

NOTE ON PARTICIPANTS

The two women interviewed are shown as J and C. Where both have spoken at the same time, J/C is used.

[[Some initial discussion between the two interviewees not transcribed.]]

2 SE: *If you like, I can ask you both some questions.*

3 J: Okay. Let me think. Like, let me just think. Hang on, why don't you give us a copy of your questions so we can have a look at it, so we can keep it and take it with us, whatever?

4 SE: *Okay. That's a good idea, it's a good idea, um, but before that I'll just get you to talk. I mean it will be up to you to talk about anything you want to discuss. After that I'll ask you some questions and then give you a copy of the questions, I mean the other ones. So you can have a look at them at home. Then later I'll tape you both again, later on. [Yes. Yes.] Okay.*

5 J/C: Yes. You'd better, whatsit. If you don't ask us something, then [] and we won't have any ideas [[Laughs]]. That'll be good, so we can really speak well and accurately about what we have to say.

6 SE: *MmMm. That's true enough. Well...*

7 J: What are you going to read now, what's it about. Jst go ahead with it.

8 SE: *Questions? [Yes.] Okay. Well, I'll start with the easy ones. [Yes. Easy ones.] Okay, well I'll let you know what all these first ones are: did you go to school here at Kunbarllanjja? Did you go to Kormilda? Or Batchelor College, or Nungalinya? Is it okay if you talk about those things? That's the first part. Okay.*

9 J: I'm fine. I'll talk about any of that.

10 SE: Okay, talk about that first part, whatever you (2) like.

11 C: About what, about when we went there?

12 J: We went to school here. and then, I didn't go to Kormilda.

13 C: We didn't go to Kormilda. I just stayed here, with those English books. They came from Dripstone High School, the - books used to come from there. [**SE: Correspondence?**] Yes. And there was also School of the Air. So we didn't go to Kormilda. [] I worked at school and then I wanted to go to Batchelor. Then I worked there and got the Stage One Certificate. I came back here and I would have worked through Stage Two but I left it at that stage, and waited. Because I didn't go back again to work there.

14 SE: [[Asking J]] What about you?

15 J: I went to school in Kunbarllanjna, but I left. I left school when I was in grade six, that's when I left school, and went off. I went and worked more or less as [] school cleaner, at school and then left that after a longish time, and when I stopped at the school. I went into the shop and then worked there. Then I went, because they wanted me, to where they used to teach Kunwinjku language, and I worked with Meryl Rowe, and I worked together with all the different old people there. We learnt how to read and write Kunwinjku. And then they put me on the school staff, where I worked for them producing books. We were making children's story books. And we were also teaching them to write and to read. While I was doing that [], producing literature in the language, I decided to work as a teaching assistant. So I worked at that, and then kept going with it working with different teachers, and I went on in that job. I started in 1989. So I went to Batchelor College. I got the Batchelor College Certificate after I went through and finished Stage One, and I completed Stages Two and Three. So now I'm half way through Stage Four.

16 SE: Okay. So now you're working together at the school?

17 J/C: Yes. Yes. We're based in the RATE room.

18 SE: *Mm. Is it okay?* [J/C: Yes.]

19 J: Another thing, um, it was good being involved as a student (teacher) when the kids had Cultural Week. I joined in and encouraged the kids. [**Mm.**] We were teaching them our own Aboriginal culture, and also they went to various different activities, story telling, collecting bamboo for spears – the kids were involved, going to all the different activities. Teachers too, they were all doing this together.

20 C: I was involved in some of that too. I was telling stories to groups of some of the children. [] Culture Week.

21 SE: *So this Culture Week is good?*

22 C: Yes. Last year they had it for the first time. It hadn't started before then [].

23 J: They all got involved in Culture Week. And it was good that we both got into it. And we also learnt, I mean, if we want to interview other people, to find out their attitudes, I mean about studying. And they sent out materials not just about interviewing other people, like you're doing now, not only that, but what they call ALF – Aboriginal Languages Fortnight. [**Mm.**] So we also do that: all kinds of different people tell stories and in that (ALF) we collect them, and I bring them together, so I can teach what I've learnt in both languages, English and Kunwinjku, by doing that research. So that too, yes.

24 SE: *Yes. I've worked in that ALF a long time ago. Ah, you remember, Korlonj, you were there.* [C: Mm.]

25 J: And what else? Yes, that's right. You're making that language book, so [] your name on it, and some other Balanda?

26 SE: *You're doing this now?*

27 J/C: Yes they're writing it now. [] It's okay if you put your names on it.

28 J: Its good if you put your name on it, and also A___, your brother should put his name on it. Other people, you know, for example, the ones who know more [].

C: Yes, that's right. And [J: Wait on, you've interrupted him.] [**SE: *No, you're all right.***] C: But if...

30 J: Is it okay if we talk about, you know, how our kids, our black kids don't get any um, encouragement. I mean how are they being taught or told stories when the mothers and fathers are not teaching them much, stories or whatever. So it's not happening. Or will we just leave that?

31 SE: *It'll be good if talk about that. Talk about it. That's good.*

32 J: How could describe the (cultural) background (of the kids). There isn't any. They are just sent off to school and they learn there, they just do the white thing at school and that's it. I mean, a lot of us when we try sometimes, find it hard with the school; so how do we prepare the kids for schooling? Some of them don't even have that little bit of background. For example, we were there with that old man Mirndabbarl, that Nabangardi. We went there with the kids to learn some vocabulary, that's what we were thinking when we went there, but then Nabangardi said, "I'll just tell them stories. I don't know (about the other stuff). I don't know where all those terms come from." You know, he tells stories to his own children, but they just get up and then they...they just go off, walk away. That's all they do and they don't know how to...they don't...I mean, what I'm saying is he is giving them education. I mean he's teaching them to "do the right thing" so they could get hold of what is good and apply it, and all the wrong things just put aside or whatever. So they could maybe sort it all out. There's a big word for all this, what's it called? Maybe I'll think of that term.

33 SE: Dunno...I don't know.

34 J: I don't know. G___ was there and whatshername N___ too, we were all there.

35 SE: At a special meeting? Or where you just having a talk, like...

36 J: We were just talking, and that old man just made that comment. We were talking about that matter, and he defined it for us. He said, "Why do I teach them when they just get up and keep going along." And at the moment that's what they do, and it's the same with the parents of these children, and small children, teenagers or young people. Yes. That's why we've started trying [] at school, and so we also remind them, or teach them, and others too. I mean we tell them about whatever so they will grow up knowing it, because they'll be the only ones, when their mothers pass away, and they'll still have that knowledge, and they'll carry on that law. Yes.

37 C: It's like yiwarrudj.

38 J: Yes. Yiwarrudj is the same as this.

39 [[Re-organization of microphones etc.]]

40 SE: This is good. I'd like you to talk about this, so then I'll write it and it will good if you can read it, have a look at what others are talking about.

41 J/C: Yes.

42 SE: Later on, after this, I want you all to have a meeting, all of you I've interviewed [Mm.] and maybe talk things over together and maybe then you can tell me something else, maybe about school or sacred places or whatever.

43 J/C: Yes.

44 SE: Okay.

45 J: Okay. That's right.

46 C: Hang on. We were saying they don't get any background. Let me think. Background might mean we don't just talk about home, but what about the school as well? The school should extend Culture Week. That might help kids, the ones who are not getting language skills [].

47 J: Yes, and it would also stop wrong behaviour, stop them doing what's wrong. [SE: *But nowadays...*] Disciplined behaviour.

48 SE: *And disciplined behaviour.* [Yes.] *The school has one week now as Culture Week, but you're saying there should more of this?*

49 J/C: Yes. Mm. In fact...it should be permanent. They (elders) should be there all the time.

50 J: At other times, like with weaving, the elders should just go into the classrooms at any time.

51 C: Any time at all if they want to. Yes, just like during Culture Week. They should continue with that, and the children should be doing a lot of different things, being taught and being told stories.

52 SE: *So who would teach them all this?*

53 J/C: In Culture Week? Yes, it would be [] weaving, story telling, um, painting - bark painting [] dancing, yes, and...

54 SE: *And what about language, I mean Kunbalak* [J: Yes those stories.] *Or Kundembuyh, whatever?*

55 J/C: Yes. That sort of thing as well as stories.

56 J: Yes. Um, Old E___ last year was teaching them. Isn't that right? [C: Yes.] They tape recorded her, maybe they just taped or they video taped her too, so they've got that at the school. I got involved with it somewhere around 1991 or '92. I went and helped them doing practical things. I'm not sure, I've forgotten, it could have been '93. I was involved in the story telling. I [] we spoke to them, me and Ngalkangila, that old lady who has passed away, J___'s mother. Then I taped it and gave that to Maree, this was last year. She taped it, and maybe that tape is still there so later they can make it into little story books so they children can do drawings. It might be published as book so children can read that story. Or teachers, I mean we black teachers may be able to use it and teach reading. And about Kunbalak, well last year Old E___ talked about that. And what else? How to maybe make fires, start a fire, that kind of thing, how to carry the fire and prepare the animal. I taped Old C___, Old C___1 as my practical project for Stage...And [] Stage Two or Three.

57 SE: *So that's why you did that thing at the school concert last year. I saw the video – Marladj, you know? That story.* [J: Namaraldj?] ***Yes, they laughed their heads off at that.*** [J: You weren't there?] ***No, I was in Darwin. But I saw the video. Just the video.***

58 C: Back at the beginning, I started that off, making that. As I was telling them the story they kept laughing all the time, because they didn't know it. Now, these were very young kids. And that's the kind of thing that they should be taught all the time, so they'll know it. That's what happened when they saw it the first time, I tried to tell them the story and they just laughed and laughed. [J: They'd never heard that story before.] Because they hadn't heard it before.

59 SE: *Really, this was little kids?*

60 J/C: Grades one and two. Yes. That's what they did. One and two. Only littlies.

61 SE: *So, when they saw it, how did the other adults react?*

62 C: Yes, well they said, “This is good. We want this to keep happening at the concerts, instead of what we’ve been seeing up until now, where they’ve just put on Balanda items.” Yes.

63 J: In fact E___ asked me. She’s given me (the job). So I’ll look at all the business going on around here (school), the things everyone is doing. I mean we’ll watch their children carefully, and I’ll see how the teacher teaches. Then I’ll come out of that and take one class, this will be later on, and I’ll maybe have my own classroom so I can apply for myself the ideas I get from white teachers and maybe after talking with that black woman (the deputy principal). In fact we (inc, 3 of us) will talk about our own Aboriginal way. So then we can develop something for the kids, and it will look good, so she can run the school. So that too, yes.

64 That Namarladj story we produced, E___ asked me, and we (2) had a look, and I just said, “That’s the one we should teach, Old E___’s story, hers.” Because all these different people tell the story in different ways. It’s the same story but there are different...[SE: *Versions?*] Yes. Versions when they tell the story. It was hers we got, from Old E___, and you can modify it, make it short. [C: So its shorter.] Yes, that’s I, and the ideas are modified. In this case, it was rather hurried or something, it was, it was, [C: They just talk about it rather than telling the story.] They just talk. So we edited it, we put it in a shorter form. So that Namarladj story was [].

66 SE: Good. This idea, “How teachers teach”: Talk about that. I mean what do kids learn? That’s one question. And another thing I’ll ask you both about is, you know, teaching method. [J: Yes.] How teachers teach. For example being strict. [J: Yes.] Or for example, how children copy (behaviour) or watch what (adults) are doing all the time – that sort of thing. Now, just a minute, there’s written questions here I’ll give you later so you can think about them.

67 J: Yes, so we can really...whatever, too. We can have a look at it and put something together in Kunwinjku, with the right words I mean.

67 SE: *MmMm. You know how Balanda do things, some of what they do at school. I mean teachers go into the school and whether Balanda or Aboriginal doesn't matter. Maybe they should teach in either the Balanda way or the Aboriginal way. I looked for books about how Aboriginal people talk about teaching method, but there was nothing, I couldn't find anything. So that's one reason why I'm asking you two.*

68 [[Personal discussion, not transcribed.]]

69 J: Well, that's why its mainly Balanda things that they see.

70 SE: *A good teacher, when a good teacher teaches and the kids learn a lot, what does that teacher do?*

71 J: In a Balanda context?

72 SE: *Mm. Or, maybe bininj. Are they the same?*

73 J: When one teacher teaches, or are you talking about a group?

74 SE: *Anybody.*

75 J: Maybe they're different. Separate. They're not the same, they're distinct. And they are about different things. So when they are learning, they see two different things, the Balanda world view and ours. [**Mm.**] So, [] I don't know, its very difficult to understand, this whole business of white and black, its very difficult.

76 SE: *So, school nowadays...any, I mean do you have any ideas, any ideas about what you'd like to see change at school? Is what they are doing basically all right or what?*

77 J: Let me think. At the moment...so, yes, it will be a long process for us, I mean we don't have something in place yet, so we'll be working on it together, getting

together and listening to what other teachers are saying, what the principal is saying...

78 SE: *And other Kunwinjku people working there, like Ngalkamarrang (the deputy principal), who else?*

79 J/C: Who else? Joe, he's there. Black people? [SE: *Mm.*] Um, on the school council there's Namengerrebbe, [] and also the black teachers, and who else. That's all.

80 SE: *And there's a meeting of Aboriginal people next week, isn't there? School Council meeting. I saw the notice at the shop.*

81 J/C: Yes, so they can nominate new members. And what was that thing? The Action Group. We were going to...it was last year, do you remember, at the end of the year or whenever? We started that Action Group for all interested people. [SE: *Mm.*] Then we joined together with the School Council.

82 SE: *Ngalkamarrang too? And you as well?* [J: And J____.] ***So this was both assistant and full time teachers?***

83 C: Yes. We all got together. We were helping each other make plans for the school.

84 J/C: Yes. We talked about Culture Week. And they all helped us with that, with Culture Week.

85 J: But its held up at the moment. It hasn't started, so we wait. When it does start later when, you know, [] that man J____ well they'll just...we are actually studying at the time they do that. [] work out. But for now, that's it, there's a lot of classroom teachers and we'll ask them to join in with us.

86 SE: *So who's in charge, I mean, um, who's got the real power to run everything at the school? Or which people?*

87 J: White people do that.

88 SE: *White people?*

89 J/C: Yes. We just don't really know all about that situation. At the moment Jan may be running it, but who knows?

90 C: []

91 J: They're both there together in that, so we're...Hang on, what was that document she's got, she's finishing it, in fact a couple of days ago they finished it, they'd been working on it...let me think. Later we'll hear about it when we've got time, then I'll start to explain our position to her. Because she's already reminded me about that. She told me, "I've been put in charge here, so I want to talk about rules, and you'll have to have those rules." For example, let me think, "No Smoking in front of the all the kids." Yes, that happens sometimes, including the teenage boys. She's made it clear to us anyway. So, anyway its running all right now. With a good principal and black teachers.

92 SE: *Good. And the kids are attending?*

93 J: Lots of kids are attending this year. Later in the dry season they'll drop off, I don't know. But at the moment, its good as it is, with lots of kids there in each classroom.

94 SE: *Okay, it's ten to two. [J: Righto.] What if...I'll stop it there and give you these questions so, okay if you have a look at them?*

95 J: Yes, it'll be good if we can look at them because then we can speak about it properly.

96 SE: And then later you can come back and I'll interview you? I can ask you both some more questions?

97 J: Yes.

[[End of interview. Tape off.]]