

2 Okay. Now, this is right back a long time ago before Balanda, before those old people saw any Balanda, this was back at the beginning. Father God made all the country. And the animals, and he created us (inc) people. He created Balanda. Balanda. It was him alone. The very first ones, those ancient people, they called him Namumuyak. Namumuyak taught the ancients, and he's the one we call Father, who created the whole world and gave them wisdom. Wisdom he used to teach them, and they kept on applying that wisdom. They talked about it and made the moral code. So they just kept discussing and discussing, talking about all the things, whatever, God had taught them. They talked about that. So then they finished doing that process, forming their wisdom, those old people. They didn't think in terms of printing, not like now, where the young people being can read books Balanda style. Not them. They couldn't read, those old people. So their ideas were what God gave them. That's what they used to talk about. They used to say, "In the beginning, Namumuyak gave us (exc) wisdom, so that's what we follow. So that's what we're telling you now, you younger generation." That's what they used to tell us. That's what they told them sometimes. So that's what we understood, what they understood and what they used to do, both men and women. They followed what the old people had talked about.

3 What they told us was entirely good. They didn't tell us wrong things. They didn't want anything evil. They rejected it. They wanted only the good. Only good, very good law was what they talked about with their children back at the beginning, teaching them, and so also teaching us.

4 Now in these modern times, there are two laws, because the Balanda way is in force. There's the white way and the black way. That's what operates now. In the past there was just that one system of law, the black system was operating, the one the old people used to talk about. That's what we used to sit around and listen to, that story. That's how we learnt it. My kakkak, way back then, my kakkak, used to say to me, "Come here and sit down, and I'll tell you a story." Or my mother, or her grandmother. They used to say, "Come and sit down. Come here kids, come here and sit down." This was me and my brother, my older brother - I was smaller. They would tell stories. We didn't tape record them. They would just tell stories, and we would get drowsy listening to those stories. And we would go to sleep.

5 We would sleep until early morning, then in the morning they would say, “We’re going hunting. You’ll be okay here. Keep an eye on the old people and they’ll keep an eye on you.” “Yes, all right. We’ll be okay to stay here.” We would stay there, and then if we felt hot we would go down and have a swim. We would go swimming, and then when we wanted a sleep, we would come up out of the water and just have a sleep. We didn’t fight. We would just stop and think. That was it. Some kids used to get angry and fight, but some of us were good and we didn’t start fights. We didn’t tease because we kept to what those old people told us. Because the old people told us about what was good and that’s how we thought. That’s what I wanted to say about that.

**6 SE: *If you like, I could ask you some questions.*** [Okay.] ***You yourself, did you go to school here?***

7 No, because I’d gone to live out bush. My mother, Ngalwakadj took me out bush, so that made it impossible for me to go. If we’d stayed here, she would have taken me down to school, and I would have gone to school. But she made that idea impossible, and took me to that other family, out east. That area, they call it, belonging to that other family, on the Rembarrnga side. I went there. I went way over there, a long way south. That’s where I grew up. I was only little when I went there. If I’d come down here, then I would have gone to school. But I’ve still got an education and I know about law and morals.

**8 SE: *When you were small, the old people used to teach you?***

9 Yes, they used to teach me. They used to teach me whenever they were doing anything at all. For example, what was the right food, they taught us that. When we would eat. They didn’t tell us to eat wrong foods. Just like (God) the Father told those old people, the one they used to call Namumuyak. That was the right thing he taught them. And that’s what they used to teach us. All about that bush tucker food. The right one, just the right ones they used to teach us, and they would give us the right ones.

**10 SE: So, now your own children, you teach them?**

11 Yes. Sometimes I used to teach my eldest son who drinks beer - he goes too far from home. But the younger one, I tell him, and his sister, "Don't go moving off somewhere else. You go off with some man, you go with someone, and sometimes I don't know." Some time you'll get killed. Same with your brother. They'll kill you if you go off that way, run off and leave me and your mother." Well one of those boys listened to me. He just tried drinking but he thought it tasted awful and make him vomit. So that was that, he just stopped. He left it. [Mm.] His sister never did drink. Nothing. My kids, two boys and two girls - they don't go to other places to live, because they learnt as children, they learnt from me, from their mother and father, they just stay here. They don't want to adapt and stay when they go anywhere else. [Yes.] Now I'm just thinking about that, when I came back from living in that southern outstation, I used to drink grog. I was thinking about the law, because I had a hard time, too much fighting. We would argue. We would fight. I was going along like that and I was thinking, I was thinking hard. I decided it would be better to get rid of the grog. And that's what I did so I could say I would go God's way. I decided (God) the Father was good.

**12 SE: So you gave up drinking?**

13 I gave up drinking. That was that. I left drinking because I was thinking, "Sometime I might have a son." And then I did. Anyway, that's what I was thinking.

**14 SE: This was a long time ago?**

15 A long time ago. A few years ago. While Mr. Wilson was still here. When he was the only missionary here. When you were first here. The others had gone off to different places, those missionaries who had been here.

**16 SE: Do you think children should learn Kunbalak and Kundebi?**

17 Yes. They should learn it, because, for example, the mothers, when we used to be camped here a long ago, you know what I mean?, well, those mothers straighten

them out them out, and that's how they could teach them Kundemboy. They could teach them Kundembuy and also Kunbalak they could teach them. Still some of them don't really understand it. So they go and get muddled up. Because they don't really teach them much about these things. They just sit around there with their mothers and fathers. And because their grandparents, who have this, are just not there. And our own grandparents have all died, those old people. But other people, who speak it, have been teaching us Kunbalak. And Kundebuy.

**18 SE: *And I'm trying to learn Kundembuy, I'm just learning Kunbalak bit by bit.***

[Yes.] ***It's hard.***

19 Yes. They mucked up my learning when I went and lived a long way away, that's why I don't really know Kunbalak because I lived with a very different group, different families. My own family, I forgot...I forgot what they had taught me. By the time I came back I had grown up. I came back here and married. I hadn't married at that other place. I'd stayed single.

**20 SE: *Did you go up to ceremonies?***

21 Yes, I went to a lot of ceremonies. Lots of different people taught me. They taught all those different ceremonies they have there in the south. They taught me Langkurr. I saw lots of them. They used to teach me and I would watch them. I watched what they did, that ceremony. They gave me Langkurr. I did that one.

**22 SE: *They used to teach you?***

23 Yes, they taught me. I would be watching what they did. And they would say, "Why don't you try." So I tried it and did it right, that procedure. But that Langkurr, was too far away, so I didn't try it. There weren't enough people because it was too far. But I was taught Kunabibi. [***Was this here?***] Right here, in the south end. I saw that Kunabibi here. But that ceremony. I didn't really get involved with it, you know? They instructed me, they said to me, "Don't just go along...this business we've taught you, means you should just stay in one place. Don't go and touch women or whatever. Leave that. If someone else sees you doing that, they'll spear

you. If you treat the ceremony lightly, or the food taboos.“ They didn’t give us some things, they withheld them. When we’d seen that Kunubibi, they withheld things from us. They wouldn’t give us things at that stage. As we went to more ceremonies, then they gave us things. I mean that taboo food. And then Yaburlurrwa they taught us that too. I saw that Yaburlurrwa. I went along through ceremonies five times. [*Five?*] Yes five. Then they told me, “That’s enough. You’re a big man now, we’ll admit you.” So they admitted me, and taught me. I paid attention to that mob, that different group, different family. They used to be really tough people back then. We were frightened of them. Yes.

**24 SE: *Those people who taught you were pretty tough?***

25 They’ve all died now. They’ve all gone. Those tough people have all died and gone. Yes.

**26 SE: *The young men, if they made mistakes, did they punish them?***

27 Yes. Sometimes they used to sing them with magic. But I got through it. I kept an eye on myself so to speak. I was thinking. I kept watching them and I didn’t just go along with them. Because my mother and her mother both told me, “Don’t just follow some man who’s very dangerous. Sometimes if you follow him you’ll make a mistake, and he’ll kill you.” They told me that. That’s why I was thinking, because I had that in my mind. I put it there. So I didn’t follow along with those other different people. I only took real notice of my mother. So I went on and became an adult, and still my mother used to give me advice. She had said, “Don’t just follow the majority of people, or the young blokes. Leave it. Just stay where you’re at.” So I just stayed put in the one place. I didn’t make any trouble when I was young so I grew up to adulthood, and people were teaching me. Well, I watched them with my own eyes. They would be fighting or arguing, maybe with spears. And I would think, “Oh, that’s them fighting. That’s what they do.” I didn’t have any enemies. But one Balanda picked a fight with me, actually there were two Balanda. But only Balanda. So I went to gaol and I was locked up in Darwin. [*This was a long time ago?*] Yes, a long time ago.

**28 SE: Were you there for a long time?**

29 Yes, for one year - that's what they gave me. So I went. [*Really?*] For one year I sat there. They gave me a year because I'd been fighting with those two Balanda.

[[Laughs.]]

**30 SE: What did those Balanda do?**

31 I'd been traveling with those Balanda. We went south. We went to Wave Hill and Victoria Downs. We went every[] We went, further and further, as far as the Queensland border, on this side. We went along there, taking the cattle. We stayed there working. Droving the cattle to sale. [*This is in the 1960s?*] Yes. Yes. We were coming back with that Balanda, and he told me we could have a holiday after one more month. I spoke nicely to him. But he said, "No, you keep on working." So we ended up arguing and he grabbed my shirt. He was causing me trouble, and he should have left me alone. [[Laughs]]. Yes. He grabbed my shirt and was hassling me. So I got mad and we had a fight. I said to him, "Give me another chance." Then that other Balanda started fighting too and we had each other by the throat but the others pulled him off. Those two were scared of me so they called the policeman, and they came and handcuffed me. He put me in cuffs. [*They brought you back.*] Yes. I was in custody from then on. [*Did you go by plane?*] No, vehicle. Police car. Because they were scared of me. Those policemen. They were thinking, "He might kill us on the way if we take off his cuffs." [*Mm.*] That time I was young, you know. [*Yes.*] Not nowadays. [*When you were a bit wild?*] Yes. They were thinking like that, but not me. No. I was just angry with that man, that was all. But they were really quite frightened. So I went and was locked up. I was locked up for that one year I had to stay there. Then I left that place and came back here. They didn't want me to stay there, so I came here to Kunbarllanjja. I came from where I was staying at Pine Creek. I got a car then just came back here. They didn't want me. They said to me, "You can't go back there because of what you did. You're a troublemaker." So they more or less sent me here.

**32 SE: The Balanda told you that?**

33 The government told me. Government, because, “Don’t you go back. You’re too rough. You’ve been fighting so they don’t want you.” “Okay,” I said, “That’s it. I’ll go somewhere else.” So I came here. [*I see.*] Okay, I came here and heard that Christian business. That was when missionaries were here. The government weren’t here then. It was only missionaries, and that was all. And there weren’t any outside people here. And there were no police. Nothing. No outside people had come in, no Balanda. Nothing. They didn’t want anyone else to come onto this land. They just [], that’s all on this country. We were very firm about that here. The missionaries didn’t want others to come in. But they’ve gone, and others, newcomers have ruined the place.

**34 SE True. When we were coming here just now, you were talking about CDEP. [CDEP?] Ah, UB. Those young blokes, What do you think about what those young blokes are doing?**

36 Those young blokes and the CDEP. Some of them, that Demed mob, they’re working. They’re working for that (CDEP), that’s right. So they’re getting paid. But others are just staying at home. Some of them don’t get UB, or maybe on the sly, I don’t know. But some do get it. But when they get that money, they don’t buy food and stock up their home, they just buy grog, that’s all. They just get that grog, and that’s all they want to do with the money. Tobacco too. Some of them buy tobacco too, some don’t. They’re hungry so they come to our place [[Laughs]]. [*Asking us for food*]. Yes, they’re asking us, “Give me some tobacco.” “I’m hungry, give me some meat. Or a can of meat, give me that.” [*And they’re smoking grass?*] Yes. Grass. Oh, my son is the worst one with that grass. I’ve told him I’d call the police to him. But it keeps going. I’ve got angry and tried to stop him, but other people have taught him. But who is the white person supplying it?

**37 SE: Where do they get it?**

38 Ah, well, maybe from Jabiru or somewhere they buy it.

**39 SE: Yes, I heard about them doing that there at Jabiru. Somebody might be selling it?**

40 Yes, That woman living there at O\_\_\_'s camp. [*That lady, his sister?*] Yes, his sister. She sells it. Some of the young blokes buy it when they go to Jabiru.

**41 SE: And it's expensive?**

42 Yes. It costs a lot, sometimes \$50 or \$100. [*Ah!*] [[Laughs]]. [*That's expensive. So beer is cheaper.*] Yes. They [] me. One packet might be \$200 here.

**43 SE: Some young blokes I've been praying for have been very muddled up after smoking that stuff.**

44 Yes. We're praying for them, but that grass muddles up their thinking. That one bloke especially I'm talking about, N\_\_\_. N\_\_\_. He just keeps on smoking grass. He just sits there and sits there. [*I see.*] He doesn't move. There's no violence. They don't get into fights when they've been smoking grass, but they do just stop moving. [*They don't lift their hands to do anything.*] Yes, they just sit there.

**45 SE: And I've seen Nabangardi D\_\_\_, you know? [Yes.] Well, I went and prayed for him. He just doesn't move, he's just sitting there. I wonder what he's thinking?**

46 The grass makes them like that. It makes them more or less incapable of moving. So they just stay still, they just sit there...and sit there until it wears off and then they can move. They reckon it makes your skin hot, and makes you hot inside. Yes, when they inhale, that smoke goes everywhere inside. [*Yes.*] It makes them hot and then they feel like they are getting numb all over. It makes them numb. [*They can't feel their skin?*] No. They just feel something inside, and they don't move much. They just sit down there, feeling numb. They don't move their lips, or their bodies, they just sit and sit. [*Like Kava? The same?*] Yes. Something like that.

**47 SE: Yes, I feel sorry for those young blokes. They should be running around with lots of energy and strength. [Yes.] Oh! Another thing, you're on the school council. Do you want to talk about that? [We had a meeting yesterday afternoon.] Was it okay?**

48 Yes, its good. We discuss things like to do with the young blokes attending school. There are two systems: when those young blokes go to school, and also the young ladies going too - there are two systems they follow: one black, one white. That's the issue. There isn't just one way that they follow, just the Balanda way. But they should learn the other, our own Aboriginal system. That's what we talk about. And parents need to try and raise them with both. They should teach them. Both systems. They should learn to want both black and white law. They shouldn't just go to school and learn the one. They will learn, but mothers fail, they don't look after them and send them to school the right way, to make them attend. Those are bad mothers. Some of them go to the club or they just play cards. They don't think about anything else.

***49 SE: Driving around in the car I see them - in school time - I see kids hanging around, just anywhere.***

50 Yes. That bus that comes around in the morning, when they see that, they just duck inside the house and hide.

***51 SE: Little kids or big kids?***

52 Some of them are big kids. Little kids and big kids, about so big [[Indicates about 10-12 year old child's height]]. I don't know how they can just hide, their mother should be been telling them what to do. They should say to them, "Don't do that! You go to school!" They just let them. They just, they just teach them to play cards with them. Sometimes they'll get involved in the kids' fights. They'll argue. They take up the kids' fights and make it worse for them. This is all wrong. What they don't say is, "All right, that's enough. You're ignorant through not going to school." Nothing like that. They just leave it up to them. And at the outstations it's the same. They don't do any work. If the Balanda (teacher) goes out there, that's when they work, only then. But otherwise not.

53 Yes, that's what we talked about. That's what they want to tackle again. One more time. This business of having white and black systems. Young girls and young

boys. So the parents will present both to them, they should explain both to them. That's what we talked about at school council yesterday afternoon.

**54 SE: What about Kunbarllanjnja Council, are you still on that?**

55 Yes, I'm in that here. The Council. And that School Council I also go there. I listen to all they talk about there, that's going on.

**56 SE: So who is a good teacher? A good man or woman teacher? Are there any good teachers at the school?**

57 At school? Well now, what are you thinking of? Balanda? [*And Bininj too.*] Well, that Ngalkamarrang, what's her role? What []?

**58 SE: Deputy Principal. And the Bininj who work there?**

59 Well, I think there's A\_\_\_, Nangarridj, he's president in both, that man.

**60 SE: Council?**

61 At school. At school. He has a job here and he also works at the council, paying out money. [*So he's got both jobs.*] [[Laughs]].

**62 SE: He was a teacher working there a long time ago.**

63 Yes way back when he was young.

**64 SE: Yes, he and I worked together a long while ago.**

65 He's really good that Nangarridj.

**66 SE: A lot of Bal..., Bininj worked there teaching, teaching the kids. [Yes.] For example J\_\_\_ M\_\_\_ [Yes, yes.] A very long time ago. There were lots of them.**

67 Yes a lot. I used to see them, lots of them, but then some of them got badly affected by alcohol. [*Mm.*] There has been too much alcohol.

**68 SE: *So are the kids learning? The ones who do go? [The kids?] If they go to school, are they learning well?***

69 Yes. If the kids go every day they're okay. They keep teaching those kids. And they also invite the mothers themselves, and explain things to them. So they'll think about leaving that grog and so forth. And they'll be able to listen to what the council is talking about. This is really about them sending the kids so they'll learn. And also, if they don't go what else are they going to do? They'll just be sitting there without money. When that money stops, child endowment or whatever, that's it. Where will they find food any other way? They'll be hungry!

**70 SE: *Yes. Now with teachers, do you think they should be strict with kids, or go easy, when they teach them?***

71 Yes. Maybe what they should do is teach them softly. He (the teacher) wants to explain to them about the white system, he teaches them that first, then in the afternoon when they knock off, then its the turn of the black system. [*Okay.*] Maybe that's what they should do. They should do it in turn.

**72 SE: [[Interrupting JD accidentally.]] *What about when a child makes a mistake, or does something wrong at school, what should the teacher do?***

73 He could hit them, or what?

**74 SE: *Well I'm just wondering what you think they should do.***

75 Well if he gets angry with them, if for example the kids are teasing each other in their own way, and they upset (the teacher). They will think, "Oh, he'll make trouble for us, he'll go crook at us. If we argue with each other, he'll be angry at us." Those kids like that will just take off and go for good, and not go back to school. I'm thinking that way because I know in the past the kids would be looking for fights

among themselves. So a child would leave, and be scared to go to school because they might attack him. They do that, that's what they do to each other, arguing.

**76 SE: *And they're teasing each other too?***

Yes, that's right. Some don't want that teasing, and if there wasn't any teasing they would all go to school together. Because, Balanda don't keep a close enough eye on them, so as a result the kids tease each other, and the black people on their part just let kids do it too. They don't really supervise them properly, and they don't explain it to them. That's why there is teasing at the school and kids leave. If they explained it to them very firmly, then they would learn: "No teasing! This school is for you, so you can learn when they teach you. Maybe you don't want that, but you're not going anywhere else either."

78 I say that because those mothers don't know about bush tucker, they didn't learn about it when they were young people. Those mothers went to school too. They don't know. They know a bit, but they don't really know enough about how to get bush tucker. [*So they would go hungry?*] Yes, a child might for example have gone to school, they used to go back then, [*Yes, okay.*] but a child born nowadays? Well, they don't teach their own children. They just don't know about food from the bush. For example they can't dig up long yams; cheeky yams, they'd eat it while it is still poisonous. They should wash it. And also, the water plants, water lily, that food. That sort of food, they just don't know about, from right here. They (the mothers) didn't learn it well enough and that's why they just let the kids go. They should explain to them, "This is good, that is good, this is good, that is good." All this bush tucker, we just don't know, we didn't go and learn about it. We (exc) didn't eat it. So now we (inc) just go along with the Balanda way here, and you learn that.

79 But that other way from our old people, our own, from our language, it can teach us. On the other side, the Balanda way is teaching us. And they are learning that. Because when they leave school, they don't go through anything else. That's it, they just follow along the white way. White food, they bring it here and give it to them, give it to us and we all eat that. Because bush tucker, well, that's over, it's not available for us to eat. In the past they used to eat real food: they would dig up yams,

get cheeky yams, and little fruits that were really good, they would point them out so they could eat them. It had to be the right fruit to eat. If we eat the wrong one, maybe something poisonous, we would die. Yes that's right. They don't know any of that now. Well, maybe some. But they certainly don't have an education. They don't know Kundebi, they don't know mother-in-law language. They don't know it. They don't speak it any more. Some know it, maybe half, the others don't. That woman, my wife, she doesn't know Kundebi or mother-in-law language. She doesn't know. Oh, yes, my daughter knows a bit, because I taught her just a little bit of Kundebi. And her brother, I taught him too - Kundebuy. But he's smoking grass. He hasn't got it, sometimes he listened to me, sometimes he didn't. He just smokes grass, that's all. He doesn't listen to me.

**80 SE: *Some children are intelligent...***

81 He's intelligent. He's interested in Christianity, that Balang, that younger boy of mine. The other day he said, "Oh, I think I'll go to fellowship." Yes.

82 Uh, I'll talk to you about a motor vehicle. They'll help me with that car, so we can pay for the repairs. Who's going to pay for that for us? Well, I'll get a four wheel drive, so he can drive it us to Church. So we can go to services. Because of the system in place...

[[ Private conversation about purchase of vehicle through the outstations resource centre, and family issues. Not transcribed. ]]

INTERVIEW FINISHED. TAPE OFF