

2 Now...just a minute. Wait, ask me something. Where will I start? Ask me something and then I'll go on from there by myself. Okay.

**3 SE: *Well, maybe you could start by talking about when you were young, when you were a child. That sort of thing. The early days.***

4 Okay. Yes. As a child I lived here in Kunbarllanjja. I'd been born up there at, what's-it-called? Ngara. Ngara was where I was born, but I came here as a baby and I grew up here. My father, you refer to him as Kakkak, and I refer to him as Kudjakardu when I respond to you (in Kundebi), this is his country here, right here in this place, Kunbarllanjja, this was his mother country - though not just his, because there were those Mirarr people and others as well all together here. But the Mirarr and Marndjulngunj people were related through one woman they all called their mother. The Marndjulngunj mob, D\_\_\_\_'s father, and those others, Dj\_\_\_\_'s wife. Anyway I grew up here. That Namanilakarr fathered me. So I grew up and when I was older we went away.

5 We set off and went a long way. He took me with him, my Dad, and I still remember that first time, we went on foot. We only went to Mardjinbardi, and from Mardjinbardi we left and went on to Pine Creek - on foot. We camped along the way and then we stayed on there. We stayed there a long time. Dad got a job there with the buffalo - they worked with the buffalo there. We stayed there for a long time, how many years? I've forgotten - I was quite small. Then we moved to another place after that. And there was another white man Dad worked for there at, what's-it-called? Mt Bundy. Mt Bundy, he worked there. Then yet another Balanda wanted him to work, shooting buffaloes for their hides. For a while he worked there shooting buffaloes. There at, what's-it-called, Point Stuart they call it - Murluk. That's the Aboriginal name for it. They worked there, so we stayed till the wet season came. When the rain came those Balanda moved us and all their workers, they put us in Darwin. Not at Bagot. What we now call Bagot now wasn't there at that time. But at Berrimah there were Aboriginal people staying then - it was a compound, a reserve. The Aborigines had lived there to start with, although there weren't many of them. but there were a big mob of us from all different places.

6 That's what we were doing all that time...Then as I was getting bigger, we came back. (My father) wanted to. Maybe he just stopped and thought about it. So we stopped and came back. He said, "We're going back to Kunbarllanjja." The adults talked about it and so did I, and I had just gone along with them, to wherever they took me, wherever he was wanting to go. So I used to just follow.

7 So we came back here, and here we camped in the bush. We stayed here and then my father got sick. We were camping, up there at the top of Mikkinj. That's where we lived. They used to go hunting. And they would shoot crocodiles for their skins. (My father) did it too. But he left off working with that Balanda, shooting buffalo and he came back to our own country. That was because he wanted to live on that "mother country" as he called it, that's what he said. And it is. Here, all my father's sisters were living here. And that Mirarr man was here. That Birrimirarr mob were camping at Mardjinbardi. That old man was camping there at the cypress tree, that Nawamud, our relative. All of them had worked with buffalo from the start. So we came back, after how many years? Four or five years. We came back and Dad got sick. In fact he was dying.

8 When I was small, I didn't go anywhere, to other places, to friends, like kids do now. We used to play with each other. We used to just play but we all lived separately. I mean I would play during the day time, then when it became late afternoon, they would say to us, "That's enough you kids. Come and have a sleep. We're going to sleep." So we would split up and I would go home. If we didn't finish that game, well it was too bad. They would say to me, "It's dark. That's enough." Then that was the time they would tell me stories.

9 They would tell me about *Mimih*, *Djang*, the Law, I mean what white people call "law". We too have our own law. So they would tell me about it – What the law said was good, "mankarre" as we call it today. And about what was wrong, that law about wrong things. So they told me the law about what was right and wrong. Its like what the Balanda have, like the ten commandments. We would call it good law. There in the book. They read it in the book.

10 I learnt gradually. At that stage I didn't go very far away. I didn't go and stay at any other camp. Maybe if I had gone, then I wouldn't have known certain things. Because I would have grown up to manhood, with the husband and wife in that other camp, knowing their way. I wouldn't have grown up in the way of my father, mother, aunty or father's father or father's mother, my mother's father, my mother's mother nor my mother's older sisters, or their spouses, in their way. I'm talking about the lady I called Morlah, my mother's sister. She was the eldest Ngalkangila. I used to listen to her.

11 I'm just talking about right back when I was growing up, when I had turned seventeen, eighteen or nineteen, as white people count years for us. We don't have that system of counting years of age. We just go along noticing each other getting older and greyer, that's all. We'll say, "He's becoming an adult." But Balanda always count how many years. They start counting a person's age from birth.

12 Anyway, before I got an education, before I got a proper education, I used to listen to two languages - I mean that language of our fathers', our aunty, and their father. I spoke that as my mother tongue, Mengerrdji. That was the language from here, Kunbarllanjja, that was it, Mengerrdji. We ourselves had two languages, our own exclusively, Erreh and Ngurningangk. Up north, further, they had Kakudju. There are a lot of those little languages in various little places. I used to hear that language - my father used to take me away to places so I knew (about those languages). We would be moving around a fair bit, but he used to take me and teach me at the same time, so I was always making progress, and growing up that way so I understood those places. That's what I did, he used to teach me himself what he wanted to.

13 A lot of the older people also used to explain things to me," Understand this, or this or this", "That's the reason, that's the one." "Speak this way when you talk." "You should really understand this or that," they used to say, "so you'll have the right ideas as you become an adult." That's what they used to tell me.

14 The time came and I had almost grown up, I was educated. This doesn't happen when you're just a young boy, when they're just starting to be a young men, I mean a

very young teenager, what would they say in English? 14 or 15 years old. Sixteen. But Aboriginal people would still call them “yawurrinj” - that sort of thing, getting closer to being young men. That’s what we say. White people would say, “He’s becoming an adult.”

15 A young man has some education, and we should have forced him to learn some hard stuff, so he’ll have the right ideas. So then later, there’s the Wubbarr ceremony, and as they all apply what they’ve learnt at the ceremonies - Wubbarr, Mardayin, Lorrhkon, Kunabibi, and then more recently, Yaburlurrwa. That is what it’s about. This is the thing that makes a man or a woman, changes a woman, so she is transformed, or a man is transformed. That’s what they do. So it makes the women a real women as she works through it and sees it. And for the man, that’s what it does, it makes him a real man, that sacred ceremony of ours. Mardayin, and so on, Wubbarr. So that gives us our thinking. It gives us our wisdom so we become real men. As a real man you have wisdom and you can speak well, you can speak wisely. You don’t just go on always talking about any old thing. So that’s what you should become. Then people will leave it with you. At some time other people might teach so you’ll have a second lot of knowledge. They’ll see you’ve got good thinking and they’ll say, “Okay, he’s a real man. He’s educated, he’s independent.” They’ll be watching over your shoulder from a distance, to see if you’re okay, they’ll keep an eye on you.

16 For example, with a “T.O.”, that is a “traditional owner” as the Balanda say, now in his country, when a child is born, the eldest child or another one, or lots of them., when their father is the traditional owner, he has those kids and the eldest kid, well that eldest child will become the traditional owner, his son. His name is already on that country, that clan. That country is his, and he has that clan membership. For example, in my case, that Namanilakarr was my father, and his father, Mawah I called him, was Namanilakarr, a Nabangardi man called Manbiyarra and so just the same, my father was Namanilakarr. So our country belonging to the three of us, Nabangardi, myself and Nangarridj, is Manilakarr country. And just here is also Mirarr country too. The Erre people, it’s theirs too, clan Mirarr. So I look after the country for where those two clans live. The land belongs to two clans. What happened was that that Namirarr, who I call Mawah, and those Mirarr clan men, he

was brother to that Namanilakarr clan man. They called that same old man father. They both had that one father who brought them up.

17 And that is the fundamental law, that's what the fundamental law is. That is what they passed on to us - when we (inc) were small. We all lived there in the one place, and grew up in the one camp. It was only later we went away from there. So we become adults and we have that fundamental law. That's why we can then leave and go off to distant places - the "wider world" as Balanda say, far away. It was maybe, as the Balanda would say, we went "exploring", to find out whatever for ourselves. We try to find out for ourselves what other people are thinking.

18 That's how you learn. You get something and mix it in so you know about minor sorts of laws and the more important laws, about Balanda law and Aboriginal law. Including Aboriginal law from other language groups. Not only black, but we have both Bininj and Balanda law - they're all law. But our (inc) laws are not identical - some, some of them are different. Some of them are different laws. Some. some are the same. There are different sorts of laws. For example, Balanda, different Balanda have different laws. And in each different place black people in their turn have different laws. So the coastal people have different laws, the inland people too, in their distant place. They each have their own law, but they have some that are the same as ours.

19 This is how it is. As I went through life growing up to adulthood, it would have been pointless if the elders in my family hadn't told me stories. I probably wouldn't know anything. I'd be just going along without anything in my head. In other words, in ignorance. But as it is now, well, they made me so that I do have an adult's education. For example my mother's father, I called Mamam, used to tell me stories. They used to tell me stories every night until I went to sleep. Some of those stories were short, and some long. They were about djang, about what happened to people who did the wrong thing with those djang. Some were about animals who were actually people. Some were about evil beings, like Namorrordo. There were a lot of them: Mimih, Marlwa. They told me about all of them. When the sun would set, they used to tell me stories until I went to sleep. I would sleep and next morning when I would get up, they would tell me things.

20 Sometimes when I got up in the morning, they would say, “Let’s go hunting.” So we used to go hunting. As we went along hunting, they used to teach me. Sometimes I would follow along behind (my mother) Ngalkangila. My father, Dad would say to me, “You go with Mum. I’ll go this way.” Sometimes they went after buffalo or they hunted kangaroo. That was when I was still fairly young, so, in the meantime, I would go with my mother and grandmother (Kakkak) to get pandanus leaves. Sometimes they used to go after yams. I used to watch them digging up yams and they would tell me the names: “These are mankodbe.” “This one is mankongkong.” “This one is mankurrkkeb.” “This sort is karrbarrda.” “This one is mankinjdjek, kamarn, morlkalk, mandem...” Mandem, there are all different kinds of mandem, different shapes. And mankodjbang. All the foods, barrdjunga, manbardmo, djilidjili. This is our Aboriginal food we’ve always had from earlier times there in the bush. They taught me about that. And the food growing on trees: mandudjmirr, mandjulkurlmarlba, manmorlak, manmobbarn, djalamarddowk. All those, all that food of ours. they used to teach me all that so I know them all.

21 Hunting: my father on his part taught me about it as I was growing up. I knew how to stalk them. He taught me that. He taught me how to spear them. He gave me a spear thrower. He made me straighten the bamboo (for spears) and he made me cut it myself. He taught me about that bamboo and showed me how to cut it, chopping it off at the roots and straightening it out. I used to put the metal head on the spears, and make fishing spears, sharpening the wires. I carved those little bokko spears. I chipped spear throwers from wood. I did that too. I made up the sharp point. He showed me about resin from the ironwood tree you use to glue (the head on the spear). He showed me the beeswax, and told me how to follow the native bees. That wax, you see the honey first, then there’s probably some wax. All that was part of our fundamental law. So now, when I go about, as an adult, when I go along anywhere in the bush, if I happen to get hungry I know about those animals, the bush foods, the fish. I know all that. I know from having watched them when we camped there in the bush, before we came back here to where the Balanda were, and they made me start going to school.

22 I went to school, and I did things that were different. They put me there - put me into that school. It was very strict and I just couldn't do it properly to start with. I would try but I used to feel a failure. I felt frustrated and disappointed, because I'd already become a big kid in the bush, that's where I grew up. It was then I came here and they put me in that Balanda thing. Then my father left me forever, he passed away. We came back to the school. (My mother) Ngalkangila brought me and put me into school.

23 I was growing up at that stage. I was maybe thirteen or fourteen. And I couldn't read. The only English I knew was very bad English, the kind I used to hear them talking when they had taken me along getting buffalo, with my father. They were working with the buffalo, and my father was working there too. I would listen to them talking and that was the only way I knew any English. But I'd never seen printing, so I couldn't read. When I went into school and tried, it was no good. Now my own Aboriginal law, I already had that. The only part I didn't know was Kundebe. In our (exc) own languages, Wurningangk, Erre, Mengerrdji, Kakudju, we don't have Kundebe. We just address people as Berluh, Ngabbard, Ngalkurrng, that's all. We have no Kundebe. I'll talk about this later on.

24 The Balanda pressured us to read English and we couldn't avoid it. I tried and couldn't do it. I kept trying but it was no good. So two years went past and I tried and tried without success. Then my teacher said to me, what was her name? She's old now, an old lady - Jean Mason, that's right. That was my teacher. I called her my sister, Ngalmurrwan clan because she used to work with (Rachel) the T.O. from Kunnanj. It was (that teacher) who told me, "You're just about grown up. You're big enough so you can leave school. You don't have to come back." But I was just getting things bit by bit, that white business, English. I would have stayed on but she said, "Don't stay on any longer. That's it. Go and get a job. Where would you like to work? Tell me and I'll go and tell the superintendent, Mr Wilson." She used his name, but I call him Nakangila, that's who it was, Mr Wilson, to use his name. "I'll tell him," she said, my teacher, "and he'll give you a job. Where will you work? On horseback with the cattle? Or you could work as a farmer, on the farm, planting food, helping them while they teach you. Or, cutting timber with the sawmill work, for

building? Or you can work back at the school.” She told me, “Okay I’ll tell the superintendent to give you a job. That’s settled, you’ll get a job and start working.”

25 So I said, “I want to work with cattle, on horseback. I’ll help them. But I’d also like to work at school.” Well, I was thinking that I didn’t want to lose that English I’d already learnt, and I still wanted to learn it. So she said, “Okay, where do you want to start? With the horses and cattle, or here (at school)?” I said, “I’ll start here, and if I find it too hard, I’ll go to another job.” “Okay.” So she went and told him, she came just here [[pointing]] to his office. Nowadays its the council office, but back then there was no council. Anyway, she went there and told him, and then told me (what he’d said), “Okay, he can start for now. But if its too hard, if the job is too difficult, then he can come back here and get an outside job.” “Okay.” So they put me into that job. They gave us some clothes – the gave me shorts and shirt.

26 So I was working at school, teaching. I wasn’t the teacher, but I worked for the experienced teachers. I assisted them. I used to help them. I would do that and every afternoon that woman teacher would taught me. When we finished at school we would come back and she would train me. She used to teach me at length, especially English. For example how to use the dictionary. We would go and she would tell me about the dictionary. So I really understood English - I could really understood when I heard it. I thought to myself, “I used to always get this wrong.” I was saying this to myself. “And I’ll learn what all this is about.” So, I stayed with that for one year as a teacher. When I had put in that year, the teacher made me assistant teacher. I kept working for them after that and I had a class on my own: They gave me a class. How many kids where there? I used to take six kids every afternoon and morning. So I kept on going, and I really understood that job. By then I had become an adult. I’d became a mature man. I was still single. I was understanding the job, but I hadn’t learnt all of it, not yet.

27 I talk about this. I left it when I had got to that stage. And that is exactly what happens with kids. When we teach a child, we would notice one child, we’ll see him, among, say, four or five kids or even six, all different kinds of kids, and there might be that one who is really good, clever. He picks up things and understands very quickly. And he makes progress. So you keep an eye on him from a bit of a distance.

And you'll think, "This kid is bright, he'll grow up well. He'll become man, a real man. He'll have the fundamental law." Another child you'll notice might be hard, and you can't straighten him out. We can't do anything with him. He's always heading the wrong way. He'll go on in life, turn into a man and still be the same way throughout his life. Another child you'll notice is a tough guy. Yet another one you'll see is brainless, who just goes along. He just goes along. You'd just have to say to him, "Go that way. Take that with you." When he watches you work, he won't get up and help. He just doesn't think. You always have to tell him, "Come and give me a hand. Go on! Look after those things of yours." He's different in that way.

28 And it can be the same with a woman, as she grow up from a young girl into a woman, without changing. She'll just go and have a baby. She'll get a man and then you'll see, she'll just leave him, the wife will just go off for own reasons, and he'll be there, and they're separated. The husband might be good, but the woman is no good. Sometimes they just leave. They just abandon that child like an orphan and go off somewhere else. She just has her own different ideas of what to do. Because (of those women) she just grew up without knowing the fundamental law. This comes from her family, her mother, father, grandmother, aunties, her, father's father, she calls Mawah. Well, growing up she didn't get hold of that law. Without the law. Men can be like that too. Like women, they might be good or bad.

29 So with the child, when someone is teaching him, its up to us, up to our own Aboriginal teachers, when you look at the children and you see that child, we (inc) watch him and we help him if we love him. We make him so he will become a good man later on. Or a good woman. (We think about what happens) later, when the child finishes school, when we know the child has gone right through and finished school, he or she should get a job at that stage. The child will continue on further from there, on her own, but we've (you and I) already given her the ability to think. We've given that to her, so she's learnt to think for herself. The teacher can say, "I've filled her mind." "Education", that's what we've given the child. We've educated him, so he grows up well.

30 (Education) is a bit like this. You get some meat, and throw some meat out there for your dog. You give the dog meat and he'll like you because you feed him. Well

its like that with a child: You give him good teaching - and don't make it too hard for him, without it being interesting or without him understanding it, you just give him something, give it to him and watch what happens to start with. You give something good its just like giving him food or meat and you'll make him, you'll make him start asking you questions. When you see that happen, you'll be thinking, "Ah, I've given him something now that's made him ask questions, this child." So then you give him a little more of the good stuff. Better things, next time. You keep feeding that child with all different kinds of good things, so he wants to be interested and keep feeding. Its as if you're feeding his will, so he'll keep following you all the time. Because he realizes his thinking is being opened up. So then he'll just want more and more and more. He'll want you to keep teaching him, because from the start, you give him the right food so to speak, and you keep on doing this all the time, so he'll be expecting you to do it. Expecting and wanting it. Then, as he develops and grows up with it, he'll have understanding and he'll say, "Oh. Thank you teacher for helping me. I could ask you a lot of questions, because you started me off" That's what he's thinking in himself. Or he might say it to you in public.

31 But if we give that child something too hard, not just too hard, but maybe even something too easy for him if he's good. If we give him something hard, what I mean is you make it too difficult for him, well you have to realize the fact that this is only a child, you're not handling an adult. Even sometimes with an adult, you can tell him good things but he might end up following the wrong way. I'm talking about us men. But you have to be careful with a child. If you give a child a hard time, he'll really hates that, he's just a child. It's the same with men and women - you might tell them what's good, but they follow what is bad. That's what we do as people. Same with kids, just explain things without going too fast or too slow, just the same as we Aboriginal people do with our law. That's why you do things that way.

32 So then, in this matter, you work with them so as to make them ask you questions. Now, what if you notice a child who won't ask you questions? Why doesn't he? You didn't make him ask you. Every time you give him something too hard, he won't have a question for you. Or every time you have something for him he already knows, something easy for that child, well, he or she won't ask you questions about that because he or she already knows. He'll say, "I won't ask him because I already

know this.” But now if you have something for him that he doesn’t know, well he’ll ask about that. So then you start co-operating with each other. Well, you might see him maybe next time ask a couple of questions, or three or four the time after that. Then you can say, “That’s working, I’ve got this one interested.” So you can keep on working together.

33 So then you just keep giving him good stuff, and be honest with him, don’t mislead him. If you try to trick him, or as they say in English, “joke” with him openly, he mightn’t take things seriously. If you don’t speak honestly, maybe if you try to trick him, well you’ll give him too many different ideas. Because that child, when he grows up, well he’ll just think things are a joke, this and that, that he and the teacher didn’t take seriously, he and the teacher just joking together, laughing at things and joking together, not taking things seriously. So he will think of the truth as something alien. The teacher should take things seriously. Because, when we’re handling kids, we need to teach them. In my case, I couldn’t speak well as a child, because I didn’t know how. When I got the teaching job, I thought to myself, “Ah, so that’s the way I learn things.” But to start with, I’m talking about myself here, I didn’t know much about that Balanda way. In fact it took me a long time before I really understood, and then I was able to teach kids at school.

34 [[Tape turned over to commence side B.]]

35 Okay. I’ve really understood what all this is about. Now, for my part, what I mean is, I always wanted to explain things to children. I taught them at school, I taught those children. I would tell them things and make them laugh. And I also taught them hard things, facts. But I didn’t make it too hard. We don’t give a child something too hard when we teach. It’s as I said about food, about meat, whatever we give the child, he has to taste it and keep asking for it, and that’s how he’ll get the meaning, and then straight away we will understand that, yes, he wants this. So then we can really give them good teaching. So if you teach him good things, then he’ll want more.

36 And, you mustn’t, as it were, do everything for him. Just leave it to him, let him do the exercise for himself. You give it to him, and say, “Okay, now you do it.” He

might get it wrong a couple of times, but that's good. He'll keep trying, he'll keep trying. Kids always make mistakes, just like adults, trying something, we'll make mistakes. But he'll improve later. Why? Because he's doing that exercise as you told him. For example, you might give him a bokko spear to carve. He might muck up carving that point a hundred times, before he can carve a bokko, make a real bokko spear, before he makes that shape. Finding trees - you point out the right trees to him. Or with bamboo, you give it to him to straighten it out. If it snaps at the joint, off he goes and chops another piece. Bush honey: you need to point out the right bees for bush honey - there are all different kinds. You teach a child how to follow animal tracks. How to hunt with a dog – “Take your dog with you.” You tell him about how to go hunting for whatever animals with his dog, or hers.

37 You teach him that law that was from the beginning. White people have law too, it's there in the Christian Bible – the ten commandments, it's there. The Balanda have law too, that's where it is. From Christianity and their ordinary laws. If you steal, well, you'll see that law in the Bible. Now in all this, you have to teach the child how to think. So he'll be able to recall it, to think back and understand it. “Oh yes,” he'll say to himself, “I understand. I see.”

38 But of course when we're dealing with a child, we don't explain things to him in the way adults explain things to each other. Of course sometimes we adults don't understand either. Sometimes I notice adults who don't understand things immediately. Bininj and Balanda don't understand each other, and we have to work along a bit before we understand each other. Someone will understand what you mean, follow your thinking, and you follow his thinking. Then we can smile, and say hello to each other and use each other's names. Fine. But deep down inside, you don't really know him, and he doesn't really know you. Even women too will do the same. And you encounter the fact that women and men don't always understand what each other is saying till later on. They have to learn each other in order to understand what the other person is thinking, what is in their mind. “Oh. That's what he's saying. That's the way he thinks. That's what he's thinking about”

39 If a child does that, then he knows what's in your mind. He knows your values and principles. That's what learning is. And there's that new way of learning. What I

mean is, if you take the child to school, and maybe, if he's good, he'll go on later to Kormilda College, and he could go a lot further, if he looks towards going to university, from senior high school, he'll go past that and move along to university. Now from there, if he goes beyond that further, a bit further on, he will more or less, as English speaker says "explore." He'll look for something extra, go further. And from there he'll look back where he's come from, from when he was young, he'll see all the rubbish, the mistakes he made, although he still might be making mistakes, no matter if he graduates from that university domain, or before that. We still make mistakes, but you keep moving along. The child is still moving along all the time. Well, next time he'll be able to judge. As they say in English, he'll get himself "organized". That's what I mean, we Bininj will say he's made himself, so he'll organize everything for himself. He'll look after himself. I don't mean he'll be looking after his own body, but his mind, his thinking. His mind.

40 So he'll know all these things: mother-in-law language, kinship language, all the clans, his identity, and where he fits in to the system - Yarriburrik, Yariyarnninj, Yariwurrkarr, Yarikarnkulk, where he fits. His family relationships. In the past the people from that earlier time used to do this: a young man would get up in the morning, yawn, "djirrkohkoh" he would say, have a stretch and maybe eat something, stretch before they did anything else. "Djirrkohkohkoh" they would go. "Njerrk" he would say, as the white corella sings out, if he's part of that green ant group, Yariwurrkarr. Same as us. And there's also the "rock" category, Yarikarnkulk. Yariwurrrik is another one again. And there's Yariyarnninj - those Dongkorl people.

41 And his whatsit, clan, well he learns that at home. If you're from here for example, you're Manilakarr. "As you grow up you think of yourself as Namanilakarr." Or "You're Djok clan, and as you grow up think of yourself as Nadjok, because I'm your father." You teach it in that way. When you have a son or daughter, Ngaldjok or Nadjok. And there's all the others stuff - the whole lot, that the child should learn at home. Not school, home. In the home. Or out bush. My father, Nangarridj, taught me as he was hunting, and so did all the other men I followed as we went hunting, as I grew up. They would kill those animals and say, "Ah, this one is same as you, Yarriburrik." For example if they killed buffalo, that buffalo is

Yarriburrik - buffalo has only been around here for a while but they've put it into that group. Its from another country. Our own animals were, for example, korlobarr kangaroos, goanna, spiny ant eater, possum, flying foxes, kites, they all had these "kunmud" groups, corellas, honey bees...all that sort of animal, all of them are part of that "base" as Balanda say, speaking in their Balanda tongue, their language. (Learning is) actually like the roots of a tree, it's as if the tree grows more and more, and maybe becomes a good tree with lots of good fruit, good seeds.

45 But some children, and this doesn't just apply to children from here, but to others from other languages too including English, from other colours, other languages, from overseas, other lands. Its the same: some of them are intelligent and some are not. All over. But just the same we try to teach them, just as I said before. You give him good food and you see the result in that child. But don't make it too hard for them. Don't force too much into their mind or they won't cope. That's my view. Make the child ask you questions. He might ask you something, but if gets it wrong, you can both laugh about it, make him laugh about it.

46 Don't look upset with him. If you are going to be upset, do it in the right way. And you should explain to him the reason for being displeased with him or being hard on him. Explain it to him. And tell that child the real reason, the underlying idea so he'll understand why you're upset. You're not scolding him for no reason. You might be telling him off for his own good. For his benefit, to keep him out of trouble - from when he is very young. That's the time when you should handle him this way.

47 I've already talked about this principle. You can't actually make a child grow up well, to get big and go to school. No, it won't work. At the start, you can make him read and write and sign his name, and speak English, and write his own language Kunwinjku. But, you don't know what he will become in his later "career" - English speakers say "career". When he gets to that stage, he'll have reached his goal, reached that level, having become a real man with an education, with ideas. Our Aboriginal people used to say, and they still say, I mean we who are alive now still say this, "Oh, that man or woman has an education. No need to worry about him, he knows. He already has his ideas." He'll do it. That's what he'll do. He'll arrive at that stage, reach his goal, and he'll have his own ideas when he wants to go his own

way, and you won't have to tell him. From there he'll get into a career, politics for example - as the English speakers say, "politics". He might enter politics, go into that area. Or if he's good enough he might become a professor or university teacher, or anything he wants. He can go his own way now. But he'll still think about what happened before. Sometimes he might look back and say, "Ah," - if you are still alive - "Thank you teacher for putting me on that good road." He would say to you. Or maybe he could write you a letter a some stage, or maybe come and visit you.

48 In my case, for example, I think about those old people, my father, my grandmother, my mother's older sister, my aunty - they raised me. I still think about them, and now I'm teaching my children, daughters and sons, as I raise them I'm telling them what their forebears were like, who they refer to as Mawahmawah. They call the women that too. I tell them what kind of people our family are like, my father and his siblings, my father and aunty. That's part of the fundamental law. But I think, you might not get...there mightn't be, out of ten children, maybe you will see about half of them are good and half are not - they're not bad people, they just don't have...they're just not bright, not as bright as the others, the bright ones.

49 That is what it means to be educated. Its very deeply important. Its not the same as when you teach someone to straighten a spear. That's easy. He can straighten or break it. Snap it at the joint. Or break the stick. And when does he straightens it? When the bamboo dries out properly, dry, you leave it out to dry in the sun. When it is just right. You tell him the best time. And when he puts the spearhead on, you tell him how long to make it, not too short or it won't go fast, when you're trying to throw it with woomera. That's all small stuff. He'll fit it in somewhere, he or she, he'll figure it out eventually, that child, girl or boy. Don't push them in an abusive way. But don't fail to explain properly or he won't know enough. If you explain to him and get him to ask you questions, that's good. In that case you realize, and say, "Ah, I'm getting somewhere because they're asking me questions. That's what happening." In fact, I still ask people questions too. Balanda or Bininj, if I don't understand something, If I don't get what they tell me, well, when they tell me something, maybe this Nabulanj or anyone, well I know them so I ask them, so they explain it to me. "Oh," I say, "Yes, I understand that now. That's helped me." As

they say in English “help,” so then I’ll know. From then on, no one will have to tell me. I’ll know. That’s what the child should do.

50 Even among our own (Aboriginal) teachers, even though at the moment things are not good, we still want to teach kids the law. It’s a bit too difficult. I mean they’re not picking it up. Maybe we’re not always giving it to them, so we need to ask ourselves about this. We should ask each other and talk it over, about what we should do. How do we teach the children Aboriginal things, and educate them, so they’ll have the ability to think from when they are quite small. I say this because I’ve noticed men and women from the earlier generation, my generation, some of us grew up and went along on the same level, but some didn’t...they didn’t really...because they weren’t interested when we used to go to school. So we became distinct from each other, and when we left school for jobs, that was it. Only some of us got jobs, the ones who had the education. Some of us grew up, they grew up differently from us, without ever asking questions.

51 So yes, we (exc) should talk about this. We should have a meeting to talk about it. If not, if we can’t “co-operate” as they say in English, if we Aboriginal people can’t get communication among ourselves, or with Balanda, if we can’t confer closely on what to do about the school, or if we just get tangled up with men’s and women’s business, without maybe asking what’s the right thing, well we won’t be able achieve anything, we’ll all just remain separate. We need an arrangement, a plan so together...we can work, with all of us helping each other. That’s why we need to make a plan, so it can come about, so things can improve. And, and we can teach them what I’ve learnt. And now we mightn’t just tell the about everything we know. What sort of ideas do we have, what sort of things to do we know about the law in our minds. You don’t just tell someone else that, especially a child. If you want to tell them, then you analyze that man or woman, and you’ll think, “Oh, I see. So I’ll talk to him this way, I’ll tell him this or that.” But you don’t just go and tell someone straight out to make him feel better or whatever, definitely not. Sometimes you might make him worse. Or maybe (he’ll think) it’s as we say, “Oh, he’s trying to control me.” But you could do something so as to make him talk with you. Somehow you can talk to each other if you want to help him or whatever.

52 Especially with kids, I mean, as I said before, you don't give them a hard time, because you'll upset them. Especially a child who's grown up somewhere else, in another place, maybe away from his own family, well for him, you have to really look after him. We keep an eye on him when he goes to school. We really work on that child because he will be thinking he's inbetween, between his own family where he comes from, and where he's growing up now, a different place.

53 In our case, what happened in the old days to us, to me was that my elders used to teach me because we didn't have, they didn't have a lot of things people have now, like television. Ah, nowadays we have Toyotas, private Toyotas, we have all our associations, whatsaname businesses, lots of businesses, lots of money, grog, shops, whereas before it was a hard time, and we would go to school every morning and work helping our parents afternoons. We worked in the food garden, growing pumpkin, watermelon, all sorts of food, corn. Nowadays we have the supermarket. The supermarket is all right, but we don't hunt and we don't have jobs. But its all new what we have now, so education now is different. It's a new situation. English speakers might say, "They are in a different land now." A different place so to speak. Different for them and us. We used to go hunting every day for food in the bush, because there was no food here, the Balanda had just enough to give those Aboriginal people who were working.

54 So it was very different then. And stories, we had lots of stories, Aboriginal stories, our own stories we were told as children. I see that this is not happening now. I'm talking about kids growing up without any fundamental law. They don't even know one fish from another. They don't know one snake from another. These two kids I know well, now they've already grown up and become adults, they've married. One knows what a catfish looks like, because I taught him myself. I taught him. So he's known what a catfish looks like, I taught him. The other had never seen one, and he asked him, "What's that fish? What sort is it?" He noticed that it had whiskers, so it had to be a catfish but he couldn't identify it! So (the other boy) told him what it was. I didn't say anything, but he named it for him. "Oh!" he said.

55 Nowadays some of our (inc) kids, that we are bringing up, just don't know anything about wildlife. So then we commit ourselves to teaching them as we want

to, so they understand the core things, and the deep things. We need to work on the deep things. Then we will have come out of this. So we shouldn't just be talking about it, or wondering how to do it or what to do, with each person doing his own thing. No. We should "co-operate" as they say in English, so somehow come out of this.

56 As I see it, we have far too many things. That's what I think. Television, grog, motor vehicles and so on. And we have big money - for card games. In the past we didn't play cards, especially in my case, my mother and father wouldn't let me, not in my family. So I never played cards until I was twenty or twenty one, fully adult, and I would play with money I was paid in wages. But in the old days we didn't play, when the missionaries were in charge, we didn't play, although some people used to play card in secret. People would say, "That's against their religion, its wrong, so we don't let them see us. Its bad." Nowadays we just play out in the open. So nowadays, what is this new "law"? There is a new generation of people, we (inc) are a new generation so therefore we should think hard about the future. Where we're headed for, that's what we should be talking about. So we can make progress, so we can go ahead with these new ideas and get through this new situation that's developed. It's a new law we need to make for ourselves, so we can go ahead.

57 So that's why we are looking hard at education, focusing on this important area of what goes into a kid's mind. The big kids, who go to Kormilda for instance, or after Kormilda when they come back. That's the time we have to get that education into their minds. Maybe then or earlier, before they go to Kormilda College. So then what is in our minds we can put into their minds as we speak to them, putting it into their thinking, their minds, their wills, their hearts. So a child will become useful and work for us. And he can go whichever way he likes. And I can teach him ceremonially over the years here. So he'll know about Balanda business, and about his own black culture, his country, his home, the ceremonies of country he'll look after. Then Aboriginal people will be able to look after themselves as they become adults among us. Its just the same as with white people. A child should only be raised on his own country. That's how I see things in regard to the law. I'm thinking about how I was raised by my elders, and how they taught me.

58 And now I'm thinking of them, I've thought, "Oh, some of those people have gone, how can I thank them? How can I do this for them?" But they've already gone. I should have already thanked them for teaching me. Good things. Including that lady teacher, that white lady. Actually there were a lot of Balanda teachers who taught us. We went there and it was like they brought us out into something like a better place. It was equivalent to our own fundamental law.

59 So that's it, that's why from here on we'll see if we can make laws/plans about what to do in education, what to do about children's minds. Whatever is best, whatever is the best way of doing it. We're stuck at the moment where we are. We don't know which way to go at present, as we are now, we're unable to make up our minds. We need to make progress. Anyway that's what I think. That's it.

**60 SE: Its going good. Excellent. And you've talked at length.** [Yes.] **So what would you like to do? Leave it?** [No, not yet.] **I do have another question.** [Go on, go on.] **Hang on while I put in a new tape.** [Go ahead.]

61 [[End of recording on side two of first tape. New tape commenced.]]

**62 SE: Actually this is the best interview I've had so far. This is really good. You've talked about nearly everything. Big issues and lots of them. So, is it okay if I ask you about a few things now?** [Okay.] **Let's see, now, with teachers, some are good and some are bad. Could you talk about this. What's the difference, between a good and bad teacher?**

63 From my point of view, as I see it, a teacher who...I'll assess them in this way, I mean, with the alphabet. "Teacher A" who knows a little bit, let's see, knows a lot more than teacher B. Teacher B maybe doesn't know as much. But he may be better than teacher C. And so on down – D...Anyway, they have their timetable, and they work together. But, when they actually teach those kids, this is just what I think myself. I see that the education doesn't...Why doesn't the education penetrate the child's will? Why is this child not happy? Because that teacher on his part is thinking on his own terms. When he teaches a child, or takes them all together. He's a good enough teacher, but that word, that message, that educational message, he doesn't get

it into the child's inner life. Its as if he only gives him half. He doesn't feed him with what's good. And that is when a teacher can fail. Its not that the child thinks he's a bad teacher, but he might think he isn't doing his job. He isn't working hard enough. He isn't working at his best to get that message and, as we might say, put it in the right place in the child's inner life. Into his mind.

64 It's easy for a bad teacher to criticize his job. Whereas a good teacher gives the children what is good. A good teacher maybe takes the kids for sport, take them for a walk, swimming whatever they do when he takes them. Going out into the bush, or wherever. A good man. But just the same, it could happen that he won't put that message in the right place. For example, you know, Mamam, what I mean is, for example (it's like) what is in the Bible, the Christian book: what's written there in the Bible, if you take his word (as it says) there in the Bible, if you get it and sow it in a good place, then the food will grow. But if it falls where there the ground is stony or hard, then it won't grow. Well it's the same with education, and this is my opinion, because I've looked very hard at this, it's like this, you've got to get that message, education, and put it in the right place, in the child's will.

65 So a teacher might be good, a happy teacher. He doesn't hit the kids. My own teacher...he used to hit us with a broomstick, a broom handle. Yes. He used to hit us with it. But there's also something else. If a teacher is, ah, if he's good but soft, the child will just go off on his own the wrong way. But if the teacher keeps a close eye on the child, and just straightens him out every morning, every day, and at the same time gives him as it were, that good food, feeds him, and does the other as well, disciplining him, well it will probably be go well for that child. But sometimes it gets hard for a child. He may not want to go on and learn any further, because the child and teacher are starting to irritate each other. The child is thinking, "I wont go to school. He'll hit me." Or, "He hit me." That's what the child will think. Now in our case, he used to hit us, but we still went. In my own case, I went because they used to send me. They would say, "Off you go to school."

66 Teachers, I'm talking about Balanda teachers, and our people, Aboriginal teachers, are both the same in this, and its also the same at home: people are too soft on the kids. Mothers and fathers...how do Balanda say this? There is no "discipline."

So what happens is, the child just goes permanently off the road. He grows up a different way. That family didn't do their job of teaching the child, so he'll amount to nothing. They need to stick there together, because if not, that child will just wander off too far. I'm not talking about physically, but in his thinking, here in his heart. He could end up way out there. Without teaching, that's what will happen. This is the situation between a family and the child. And it's the same between the teacher and that child. Without close communication, speaking to each other closely, the child won't take him seriously, and he'll give him a hard time. Well, it's the truth, that child will eventually just turn up somewhere, he'll be put out there. But if he wants to learn more, the teacher should keep on, little by little, always giving him what is good, more and more good stuff, hard stuff, good stuff, more hard things, more good things, more hard things, until he has finished his work on that child. But if he always makes things too easy for him, the message won't...the child won't get hold of it. It would fall out half way through the process, that message. The child would just be mouthing words, only sounds, but the child doesn't have that message in his heart. No. Well, that's the way I've looked at it. You know we're (inc) talking about this from Aboriginal point of view. The parents have a similar relationship with the child as does the teacher.

**67 SE: *Is that the lot? Maybe we should leave it. You must be getting worn out.***

[No, I'm fine] ***Well this is certainly interesting.***

68 Yes. In fact, any time if maybe...

**69 SE: *Well if its okay, later maybe I'll interview you again - about a few things.***

70 Yes, ask me again. Any time.

**71 SE *So now Nabulanj and I will work on this, put on paper what you've talked about.*** [Okay] ***We'll print it up and give you a copy, with English and on the other side Kunwinjku.*** [Okay.] ***But, you've been talking for one, nearly two hours, eh, one and three quarter hours, so this will take us maybe a few weeks to write this up.*** [Yes.] ***Then you can look at it, and read through what you've said, and maybe***

*something else, if you want to add it, that's fine. [Yes.] Truly, this is excellent stuff you've talked about here, giving me good ideas.*

72 Yes, that's why I'm saying, come and ask me questions again. This is good. I'm already thinking that maybe we'd (exc) stopped, I mean me and other elders had stopped talking about this until now you've done this. I mean, it's good what you're doing. It's like you're opening it up, you're starting it, if enough of us think about it. Maybe something will happen when you've finished, when you've got all this in book form. And then maybe you and I will be able to help people, start doing things in a new way. There are new ideas every year. I mean, in the past, in the forties and fifties, back in the forties, it was slow, everything was slow. But now there's new buildings here, the club is here, but there are no jobs, [*And we're all talking fast.*] Yes, its all fast. That's why we're just getting overwhelmed ourselves, so kids are not being told stories. Some people tell them stories and some don't. Sometimes I see kids just wandering around between camps. Its as if they have no mother or father – that's what it's like.

73 I mean the mothers and fathers don't worry about them. In the old days they didn't get child endowment for them - our (exc) mothers. Our mothers didn't get child endowment for us, not back then. They just worked. They worked and without pay. It was only later on they got paid. The missionaries organized employment. And they used to teach us Aboriginal people. Jobs, whatever, and then later on they organized for pay. So that's what I did, I got a job and then a was getting paid. Before that, it was just rations. When we went to school – they used to come, the adults who were working, bringing billy cans from home, or a bag, full of flour, rice or wheat. We had a grinding machine here and all of us bigger young blokes used to help with that machine. And, oh, we used to just share in everything. We used to look after dairy cows. We would share the milk and they used to give it to the children especially, but adults, and Balanda too, we all used to drink milk. And cattle. Those bullocks were here before the abattoirs. Some people had them at their camps. And some used to take us hunting a long way off. We would go out hunting.

74 But now, we've got plenty of money, plenty of everything, grog every day, so, I don't know, we're not applying the law well any more and yet that's the one thing

we (inc) should do. We're not making it strong for ourselves. Maybe that's what you've made a start at. I reckon this is good, and in fact we (inc) should support this idea of yours that you've come up with for us. In fact we want to support this now, just push it along, give it a big push, that's all, and then we (exc) will see what happens. They'll start off and it will keep on going on and on. For the future whatever, as we make progress from this starting ground, we can go forward all the way with education. And with what might happen here to this country, before its too late. This thing you're starting, maybe its about time, the right time to start. No one started earlier, in the fifties or sixties or this place might have been quite different. We might have had different laws, but anyway you've started this now, and maybe, well, I don't know when you'll finish, you'll both finish it, and then we'll see what action will come about. I can see some things will change. So, okay, you just put it down in writing, so you can say, "That's it, we're getting this message into the right place somehow." I want to support this myself, and maybe those others will too, the ones you've already interviewed, but everyone should help you with it because that's the only way we can stop this trouble, these divisions. Divisions not only from grog, but from whatever. Money - sometimes they'll argue about money. [*About women?*] Yes, about women. About men. Or children, not listening to advice. Yes, its true.

75 If this is ready, well I'm ready too, and I'll tell P\_\_\_C\_\_\_I and Nakangila, that old man. Because I don't want that, I don't want the NLC coming to talk to me, about mining. Oh, well, if we talked maybe once or twice a year it would be okay, or three times, but not every day. Yes. We're sick and tired of it, that's the truth. Oh, some time last year I told them, that's enough, I don't want to keep on talking, because we would talk about it, but nothing happens. I want to talk about something else. What I mean is, maybe later you can think about making a history. We could make it. So it can be there permanently - history. But I want to support this too. Yes, I'd like to help you. But not mining and all those other meetings. No. Association meetings, meeting about the club, about royalties, its no good any of it. It really makes us (inc) sick. I got sick and tired of it. Its okay but not when it goes on all through the year, all through each week. It's not on.

76 Anyway, you can ask me again any time, ask me questions.

**77 SE: We'll leave it now.**

[[ INTERVIEW FINISHED TAPE OFF]]