

NOTE ON PARTICIPANTS

MM's son, AM was present throughout and MM refers to him a number of times.

2 All right. This is about the original law we Aboriginal people are taught by the previous generation. They teach this to us throughout childhood. They tell us when to go to Wubbarr, Mardayin; they take you to Kunabibi, when they take you to Lorrkkon, Murdduh – Yaburlurrwa. They're the ones. They're all the ceremonies. That's where they instructed us. Where they taught us the law. They teach a child, a young man - a novitiate. They teach him the law, so he will learn our Aboriginal law. We learn the law, the real law. Maybe, up to that point, he has been just going along without being serious, but then he learns the real law. That "business" - our Aboriginal business, is not done in public. It means the same as "Law"; in fact it possesses the law.

3 So you kids, you young men, you listen to that law. Listen to that law so you'll know it. They'll teach you the law. They're the ones I've named - those ceremonies: Kunabibi, Mardayin, Wubarr, Lorrkkon, Yaburlurrwa - that business holds the law so you (s) can know it. That's the same as when, you know, Balanda says "teaching", or "teacher". He comes and teaches you and you (pl) write things - so then you know how to write. So you learn. You can go ahead like an adult, a grown man. A child learns the law at school, then he goes to high school and learns the more important law.

4 It's the same. Its the same with our Aboriginal law. Maybe you go when you're 13 or 14 or maybe 15 years old, and then you go on and learn more until you are 16 or 17, you keep learning whatever things, till you are 18 or 19. That's how someone learns the ideas, the "kunkarre" - the law.

5 You young men, the law, well you must know it and understand it. That's why you go ahead and learn to write, but then you come back to go to ceremony when they summon you. Now, when we finish it, when we formally complete that Kunabibi, you come out, and you might go for two or three weeks, and you'll have forgotten! Why is that? You'll break the law. You remember that man telling you, "Don't steal anything"; "Don't eat that"; all those things in that category – "Don't go off in secret

to eat fish, kangaroo, or any kind of hunted animal, goanna – they're all in the same category. You must obey that man's words, the man who taught you the law. So you will understand, and so you'll really know the law. So don't treat it as a joke. You live with the two (laws) – they're the same: the Balanda teaches you law, the Aboriginal man teaches you law. The Aboriginal man will show you, he'll teach you what the law says.

6 Don't go up to the our ceremonial area when the Yirridjdja (moiety people) –are doing things, it's their business, separate from ours. We Duwa men are separate from them. That's what the law says. Aboriginal men must teach you the law, so you will possess it. You must not break the law. Now the Balanda, the Balanda don't do it the same way, not at all. But Aboriginal people - maybe Balanda are the same, I don't know - but if you break that Aboriginal law, you'll be punished. Like in the old days they used to punish anyone who broke the law. If anyone caused trouble, they would punish him, a young boy, a young man who kept breaking that business, or kept crossing the line.

7 You (s) know each (moiety) has its own place, its own shade shelter there. There was a shelter there for each (moiety) at Mardayin, Wubarr - that's what they do, Kunabibi is the same, and Yabburlurrwa is the same. Different shelters for each, a shelter for Yirridjdja and the same for Duwa - both. That's what the law says. If you're Duwa and you go into the Yirridjdja men's you will break the law. It's wrong for Duwa so they would punish you. That's what our black peoples' law says. That's what the law says. The white law puts you in court if you break it, if you do wrong, if you go and steal things. It's the same. When you steal anything under Balanda law, you break that law, and they'll handcuff you. They'll send another man who works there and he'll grab you and take you inside to testify. That's in accordance with the law. It's not only the white man that has the law. We've got the law too. We Aboriginal people have all the same law the Balanda have. We're just the same in having law.

8 But you Aboriginal people are missing out on our law, you don't really hold on to it when you hear it. Listen to that Aboriginal man telling you about it, that old man talking about it. Oh, you young men, think about that one who is in charge of

business – when we have the Kunabibi, he’s in charge of Yirridjdja, and Duwa. He’s in charge of Yirridjdja; he’s in charge of Duwa. Up there, in the restricted area, our Aboriginal business is different. But when you’re in public you still don’t break (the law) he teaches you. Don’t do that. If you break the Balanda law, the Balanda will arrest you. He’ll send someone working for the police to take you. And that’s just like us. We break the Yirridjdja law, and they grab us - whoever is in charge of the law for Kunabibi, Yabburlurrwa, Wubarr, Mardayin - they’re all the same - Lorrkon. All the same. This is what I was talking about before, when I named those ceremonies.

9 You young men, don’t break the law. You (s) go to school. Maybe you know that way. You must go to both. Don’t just go one way. You go to both so you’ll know. Really get hold of Balanda (law) and our Aboriginal (law). That law, the law is there so you won’t die. It’s about us Aboriginal people. Balanda will tie you up and put you in the jail. It’ll take you to court. We Aboriginal people, well they used to punish them, in the past. If a young man was breaking the law, they used to punish him. In the East and in the South. Here where we are, here in the North: we did the same everywhere. They wouldn’t let him get away with it. If he broke the Aboriginal law, they used to punish him. This is not like Balanda. We used to go that way. Some still do have the law for instance in the East and South. They have the law. If we are spoiling the law, the “law”, they’ll sing a curse on us. There in the east, if we spoil the law, they’ll sing us, or spear us. Just as I say. That’s the law. That law we must keep.

10 You young men, keep the law. It’s what will teach you. It will teach you and develop you like school. It’s our own ceremonial business. That’s what will teach you, so you will live the right way. Don’t lose the law. Don’t say, “Ah, this is no good. I don’t like it. I don’t want to learn that law.” No. If you do that, you break that law, you break the law and so you’ll learn the evil law. Then you’ll be in trouble. You’ll end up making yourself into a criminal. That’s what we say, “You’ll make yourself a criminal,” Balanda would say, “You’ve made trouble.” We say, “You’re becoming a criminal.” So for example you’ll steal things - money being the main thing. Then you’re becoming a criminal. Same with business -if you do the wrong thing about that, then in the same way you become a criminal. It’s our own

Aboriginal one, that's what you really keep possession of. Hang on to it as you go along, listen to that Aboriginal business. You hold on to it, and keep on going, keep on going, keep on going, keep on going until you get what is there.

11 You young men are just starting in the ceremonies... We are citizens now. So we should have the law, I think. But no. We didn't get it, or maybe we do have it. Now the Balanda has given us citizenship here. Now we are living with the Balanda law, so you must listen carefully to the law. The school takes you so you will really grasp that law. Don't just half learn when you go to schoool, then come out (of school) and then go and act like a criminal. You think about what the Balanda says, what he tells you when he teaches you. You hang on to that law. (And do) just the same with Aboriginal law. The Aboriginal law teaches you, it let's you know. This Kunabibi – you can see Kunabibi is hard, and probably dangerous if you become a criminal, and make trouble. Just as, if you break the Balanda law the police will arrest you. The Balanda have police, and they'll come and put you there. He'll come and grab us for them and put us into court. And those police will be watching us too.

12 It's the same with our Aboriginal system. If we say, "You've become a criminal," well you might be cursed or they might spear you. That's what they used to do in the old days. But nowadays, no. But as I said, they still have that in the East and South. In the South we've still got that, if we do something wrong at the Yabburlurrwa or Kunabibi, they'll come after us. In the East, if we do wrong, well, there too they spear us. Its the same that law. What is it? That very law of ours teaches us, and that's how I lived. I went the straight way, but what if I got muddled up? Well, then I'd go the wrong way. That's the wrong thing.

13 You young men if you don't understand properly, you must really get hold of that law. So you will know it. Don't just go a little way with it, that's the wrong thing. You should start with the Aboriginal way, our way first. Start there, with what we do. Learn, so you will know. Don't get muddled up in your thinking and get wrong ideas. What I've told you about , what I've said about ceremony - Yabburlurrwa, Kunabibi, Lorrkon, Mardayin, Wubarr, these are business, law. These are our Aboriginal ceremonies. We have that law. It's what our old people had and taught us. They gave it to us, so we must hold on to it just the same way. What I mean precisely

is, whenever we talk about Aboriginal (law), it teaches you, maybe it's the Kunabibi that teaches you, well that law will take you the straight way. That business is the law, and that law still exists.

14 SE: Want some water? Ngabba? Water. Okay. All right then, what about some tea? I'll make you some tea? [Yes.]

15 Go ahead. I've been sick with this cold. [**Yes, I've been a bit sick too with flu.**] Anyway, I caught this, so I gave up smoking. It hit me a few days ago, I got the flu. [**Oh yeah?**] [] I caught flu [] I gave up the tobacco.

16 SE: Was it affecting your breathing? [What?] **Were you having breathing problems?**

17 Yes. It affected my breathing. So if I smoke I'll probably get sick.

18 [[Short tea break. Tape was left on.]]

19 SE: Have you finished? [Yes.] **Okay. All right to ask you, ask you some questions?** [Go on, go ahead.] **So, you attended ceremonies, you went up to all the ceremonies – Wubarr, Mardayin,** [Yeah.] **and what else?**

20 Lorrkkon. To start with I saw that Wubarr. [**MmMm.**] Then later Mardayin, then later on Lorrkkon. Those were the ones. Now these ones, Kunabibi, Yabburlurrwa, they've only arrived recently. Kunabibi arrived in 1955. [**It was new?**] Yes, that one has only come recently. From different places in the south they brought it as the law. But it was already here: Wubarr, Mardayin, Lorrkkon, that was all. [**Was the Morak there back then?**]

21 Morak was from here. From down in this area. I don't really know that Morak ceremony. It had already finished, before I was a little child, maybe even before I was born.

22 Or, it could be it had finished before I was born. [*What about Kunj Murrng?*] What? [*That Kunj Murrng one?*] No. I don't know that one. But that whatsitsname too, oh yes, Burangkal. I saw that Burangkal. They taught us that one.

23 SE: You send the children?

27 Yes. Murdduh I saw too. I went to that one a long time ago, actually not very long ago I saw it. [*Murdduh?*] Yes, we had Yabburlurrwa. It was a while ago I saw it here at Kunbarllanjnja and also out east. Then we came back here. Yes. About the law, well in my case, my father's father, my Mawah, to start with, they didn't teach me the Wubarr. No. They would just explain things to me and teach me, and this went on until I was fifteen years old. I was learning the outside law, from what they talked about and what they taught me. It was our law from way back at the beginning, when their first ancestors taught those people and then in my turn my father's fathers taught it to me.

28 They would say to me there, "Don't go and steal from people. Don't go and steal things. They belong to someone." Or "What are you doing touching things?" "When you go ahead and grow up, don't go chasing after things. That means you will break the law." Those Mawah of mine used to say that. "When you go hunting for fish or any animals, bring it all back to the camp, don't hide it for yourself, even if you are hungry. Even so, bring it back to camp. You eat it in camp where they can see." That's the sort of law those Mawah used to tell me about. That's what we used to do.

29 When I turned fourteen they showed me that Wubarr. They said to me, "Okay, you're ready to go. Go and look at that Wubarr." They spoke about it to me, "Wubarr you must think know. Don't think about the Kunabibi or what it says." They had taught me, "Don't eat that" and "Don't get to close to that thing there" and "Don't cross over that way. It's all the same thing. This is what the law says." They said to me, "Do you remember what we told you before, what we've taught you?" "Yes," I said, "Why?" "All right then. We're saying you can see the Wubbarr." That Wubarr of theirs was the part of the same thing. "This is what we talked about before, when you were small, and we spoke about it." "Yes," I said. Actually, it was whatever my Mawah, my father's fathers talked about. And I didn't go away from that, I didn't

leave what they talked about. Nor did I laugh at it or play games with it, nor did I make fun of it. No. That would have been a bad thing. That would mean I had broken the law, that I hadn't understood it, that I probably hadn't grasped it. That would have been a mistake, but I didn't leave it or let it go, or fail to fully get hold of it. I didn't, as the Balanda say, misunderstand and mess things up for myself. I wanted to really get hold of it for myself.

30 In fact, I didn't go away from what my grandfathers (Mawah) talked about. I paid attention to what they said. "Okay, that's all. Now go to sleep until this afternoon. In the afternoon I be there, and then they would say, "Don't argue against these ideas you're hearing. This is the right way to think. Listen to what we explain to you as you grow up you will have the law." So I would just sit. I didn't go on talking, but I just stayed there, just sat there while Mawah was speaking. It was either him or another man who would tell me things. They told me everything, he and that other man, your Nakurrng, the one I called Kakkak. He talked about things and for example, he used to say, "Don't just go off..." And I would listen to what he said. They would talk about things, they talked about everything. I mean that Nakurrng used to tell me things when I was only small, and I would keep listening to him. When I felt I wanted to go to the toilet, I would tell him, "Hang on. Stop so I can go. I'll just go to take a leak and come back then you can talk." So he would stop and I would go. In that situation I never just got up without explaining. If I had just got up and gone without reference to anyone else, without saying anything...no, that would have been inappropriate. I probably wouldn't have learnt things properly, not got it properly. That's why I used to just sit there while they talked about things and then I would say, "Hang on. Stop while I take a leak. Then I'll come back so I can learn the law." I used to say that and I was thinking, "I'll really get hold of the law."

31 When I speak like that, for myself, I'm not getting something new, but I'm getting the old thing for myself. I get it just like Mawah and Nakurrng, Makka, Ngalkurrng (his sister), that eldest Mawah - and the youngest - they all used to tell me about the law. And I wouldn't get up and go. Never. I would just sit there until they used to say, "Okay, that's it. I've finished. So now you go to sleep." Then I would sleep. That's what I used to do. Now, later, I'm talking myself, explaining that law. I'm not learning it nowadays, but to start with, at the start, they used to just explain to us,

those old people, Mawah, Nakurrng, that old lady, (your) Makkah - my mother that Makkah, and that sister of that Nakurrng (you call “Ke Nakurrng”, and I called “Kakkak”). That brother and Doydoy, my nephews, those I call Mamam. Makkah, who was the aunty of my mother, used to teach me too.

32 I didn't mix in anything of my own when I listened to that law. They started talking to me and teaching me. Aboriginal thinking: they taught me and talked to me about all kinds of things, everything. They were explaining it to me, and Then they took me to Wubarr for the first time, so I went to that business. They said to me, “Listen to this. You think about this. It's all the same law we've already told you about when you were little, around the camp, here in the bush. This, here, belongs to the men's law. No women here. When they first used to talk about this with you, that was with women around as well, at the camp. Now this law, well you listen to this! You watch this! And listen to this, every bit of it. This is the law. Don't break this law. You know what we told you at the start.” That's what they said to me. So now, later, I myself know and I tell any and all children. But the young men - no one is instructing them. There's nothing.

33 So then, now what? Oh, yes, I'll just talk about another thing. Yes that's right. Here...here what's happening now is that something has muddled their thinking, the young men who have been to ceremonies as initiates. They've seen Mardayin, they've seen Wubarr, they've seen Lorrkon – probably they haven't seen Wubarr. Some of them maybe. No. Only the Kunabibi. But why, why do they go and do these other things I'm seeing? The young men haven't understood, when they get into arguments and go looking for trouble and finding it. Other things have muddling their thinking - that white people's thing that arrived a while ago - alcohol - that is the worst thing that has impacted them. When they are 16 or 15 and they drink, they get more and more silly, and this is happening everywhere. That's not the right thing. But why don't they know our Aboriginal law? The law is out there in the bush, but here, it's different. Could it be they just don't know it?

34 This is what the young man is like, isn't it? I'll explain again about the law - its different, and this is not coming from me. No. This law, what I'm talking about, I'm not just making up now, I'm just talking about in my turn, what was explained to me

right back at the beginning, when they used to tell me about it – my father’s father. My mother, with her sisters, she also used to tell me about it: she would say to me, “Don’t steal!” “What are you doing there?” Or, “Where are you going? Where? Where?” “Don’t eat it yourself when you spear fish. Bring it back to camp.” It was just the same with your Ngalkurrng - it was her sister I call Kakkak - she used to say the same things to me - she would be giving me that same law. So I wouldn’t just go for myself when I went fishing. I used to spear a big fish, maybe barramundi or whatever, and I would take it home. I would take it home, and not eat it out in the bush. No. I would take it home and show it to them. This was because they had said to me, “No. Don’t eat...if it’s only a little fish, eat it - marrngun, okay eat it. But barramundi is too big.”

35 So I really got that law, that same one I’m explaining - it still keeps on going, the same law, the same meaning. I know that, but I don’t know what else others know. What my father’s fathers told me, that was the law, that is what they gave me. They gave me that real law. And on my part, I used to really listen. I paid attention to what my father’s fathers said. So I understood that law. And I still keep on explaining it. That won’t change as long as I live.

36 Neither have I let go of it, what belonged to those Mawah. No. I just got hold of it, and I’ve kept going. They’ve died. They are gone but I’ve got their words. I know it. My own father’s fathers have died and gone. That Nakurrng of yours whom I call Kakkak, has died, but I still have the words that he used to tell me. Your Makkah, who was my mother, has died, but I have the words she used to tell me, all of whatever she said. I still have her words. I have not let go of that law. No.

37 I went to ceremonies. They used to explain things to me, and teach me. I know all that because I understood that ceremony. That’s all I did: I would just be there, I would just stand there without saying anything. Nothing. I just stayed there at that place where they were teaching me the law, which is the road they showed me. It’s like a road, that law. That’s what they taught me about, and I’m still with it. I didn’t leave it, and I haven’t lost it. No. If I’d done that, if I’d let it go, I would have gone against the law they used to explain to me, those old people. I’d have broken it if I’d argued with that law. Or as they say in English, I would have gone “against the law”.

If I'd left it, if I'd not done whatever, or I'd said, "That's enough of it. That law can just go. I won't keep it." Then I would have been against the law.

38 For my part, I was really listening because I wanted to get hold of the law quickly, so I would know it. "I'll remember the words of that man who taught me – my father, and my mother's mother and my mother. I'll get that law so that if they die at whatever time, I'll still keep hold of it." Just as it is now: they've died, they're gone, but still I have it, I have the words of those older ones - my grandfather that you call Nakurrng, your Ngalkurrng's brother - his sister I called Kakkak. And my mother, your Makkah. I still keep his words, even though he has died, but I still have his word just as he used to tell me. He explained to me the actual law.

39 That's all. I've spoken about that, so later maybe I'll talk about whatever else they told me. That's all. I've talked about it and I'll finish. [[Laughs]]. I'll talk about whatever other things they told me too.

40 *Hang on, I'll turn the tape over and...let's drink some tea and then I'll ask you some questions.* [Okay. Okay. That's good.]

41 ape turned over and rewound to commence side two.]]

42 *SE I've set up three (tapes). I've made three tapes and I'll give you one of them.* [Okay.] ***So you can keep it for yourself.*** [I see.] ***Okay. Ah, are you ready? Are you ready Ngabba? Okay?*** [Yes.] ***Righto. When you were a child which adults used to teach you about bark paintings, about djang*** [Yes.] ***paintings?***

43 Yes. They used to teach me so I could make bark paintings just like they made. They used to teach me, and they used to make spear throwers. "This is a spear thrower. This is what you have to do. You use it with the spear", they would say. Or I would go and cut bamboo. "Go and chop that bamboo." I would go and cut it myself and they would teach me and I would straighten it myself. I would straighten it and make fishing spears, or shovel-nosed spears. I would make these myself and attach the heads to the spears myself. Spear throwers I would carve out, and make just like the adults used to do, just as they used to tell me. "Make it yourself."

44 Or with barks for painting too, I used to paint those barks. They would say, "Paint the bark or paint the rock." And I would paint that rock there where we were staying. When we would live there in the rocks, like there [[pointing]] The painting is there, but its a long way, maybe we should drive there. I did that and I painted it. Then we went back. Mawah said to me, "This you've painted is the way I did it." When I had turned 18, Mawah took me back and showed me, he said to me, "This is what you painted when you were small." It was a kangaroo I painted there at Tor Rock, on the western side in a cave where we camped. He had said to me, "Paint it." Mawah told me and I painted. They used to show me, so when I used to paint I didn't depart from that.

45 They used to say, "Make a fishing spear. You go and do it yourself." And I would make a fishing spear. I would go and chop the bamboo, come back and peel it and straighten it myself, the lot. "Go and spear something. Go and do some burning. Go and spear karrkanj." They would say to me, "Go and spear some birds - korlobok, kernalk, karrkkanj. Go and spear them, stalk them." So I would break off a bunch of leaves and then, whatsaname, I would cover myself with it and take it along and spear the kernnalk or whatever, or karrkkanj. I would spear them. Sometimes too I would make a mistake or wonder what I'd done.

46 "Now go and look for bush honey." I would look for honey and I would see it, and start chopping. I would chop it and then put it in the container and bring it back to camp. I would come and say, "This is what I cut down." "Did you eat any?" "No," I would say. Because some bush honey they used to say was taboo. "Don't eat any of this in secret." "That tree was split, it was split but the honey was okay. It was good", I said, "I just chopped into it, that tree that was already split." They had told me that, my Mawah, "If it's split, chop into it so it falls and breaks up, and don't eat the honey. Leave it but just put it in a container and bring it back to them at camp and give whatever you've got to them."

47 And I saw another thing at that stage, that Wubarr, and there they told me about the honey, "Go and cut the tree that's splitting, and don't eat the honey but just put it in a container and take it and give it to them: children, adults..." When I used to do

that, I didn't give any to the children. That was not done, nor young men or young women. No. Very old people, I didn't give it to either. I just gave it to the adults. That was it. I was under ceremonial restrictions, that was my situation then.

48 How can we describe what that is like in today's terms? It's just the same, that law I'm talking about, as the way a school teaches (students). That's the school they took me through, my father's fathers, when they used to explain to me so that I would understand. They took me through it just like school. Those Mawah would explain things to me. They would say, "Well? Have you understood this?" They used to ask me that. Those Mawah would ask me when they had told me things, they would ask, "Did you get that?" "Yes," I would say, "I understand. I got it." I would stay there in the morning and afternoon, and he would ask me questions and explain to me everything. He would say, "Do you understand?" "Yes, I understand, that stuff you talked about yesterday. Yes." "Oh, I see. Good. You understand." "Yes," I would say, "I got that meaning. I understand what it means." I would do that.

49 They never just talked to me and just left it at that, and just left me alone. No. It was necessary for them to question me. Mawah, Makkah, Nakurrng, Ngalkurrng, Doydoyh - they used to ask me questions when they explained things to me. They would ask me questions, they would say, "Did you understand that?" Sometimes I would say, "No, I didn't get it. I didn't really hear you properly. In this case I didn't hear you and didn't understand properly what was behind what you were talking about." So I would ask Mawah some questions myself, and he would explain things to me, "It means this. This is what I'm telling you." He would explain it all. "Oh, I see! That's it," I would say. "You got it?" "Yes," I would say, "I got it." That's what I did.

53 Now that is just what it's like with our youngster, the school takes him and he's writing, he writes quickly enough, and he can read that English, he can write the English he reads in books. Or someone tells that child, a parent or someone else, a teacher will teach him. In either case he'll learn. That's based on books. We Aboriginal people can't remember everything! This new generation now will be different. When we(exc) are telling them things, they will write it down.

54 Actually, that's what I said to your younger brother when he started school, when he was fourteen, I said to him, "You start. Start drawing birds or whatever, kangaroos, whatever ideas." So he kept doing that. He went along and turned fifteen, and I said to him, "Write Kunwinjku. Try and write Kunwinjku just the same (as English)" So he tried it out and wrote it. He had a go at it and did it. The first thing he wrote was about Nakangila and Nawamud. Nakangila was coming from Gumardderr. Nawamud, I don't know where, but he was waiting for him there, and he speared him. That was back when your younger brother first started to write. He wrote that.

55 This is all part of the same thing, what we are teaching the children is not wrong. Kids -well some kids, think the law is bad to start with. He'll say that but as he gets bigger, when he's about so high [[indicates height of an infants school age child with hand]] we should start, when they are up to this height, and then they can pay attention to what their fathers are saying. At about that age. The same age that Balanda begin schooling. So he's old enough to understand a bit. What I mean is, as he grows up, when he gets up to here, when he gets to this stage, he must start being given the law. He must have the law, the ideas explained to him. Before he learns to write Balanda. Look, he must thoroughly understand it, and know it properly...In other words a man should first of all give him the law, the father, or the mother's father, he should give it to him early, or his mother should give it him the law early, so then he can go to school and write and learn well, the ideas and meaning so he can understand what it does, so he can say, "Yes. That's what this means." So he will understand properly at school, and also when he listens to an Aboriginal man, he'll remember his words. That's how they'll know things.

56 As it is, a (father) will just keep the child there without telling him things, and then when he gets to this stage he'll say, "Go to school." But why doesn't he explain things to him earlier, when he's only this high? He just sends him to school. So he goes to school and does all that writing. Fine. Then in the afternoon, "Oh, I'll just go and play." In the morning he goes again. He goes along at this stage, this tall, he goes to school. But he doesn't have any teaching from his father. Nothing. Before that, no one has given him any ideas. Nothing. He gives him nothing to start with. No. So he only goes along to the Balanda (school) and that's all. This is a bad thing. This is

wrong. That's what I say, it's wrong. A father must give him the law so that when he goes to the Balanda (school), when he goes there [[pointing]] to learn (Balanda) thoroughly, he will know both. From where he goes, from where he goes and he will also know what his father tells him.

57 So when goes to the Balanda (school), where he will listen to Balanda. Fine. If he works hard and writes English well, he goes through to high school, but he has his father's teaching too. But not if the father doesn't teach him. Then (he'll have) nothing. Our law he won't understand properly. Nothing. Maybe that Kunwinjku (child) will go to high school – that little boy, a young man. A Balanda will say to him, "You've been to school so off you go to High School?" He keeps going there, keeps on with it, and learns Balanda. So he just keeps going along that way, he keeps going there, until at the end, he's got nothing. He looks back, and, no, he's missed our Aboriginal law. The Aboriginal law. That's the way I see it. Now I've told you how I see this.

58 My grandchildren (your nieces and nephews) who I think are going to school a bit, I'm explaining things to them. This was a few days ago. Nikka - her, and her sister Hannah, I was explaining to those two a few days ago. I was explaining to those children, I said to them, "Don't just keep going. You must listen to this law here first." For example, I'm explaining things to your nephew, my grandson, Darryl. He goes to school and when he comes back I tell him things. "I'm explaining this to you so you will get this law of ours. You've seen the Kunabibi ceremony," I said to him, "And we went to that Yabburlurrwa and saw that business. That business will take you the straight way. Not for nothing they teach us that law, that business. They teach us that business, that law, and it takes you along properly. How will you go? What's your direction? It will explain what is right. But before that you should get hold of the ordinary everyday things the men explain to you – your father, your mother's father, your mother. What you've talked about at home. So you can then go to the ceremony and look at it and understand all that law. Then after that you can go along, you can go along, you can go along with that Balanda (business), and then, in your turn, you will know two ways, you'll get them."

59 In fact, that's what I did with your younger brother. We went along (to school) and I told him to go into the school. [[Sometimes addressing AM, as he talks about him.]] You know when you were small...he used to go to school. They both went, both those brothers, although only one really learnt. That other one wasn't any good, that older one – he didn't want to do it. I talked about things, but he would just get up and then just go off doing his own thing and playing, but Andrew just stayed and listened when I would talk to them. This one here, your younger brother, your friend. Andrew here used to just sit and listen to me. He would just keep on listening to me, listening to me until I finished and I'd say, "That's it. Go to sleep." In the morning after we'd stayed there all night, we would get up and I would give them some food and they would go to school. When they arrived back, I would talk to them, and this one here, your younger brother, your friend, would sit there. The other one, he used to just be off all over the place. Consequently he didn't really learn the law. No. He wasn't in the mood. He wouldn't be in it.

60 I used to talk to them both, telling them all that your younger brothers. "This is what the law says, just the same as what your Mawah (my fathers) explained to me." Okay, then I in my turn made your younger brothers (learn) it. And your sisters too - I made them (learn it) too. I told them. I didn't leave anyone out - neither boys or girls. I explained to them the same law that those Mawah had given me long ago. What he told me back then. Your sisters and your brothers: that's what I explained to them all. I didn't miss out even one of them, not one. I just explained that law to them all. I explained the same law that my father's fathers gave me. I didn't teach them my own ideas, no. That teaching was from those Mawah. That law is exactly what I talked about. I explained to them what every part was about, the ideas and meaning, what Balanda calls "meaning" - the ideas of that law, so that your sisters and brothers wouldn't be ignorant.

61 It was necessary for me to explain it to them all. They would go to school, but then they would think about what they had learned from me beforehand - what I used to tell them about. If no one explains to them, if their fathers don't - if the father or mother's father (doesn't) - this is what I'm seeing, and I think it's wrong. Some of them going to school are good thinkers and some are just not. And why is this, son? It's because early on, no one gives them the law - I mean they don't ask them and

they don't explain to them: "This is what you do when you paint, when you paint whatever", or "Go and cut some bamboo." " Make a fishing spear."- "Fit the point on by yourself, you do it." Or "Fix the end on this spear thrower." or "Carve out a shovel nosed spear." or "Make this hardwood into a fishing spear."

62 Nowadays we use wire to make a fishing spear. But in the past it was wood, they used to make it with hardwood, they carved it and they would make it out of very hard wood, they used to call it mandubang. They used to make those spears they called djalabban, and they speared fish with that hardwood. That's what they say. I don't know this from personal experience but my Mawahs used to talk about it. That way. I used to make some of those spears. I did make spears.

63 I didn't just disregard what they used to say to me, your grandfathers, my fathers. For my part, I've kept hold of what they said. "Oh, yes," I would say, "I see!" I didn't just say, "Oh, what does he mean?" If I hadn't understood then I used to ask him, "Dad, what do you mean?" and he would go back and explain to me again. "Ah!" I would say, "So that's it. That's what it means." "Yes. That's what it means. What (you and I) talked about before is different."

64 That's what your Mawahs used to tell me. I know it, so now, later, that's what I talk about it. I'm not just inventing this now, no. I'm not just thinking of it now, this law. Not at all. With me, this law was earlier on given to me by my Mawahs, this that I'm talking about now in accordance with what they used to explain to me. That's what they explained to me and I've still got it. I've just hung on to what they said, those Mawah. I didn't write down what they said on paper – but I wrote their words in my head, whatever they told me. I put their words here. [[Points to own head.]] Your Makkah, my mother, that Nakurrng, your Nakurrng - I still have all their words. They've died all those old people, but I still have their words now. That law they gave me, I haven't let it drop. No. I have that law. That's what they gave me and I haven't lost that law, certainly not.

65 In fact your brothers and sisters, I've told explained it to them, I've told them about it, in fact I've told them what to think about it, that continuing, same old (law) the one the old people gave me. I didn't just take it on myself to invent what to say

and tell them that. Certainly not. That's why I went and said to one of your brothers - this one here you are working with, "Write it down. Try it. Don't just always go on writing in English. You're already going well in that." That lady, whatshername, Mrs Harris, she told me, "He's going well at school. Andrew is a good boy." "Really?" I said. "Yes." And I realized something. Maybe A___ was good enough, clever enough and that gave me an idea. I turned around and decided to tell him to try to write Kunwinjku. So (it happened) because I pushed him. It wasn't because that Balanda praised him, that lady who was teaching them, Mrs Harris. She said, "Oh, A___ is a good boy. He is able to write well. He's clever and doesn't get angry. He doesn't miss school, so he's going well."

66 Well, that Balanda pointed that out to me, and I thought, "Okay, maybe he is good." So then I had that idea of mine, and I immediately made them do it. That's why I asked your younger brother, I told him what I was thinking. I reckoned he was good so maybe I would try to teach him to write Kunwinjku. So I taught him and he wrote it. "Why not write it," I told him, "Kunwinjku. Try that so you can write both Balanda and Kunwinjku." So he wrote Kunwinjku. He went there and wrote it, and came back with the paper and showed me. "This is what I've written on this paper, Dad." "Good," I said, "Talk about it. Explain what you've written." So he talked and talked about it, explained it. "That's great!" I said, "It's good. Now you keep going all the time with this."

67 So he kept going. He used to keep writing and writing in Kunwinjku.

68 He produced a lot of paper that he kept it at our place - some was there and some he used to take to school. He always used to go to school. He put a lot of his papers there, instead of at his place. So the Balanda teachers saw it there (at school) His teacher, that old lady, told me, "He writes Kunwinjku." "Really!" "Yes," she said, "He's been writing Kunwinjku. I've seen it there in that whatsit, where he keeps his stuff." "So that's what he's done," I said. I already knew about it from when I told him, "You write it down. Try Kunwinjku so you'll be able to do what the Balanda does. Maybe he's ahead of you now, but if you just go yourself and write down the language - just the same way."

69 So he kept on writing and writing, and so a lot of (others) wrote too. But he's the one I told to start, your younger brother, in Kunwinjku. I said to him, "Write. Write your language. Write Kunwinjku." So he wrote and lots of people would watch him and say, "Oh, this is good!" So a lot of them started off writing after that. That's why I said I've been teaching the young men, teaching them about everything, whatever. If we just leave them there, the lot of them, that would be wrong. We should teach them something and move them along.

70 SE: *And, Ngabba? Do you want the school to teach them language?*

71 Yes. [*Both?*] Our Aboriginal language, so, yes. They should teach Kunwinjku and English so there's two. Two so that they will have both, so they will know Kunwinjku thoroughly, like a good man, as an intelligent man, or intelligent woman. They should really get it into their heads. Our Aboriginal ideas. Our thinking, we Aboriginal people.

72 SE: *You mean Kunwinjku, proper Kunwinjku? What about anything else?*

73 [[Interview briefly interrupted by children visiting.]]

74 SE: *What about all your Mamam? And all those Mawah you have, do you teach them Kunbalak and Kundembuyh?*

75 Yes. I teach them [[Coughing.]] I explaining things to your sisters' children, D___, A___, C___, V___ - I teach them everything: they all understand Kundebe, those Mamam of mine, your sisters children, those girls N___, H___, I teach all of them Kundebe. And that lot I call Nakurrng, your kanjok, the ones you call Kanjok or that boy you call Ngabba. What I'm talking about is the way two first cousins address each other: one calls the other his child, it's like a parent-child relationship, that's how you would relate. You are "ngunemodjarrkdorrinj" relationship with that person. For example, you know William, as they call him. Well, D___, that is W___, calls D___ cousin, because S___ is W___'s father, but in fact D___ is regarded as W___'s son, because they are full first cousins. [*Yes, I see.*] Yeah. That's what I'm talking about: when you call your cousin "my child".

76 SE: And what about avoidance language? Do they know about that?

77 Yes. Kundebe, Kunbalak (“Mother-in-Law” or Avoidance Language). Yes. Oh, Kundebe is part of Kunbalak. It’s like when you call some people Mamam, but you could have otherwise called them Korlonj. (Relational language between) Nakurrng and Ngalkurrng, I’m giving that to the children. Some of them know it well, but some haven’t, not till later. D___l is fine. D___, A___, D___, D___ – they’re fine. They’ve already got it. They’re grown up.

78 Now this Kundebe: Nakurrng, Mamam, Kanjok and so on...Kanjok, that’s when you are first cousins with someone, so you call them Ngabba or Korlonj – (you relate to them) something like a younger brother. Now my sons’ children, I’ve told them, “Ah, you are all first cousins. So really (you say) Korlonj. So those ones (using Kundebe) Nangarrkkang or Ngalingarrkkang, they call you Korlonj, your first cousins. It’s the same either way - those first cousins you could call them Korlonj, or they could call you Korlonj. That’s how it works. In some cases you call people Mamam (mother’s father or man’s daughters’ children) – that’s one way, and it applies in one kind of relationship. But there is also the situation where you call (someone in that kind of relationship) Korlonj. That’s what’s called “Modjarrkdoyiburrk”, which is when you call each other Korlonj (your child), Ngabba (your father) or Berluh (your aunty). When your Mamam is your mother’s father, then he’s called Mamam. But we call some people Mamam because our full first cousins are their mothers, that is, the people we call Korlonj (my child). That’s what we call “law”. It’s all part of the same thing.

79 SE: What about the idea of a child learning both, I mean learning Balanda things, white business – is it a good thing for him to go to Kormilda or what should he do?

80 Ah. Yes. Every year they go to Kormilda. They attend Kormilda but what do they do? They don’t go to High School do they? They just go anywhere. They should just here in Kunbarllanjja instead of Kormilda.

81 SE: *Some schooling here and some there at Kormilda?*

82 Yes. Yes. But, oh, yes, yes. Now, if someone who knows a lot goes to Kormilda - he should keep on going, male or female. But she must also know our Aboriginal law [Mm Mm.] Or he'll forget. It might be the mother or father should tell so that girl knows, or that boy knows, then they could go on the Balanda way, to Kormilda. But if he or she doesn't know our Aboriginal culture, then no (he/she shouldn't go). He won't learn that law. That's what I say! [[Laughs]] He must go into the that law. In fact, the children must be here for us to teach them the ideas first from our Aboriginal custom – our customs first before the “law”. The ceremonial law (comes) after that...but this one first, this one first, here - in the public domain. The ceremony later, and that will then give them the ideas.

83 SE: *You know that Ngalkamarrang, Ngaldjalama woman who works at the school [Yes.] She went away and has come back [Yes.] to work.*

84 Yes, she's doing that job. Yes, what do I call her? Mawah. [*You call her Mawah?*] Yes, when I talk to you about her I say Mawah, but I would answer you by referring to her as Mamam. I refer to her as my father's sister. So I'm saying Mawah. She's my aunty. [*Nawakadj is her father, C___, Old...*] Yes, yes.

85 SE: *Should children, is it okay if children learn about Christianity? [What?] Christianity. Children learning about Christianity. When you were a child. Who actually taught you?*

86 Yes. That Yiwarrudj one. That Yiwarrudj, it started and it set up the school - that Yiwarrudj. Mr Dyer made that school for Yiwarrudj. He set up the school and they went to school - we went to school, but myself, I went half and half. It was on my own initiative I went to school. I used to go, but then we would all go...we went up there where they took me, up north. So I couldn't stay at here in Kunbarllanjnja. I used to talk with that man (you call) Mamam, I told Mr Wilson about it, and we talked about it. He used to explain Kunwinjku to him, that's what he told me (to do), so then he taped me, that Mamam when I talked to him. I would have gone to school

but they kept taking me out and taking me with them, and they wouldn't let me stay here.

87 But about Yiwarrudj, that, that Yiwarrudj, it used to teach us too. It was very big, that Yiwarrudj. Yiwarrudj, well, it's what (makes us) so we don't...we don't take things, we don't steal, for example. Or, we don't get violent, we men, according to that Yiwarrudj. It's the same as what Aboriginal people talk about. Yiwarrudj is the same. The Balanda call it Yiwarrudj, but Aboriginal people have the same thing, and they used to call it Kunkunadj, when they discussed it. That's what we are talking about in fact. We're (talking about) that right here. They used to call it Kunkunadj. In fact, I explain Kunkunadj, it's what I explain to my sons' children: (those you call) Nadjakerr and Narrumanj, and to your sisters and brothers, Nadjakerr too. It's that Kunkunadj that I explain to them – the law. I've told them about it. I've taught them that Kunkunadj, told them about it. I'm staying with that Yiwarrudj, I've kept it for them.

88 SE: *It's nearly finished. It's nearly finished.* [[Talking about the tape.]]

89 That's what it's about. Yes, I taught it to them well. I taught it to your brothers. I used to say to them, "Don't you two just go along anyhow. Don't just go here or there. Don't do that. Don't do it. That's wrong, and you'd be breaking the law." We went together when the elder (of your two brothers) brother was first to go to the Kunabibi ceremony. He was the first one I took up there to see the Kunabibi. I'd already explained the Mardayin to him and he'd seen that. They had both seen that Mardayin together, but the elder was the first to see the Kunabibi, your younger brother here I mean, and then later the younger brother, Mornelawk, went when it was his turn. So all the others in their turn all saw the Kunabibi. All of them. All the boys have seen the Mardayin.

90 I told them, "This is business, and it will lead you the straight way wherever you go. You'll be wrong if you turn around and steal things, you'd be breaking the law. You must each keep the law yourselves. Whatever I tell you, remember it whatever happens. I mean, when I die, you must still keep the law just as I did for those Mawah who have all died. I still have the law. I still have their words here. And you

can write it on paper. Write it all down, write what we say, put it there so that when I die, you'll say, 'O yes, I've still got what Dad (said) in this book.' Then you can get it out and see what I'm saying. I like that."

91 SE: The main tape is running out. Is it okay if later on maybe I ask you something else? [Yes, of course.] **Probably later on.** [Yes, yes.] **We should finish now.** [Okay, good. That's fine.] **Do you know about the others I've taped?** [Yes.] **I'll put it all together and write it on paper.** [Yes. Yes.] **Maybe later we (inc) can all meet together so you can do whatever.** [I like that idea.] **Is that okay?** [So we can all help each other, about our language.] **Maybe (talk about) how children learn, young men...** [Yes, that's it, I think. Young women too.] **White law and also black. Black law.** [Black law. I like that idea. Black and white.] **And that law is just the same...** [Yes, the ideas and the law.] **Go on.** [Good.] **Well, let's leave this, we'll finish.** [Okay. That's it.] **That's fine. I'll just give you a copy now.**

[[Tape off. Interview finished.]]