



First Nation Elders Oral Histories and Digital Stories (North Queensland)

Laurie Padmore

Interviewee: Laurie Padmore

Interviewer: Nathan Williams

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Legend: Nathan Williams (NW)
Laurie Padmore (LP)
Sarah Scragg (SS)

NW

Um, well thank you Uncle Laurie for coming and talking to us today. My name is Nathan Williams.

We're actually here in Yungaburra with Uncle Laurie. It's now Tuesday the 21st of June 2022. So, Uncle Laurie, can you just introduce yourself?

LP

Yeah well, I'm Uncle, I'm Uncle Laurie Padmore and I was born in Atherton. I grew up grew up around like Barrine area, which is our traditional area. Dulgubarra-Yidinji area.

Dulgubarra means rainforest and barra means belong to, so belong to rainforest Yidinji. Now the Yidinji we have Tableland Yidinji. So, there's about three or four groups along the tableland. Yidinji groups which are Tableland Yidinji so we're under technically the umbrella of that but we have about, there's the clan groups.

We've got Dulgubarra, there's Bundabarra there's Dulabed, and there's Wadjanbarra. So, some of them. I think it is something that it can't get a bit controversial about the boundaries and this and that too so I won't go there, but we take this area here this regional area, Lake Barrine area and that's where we grew up. See Lake Barrine to us is, that's our lake that's a traditional lake. You know, we've got our story with that lake, and our next-door neighbor that's Uncle Ernie's (Raymont) mob, Ngadjon. Ngadjoni-ji, they have, that's their, theirs is Lake Eacham. But we've always been that, we've always been close. Very close.

NW

And even though you are closely sort of located groups, you're both very much different from each other?

LP

Yeah, we're most different, language, language was different. Our language even defers a little bit even to the coastal kind of Yidinji. Like say the Gimuy, Cairns Gimuy. We know the names of that but see the Yarrabah, Yarrabah mob down that way you know, that we classify them as you know, the coastal Yidinji.

There's another one in the middle here just down where Lake just Mulgrave, Little Mulgrave there's another group there so it's called malanbarra. So 'malan' means rock or flat rock. So, they're the flat rock people we can probably call it but they're still Yidinji mob you know. Some of them our cousins kind of thing so they come from that sort of area there.

My grandad's sisters mob lives down there so, but they just they're just different. So, there's, we have, they used to come up along the coast years and year ago traditionally when they used to look in seasonal time lookin for kind of different kind of tucker when they got the message from, you know from nature. Those locust, the black locust used to sing here and they knew that that was time for the come up with the black pine nuts and that which we call them we call gubuum.

When it's all crushed up we call that's what the black pine, that's what grandfather and Nanna, they used to give us when we were kids when we were growing up. It's good stuff. I tell you good stuff.

NW

How do you use it? What do you what do you use it for?

LP

We use it. We use it for eating. It's an eating. So, and it's the only food that really it does, you don't need to go through a long process with it?

You get that big, when it is ripe, you know, it's in a shell the kernels are in a shell. So, it's roasted over the fire and when it gets right, then nuts are cracked and the kernels are taken out and they're crushed. And Nanna used to get this this stone and a long kind of a long kind of a flat type of stone used to ground it, on it, and after she ground it when it was in this type of just semi kind of floury kind of kind of position, Grandad used to come along and he used to put it in a dilly bag.

When he put in the dilly bag, he used to take it not far from where we were living, a place called Surprise Creek. It's out, it's out at Ball Pocket. He used to take it. There was a little spring on the other side and he used to take it down there. Get us all of us kids will be following him. We'd go down there, we'd go down the hill. We'd go down following him. He said "Oh no you kiddy kiddie," he said "youse..."

So they got it going and put this through water now so and put it through that spring water and then the leaves out there was there was a there was ginger leaves and there was taro leaves. So, we used to just after, after he had soaked it through the water and run it through the water, he just used to put on that and used to hand it to us put on the leaves and we thought that was just Christmas you know.

NW

So, the purpose of running it through water. What's the purpose of that? Why is that important?

LP

That is so important because that that sort of takes any kind of what would you say. Let's say it's used as a filter. That's probably the best way that I can say. And it's better that way. It's better than, that was the only process grandad and them used to use.

But I heard of the other old people, we never experienced this, they said a bean, the beans when the beans are cooked and when those when the shells are when they're, when they're crushed up and all of that, it goes through a long process of two or three days leaching. It's

got to be put in the water and the water runs through it because apparently it runs out. It's got poison in it.

And it takes a poison out, that leaching process takes the poison out of it. But we never experienced that but we we're aware of it.

NW

And can you describe the taste of it? What is it? Is there something that's similar to that to that taste?

LP

It's got a type of nutty type of taste. My cousins and then they, we used to love that taste. It's probably like probably a little bit like sort of a peanutty kind of taste, but it was just that lovely taste that you would not add any ingredients to it like sugar or whatever.

You know, in its natural state in, that's a that's how we sort of liked it, you know. It was just so lovely. There are other things we used to eat around there too. Thing what they call it, raspberry. The wild raspberry that used to grow pretty close to the river but grandad used to have a garden of it because he was really had green fingers. He really did.

The story about him he had he had a he was given an acre of land by these people and he grew a garden in that and he, he went and sold all these all these vegetables out back in that time. The Act was still on. He probably sold it against all rules. But he got away with it. Because he was trying you know, and um... There was a long time before he really got approval to really have that garden. He had a horse. He had a dray, used to put all these veggies into that and he used to take it into town into Kulara. And he used to go and sell it there and he used to employ me uncles and that but the other thing he used to do, he used to fall scrub too. So, he knew all about trees. There's nothing that he didn't know about trees. He did have an accident though with a tree. One of the branches went and fell on him. Got him on the leg, but they said you got to watch the dry limbs when you're in the scrub. That's what the Old people said, and any timber cutter will tell you that. Watch them dry limbs because they come down they're dangerous. So, he had a limp. He had a permanent limp after that.

NW

So, your grandfather. What was his name?

LP

Jack Stewart and my grandfather was Billy Possum. That was his father. That's that it's all I know from history. But and he was actually he was a tribal man. He showed us the tribal marks that he had when we're kids growing up and he did, he did explain it to us what it was. But as a kid, I've forgotten, I forgot it. I don't know, there was some stripes there. That allowed them to sort of marry, kind of thing you know, that they had that right to marry. But it was really very exciting, you know. Very close and he was a very traditional man. He used to pray every night language, every night and we kids, we used to go up there and I stayed up there, live up there till I was about 10 and then when the Tinaroo Dam before that was flooded, we had to move because there was no work then we had to... Dad moved down to Daradgee down to fairly close to Innisfail and that. Look for work and that.

And he did we work down there on the (sugar) cane farms. And then he worked in the timber. There was a timber place there they felled scrub there also. But the experience at Grandad, that I had up her as a kid, you know, I can't forget it. So many wonderful things did happen. Even when I was going to school.

I went to this Barrine State School. Now it must have been about five or six and the Act was still on of course, but because our grandparents they were exempted. But they were exempted, but as you know with exemptions they had to be reviewed every week, every year.

NW

So, did they have an exemption card with them or?

LP

Yeah. Yeah, they did.

NW

And how did I get that? What came about them doing that?

LP

Oh, I think they had to go and apply for it. I think they had to apply for it through... what was that called N A, Native Affairs. Native Affairs, the head office was in Brisbane, and any documentation or that was sort of done, like even when they had to go into town.

See as you know the protectors they used to be the police. So, they used to come here into Yungaburra and Mum wanted a buy something and that. They had to go and sign a little form and go in that to get permission and that and then that the police from the office there, they did the admin work and let that offers of Aboriginal Affairs know that this process, you know, this is documented.

I've got some documents that mum had sent when I was a kid kind of thing that I did get from your library down there in Brisbane.

NW

And how had that changed their life? Was it better? Was it worse? What how do you think they or for you?

LP

Well, they seem to be happy but looking back at it now I see they must have been under a lot of stress. We were aware that there was an Act. That's all we knew it was an Act and we used to ask grandad and them, what is the Act and they said, "Oh the Act. You don't worry about that boy." That type of thing because at that time it was like the rest of, I think it was that social era too that don't ask questions you know you're only a kid here. You should be seen and not heard that type of kind of thing. So, this is only for adults, you know, all you need to know that it's an act. That's all. Let us worry about the rest. I'm looking back at that and I'm thinking that they must have so much pressure on them that, but we didn't know. I reckon that takes pretty strong people.

That's what I reckon. That's what I admire 'bout all of our people. The strength that the resilience that they had in going through all of that crap and surviving. Not saying anything about it. It was all parts of survival because part of that survival sort of routine was part of the rules.

You gave any back talk, you were sent you sent straight to the mission. So that's why every year, that's why it was reviewed. Every year. Now any of those, any of those breaches. If there had been any breaches in the Act that's where they were sent. You were sent straight there. Well you know Yarrabah. I know there was Mona Mona here, but I do have history of me auntie being sort of sent. She gave a little bit of back talk to one of the people and was sent straight down to Yarrabah for about six months. But she got out. I think it was only because grandad's reputation, because grandad he was probably the... He never had a bad

word against anybody. He did all the right things. That he fulfilled the requirements of the act, of that exemption. Must have been really hard for him but...

I was having a look at a document not long ago and it was saying that for our people to get any work during that time, they had to go and register themselves. And the bloke who they work for, the person who they work for they had to register themselves also. So, in a way a lot of people... This is the way I look at it. A lot of people don't look at it. they think it's only one way that okay you fellows went and work for this farmer, you work for that farmer. You work for him. But that farmer he still had to be registered to get fellas. So, they should, there should be a little bit of credence there. Those fellows should get a little bit of credence for doing that because in the process of that, not any having sort of getting them employed, but they're fulfilling an obligation that they really... Well, they probably thought at that time, why do I need to do all of this, you know from their point of view, but they had to. So, this is why I say, so we weren't alone in that process. It was same but you don't hear nothing about that.

NW

And were they being paid the right amount?

LP

Well, this is another thing we don't know. But far as I know that, well our grandparents and my uncles, I think at that time they thought so. I think they thought so, but they may not have they might have been, I don't know whether there were any what do you call it, any award rates for any of that back then.

NW

So, what was the type of work that they were doing around?

LP

My uncle he done a bit of stock work, and he did a bit of falling scrub, and grandad he done, he was falling scrub, and he had his own little garden. He had his own little corner business going there too. So, we did pretty... I reckon that he done a wonderful job and we used to, we used like this because

When we used to come back from school,

"Where grandad?"

"Oh, he's down the garden there. So, you fellas, so you fellas you'd," Nana use to say, "you better go down there going he might need some help."

And you'd go and water the plants so said, "Alright Nanna."

So, we run down there and there's no watering cans of course, but you know those Sunshine Milk tins about that size? I used to perforate the holes on the bottom and all you need to do and you put handle on the top. and just put water on it and just run along the rows. So, we used to just love doing that. We had all that energy too, you know.

NW

That was here in Yungaburra?

LP

Now that was over in Barrine. Off um, what do you call it? Surprise Creek. It's in Barrine. If you have a look on the map, you'll see Surprise Creek and there's Severin Creek. So, Surprise Creek goes into Severin Creek and this and there's a little acreage there when Nan and Grandad used to live in the scrub. It was great.

NW

And so you were talking about your grandfather? Jack. I mean some of the stuff that he was growing, with so there was like just your normal vegetables and but was there any sort of you know traditional foods that he grew?

LP

Ah, probably the only traditional food that I could think of at that time might have been taro. But he didn't grow it in the garden. He grew it with a taro needs to grow, you go to grow taro right close to the creek where there's a lot of water. So that's the only thing but there are things in the bush that they told us about too that, you know there's finger cherries there. Don't eat them. Because certain, you eat them at the wrong time to this here. You can go blind.

So, and there was, there was another couple o fruits there. There was at that wild plum. Wild sour plum and there was that fig. You know the wild plum called wuruy. And that's the same name for that little house lizard, too. It's called wuruy too.

So, after that we used to. There was also a fig that we used to eat banba we call it. Now that's a long kind of like a banana type fig. And my cousin here, cousin Doug Stewart. He's got his house, he had his house here. Well, it still is, off on Ball Pocket Road off there, and he grew all of that. He grew those figs in there. Oh, yeah, you used to, I used to wait till I used to get ripe, and get into them they. It was just lovely that beautiful sweetness that it has. All of that natural kinda tucker. And he had a green finger too like Grandad so he basically used to grow a lot of things around his house on his property.

Yeah so, you know, they were good times. You know when you think about them, even though some of the you know, some people are unfortunate they had bad things did happen to em. You know so. I don't know maybe luck of the draw. I don't know it just happened to be how things happened.

NW

You, you have a nice smile when you're talking about the memories. So how important is it also, you know, did you grow up with learning language as a young child?

LP

Oh, let's put it this way, you know I laugh at this, but grandad and nanna, they always used to talk in language, and we used to know what they were saying. But sometimes it used to go through here, this come out this way, and all we only used to know just the basic type of sounds and...

So, in 1963 this bloke called Dixon he come up. I wasn't there then, we were in Innisfail and I was down Tassie then. I was nearly, I was nearly on my way to Tassie. And this bloke come up to nan and grandad and he went this linguist old Bob Dixon. Everybody sort of knows him. I think he's at the Cook University now here in Cairns.

But anyhow he come and interviewed Nana and Grandad because they're pretty fluent speakers at that time. And Sibby [Breslin], was there Sibby and Chrissy the other cousin Christine, Christine Stewart. You know her mother married and Mansbridge. And her name was Violet. And Sibby's mother was named that's in named Sarah.

Anyhow they were there at nan and grandad's the time that this bloke Dickson come and taped them. He taped them on. He taped them on audio. Well that back then it was an old tape recorder, you know. And he, and we've got recordings of it. Of him speaking to me and Grandad and this is how we've had to relearn our language.

So, they basically they still teaching us language even after they're gone all these years. Because we got those, cousin Doug he wouldn't got those audio tapes from The Institute of Aboriginal Studies in Canberra. And then it he got a hold of them. He bought them up and then he digitized them and we got hold...

Just at that time too there was that that Language Center here in Cairns was just opening just was starting. They originally, they started in Cardwell I think and they came up something happened. But so, let's come up there. I think it's base, it was base at the Serbian Center in Cairns, I don't know whether it is now but it might of moved in a little bit in town. They move them about. You don't know where they're moving half the time.

But anyhow... We got hold of them and I asked them I said "Look," I said "Have you got a linguist?" I said, I didn't even know what a linguist was, but I said, "Could you get one?"

And they said, "Yeah. Yeah, we'll see if we can."

"So, who are you fellas?"

"We're from up the top here we are the Dulgubarra-Yidinji people."

Righto, so I said we need to, then they said and you know we tried and tried and they couldn't get a linguist.

Well, I think they were a bit slack to be honest to be honest, you know, they and I think that would just sort of starting out too. So, they didn't know the ropes about this and that. And they didn't have their compilation of the linguists.

So anyhow one of their officers their field officers, she said to us, "I know one. I know one I can get one for you."

I said "Really?"

And they said "We'll, we'll get hold of her for you and we'll bring her up."

And it was a lady young lady that she's named Cassie Nancarrow. She was one of the prodigies of that bloke who interviewed Nana. She was Bob Dixon's prodigee because she learned language here and at the uni here and she was a teacher also. And we got hold of her and we never look back mate never.

We got her, we had a meeting in 2015 with her. We didn't know what, so we had her prior to that, when Language Center had come up and sort of introduced and spoke to us just about it. And she, what we made it sort of date. So, the first workshop we had was in 2015. And then she spoke and she said, "Do you fellas know sounds?"

and we said "We know sounds, we know the sounds but we don't know...that's all we know. We only know just things like egg, dog and this kind of thing," we said "We can't put those sentences together."

And she said "Oh don't worry about that Uncle I'll just show you like that." So, she did, she come up and she got this book out. She had a book already made for us. I'll show it to you later. It's there. And it was on our first workshop.

So, we went through something then she said "First thing you need to know is you need to know how to make the sounds."

And we said, "Well how we gonna do that?"

She said "Well, you should know some word in your language that you can you can you can use. And this is how we're going to put our sounds together."

So, she said "All we've got is we only got about three vowels see? We've got a, i, and u? Now those sounds they sound a little bit different." Then she said "The sound sounds like a in Pizza the i in bit and the u in book," she said, "so that's u."

She gave us a practice run through that. She said, "There's little words, little sounds that you really need to know too that. There's an ng sound that you're going to sort of be using and there' an ny sound that you're going to be using sound."

And I said "Oh Jesus sounds pretty hard."
She said "No, just try just."

So, we got the sound and she wrote it out. So, this is how it sounds and then she said, "This is how other, you got your nouns. This is how your case endings are added on to the end of it."

So they were like suffixes. So the case endings. we said "Is that all?"

And she said, "Yeah," but she said "that's that something."

So, I said "You got nouns and then you got verbs."

She said "You know what they are."

We said "We've got a fair idea what nouns and verbs were."

And said "So this is a subject of that, that's verb and said so we've got transitive verb sentences and we got intransitive sentence sentences."

Yeah, we say "Well, we've got lost a little half way there but." We ended up getting the idea.

She said "You'll have to look through these books see that I've got for you," and we went through some of them in that. And then ah, just as easy as falling off a log now. It really is. It's something It's a never end. It's a never-ending type of thing and it and it is so easy.

I did ask grandfather to teach us, but he said to me one day. He said "It's gonna take too long boy," but what I didn't know he'd already done that tape. He didn't tell me. He had already done that tape. So, I was really you know, I didn't know. So, when I heard those words and when you hear him speaking and he's speaking and Nana and what's that word for this, what's word for? What's this word for that platypus and ngunba by what? What's the word for kookaburra, you know gurrungga and what's the thing for tree and that, you know that kind of thing and it all of those things, you know egg, dingal you know and dungu. You know, all of that type of thing.

And we said well, how do you say kind of you know, we said to the linguist you know, "How do you say good day, kinda or hello?" Because you know the way we'd say hello or anything greeting is totally different than what it is in English. You know, we have broad words terminology.

So that gurriny, is a good, is a word we usually use and nyundu is a word we use it's called you. So, we say, "Nyundu gurriny," that means how are you? Are you alright? So, when the person goes and responds to that person, he says, "Ngayu gurriny." That means I am okay. So that's how you respond. So, most of our words are interjections and most of that.

We've got about three class type of verbs they're n, and there's n ny. No, there's n, l and g. Those are the words that when they're spelled that's the last letter on them. That's why we call them that class verbs like say we've got a word, just say for go common word. A word for goes, galin. G a l i n, galin. So, we put if it's called galiny, galiny that means it puts it into past tense.

So, you use words. So, what usually use the words, say we cut the Y off and when the end is there, we usually put a case ending on it and a maybe a l a on the end of it. So galinga it comes then. Now that means I'm going now.

You can say, "Ngayu...ngayu galingala."

That means I'm going now. See how easy that is.

NW

And as is the language that you're using now or you've had to relearn.

LP

I've had to relearn it.

NW

And is the Next Generation taking that on?

LP

That's what I'm getting stuff ready now to teach the Next Generation. That's one thing that is so important. That is the most important thing in. As I said, I'm in the process now, so I haven't had, that's gonna be second workshop that we're gonna have with our mob. I'm gonna teach them my way. And taught them to get, teach them how to get them sounds and that. And it's easy.

What I've just thinking of doing is basic things really, any one of us really needs to know is just the pronouns. I, u, i and u and go simple words, go and come. And you can put in I'm going. You can put that in the present tenses. You can put that in the tense of going is in present tenses. G a l i n because n is a class noun. Just put g on the end. It's galing. That means that means going. So, if you know those, the class verbs and that you know, you can't miss you can't you can't really you can't go wrong. You go to keep on. There are other little kinda words that certain words you can't use and certain words you can sort of use but if you've got those words and they're connected right as suffixes or case endings, you can put them in any order you like. But they've got to be connected first. So, what I do is I put them in order. But I put them in a flowing order. Like say when I say Welcome to Country kinda to people I say, what do I say now um...um, "ngany jidulgubarra yidinji bujin nyunduubany gadaana. Janggaburra yinggugu yalungunda nganyji guman wabu gadan jibadurrigan."

What I'm saying there is we are the Dulgubarra-Yidinji people we welcome you here to Yungaburra. Today we all come together as one with a happy heart and then I'll say welcome.

NW

And that Welcome to Country. I mean, you know, you don't want to make that, you know, sort of, you know just a tokenistic type of thing, what how important is that it to be able to do a welcome to country, especially in language.

LP

It is so important. That's why I want to teach these young ones. It needs, they need to speak in language and they can go and let people know the English type of thing. But I usually have another procedure first before about, I usually go and say look whenever old people used to go in the forest and that, they always used to sing out, let people know that they're there and what they're doing there.

Hey you fellas I'm here, you know, that type of thing. So, I usually go and explain that and I say to people, look, I said, I need to let the old people, I'll need to pay my respect to them and acknowledge them what I'm doing here, and what are you doing here and what I'm doing with you, kind of thing, I said that's my way of acknowledging them. So that's what I usually say.

So, I usually say what is it. Wonder if I can remember, "Buri buri ngayu ngabi bama janang yalungunda yingula."

So basically, what I'm saying there is, Hey, old people, I'm standing here with a lot of people there. So, I'm giving welcome to Country. Here at Yungaburra. So Yungaburra as you may know Yungaburra is what we call janggaburru. That means Silver Ash. So that's what it's got its name That's what it's got its name from. It's a Yidinj name for it. Janggaburru.

SS

Can I ask something because I am curious, so it was Allumbah pocket before...

LP

That is true.

SS

So why did it change to Yungaburra.

LP

Well they changed it because they thought I don't know how this thing, but there is a saying, now it's a westernized saying oh and so I don't know, but what they are saying is it had the same name as a Allumbah on the coast. And they reckon they got that name from an Aboriginal from Aboriginal word meaning red cedar. But that is not so. That's not our word for red cedar. Our name for red cedar is wanggarigaa. But that's what these guys got in history so I'll let them argue over that but that's that is what... That is us where that's what we've been told granddad told us. He knows all of those. He knew all of those names and I've got him recorded on tape even saying that. So, who do you believe? And he was a timber man. So yeah, but that is the reason why Allumbah because that's the that's it. They didn't want to get it mixed up with that.

NW

And how long ago was that? Would that be?

LP

Just post contact that would have to be. Well I've been approached anyhow with they want to name this track. There's a walking track here. I think it's that it's already gone in but we've been doing a little bit of work. So, what I've done. I've helped them sort of with that and I said I said "You guys give your acknowledgment to our people," and I said "I'll give our welcome to Country, to you fellows that are going to walk this track." So, I've done that. So, we're going to see how it all works out.

NW

And where's that happening whereabouts is the trail?

LP

The track is it's along here. Not far from where the I think where the Catholic church is. There is some track that goes along there plus there's Peterson Creek here. Years and years ago Sibby and cousin Sibby and cousin Dougie, they got together with the TREAT and the Landcare kind of people and they went and planted some trees it was about 25 years ago. From what I can gather. They did. I was in Tassie then and they called me and they said "Cous'," they said, "We want to run this through you. What do you reckon?" and I said, "Go for it, you know," and they showed me the names that of the trees that they were going to plant on all of this. So I said, "Yeah," I said "Go for it," so they went and planted them. But at that time, it was only the English names given to those, given to those plants and the scientific names

So lately, the last couple of years when we're talking to the Landcare people I said look. I said I didn't know back then I feel a little bit more sort of a bit more confidence now, but I said I want to have our names there. And we've worked out a process and they've already, and it's taken a while, but they've got the names printed mate. They really have so all we really need to do is We're going to have a little, we don't know, we're gonna just have a little

gathering with the mob down the creek there because they worked really hard the Landcare people.

I've got to give it to them, they do. And they were all in favour of it and so yeah. All we have to do is wait. Get an appropriate time when to do it. But we've got it. I'm glad I'm so happy. You know, I really am.

NW

That is so important, you know, and you know, you know the connection to the language the connection to, further you talk about, you know, and the passion you got for that. What about the stories are there continuation in terms of you know, knowing stories of the country and the connection to country, spirits and that, is that, is that still ongoing with your mob here?

LP

In a way, in a way we still got stories about the gulaar that's the Cathedral Fig. We've got a story about that. We've got story about, of course about the lake (Barrine), What happened there. See the thing about the lake is everybody's, they've got a different, got a different story, but we don't knock that because it's their story. They own it. The one we tell we own ours, the one we tell that story about. And it's nearly it's nearly the same, but it isn't it's nearly as same as the Ngadjon one.

See even in the Yarrabah they got a story about it. So, this is our you know? So that's how, that's how it goes. But only go with the one that I've been told from our family and I'm speaking of it. Nobody could come up to me and say that's wrong. Because I'll say look, this has been handed down and probably the stories that you fellas have got been handed down to you to so I won't dispute anything just, you got to accept it. I usually tell it on country.

Now we have a group of kids and they've been come from Sydney. They usually come up here. They're called the Loreto kids, Loreto kind of, they come from the Loreto (Catholic Girls) School in Normanhurst in Sydney. And they come up. They been coming up for nearly 14 years now. And they come up here work up, and then they travel down to the coast. They go to Yarrabah and then they go up the Cape a little bit. They go and see the Wujal Wujal kind of mob and that? So, they're really very culturally sort of orientated those and I thought wow, and it's a Catholic school and I said, wow these people they're really out there. You know, they're really, they're really such... and those kids the know how to behave themselves, you know, they do know how to behave themselves.

NW

And they suck up that, the stories that you tell them.

LP

Yeah. Yeah, so I go and me and Sib, we go in as a matter of fact it will soon be on and be on. What are we in July end of July, August. We'll be going then. We haven't been able to see em for a couple years because of the COVID kind of thing. But we go and usually tell them the cultural kind of things, talks, give it culture or Sibby gives it. I'll give my cultural talk. and then we give the welcome and then we go down to the lake. We go and jump on the boat. Then we go around the lake. The driver there, the guide being, usually goes and tells their story and I tell my story. I'll go and tell those kids. I said, "Well, this is a name of some of the plants and some of the animals that around here that we got." I said, "You got that black duck here that's burago not burago that's um burugu and there's um," I said "there's pelicans there," and I said "there's that that black diver, darter. So, we call him dagarr. We call him that."

We said "We got," as we're going around I said, "we got different type of sort of trees." I said "We got the pine trees there and there's, you got this smooth pine and then you've got two smooth pine trees. Warndar and then you've got gulumbay [smooth bark kauri pine], that's another one there. It's another." so we go around, "and we have the names of some of the there's a lily, kinda little green blue lily there, garabuny. There's different kind of words. There's three different kinds of umbrella trees there."

That I can't think of them at the moment really, but they're good because there's three, cause if there was only one it'd be okay.

But then then you know we go around we go around. Go around and we go and see the snakes. Seeing our generic term for snake is gubul. Call it a gubul. When we go and call, see that that python that's there. That well they're the biggest bloomin snakes in Australia. Really, amethystine pythons. So, then you go and you go and call them a wungul [amethystine]. And then you got your little carpet snake. You might come across. You might come and see him sort of curled up. You call him the dangal. You go around the corner a little bit. Then you go and see water dragon. Well, what's that ... gurruguday. Then you see the eels. The eels nearly the same name. The nadjin's call it same name, too, jaban. So yeah, and then go around there's, you know, there's different, I could go on and on but that's just to give you just a rough idea. We go and tell those kids.

And we, what we do we give him a little kind of a little sheet so they can see the language When we're talking about it, kinda thing. This is there. And they get down they stop and they have a look at the python all curled up if he's around. Sometimes they're not and sometimes they are. All depends if it's you know if the sun if it's a hot day warm day. They're not there every day. Yeah.

NW

I think it's a good segue, you know talking a bit more about you know, your own personal history.

LP

We were sort of this is funny Act. This is funny because the way the Act worked was Aboriginal people were under the act in Torres Strait people were under the Act, but any other race that I know of wasn't. See my Dad, my Dad was, he was Malay? So, he wasn't under the Act. So, Dad married mum. He wasn't under the act, but she was. See how stupid that is. That's madness pure madness but the whole lot of the Stewart family were exempted I think in 1947. I think. I think that's when they were exempted from it. I'm not sure but I think that's what the records do say.

So, it's yeah, but my schooling. As a matter of fact, I only went to, when we went down we moved from here. I was still a primary school student when I left here and then went down to the primary school in Daradgee and then where's that other place, went to Mourilyan and went to Boogan and that that is where had I finished more primary years because we, I went as far as grade 8.

Never had a hope of going to high school because I just didn't have it really. We had to go and sit for a scholarship. That was when you had to sit for a scholarship to go to high school. And if you didn't get in, that's it. And if you wanted to go to school, then you had to pay kinda thing. That's what I was told. Well the teacher son didn't even pass. And he, I was told that he had the pay to go, go and do further studies. I don't know how true that is, but I didn't sort of bother to sort of go and follow that on because.

So, after that, yeah. What happened after that?

NW

Did you start working, or was it?

LP

Um, well it's sad thing how I started to work really was sad really. I've got to say. Because I just had left school and my Dad was out working on a, he's working on the farms. He was working in the sugar mills and that and the baddest thing that happened he got killed. He died. He got killed by a drunken driver on his way home from work, and that was the end of the story.

So, here's me I was green as a flamin anything was and I had to go out and working. So, we had me brothers and sisters, there's about seven in the family. Dad was a good provider. Definitely the best. He taught us a lot of good work ethics. So, I went out. I was working for the Farms. Dad had a good reputation as a worker. So that the farms they said, oh, here's Joe's boy. We better look after him. So, they did, they went gave me, I was work, nearly locked on the rotational kind of basis with them. So, when once work finished here I went on to the next farm and that. That type of thing they looked after us.

So after many years of that mum found a way to get damages for dad's death, which I think was pretty good at that time for her to even think anything. Because there's a pretty dangerous grey area then. And she managed, we managed to get enough money from damages to go and buy a house in Innisfail. So that's where it most of me brothers and sisters grew up on Mamu country kind of thing there. We didn't know then that was different country, was just we knew everybody and we didn't know that you know, but I don't even think land rights even existed then.

But anyhow, this is back in the 60s and so I decided me and me cousin. We got a bright idea. After, because I was working on the farm. You know on a cane farm we got an idea that hey, you know. What are we gonna do in the slack season? There's no work here. We can't get on the dole. I don't like living on the dole here. So, everybody used to go down south. There were a lot of people used to go down south picking fruit in Mildura and all of those places down Shep (Shepparton) and I went a little bit further. I went down to Tassie and I went down there the first year. And because my sister was living down there at the time and she married a Tasmanian.

My timing was pretty bad. I can tell you. Because I went down there in winter time and I've never ever been sort of really got over that really. But anyhow I was freezing there and the people they were out there playing sports Aussie rules and that and they had a they had a football kind of grounds there. There wasn't any lawn on it. There was just gravel. And those guys used to come to work, they'd be bruised they'd be bruised and all of this. But they were tough as nails those guys. But that was a good place.

So, I went there for about you know for about three months till the cane was about to start, I come back. Done me, done me other year. And I said to mum. I said, "Mum, I'm gonna go back down there again to go back down Tassie." So, my cousin he said, "I'll come with you." I said, "Right cous", let's go." So, we went got down to Devonport.

Because I was heading down to Queenstown and they said, "Oh there's plenty of work here, but we got no place we've got no accommodation. Because I was staying in the men's quarters down there. That's where I used to stay down there. I said, "Oh well blow this." And we were in this boarding house and you know I said to my cuz I said I said, "What we're gonna do?"

He said, "Well I know what I'm gonna do."

He said, "I'm gonna go home."

I said, "But you can't do that. What about me?" I said, you know. There's about 20 bucks in my pocket I had and I said, "Oh," I said, "looks like the streets for me you know."

Anyhow the bloke who owned that boarding house. And this, I will never ever forget this. He owned it, he must have heard us talking. He came up to me and said "What's happened?" he said, "I see your mate's going," he said he said, "He's left you in the lurch, has he?" he said.

"Yes," I said, "I'm not really very pleased about this."

And he said, "Look," he said, "you seem like a good bloke," he said "what if I'll put you up here until you get a job."

So, I said, I could not believe it. So, my cousin already went so I said "Well, I hear there's a factory about five k's away. Its place called Quoiba that's outside of Devonport. Place right next to a place called Spreyton. So, I went there and here we go and I went there I went and asked, I said, "Look is any work here?"

and they said, "Oh no. Sorry."

They said "We're not putting anybody this, on at the moment." They said, "Oh, there's no vacancies."

I went back next day. They said, "Oh you was here yesterday."

"Yep, anything happening?"

"No there's nothing happening today."

So, I went back on the fourth day. I really nearly drove them nuts I tell you. And you know, by the time I got back there was a telegram waiting for me saying you got a job. You start tomorrow.

So here I am. I'm working on pushing all these hoppers, these pea hoppers that they have down there. You push them into a big kind of a like a dump rig kinda thing there big kinda vat. When the two weeks were up I went to get my pay. I said, I said, "Okay," I said, "I come to pick my pay up. So, I can head off now."

and they said, they said, "Before you go, so we got a proposition for you".

And I said, "What's this?"

They said, "Well, you won't believe this but we're putting on permanent staff."

They said, "That truckies that you've been working for they put a good word in for you,"

they said, "they don't want you to go."

I work there for about 12 years and we used to come home now and then. But something else happened. A job in Aboriginal education came up and I said, "Wow," I said because there was no Aboriginal education in Tasmania then, this is in 1970s. Nothing, nothing. There was one officer from Victoria that used to do the whole state. And they didn't even have an Aboriginal office. There was no office down there so, so they went and put her under Special Ed, special education. So, I went I said, "Look," I said, "I got nothing to lose."

So, I went and applied for it. Blow me dead. I got it hey. It was part time.

They said, "Well," he said, "this is what your duties are. You'll have to write a report every month."

And I said, I said, I said, "What's a report?"

They said, "Well you've got to write on activities that you do during the month."

I said, "But," I said, "I don't even know how to write report."

They said, "Can you write a letter?"

and I said, "Yeah, I can write a letter."

He said, "Well, it's this is all you need to do."

He said, "You got your beginning and you got your middle and you got your conclusion. So that's all you need." He said, "You put your title here, put your date up here."

It gave me a sort of template to sort of work from.

I went and got a lot of books on grammar. I went into the, I went into this book shop. I went and got books on grammar and books on writing and all and books on reports. I went and studied and studied and studied. To give you an idea, so I ended up getting pretty good at it.

And when I was working there, because it was only part time at that time. Another thing came up. A thing on the NAEC and they said, they said, "Would you like to represent us?" and I said, "Look," I said, "I'm from another country." I said, "I can't do that." I said, "Don't," I said, "You got people here. You got your own people. Why don't you get them to go and represent you?"

They said, "No, we want you."

NW

Just explain the acronym the N A E C?

LP

NAEC, is the National Aboriginal Education Committee. Now at that time National Aboriginal Education Committee didn't have, they didn't even have a framework. Didn't have a Aboriginal education framework. That didn't exist. And there were people in the 1970's that were working.

While these fellas were doing land rights, these other fellas, some of these young Aboriginal school teachers, they were in there. They were in there. They were working towards creating education policy. And that was back in the 1970's.

Then my turn come up in 1980's. In 1983 or think it was and I said, "I don't mind representing you fellas but I don't really want to." I said, "This is not my country," I said, "I'd rather," I said, "I like representing my people." I said, "You're my people too," but I said, "I'm from a different place. I've got culture differences."

Anyhow, so no, I said, I said, "Well, what is the question? Why do you want me to represent you?"

"Well," they said, "The work that you got, you're out, you're a grass roots person, you're out in the community, you know all the people we don't."

I just went into the first meeting. In the meeting said, I said, "Look," I said, "you fellas," I said, "I'm just come from nowhere." So, I said, so I said, "From representing Tasmania. Was that I only know little bit about education" And they just looked at me, they said

"Look bro, you learn of us. Don't worry. Don't worry at all."

And I did, I did learnt off 'em, they taught me everything. Then I got ideas when I went back I said, "Right," I said "we need to go this place. See these kids I go round to the parents, I go and to talk to parents."

I said, "What do these kids need here, you know?" I said "What do they really need?" I said, "Some of them," I said "they got low sort of literacy and numeracy levels," I said "What do you, what do you think about that? How can we go and solve this? Can we do anything? That's, that's workable with this?"

At that time, the Commonwealth Department of Education they we're giving out funding for homework centers. So, I said, "Wow," I said, "I'll get hold of this." And there was a program that came out from the school's commission. It was called PPEP, Program Participation and Equity Program it was called, so we went, we went and got funding from that. I didn't even know how to write a submission. But they had a person in the department that came up and helped us.

All of us parents, got all the parents together and we sat down and we got hold of the submission. What do we need? What office requisites we need? What resources do we need

for these kids in this and that? We got em. We went and put all of that thing. We got it, and we rented out a little, at the school that had a vacant sort of classroom they used to, they used to use, that was unused at that time and we used to run homework centres there at night there, after kids had finished sorta school. They come back seven o'clock and we'd have, we'd have a little meal for them that kind of thing.

We'd had a teacher there for them. And then we had the resources for 'em and that, so... We did that. So, you know what? It ended up coming state wide. It came state wide. They said, "Well, we need one up here. We need one and Lonnie, Launceston. We need one in Queenstown. We need one in Hobart."

Later on, come up with a mentoring program. I saw that I got an idea about that. We started our mentoring program. And it was a mentoring program that was to train the mentors. And the best mentors there were the parents.

I used to go into the high school to speak with the teacher and I said, "Look," especially with the student support services people, I'd say, "Look we need, we need a do you know." I said, "I've got an idea," I said, "Do you know anything about mentoring programs?" I said, "I'm looking for one. Do you know anything about I don't have clue but I've got an idea how it works." Because I had been looking on the internet about it. I said, anyhow they said, "You know what?" they said, "It's your lucky day." I said, "What?" they said, "We've got one." I said, "Look, I want to do it for our Aboriginal students and this Aboriginal parents and this and that."

So, we went and modified their program and I said, "And another thing, I want on your modification," I said, "I want to have some I want to have the people or the parents or the teacher aides that go through this," I said, "I want them to get some accreditation. That are going to be recognized in TAFE or the Australian teaching them, you know training kind of authority." They said, "Yeah, done."

NW

I also see now that you also have this, you know huge interest in or work with puppeteering. Explain how you got into that.

LP

Well, I got into that through, what do you call it, Tableland Folk Festival. They got their, my cousin, my cousin used to give welcome the country there all the time. Before I came up when I was still in Tassie.

So, when I come up see I just, after I retired see I worked with the education department there until I retired so I put in about 24 years there. And before I come up here 2013.

So anyhow, I went, I went to this meeting because he said, "Cous', this is how we give Welcome to Country cous'." I said, "Look," I said, "Yeah," I said I said, "I just come and support you cous'," I said, "You get up and do," because he, he had the gift of the gab I didn't. He just come up, he can go like that. I'll be saying, "ahhh ahh," you know. Hum and harring. Anyhow, he come up he showed this is how the ropes this is how we do it so,

Anyhow many years later my cous' he, you know, he's passed on now he passed on a couple years. So, I've sort of take, that's where I've taken over the welcome to country kind

of thing for him there, and only difference is I say it in language and the people there they're the most, I know how to say it. They're the most sort of understanding or reciprocal kind of people that I've ever come across.

They just want they're mad on Aboriginal culture. They want to, they want to expand on it. They want to educate the rest of the community. They want to be part of it. And that's how I worked in. So what we did they, we were talking and then they said, "Look," they said, "how is probably the best way we can, we can, we can go and promote or have cross-cultural create, cross-cultural awareness?" And then they come up, they's thinking, thinking thinking. Hey, there's a bloke in Melbourne. He makes puppets and he works, he works with the community. He works, he's worked with every probably Indigenous community in the world mind you. Been to China everywhere. And he knows about the different cultural kind of protocols too. He's very respectful. The funny thing about it, he's Italian. He's Italian. And, but he's such a very knowledgeable kind of bloke but he's... You know I can't speak more highly of the because he just he just the right bloke for what he's doing anyhow he's the bloke, he virtually makes those puppets himself.

He come up here and made his, he went and said to the Folk Festival people. He said, "Look," he said, "this is how we make the puppets." So, he went made and we went and had a look when he was making. Because he made it, this place called the Red Sheds here. He made it. He made it in there. A big, big Red Shed. He made it in there. So, we went there and he went and made the puppet there and the we went out and then we went out, we went out talking.

When Folk Festival, we went and opened and first of all, we got him walking around to the people. With the people. And we said we need we need this puppet to do something. How is he going to create this self-awareness?

So, what we did was we said, what about all this place here's got the name of trees. Yanggaburru. Yungaburra is named after a tree and there's all tree streets here. So, we said, "Well, why don't we do a mock version of naming these, giving Aboriginal names to these streets. So, we did, that's how we, that's how the big puppet was used as a cultural cross cultural kind of interpreter if you want to say it or what. We used him because it was coming from him. It wasn't coming from anybody else. So, we thought that was the best sort of impartial way of imparting knowledge, cultural knowledge.

NW

And how was that then, by the community, how do they take that from the community?

LP

Well I think they were really a bit dumbfounded at the start but they did accept it. Even though they didn't know what was going on. They were very receptive to the idea. But just steady, steady because I think that we've got to realize that there's all different cultures and most of the culture here really relates around like, like it's still a little English Village. So, we have gradually got to go in and say, "Hey, people, there's other groups. We were here first." But put it in such a way that it's meaningful. So that's what we're working towards at the moment.

NW

And what are some of the street names that you changed?

LP

Streets names we got Cedar Street, that's the dulnbilay that, that one is and there's Penda Street, that's jun jun. There's fig street there's banba. Beech Street is bariiny. There's a street

up here, goes past the school. I don't know what the name of the street is, but I know the thing, the name for that is we call it, marrgany [Maple]. This is a local fauna. So we've got the traditional language names for the local fauna. So, platypus, call it ngunba, Turtle, bajigal and black brim, gulgulu. We've got a blue green, which I never knew existed, but I did see it, blue green tree snake, gurrumugul.

So, we got birds our, traditional language name for those bird scrub turkey is wawun, kookaburra, gurrungga, stone curlew galgaman, peaceful dove, guludu and then another thing we've got the language name for the streets here now, I got 'em.

So the Queensland Maple is marrgany. So that's Maple Street. Cedar Street, the white cedar dulnbilay, and Penda Street junjun, and Beech Street is bariiny.

There you go. Probably only thing that I've got to say is that before I came up in 2013, lady from University of Newcastle, Leanne Holt, Leanne Holt and she come over and she interviewed, she interviewed me as a member of the, past member of the NAEC.

So, we got a book out. We do have a book out. But at that time that I got interviewed I didn't know how to spell dulgubarra, because it's spelt different name, we used to spell it as the way we used to say. Say, the proper way is D u l g u b a r r a. That is the proper way. But we used to say d u l g u d u l g a b u double r u, because we used to say burru like let's say Yungaburra see. That's how you pronounce it but if we said Yungaburra it would be burru. Because the 'u' sounds like an 'o.' Very, I know there's only three vowels to know, but it can get very confusing. That's why we use the 'a' see b a double r a ba rah barra.

NW

I really want to get sort of a last final message from you. What are some of the things that you you know, after all the things that you told us about your you know your family history the your cultural and what you did is that you know as young kids growing up and working and stuff. Is there something that you want to impart any special message for future generations for you know, the young ones here.

LP

Yeah, well the one I want to think is, one of the main things is probably education is probably one of the main things. From there we can get out a lot of things out of education there. They need to, there are, what they have to remember, that we in our younger days like on the NAEC we set up things for them. Those things that we set up on the NAEC, that's how they're here now. They're here now. Teachers and all of that we, where they go and they can go and access, there's an entry type of level that they can go in before they get into Uni and all of this this type of thing there's Abstudy, there's all of that, type of stuff, but what they need to really remember is, be proud of their culture, and never forget that and learn as much of their language as they can because they got to retain that. You lose that you lose everything Because that you, that is connected to land and country. Never ever forget and always in always respect your country. You've got to start that so you can respect your own people. And listen to what your old people are saying to you. Listen to them no matter what race them old people are from, whether their thing, because they're going to be taught from different classrooms with from different sort of elderly type of types of people who wish, that are imparting their knowledge to them also. They need to take that that that's just only a stepping stone from here to here and that helps them up here, if they want to get up here. To try and learn, to learn as much as they can from their literacy and numeracy levels. They really need to do that. That is going to be important. If they're going to work in in a more technological kind of area like computers and whatever, they need to have a good sort of knowledge about how, how of numeracy. It's just as simple as that and if they want to become writers, if they want to become writers, actors or

whatever, or journalists, they got to know how to write. They've got to know. So, they can so they can do that. That's probably the best thing but the main thing is language. You got to retain your language. It's gotta be a starting point.

NW

Well Uncle Laurie, thank you very much for sharing, you know your history and you know, you know your stories and your personal history is it's been an honour, you know talking to you today and thank you so much for sharing.

LP

Yeah. Thank you for sort of coming here and having the time to sort of record it.

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