# Aboriginal Community Leaders Interviews - Transcript

Question 7 – What effects will learning an Aboriginal Language have?

**Bruce Pascoe:** We can remember, and we can value it and be proud of it, and our kids today should not be shame of using Language, they should not be shame of standing up for their history. But the fact is that Aboriginal people had a very viable culture, a very viable economy and the world does not know it. The only people who are going to stick up for it are Aboriginal people, and the only people who we can count on to do it for the next forty years are kids, children now, we have to teach them to be proud, really proud. That’s the way I found my way back into culture, through Language, and I must… I’m so much in debt to the elders, who took me into their homes and…let me sit down there with a cup of tea…listen to their stories.

**The Late Tandop David Tournier:** Look it would be great to get some, look I’d love to get to the kids, especially you know the Aboriginal kids within our community…to really look at Language, because it really does reinforce who they are. It makes them a bit more forthright too if you know what I mean, they, they tend to you know, ‘I can speak the language, look at me’, you know, that sort of thing and I think that’s great.

**Dr Esme Bamblett:** I think it’s important that Language is used in everyday usage in schools, such as in PE when they, you know, for those action words and such as the halls and you know, all that sort of thing because I think what that will do is validate the Language as an important part of the school, important part of the curriculum… it will validate Aboriginal people as important to the history of the area, it will also… get the kids to, it will encourage kids to go further, to look at Language development, and to think about other words, you know, other than English, what other words are being used, what other Aboriginal words could be used, I think that will make kids think about those things, and I think that’s important.

Aboriginal culture I think, I would like to see that it is a really important part of schools because it is the culture of this land. If you go anywhere else in the world you’re not going to get it. This is the land that Aboriginal culture comes from and I think this is what schools have to really come to terms with that it’s an important part of their heritage of Australia. If you’re really include Aboriginal culture as an important ingredient in the whole school curriculum as part of it, then I think you’re going to get to all the kids having an understanding about this country… the stories about this country, we don’t get told, in the schools there’s myths and legends, and you can pick this myth or that myth or whatever, but you don’t get to feel how the story connects to the country, and that’s what we need, we need to connect story to country, to the people, to where we are, and I think when, when schools get that, then I think we’re going to be really culturally inclusive, and that is something that I would, that’s the vision I’d have for Australia, you know in fifty years’ time.

Now the Language course that we’ve got is a very much a cultural course, very much so, you’re not only teaching about Language, and at the end of the course people will not know how to speak an Aboriginal language as such, but they will know about Aboriginal languages, about all the different languages and about how important languages were to people, and I think that’s what we have to understand and realise and incorporate that culture and language are the same.

**Geraldine Atkinson:** It’s so important because it’s what, if, if, if children learn about you know, if what, if what you’re teaching in schools, what students are seeing, their, their…their culture is being respected… and nurtured but then they have the ability to, to learn to feel… at ease and comfortable in those settings as well, that they’ll feel that they actually own a place there as well. If that’s what schools and childcare centres and kindergartens are going to do for our kids, and if they see that then…then they’ll feel welcomed.

**Richard Kennedy:** Going back to…me learning the process of going through Language… and the way we did it, it was it changed me in the way that it probably gave me more self-esteem…more belief in myself as and also the extra link of identity…you know, always knew that I was Indigenous but this is an extra link to, to link you back to your past…particularly when some of the source of the language we studied and used was… recorded by a linguist…of my great uncle Walter speaking it and, and that the really amazing thing about that is when you hear him speak then you understand what he’s saying. When I first heard it I never knew a word of what he was saying…so that was a huge change, and the confidence boost and the other side of things that I found is that the people that we were doing it with… that the, particularly one young person in the group… her, her change in confidence and belief in herself changed so dramatic of the period of time in, in, in the three years of being with her…doing the language, and just that confidence helped her grow, get on in life much better than what you expect.

Since we started reclaiming it probably the most important thing that we’ve done with it is doing actually Welcome to Countries in Language on your own country and… it’s a powerful medium and very, very powerful in regards to when you talk to outsiders and… again with the Language when we did a presentation at the World Indigenous Conference in 2009 I think it was,… the difference in, in, in the way that you are perceived by people changes. It is really a confidence boost tying to where you belong…who you belong with…and it gives you probably to me, it gave me another connection to say yes I do belong here and this is my country, I’m not from overseas, Europe, I’m not… a migrant that’s come over the last two hundred fifty years to this country.

Language has affected the, the, my, my own family, myself, my daughter, my two daughters have actually learnt the language and…my granddaughter who is turning one at the end of this week is actually…understanding the language because it’s been spoken to her and about her and she is picking up sounds…of the traditional language which will… in the long run probably help her in her education because she will be at least bilingual.

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