# Aboriginal Community Leaders Interviews - Transcript

Question 5 - Where did you find information on your Language?

**Bruce Pascoe:** Well, I started to learn the Wathaurong Language because it was closest to the Boon Wurrung Language, which my grandmother should have spoken. The Boon Wurrung at that stage hadn’t been reclaimed, so I started to learn Wathaurong because I lived on country at that stage and I wanted to be able to talk to the country and the only way to do it was through Language.

**Diane Singh:** Well, I’m sort of a descendant of four traditional owner groups, and there’s dictionaries out from those groups. Well it’s Wiradjuri from New South Wales through my great grandparents. Well all, ya know, through the great grandparents, of course. Of course Lee wrote a, she’s been working with one of the linguists to put out the Taungurung dictionary.

My grandfather and his sister were interviewed in the 1960s by Luise Hercus for the Wemba Wemba dictionary. And of course my grand aunt and her family were all instrumental in getting the Yorta Yorta dictionary together.

So I notice when I look at them there are a few similarities in some of the words. So I guess that’s a start for us anyway. There are members of the communities who do go out and teach the Language. I know Aunty Zeta goes out and teaches YortaYorta, at, up at Worawa she was teaching it and she goes out to Malmsbury.

I became aware of my own Language, or one of my own Languages that have been handed down by my descen-, by my ancestors through the, first through the tapes. When I knew that it had been actually taped, and I went and did, and like I said I went up to Morwell and did the Cert III. We were able to do it sort of actually online and we went and took some classes.

Then I went to a couple of Language conferences, and I purchased Uncle Stan Grant’s Wiradjuri from New South Wales. And I purchased the dictionary and some of the Language lessons and the books and workshops, and I’ve sort of sat down and sort of listened to them and tried to do them, but then you sort of thing well who else is going to be speaking Wiradjuri, you know. There’s no one here at, at, you’ve gotta have someone to sort of speak to and talk to.

**The Late Tandop David Tournier:** Well, I suppose Language has been a part of my life, all of my life from, you know, from a little fella. Mum being South Australian, Ngarrindjeri, she could speak her Language. Unfortunately, she wasn’t able to teach me, although I did learn the odd two, the odd one or two words, and normally it’s the swear words or the naughty words that you learn first.

But you know, I wasn’t aware I suppose at that early age the significance of it because it was there. You know, we didn’t speak it fluently, mainly because Mum wasn’t allowed to, and I learned, later, later that she could actually speak her Language fluently, but she, her problem was she had no one to talk to, and she’d only meet up with those people once in a blue moon who could speak with her.

And it used to be quite funny, you’d go and listen to them talk and they’d just like this [hand gesture], flat out. And you could get to learn other words along with it because you’d hear your cousins and your brothers and your sisters saying it and you’re asking them, oh yeah okay.

And then when I started working I suppose, as a teacher aide in the 70’s up in Swan Hill, we sort of, looking at ways of teaching kids cultural stuff within the, within the schools and within the curriculum, and then Language started to come along as part of, you know, simple words like *hello, goodbye*, simple words like that, animal names.

But, you know, they’d tell us the odd one or two words. Because of their upbringing, they weren’t allowed to speak the Language and, I suppose, as they got older, they didn’t think it was important.

**The late John "Uncle Sandy" Atkinson:** When I started out in, in, in Language you know, it was a fair while ago now and. We, the only Languages we, our Languages were all in the archives and. So we had to, that’s where we had to had to go and start, you know. And it, it was amazing, it’s a very good, it’s a very good lesson.

I started, I, I started in the Language, you know, over twenty years ago. When I came to Shepparton to live, you know full time, that was, we were sort of reaching out to some cultural values to, to give us some foundation to work from. So we ended up building Australia’s first Indigenous museum, you know, and I, I designed it and done all of those sorts of things.

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