# Aboriginal Community Leaders Interviews - Transcript

Question 2 - Who should learn an Aboriginal Language?

**Bruce Pascoe:** So I’m saying to the kids, learn your history. Learn what your great grandparents did. Language is very important for everyone, but, with Aboriginal Languages, I think it is very, very important for Aboriginal people to learn it first. So that might mean there’s a transitional period of a decade, and if that’s the way it has to be, well, that’s the way it has to be.

**Diane Singh:** I think, with children, I think our kids should be taught first. They take it home to their families, and then that’s up to them where they want to speak and who they want to teach. I don’t see anything being wrong with it, because I mean, we all learn English together, and, if we live in someone else’s country, we sort of pick up the Language.

But I think for us, because we’ve lost so much, we’re still sort of coming to terms in, you know, in, in revitalising our Language, in finding it and going out there. We have to learn ourselves first and then go out and we can teach our parents, our, you know, the other members of the family.

And then eventually, you know, once we become fluent in it, then we can sort of, if people want to pick it up, because I mean people up the top, I mean have been teaching Aboriginal Languages to non-Aboriginal people for years.

**The Late Tandop David Tournier:** Teach all kids, irrespective of they’re Aboriginal, green, purple, whatever. I get inquiries, requests from schools, and I’ll go and do cultural sessions with those schools or with the classes. Sometimes I’ll have Aboriginal students, sometimes they won’t.

It’s not my job to teach Aboriginal students about their own culture. That’s up to their own family to teach them that I, I think. However, that doesn’t exclude them from my classes or anything. In fact I get them to help me, which makes my life a lot easier, and it makes it better for them because, you know, it makes them feel proud that they’re part of the teaching of their culture.

**Dr Esme Bamblett:** I think it’s important for all children to do the Languages unit, I think, because, not only all children, Aboriginal children as well, I think there’s not enough history being handed down as it used to be. So I think all kids would benefit from it, and I think all students, it’s important that all students in the schools have access to Aboriginal Languages.

It is the Language of this country and it is about the history of the country. It is about the, the cultural heritage of the country, and, as students learn that, they’ll learn about the country we live in as well.

I think there is a fear among community members that the young people will know more Language than them. I don’t think the fear is that young Aboriginal people will learn more Language, I think it’s that the wider community will have more Language and that would be hard. I think there’s a fear too that the wider community will have the Language and the Koori kids won’t. I think they’re real fears and I think they’re justified.

But I think that schools can turn that around and incorporate community into the Language teaching, so that it’s a holistic thing. I think, as I said at the start, Language is culture, so you can’t have one without the other. You can’t just teach a Language over to the side and not be teaching culture. So when you bring community in, then you’re actually bringing in the culture where the Language belongs.

**Geraldine Atkinson:** I believe that it should be taught to all children. I think that it, I think that, if it’s taught to all children, then all those children that are mixing with our Aboriginal children will only gain respect. That the racism that exists, that we can break that down. And the way we do that is you, is that you have to do that with children, you know, we have to start, and if we can start at that, at the very earliest, with those children that are participating in those classrooms with our Aboriginal kids, are able to do that then we will, it will, you know, there will be that knock on effect that later on, further on and further on, as they grow, that they’ll understand and respect Aboriginal culture and it will have its rightful place.

**The late John "Uncle Sandy" Atkinson:** If you look at me I suppose you could easily think I’m something else and, somebody else and so on. And you know, and rightly so I’m, I’m, I’m four, four generations away from my tribal mother and so on, you know. And so here’s the thing that we, we’re looking at now at generation that are five and six generations away from you know, that point. And, and so they’re not going to look like Indigenous people or, you know, traditional people anymore.

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