

APPENDICES

**Appendix 1: Permission to Conduct Research in Schools (NSW Department of
School Education)**

Received 6/7/92

APPLICATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT

PUBLIC SCHOOL

(1) Applicant - Geoffrey Munns

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(2) Degree and Institution - Ph.D. in Education,
University of New England. Supervisor - Dr Elizabeth
Hatton. Department of Social Cultural and Curriculum
Studies.

(3) Project - *TEACHING RESISTANT PUPILS*

Towards Non-Reproductive Education

(4) Background / Rationale / Purpose

The study is situated at School. I have been a
teacher there for nine years, the first eight as
Assistant Principal, and this year as Relieving
Principal.

The school serves a multicultural population, and has a
significant (more than 50 %) Aboriginal student group.

The school is characterised by the students' resistances
to school, to its curriculum and to their teachers. This
occurs on many levels and in many ways. There is also a
low academic level of achievement for many of the
students, particularly the Aboriginal group.

The research aims to look at the intersection of these
dual concerns of student resistance and low academic
standard. Its focus will be classroom practice as a joint
and dynamic construction between teachers and students.

The issue is that the pedagogical practices of teachers in schools like these may be contributing to the educationally disadvantaged position of the students. This seems to be most apparent and severe for the Aboriginal student population. A close examination of these practices has the potential to make a significant contribution about more effective pedagogy for schools serving similar communities.

The problem which this research addresses is to discover the extent to which the teachers' pedagogical practices in this school setting contribute to the educational advantage or disadvantage of the students.

My literature review has looked at research into inequality, student oppositional behaviour, and class, ethnicity and gender as determinants of educational success.

The major theoretical perspective has been the ethnographic work from Birmingham's Centre For Contemporary Cultural Studies, and research which followed in that tradition.

My theoretical focus has been narrowed to the *Resistance Theory* of Paul Willis.¹ An important aspect of Resistance Theory has been Willis's notion of *cultural production*, an active process which reacts to the perceived conditions of existence, and links the neighbourhood

world to the wider structures of society. Willis saw that cultural production in the working class school of his research manifested itself as resistance to school, and this lay at the heart of the school's role in reproducing the social position of the students.

By contrast my research looks at the teachers' as well as the students' role in this process. The teachers' practices have not been the main focus of research in this area, although their roles are vital.

(5) Design and Procedures

Data will be collected qualitatively.

Methods employed for data collection will include:

- * Participant observation in classrooms, the school and the community. This will be undertaken in the course of my work as Principal of the school, a role which involves constant student welfare. I will not be changing the work I do in order to collect data.
- * Interviews with members of staff.
- * Interviews with community members.
- * Examination of the school's educational documents, to show movements in curricula, teaching ideology and student learning practices.

It is important to note that this research is conducted from an *insider* perspective, and this will provide the opportunity for greater insight into the school.

(6) Documentation

The ethnographic data will be recorded retrospectively on a nightly basis, again not impinging on my school work.

Interviews will be conducted informally using a tape recorder. No schedule will be used.

(7) Implications for the school, teachers and pupils.

- * School will be the only school site for data collection. Its real name will not be mentioned.²
- * The ethnographic data involves all classes (K - 6) and teachers. No real names of any people will be used.
- * All interviews will be conducted in out of school time,
- * Interviewees will have the opportunity to see and respond to the transcripts of interviews.
- * Participants will be able to look at the thesis or associated article before submission or publication.

¹ Willis, P. (1977) *Learning To Labour*. Farnborough, Saxon House.

Willis, P. (1981) "Cultural Production is Different from Cultural Reproduction is Different from Social Reproduction is Different from Reproduction." *Interchange*. 12. (2-3).

Willis, P. (1983) "Cultural Production and Theories of Reproduction." *Race, Class and Education*. Barton, L. and Walker, S. (Eds) Croon Helm, London.

² I refer to Redfern as Greytown in all of my writing about the school.

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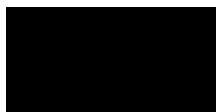
Dear Mr Munns,

Your research proposal has now been considered by the Regional Research Committee.

Approval has been given for you to approach Principals of the school or schools nominated in your submission, seeking cooperation in the study you proposed. Teacher and student participation must be voluntary and must be at the school's convenience. The participation of the school is at the discretion of the Principal.

On behalf of the Research Committee, I would like to wish you success with your research. We would be pleased to receive a report on its completion.

Yours faithfully,



John Ward
Director, Educational Programs and Planning

17/8/92

**Appendix 2: Permission to Conduct Research in Schools (Aboriginal Education
Consultative Group)**

Permission was granted by the local branch of the Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG) for this research. When Koori students became the specific research focus (described in Chapter 2) I attended a meeting of the AECG held in the local community. The meeting was attended by community members, the Aboriginal Education Consultant for the region and teachers from nearby schools. I explained the purpose of the research and how the data was going to be collected.

As well, Aboriginal people were consulted before I was given permission for the research by the NSW Department of School Education (see Appendix 1).

Appendix 3: Selection of Interview Transcripts

Teacher Interview - David Wheeler (second interview, September 1993).

- David: I do think of Greytown a fair bit - in some ways I'm glad to be away from it.
 (Goes through list to see who he thinks will make it in education.)
 XXXX¹ - oh well, she'll go well, she's focused.
 (Pause) XXXX'll struggle but he'll bounce along, but more like on rocks.
 XXXX'll be fine, XXXX'll be fine, XXXX, XXXX - she's bright, XXXX will be fine.
 XXXX's lost already, she really needs a lot of support, a lot of attention.
 XXXX - he's lost, he really needs a lot of attention.
 XXXX has got a lot of potential, lovely personality and all that and I think she's got a desire to learn.
 Those three, XXXX, XXXX and XXXX need a lot of support.
 XXXX - he needs support, if he's not, he'll get through the system but if people think he's all right he'll get left behind.
 XXXX - oh she's fine, she's got personality, intelligence. and enough inner motivation or desire.
 XXXX needs a lot of help, she's got a lot of desire to succeed but hasn't got many skills.
 XXXX - boy, oh boy she needs a lot of support.
 XXXX - yeah he'll be fine.
 XXXXr - yeah he needs a lot of support, especially emotional support, but also his skills are lacking.
 XXXX - well, she'll be all right.
 XXXX needs support.
 XXXX - she's bright. she's very bright, she has so much potential that girl. if people sort of just put her in a, she's going all right she'll lose out because they could take much more out of her.
 XXXX needs a lot of support, she's bubbly, expressively she's good. She's shy, but when she gets to know someone she talks what she thinks. But her skills are lacking - though they're not lacking like back here with XXXX or XXXX or XXXX or XXXX.
 XXXX - the only thing is more social.
 XXXX - another kid, he's not like XXXX cause he comes to school all the time, so he gets some support from the school environment, but he needed a lot of support, if he couldn't do something he couldn't stand it, he had to succeed all the time, so he needed structured lessons, where he could go one step, "I've succeeded."
 XXXX - Got heaps of ability, heaps of future, great future, except there's a lot of emotional instability there.
- Geoff: Just general thoughts about your teaching there last year.
- David: Last year I enjoyed it a lot, there's a challenge there but it was more fun than challenge. But even though it was a lot of fun you realised there were certain people in the class that you didn't see too often, and you were glad they just walked in the door. But at the same time you knew that they may come one or two days and you don't know when you're going to see them again. So the expectations are there and the planning wasn't centred around them, it was more around the kids that were there constantly, like XXXX who needed a lot of support, or XXXX. You always had to be aware of how far each kid could go - I

¹ Names of children are hidden in this transcript. In the thesis, when data is included from interviews which mentions names of children, a pseudonym is employed.

think I was more aware in that class, you're always aware in every class you teach, but because they're such little kids and they're only in 1st or 2nd class, and I really enjoyed it, I was more aware of how far certain kids could go, like in the area of pushing them academically, pushing them emotionally, and in the area of discipline. And if you went too far you lost it, it's sort of like a bang when you're puffing up a balloon. I'm not just talking about in discipline, in every aspect. I suppose that's one thing I didn't say that last time I talked to you - I think being at Greytown you're more aware of that, how far you can go with kids. How far you can take them in the areas I've just mentioned. You become very aware how far you can push or entice or demand or whatever. And if you went over the line, and it was a very clear distinction, like with XXXX, so clear, other kids, XXXX, you could just push them as far as you wanted - but there was a good group in there that there were limits.

Geoff: That would be a real difference to your other teaching?

David: Well that's in every class, I think, in every school, but I think at Greytown it became more and more apparent, because it became noticeable in my own awareness of that situation, maybe I was more aware of it. I think because some of the reactions like, let's take XXXX, you push him too far in the structure you've created, and if he didn't like that structure, whether it was academic or social he was gone. And not necessarily gone out of the room but gone! From you - your communication channels broke down. I think being at Greytown in some ways helps you develop your communication with the kids. I think that's essential. It's very easy to go the other way, though, and say, "Right this is it. Either you follow along or that's it, I don't care about you." That's quite easy sometimes to think that.

Geoff: How would kids react to that?

David: Well some kids just do it, like a lot of kids, just follow along like sheep.

Geoff: What about the others?

David: Well they don't. So that opens up, after a while if you try that, say they've been really naughty or something, even when you think they deserve it, it doesn't work. So you've got to open the channels up, you've got to be aware of how far you can take the kids. By being at Greytown that has opened that awareness up to me.

Geoff: You think it helps you to be a better teacher?

David: Yes, for sure. I'm not teaching now, but if I did go back to it, it tunes that aspect of your teaching skills that you need to develop - how far you can take a kid, working a class as a whole, but also looking at individuals. It's very easy to try and bring the whole class along, and it's good to do that, as they go as a group, but you've sometimes got to stop the whole and let a few try and catch up.

Geoff: One of the things that I pulled out of your interview was that it made you put in more.

David: If not the amount of time that I did planning and the academic type thing, I think that when I was on the north side I did as much as that, but I think maybe in some ways on an emotional level and on that awareness thing that there are kids in here that can't be stretched too far or pushed along too far or cornered too much and that became much clearer. So in that area you put a lot more in, watching the kids, making sure what you say doesn't cause too much disruption. You maybe put more emotion in it - that's why you get so easily tired.

- Geoff: Another thing you said was about thinking short term.
- David: Obviously long term goals are good but as a teacher at Greytown I was never really even concerned with the kids' next year. Especially I don't even consider, because it's a 1/2 class how they're going to go in High School.
- Geoff: Why not?
- David: Because you're dealing with now, right now. I can't make predictions how those kids are going to react in education down the track. My work is to deal with the kids now, give them as much as I possibly can in the area of curriculum, in the area of social behaviour, because I still maintain that school is more of a social reaction.
- Geoff: Any school?
- David: Yes I think any school. When we're talking infants/primary the 3Rs and all that are very important but I maintain that, especially after working at Greytown, that's helped support how I feel about it. School - we have to try to get them to read and write and all those things, maths, and get their concepts, I'm not doubting that, but overriding all that is that kids come to school, they're with their own peers, they're talking to each other, they're playing with each other, they're moving along together. I think that's really important - that's why I'm not that concerned with the future. I can't have much influence with them in the future, but I can influence them now, or at least create a situation where they get some foundation, especially in the early years.
- Geoff: Do you think the nature of the school and the kids made you think more, pushed you more into that present orientation.
- David: Yeah I think so but it's also something from me. But yeah, I think so, as a teacher.
- Geoff: I'm wondering whether it's happening with other teachers as well.
- David: I get the feeling, one thing I could say with Greytown is, and I suppose you hear it now with a lot of teachers and education, all these exams and tests, one thing at Greytown it really helped me clarify, I don't really believe in exams and tests, I don't mind giving them, just as a guide and all that, but at a young age, the infants and middle primary, they're just a waste of time, because the emphasis should be on the social development of children, I really believe that. That's not to leave behind reading and all that. And because you are at a place like Greytown, it is different to other schools in a lot of ways, because the school is so much geared towards success at certain academic levels, but at a place like Greytown you need to put social development on par with academic development.
- Geoff: It almost became **the** most important part of the curriculum.
- David: Yeah, and I don't think we need to justify that really in the sense that that doesn't make it a lesser school or a lesser goal, I think it's a great goal. And that helped me being at Greytown to realise that social development in the early years is more important. They need that support, that environment where they can communicate with each other, with adults. And that's one good thing that was at Greytown that was strong while I was there - if something blew out of proportion the teachers didn't get blown out of proportion. If a fight was on, like it wasn't the end of the world, like "All right, we'll get your parents up and we're going to expel you". Everyone realised the situation, somethings were quite blown out, but generally it was kept in proportion. I think that was one thing that came out of Greytown and you had to consider that. It was like what I was saying that in the classroom you can't stretch them too far or push them in a corner - the same with the school as a whole.

- Geoff: Did you ever find with some of your lessons that you had to back off or back out?
- David: Or yeah.
- Geoff: Which lessons were the hardest ones to give.
- David: Reading. It's very hard to teach.
- Geoff: Was it harder to teach at Greytown?
- David: Maybe a little bit more frustrating. I think because you've got kids like XXXX and XXXX, and you start at the beginning of the year and at the end there's not much development. And I found that difficult to contend with.
- Geoff: What sort of lessons were easy?
- David: Good maths lessons, (hand) writing - and even that was sometimes a bit difficult.
- Geoff: If you had to back out of a lesson, say if it was just not working, what were the sort of things that you'd end up doing. On the days of chaos.
- David: Music. Read a story. Play a spelling game - so you're getting something in but it was a game. Play a game. Play even *heads down thumbs up*. When I did RFF I had a whole stack of games, heaps and heaps of them. So if it got that bad I'd just resort to maybe change the lesson, make it something else. But very rarely that happened. I remember the first class I had that I backed out of many a lesson.
- Geoff: What sort of lessons?
- David: Heaps. Sometimes switch the lesson from reading to Maths. You see Maths is a little more structured, it's got it within it. It didn't happen that much last year. I'd go to another lesson if I had to. I'd try and do another lesson. But quite often with the little ones all I remember was if something was like, some kids have finished a lot quicker than others it was just like getting a bit too monotonous waiting around too long and the other kids were not handling it like XXXX and XXXX - you'd say "All right, let's come on. Sit on the carpet. What'll we do now?" (laughs) - ask the kids what they want to do.
- Geoff: What would they usually say?
- David: Music, play games, some kids would say Maths, some kids would say reading. That was just spontaneous - something's not working, all right what'll I think of now?
- Geoff: Did you ever feel like it got you down?
- David: Last year I'd say nearly no, but the first year, yes, that was incredibly hard, it was very difficult - I was different then, I wasn't as flexible. I felt rigid in my teaching.
- Geoff: Did you prepare safe lessons?
- David: Yeah, sometimes. Not music, no, no, I wouldn't use music - sometimes we couldn't. That's where it didn't work. That year you couldn't do things like music, like art, drama. Way too risky. Way too risky. So I'd rely on the maths and the spelling, reading. Blackboard, or the sheets. photocopies, whole group. Small groups? Too risky. Sometimes it worked. Story writing's another good thing to get into, there's a few little things you can do with story writing - one kid starts and the other kid finishes. But last year's group, that was different.
- Geoff: I wonder what's considered to be the most important, control or academic progress for your kids?
- David: Good question. The school itself, obviously the teachers had to have some control, there's no doubt about that, and the curriculum needs to be maintained. But in a school like that everyone feels like they're contributing, the teachers and the kids are contributing. But the teachers have got to show the kids that they are giving direction. Kids do like structure, even the wildest kid, they like to see a teacher who gives the real impression they know what they're doing, they know where they're going but, that's not quite control, that's just showing

that you're a teacher, you've had experience and you know what you're doing. At the same time it's better that everyone feels that they're contributing to the growth of the class, for themselves, when the individual feels like they're contributing to their own bit even though they're listening to a teacher and the teacher's directing it. That the group as a class feels like they're all together, teacher and kids, and then as a school. It's important the teachers feel like they're together - if the teachers in the staffroom aren't together, aren't functioning as a unit, that influences the school.

Geoff: A social unit?

David: Academical, social, philosophical - but even with the philosophical people can have different viewpoints as long as the channels of communication are open.

Geoff: What do you reckon the philosophy of the school was?

David: My perception of the whole thing? It was like (long pause) - look after the kids basically. Think of the community, that was important, but don't let yourself slip on the curriculum. You look out after the kids, when you look after the kids the community thing is intrinsic in it, but don't forget about the curriculum, cause the community doesn't want you to forget about the curriculum. A lot was about survival, teacher and kids, but as a whole I think, a lot of the time for certain individuals was just survival. But as a whole I think the balance of looking after the kids and the curriculum, without pushing the curriculum too hard. But give it the little direction it needed. I think that was maintained, pretty well. I think sometimes in that first class I had though it wasn't.

Geoff: Do you think we had to soften up the curriculum too much? Compromise?

David: Compromise? No, no, no. That could be a way, I don't like the idea of compromise. I like to make a decision am I going to use this part of the curriculum or not. And sometimes I said no I'm not. But another point which came out clearer in Greytown, you had to make decisions, and sort of had to stand by your decisions. And evaluate it too to make sure, there is a certain curriculum, there's guide-lines, that's basically all they are, and there's certain things I just wouldn't do with the curriculum. I remember making decisions many times, especially in the area of Maths ...

Geoff: What was the basis of your decisions? What I can do with these kids?

David: What I can do with these kids, and what resources we had. Sometimes I thought it just wasn't needed, not applicable, let's pass it, it wasn't that much value. You can only do so much, you know, and there's so much to do. There's so much to do on the curriculum aspect, there's so much to do on the social aspect, and emotional, and all that hidden curriculum stuff. I think the hidden curriculum in the sense of, I mean it wasn't hidden because we made it an open thing, that we need to think about the kids.

Geoff: And if you didn't think about the kids, then you probably weren't going to have any curriculum anyway.

David: Well what's the point of it? There's no point. I agree. If you don't think about the kids, what value has the curriculum?

Geoff: But they'd make sure you that wouldn't get your curriculum.

David: Yeah they would.

Geoff: Because if they didn't want it?

David: Looking after the kids I found is not a hard thing, it can be, but it's just things like the kids seem to pick up your feelings towards them. But that's a reality, they start picking up the way you feel about those kids.

the way you speak to them, the way your body language is, I'm sure they pick up on all that. You know they mightn't consciously analyse that and put it all together - but looking after the kids on that level. Listening to them, being fair with them, showing discipline. But the important thing I found in my class was you create boundaries, maybe a bit wider than what I would use in any other class, in the area of how far they could go, what I expect from them. And if then if they stay in those boundaries, the kids operate really good. Classic example which I got from Pat was using that round the class thing, one kid does some reading, one kid does a crossword, you create these boundaries and the kids operate in it. And you give them a little bit of success here and there. But it's all based on knowing your kids maybe a bit more, you've got to be aware, but you can't let it overshadow but you've got to be aware of their home situation. Like XXXX. He'd come in and sleep and I'd be happy for him to sleep under the table.

Geoff: That was an adjustment, wasn't it, sometimes bizarre things happening to us.

David: Sure but even little things like kids walking in late, just strolling into the assembly. That's no big deal but for some people it would be. You've just got to accept that. Because even though it's 1992, because of a lot of Koori kids, the time value still does carry through to a degree with their parents. There's no doubt - but also with the kids. That's not everyone of them. Little things like that you've got to think of. Like I'd know that every day XXXX would walk in half an hour late, that little XXXX with his Mum would cruise in 15 minutes late. That's okay. XXXX with his mum would cruise in at any time - somewhere before recess.

Geoff: That was out of our control but I guess collectively they don't get anywhere near as much sit down, bums on seats time as other kids in other schools.

David: No they don't.

Geoff: They're over there sitting in the corner and they're happy and you've got to let them be happy.

David: Well even if they're not happy but at least they feel there's somewhere they can sit.

Geoff: It would be more important for little XXXX to be sometimes sitting in the corner being happy at school than to push him into a lesson.

David: Yeah, totally, I agree. That's what we tried to do with XXXX, too. I think we all wanted that. All right XXXX, even if you don't want to learn anything, sit in there. Cause kids, like anyone, if they're around other people long enough, who're getting things done, and doing things and working together as a group, they start, the majority of people even if they sit in the corner for ages will desire to be part of that unit that seems to be getting things done. Yeah I agree totally, you've just got to let kids, more so in a school like that, to, ahh, fit in.

Geoff: A couple of things that I've noticed about the kids who came through, a lot of them didn't seem to want to take a risk educationally.

David: I agree, and you'd see it, and it'd go on to Year 6 too. And I think that's why we needed to develop the social aspects - kids are with kids. they're talking, communicating, playing with each other, as long as they can open up with each other, and see kids sometimes going well and other times not going so well, that's why that whole social thing is important, especially in the early days. Then when they can finally start to focus on their school work, they haven't got the sole responsibility of dealing with new things, they can work more together in groups of two or three or four. That's why I really think the school, especially in the early days needs to be a social thing. And you're right, you can see it a lot at Greytown, kids will pull back and are not game to do

anything unless they've got help. And you'd have to say it across the board that a lot of Koori kids are like that - you'd have to say that. And that's why you needed to develop the social aspects with teachers, parents, but also, especially among themselves. That needed developing the whole time.

Geoff: The other thing I suppose there was a political arena.

David: With Koori kids yeah.

Geoff: A lot of them knew, they kind of had an idea what their chances were.

David: They kind of had an idea, maybe some - but I had the feeling from quite a few of them like XXXX (Anglo-Samoan) were quite positive.

Geoff: Did you get the feeling that some had given up, even at an early age, at first class?

David: Some had, yeah, some had given up, totally - Kindergarten, XXXX XXXX, he'd given up.

Geoff: So it was almost all over for them.

David: Yeah, yeah, in a way. That's what I mean special treatment they need, special intervention - it wasn't there. I agree, you're right, there are some kids even at a very, very early age, who come to school, and they're gone, yeah. That doesn't mean that I'm not optimistic for their future, cause they can turn 16 and something can open up, someone might just give them some direction, or something might just open up in their own awareness.

Geoff: But for all intents and purposes educationally they're gone.

David: Or yeah, they're gone. But you've got to, as a teacher, realise that's part of teaching at Greytown, in a way. It's not satisfactory and noone's happy about it, but you've got to sort of steel your heart a little bit maybe - "Gees I hope I don't lose any more" sort of thing. Yeah you're right. I think so. Even though it might not be actually expressed verbally too often, how you feel about this, I think if you got everyone sitting around, I think everyone would say yeah. I feel there are kids with no hope really. We deal with that in your own way. I think maybe that in a school like Greytown that's something you do have to deal with a little bit more maybe, than what you do when working in an upper class school. There's more of them - some of the bigger kids they get round the system, a lot of them use their personality - "I'm not too good at this curriculum stuff but I'm OK" and that's where the school comes in, where the social development aspect is needed. And then when they start thinking, I'm OK, I'm still here, and we emphasise that and a bit more of their self confidence develops and then hopefully it's not too late that's when the intervention needs to be continued. That's when you try to get them into the skills but we need to develop that "I'm all right at the early age" so that they get the skills at the early age and develop, not wait till they're you know. That's a good point.

Geoff: We played a lot of catch up, especially in the primary.

David: Yeah we played a lot of catch up. You notice that by around Year 3, and especially 4 and 5 and 6, a lot of kids have not gone too good academically, but they're still hanging in there, cause they've somehow fitted in, maybe sport or everyone likes them, or their art, or just their personality pushes them through. Some of the Koori kids push through here with "I'm an Aborigine and I've got a right." I think that affected some kids. Or "It's just fun."

Geoff: I often wondered whether we pushed too strong a message about that.

David: I wasn't thinking about social fun, we should have fun, what the hell are we supposed to be living for.

Geoff: We had our special days, our unique days, our Greytown Cup.

David: Kids should have fun, adults, everyone, but that doesn't mean that

- you've still got no responsibilities or ambitions or goals even kids you know, kids know that they want to learn, all those kids know that, if you ask them, "What do you want to do at school?" They'll say "I want to learn to read, to write." Some kids will say "I have to go."
- Geoff: They want to learn to read but it still runs up against the fact that sometimes you can't get them to read, they won't. And that stretched our resources.
- David: Stretched, broke them. There are a lot of kids at that school who need some kind of intervention, someone else to be in there. I mean in some cases there's AERT and all that, but I don't know what the answer is, maybe another person in there. Greytown's only one school, just imagine what's going on in other schools like Greytown.
- Geoff: The decisions I made about my classroom were very much with the kids in mind, whereas at other schools I made the decisions. At Greytown it was what can I do, what am I going to get away with in this room, what's going to keep these guys interested.
- David: I think you do think more like that. At other schools it's generally this is what I'm going to do. At Greytown, definitely, it's if I do this I'll lose. But at the same time though, through a bit of perseverance and endurance, they do surprise you sometimes the kids. You've also got to be aware that you don't underestimate them, you don't form too many set ideas about how they will behave. You're right about the idea you have to be careful because if I do this well this is what's going to happen. but at the same time there were times with that class. when I'd say "Oh fuck it I'm going to do that" and it worked. Highly unpredictable - it was like a little time bomb, ticking away all the time.
- Geoff: Sometimes you thought your day was going to be perfect because you had it prepared and it was a disaster, other days you really weren't looking forward to going to school and you had a top day.
- David: Yeah. or a mixture, morning session's great, afternoon session's lousy. yeah for sure. So you've got to think about flexibility there, it's easy not to have flexibility, but I think in the way you deal with kids and also the in the way you prepare yourself and use the curriculum and your expectations and goals and you also are flexible in what you expect from each individual kid because you never know they might break out and go another step.
- Geoff: What do you reckon it did to you emotionally working there. did it affect you outside?
- David: The first year a lot because of that class I had, but the worst year I had at Greytown was the second year because I was relief from face to face. that was depressing. I'd go home and quite often I'd be physically and mentally drained, exhausted, absolutely exhausted.
- Geoff: Hard to get up for the next day?
- David: Sort of yeah, thinking I've only got 2 more days to go.
- Geoff: Survival.
- David: Yeah it was, that was. And I've been RFF elsewhere - but that was really tough. But last year with my class I really enjoyed it. The first year it was tough but there was some enjoyment out of getting to school early. I like the little ones I never thought that I used to always say I'd never want to do infants. That's one good thing about Greytown it had lot to do with a positive view about infants. Greytown's given me a lot of insight into dealing with little kids. You'd expect certain kids to act in certain ways so you'd start categorising them, "This kid will do this or muck around, this kid won't, this kid's sort of semi good, semi not." You'd start getting on those ways of thinking.
- Geoff: Why?

David: Because some of their behaviour was more extreme than what you would normally expect and sometimes you wouldn't want to handle it again today, and so you would not let situations happen. But it became obvious that it's very easy to think that this kid'll act like that, this kid'll act like this, and this kid'll be naughty, this kid'll be good. It's very easy to do that, and expect that, but it made you at least attempt in your awareness not to do that - you didn't want to really do that. But it came up - and the kids would maybe get away with a bit more than they normally would you'd know they'd explode or really go off, or bolt.

Geoff: Sometimes we weren't really in total control.

David: No sometimes the kids were in control, they were in control and the teacher had to build up the whole force of the authority behind them, then they'd have to come down and the kids would realise that a lot of the times the kids are in control and that directed how you'd soften kids up so you wouldn't have to discipline or you wouldn't have to exhaust yourself in an emotional way. Sometimes that was a bit of a let down, having to do that, but not all the time.

Geoff: You'd put up with more.

David: That caused a bit of burn out too, cause sometimes I'd felt we shouldn't have to put up with this, and as I got to know a few more of the parents too they wouldn't expect you, XXXX for instance. Mum said "Control him, do what you want." Basically she said don't hit him or something. One mother told me I could hit him as much as I liked - "Do what you want, if you want to smack him, smack him." I didn't do that but the parents wanted you to control them but sometimes you'd let them do a little bit more maybe than what you would normally. But at the same time though there's nothing wrong with that. I found that a bit hard because in some ways I'm a bit of a traditionalist in my thinking about schools, but at the same time it does create the idea that just take it as it comes. There's nothing wrong with that, handle it, be flexible. And I think I came out of Greytown more flexible in my teaching and more this idea of take it as it comes. The academic and all that's important but it's not everything - kids still will succeed without a perfect grasp of the curriculum. Take it as it comes, you have to develop that a lot at Greytown, that's a good thing. It's just a matter of where the power is, if you can handle kids having the power in some different form.

Geoff: Sometimes they couldn't handle having it.

David: Well they couldn't and that's where the teachers have to give the guidance and direction, that's the boundaries, create the boundaries, let the kids have as much power in the boundaries as you like, but there are boundaries, that's what schools and teachers are there for, direction, we've got the skill, the knowledge, we're the teachers. Sometimes at Greytown you'd let kids get away with more, you turn a blind eye a few times, recess duty, lunch duty, heaps of times, just little things kids just constantly dropping papers on the ground. Now every so often the school as a staff would get together and say we'll stop all this, but they do it out on the street, their parents do it. It's difficult for kids, swearing for instance, that used to bug me, we were never clear on that aspect. And it grates you that these kids are expressing themselves in this gross way so young and so violently sometimes. Even if they didn't say a swear word, sometimes the way they expressed themselves

was so street wise, so gross, so un innocent like - and you had to cope with that.

Geoff: Frequent emotions I had were I can't believe this and a feeling which came from that was a feeling of helplessness at times - "What can I do, I can't do anything"

David: Exactly, of course, that feeling of helplessness, it's very important not to let that develop too much in a school like Greytown as a whole as a staff. But as an individual that's why you go home exhausted sometimes, bit disappointed. But also when you get in it and stay in it a long time, it wears you down. I was away from it for 6 months, came back this year, it was good I saw these kids again, those innocent little kids. I know it sounds funny but I saw that they were little. After a while you lose that perspective, you're dealing with them all the time, and all this stuff coming at you all the time, and all this grossness all the time, language, expression, and that's not their fault. Violence. And you think "These are kids." And if you step out for a while, then go back in, you see the kids, and they're OK, they're bouncing around. But it doesn't take long to get caught up in it again, I was even there for 2 days and I started getting caught up in it again and you've got to be careful not to. Cause we are role models but it's important not to put your own gaze on them too much, like we come from, especially the Koories, and the Asians, we come from a different way of life. But you should still show dignity and cool headedness.

Geoff: Wasn't always easy, was it?

David: I lost it, sometimes. I think we all did.

Community Interview - Harry Taylor (January 1995).

- Geoff: We will talk about when you first started at this school.
- Harry: The only reason why I got that job was that I was from the community. I had my nephews going there and my nieces, my sons, and that was it. I was from the community but in nowadays if a person was to go out there from the community they won't get a job up there because there are these people with degrees or certificates or what ever. I personally don't need degrees or certificates.
- Geoff: And what were some of the things that you were doing in the early days?
- Harry: When I first went there I spent most of my time in the community. I came down, got a list of all the students' names and I just came down and ticked them off and looked around and looked at them and told them who I was, what I was doing at the school, how I can help them and to keep the kids at school, to get them at school and keep them at school.
- Geoff: Because before then they weren't going to school.
- Harry: They weren't going to school at all.
- Geoff: Were they scared?
- Harry: They were scared because they didn't have the right uniform or didn't have the right clothes or didn't have their lunch money and these little things. I used to go and get clothes for the kids that couldn't attend school because they didn't have a pair a shorts to go to football training or what ever. I used to go and get em a pair of shorts off someone or ring up the, I had a contact with a lady ... from Sydney City Missions, and she was a big help to me. She was one of the welfare officers there and I've rung her up and she told me to go up there and I used to pick out a lot of stuff up there for the kids but I used to keep them at school there, in the office. Like shorts, socks, shoes and T-shirts, and I used to drop this stuff down to the community for the kids that didn't have no school clothes and didn't have no things to wear to school, for sports. Lunch money I never got no grants for them because I used to, what I did do, what I used to supply lunch money for them. It used to either come out of my pocket, my own pocket, or I used to stroll around the different communities, Aboriginal welfare or Aboriginal organizations and get them to drop in five bucks and I picked up the lunches for the kids.
- Geoff: Were parents scared to send their kids to school?
- Harry: Some of them were, but some of them just didn't worry about the kids. A lot of the kids knew their parents had their problems, they might be alcoholic problems, drug problems, and they just didn't have the money, didn't have no money to send them with their lunches or clothes to wear and they was ... and a lot of people are not aware that Aboriginal people have got a lot of pride, some of them and they just would not, well, beg for the stuff that they wanted for their kids to send them to school and the kids used to suffer because they were kept at home.

- Geoff: The kids who were going to school when you started the Aboriginal studies there, did that help them enjoy school better, behave better?
- Harry: They looked to us, myself and the AEA, we ad a turn, we would go into this class, she would go into one class and I would go into another class and then we would just sit there with the kids and read with them or help them out with their stories. We ad a book, the AEA started a book with the students for Aboriginal studies. That was a special book for Aboriginal students and every time she would take them out she would supply these books for them and she got about four done after the year was finished. Some of the Aboriginal Studies that was taught through the year, it was really showin that the kids adored that time that Aboriginal Studies come on. They sort of enjoyed that because they ad meself or the AEA with them in the room at that time. The teachers were trying to do their best, there was nothing wrong with the teachers but in the class, there was a lot of kids the teachers can't concentrate on one kid, they can't afford to concentrate on one kid and we realised that, and a lot of people don't realise that, that kids are only human. and that if you've got a full classroom of kids and you have one kid staying away, for a few days or weeks at a time and then they come back to the school and you've got your teaching program which they've missed, this means that you've got to go back especially for that kid which is usually the Aboriginal kid, and it gets a bit frustrating. I can imagine for the teacher it is. It never used to upset them but it just used to put them behind. That's what we used to find a lot because we used to come in and we'd go over the work what they missed out on.
- Geoff: Were they mucking up a bit before you started?
- Harry: Yeah they was.
- Geoff: Why do you reckon they were mucking up?
- Harry: Well a lot of them were mucking up because they couldn't understand it, they didn't know what they were being taught because they wasn't there. In one day they was taught something and the next day they wasn't there, well they would miss out on that. Then they would come in the next day, or may be two days after, or two days after that, or one day after that. It is that little bit of a gap in that program that they missed out on. That's when we'd come in. And they used to play up because they didn't know what that little gap was, and they used to distract the other kids in the class by talking or, because they knew they couldn't do it. And they didn't want to say that they couldn't do it.
- Geoff: Was that like a shame, the Aboriginal shame thing?
- Harry: Yeah 'cause they wouldn't say, "Well I don't know about it." They wouldn't put their hand up in class and say "No I don't know that," because they was scared.
- Geoff: And that would be shame?
- Harry: They wouldn't say they were shamed but they would play up because they didn't know it and that's just part of their way. If they didn't know nothing half the time they would play up or they would do something or go to the toilet or do anything like that to get away so they didn't want to be put in a position where the teacher would point to them and

say "What is the answer to that?" when they didn't know. They didn't want to say I don't know it because kids can be really hurtful nowadays. A lot of them put kids will say you're dumb or you don't know nothing or you're a wagger and that's really upsetting to some of these Aboriginal kids when they get called that, and they are too frightened to say they don't know because these are kids, kids can be really hurtful when they want to be, not knowing that they're hurting but they are.

Geoff: And teachers looking at the kids mucking up are thinking that they are just naughty kids and they are not understanding ...

Harry: If the teachers see a kid playing up well a lot of them just put the kid on detention, put the kids on detention straight away because they don't know that the kid don't know what they are talking about because they wasn't there. The Koori kids will play up if they don't know anything. But with Steve there when I first started he was a big elp to me because my office used to be next door to him, he had a portable and he made an office available to me next door to his classroom and it was a big help because I used to spend a lot of time in his class then and because he had a majority of the Aboriginal kids in his class room, and many's the time we'd sit down after class and he's commented on how the kids have changed, not just because I'm in the classroom, but because I'm there, I'm there working in the school.

Geoff: So it is an Aboriginal presence.

Harry: It is just a presence just the idea of having an Aboriginal person, who they knew, and most of them called me Uncle anyway, even the non Koori kids. They used to call me Uncle Harry all the time.

Geoff: Was it hard for you to start working at the school, an Aboriginal person going to a whitefella school?

Harry: Yes it was really hard for me because when I was going to school I had a lot of problems myself with the school system and we had quite a lot of problems and then I wouldn't dream in all of my life, I would not have dreamed that they would have an Aboriginal person working in a school system like that, in that position where you go into the classroom and talk to kids, Koori kids and the other kids.

Geoff: So it was a big break.

Harry: It was a big break when they brought in liaison officers and the AEAs into the schools, it was a big step.

Geoff: It was happening in Greytown before other schools.

Harry: Greytown as been the leader, I reckon, in all of the changes in the school system and the Department now have been through Greytown, Greytown has been a good model school to go to take up to spread the word.

Geoff: And then you wrote the Aboriginal Education Policy.

Harry: When meself, Joe¹, Dave, Sue, she was the Principal of the kindergarten, of the infant department, and she was a really big help too, and a community member, Julie Harris, Beryl Bowen was the AEA and meself, the liaison officer, and we spent something like two

¹ Names have been changed or hidden.

weeks working on that policy, and it was a really good guide line for all other schools, that policy, because schools were sendin from as far in the country as you could imagine, they wanted a copy of this policy that we had presented which was workin in the school and they just couldn't keep up the demand for it.

Geoff: Were the teachers then getting closer to the kids, were there good relationships with the kids?

Harry: The teachers that were at Greytown at the time they saw the big difference in the school, avin Aboriginal people there. The AEA and the liaison officer was no one special, they didn't come out of university or they didn't get no degrees, they were just community members, concerned community members and family men and women, and you get down to the grass roots, and we went in there, we went in the school and we taught the kids as such, we didn't put anything that would have been taught to a university degree graduate or anything like that. It was just ordinary people comin into school elpin out. And with the teachers they felt real at home. I'd reckon where the teachers used to cope with it, because the Koori kids, they are so used to a teacher there like do this, do that, teach them this, teach them that. If one pupil wasn't givin them any attention, with us there the liaison officer and AEA we was givin individual help to individual students, but we just wouldn't just stay with that one student we would move to different students and we would even, I was in the school in the classes and the Vietnamese kids would ask you. They used to call me uncle Harry, "Uncle Harry can you come over and help me?" So I went over and done what I can too. I'm not the best scholar in school, either, but I know enough to manage to answer the question that he wanted or help him like he wanted. The teachers never used to tell us how to do it, but the impression that we got from them from the teachers was you could see that there is a change in their class and achieving something as teachers.

Geoff: And the students felt different?

Harry: And the students felt different too towards the teacher because they knew what the teachers wanted. The teacher was a White person, the teacher was the authority, that was the first impression that they got when they went to school. When an Aboriginal kid goes to school the teacher is there like an authority there they just got that feeling that a teacher was part of the system like the law in school and that if you do anything wrong you will get the law and then they Aboriginal kids are not used to that, they are not used to they are used to the authority they know there has to be authority there has to be a right and wrong but a teacher in them days would single them out from the class, and bang, just drop them down and they would just feel so downgraded.

Geoff: So in this period the teachers changed?

Harry: Yes well as I said like in Greytown after they did ave the AEA and meself, the liaison officer started you could see the big difference in the kids when they first started they would walk in and we wouldn't just send them into the class with the teacher. We would go in with em for their first day, and meself or the AEA would sit with em in the seat

next to em, all those simple things, so you would say that the teacher is not threatening, that the teacher is there to help em and after the day or two days they would start to get in with the system and get a few friends and just carry on, so then we would just move on to the next lot.

Geoff: And the teachers tried not to be the big authority figure.

Harry: No, the teachers, they just, the teachers at Greytown really in the early part, they just couldn't do enough for the kids, they just couldn't do enough. It was a good mob of teachers there, meself and Beryl got really close to a lot of teachers and we discussed a lot of things in the staff room or staff meetings, different things like that. Teachers even used to come to our office and talk to us, if they had a problem, one thing they wouldn't do is grab the kids up in class and have a go at them in front of all the class. That is one good thing that I really appreciated from the teachers because they wouldn't do that, they would come to us and tell us and we would bring the kids and we would talk to the kids and say, "What happened?" and we would try to find out what was the problem and 9 times out of 10 they would tell us what was wrong there. They wouldn't tell the teacher, if the teacher was to have done that they wouldn't tell em anyway, they would rather cop a detention or what ever.

Geoff: So a kid would rather be put onto trouble than tell the teachers why?

Harry: Yes a lot of then did do it and a lot of them got into a lot of trouble for just a minor little things that are what that could have been handled out of the classroom.

Geoff: Were they scared to tell the teacher?

Harry: They was, just because the teacher was a white person, the teacher was the authority, that was the first impression that they got when they went to school. And after they had been in the school then they used to learn the teachers got to know what they wanted, and a lot of then just did that and they never used to pull them up in class then when the kids was really bad, they would come and tell us and then we would go and get the kid and take them to the headmaster ourselves and we would sit down with the principal and we would discuss it, what is going on and what elp we can give em. And we andled a lot of what could be nasty things but we would andle it just by talkin between ourselves. But I know with a lot of the schools they do pull the kids up and they will have a go at them in front of all the class and that is the wrong thing to do to Aboriginal kids because Aboriginal kids just won't respond, they can't hack that, they just have been given authority since they were born and it has come down from the parents the parents were given authority especially the ones that were born in the reserves and on missions. I was born at Taree and we had a manager there and our relations wasn't even allowed to come on the mission without first asking the manager if they could come and visit us. We have always had that authority there all our lives and that is the way we look at it and even when I went to school, what did I come across? Authority. In the school a teacher I threatened her and I used to play up something terrible at school and that is the way the kids are nowadays. That's the

way a lot of the kids have been here and a lot of the parents even now are even saying the same thing to their kids which I don't think is the right thing they should be doing while they have been through school which was hard in those days but we shouldn't drum it in to the kids what was happening in our days because it happened a long time ago and the system is trying to change but by putting that into the kids' heads we are not going to change it.

Geoff: Do you think a lot of the parents are scared that when the kids go to school they are just going to be like the old days.

Harry: They are. A lot of em went through the old authority bit and well they are frightened when the kids go to school that the kids are going to be in the same position, they are not going to learn nothing so they see things if they are not going to learn nothing what's the good of me sendin em to school.

Geoff: So it is almost like they are expecting them not to do well.

Harry: Yeah they are expecting them not to do well a lot of them are. The parents think if the teachers are not going to help em if the teacher is not going to spend a little time with them, understand their need, to understand the Aboriginal needs, well if the parents are going to think that what chance have the kids got?

Geoff: If a kid drops out of school does the community expect that to happen?

Harry: Well they are not surprised when it does happen, they are not surprised when it does happen. They say, "Oh well, that is only natural," and then they just leave it at that.

Geoff: And then what happens?

Harry: And then the kids stays at home and then you know what happens when they stay at home they are not going to learn nothing they are just going to run the streets and get into trouble and so on and so on.

Geoff: It never stops.

Harry: Then the chain just goes on they get into trouble with the law, gaol, students court or what ever.

Geoff: Do you think when kids go to school that the first thing that the Aboriginal parents want them to be at school is to be happy first?

Harry: Yeah, yeah every parent wants to see their kids happy to go to school and if they are happy in that school, well if they are happy in the school then they know the teachers are teaching them something that they are learning and that it is coming through to them. A lot of the teachers just don't know how to get through to Aboriginal kids because I know that a lot of them have special needs and a lot of em can't understand maybe hearing problems, a majority suffer from hearing problems a lot of Aboriginal kids suffer with ear problems and some of em if they have a hearing problem and they're put way at the back, well they won't sit at the front of the class anyway, I've noticed no Aboriginal kids will sit in the front.

Geoff: Why not?

Harry: Because they don't want to be up the front in a lot of the classes. When school starts the Aboriginal kids would always be up at the back, back of the class so that they are looking forward, not being looked upon, because at the front everyone is at the back of you and they are all

looking at you and if the teacher wanted to ask you something up the front of the class all eyes are on you and if you don't know it, well a lot of em get so shamed and so their self esteem must just go rock bottom. But up the back if they can't answer they just say no because half the time they all won't all look back, all the kids, they just keep looking forward, that is why most of them run to the back of the class.

Geoff: Is school another fight for the Aboriginal kids?

Harry: Yes it is, to get the kids to school sometimes it is a hard battle, if they are not enjoying school if they are not happy to be at school well in the morning they are going to come up with all excuses to stay at home. my leg's sore or I feel sick or I can't find this or I can't find that and they will make up, you would be surprised some of the excuses the kids can come up with if they don't want to go to school.

Geoff: And then what do the parents do, do the parents tend to then say well stay at home? If they are not happy will they send them to school if they feel they are not happy?

Harry: If the parent feel that they are unhappy they are not going to send them to school, they would rather let them stay at home and then tomorrow their feelings might change tomorrow, "We better go to school today." and they go.

Geoff: It would be more important for the kids to be happy than to be at school?

Harry: Oh yeah that is how most of the people think, well I reckon any way, if the kids are happy well everything is right if the kid is happy to go to school then send em. If they are not happy to go to school then they are not going to learn then they are going to go to school they are going to disrupt the class and they are going to end up getting suspended anyway. And then there will be a letter comin ome and then they have to go up and see the headmaster and to find out your child is suspended for such and such a time and I want you to come up and see me before he can come back, and for a parent that is the worst thing a parent wants to do to go up to the school and confront a headmaster over their kid playing up and getting suspended. no parent likes that I'm sure no parent likes, that especially the Aboriginal parents. And that's like them going back to school and the parents don't like it. I think a lot of parents are really strong on that and a lot of parents wont even go up to the school, they would rather leave their kids at home on suspension rather than go up to the school.

Geoff: Is that a lot of the time you only hear from the school is when the kid is in trouble.

Harry: That is exactly it, nothing is sent home if that kid has done well. nothing is sent home at all. If the kid has been good then we don't hear nothing but if that kid plays up a letter goes straight home, there is a letter home before you can say "Boo." As a rule Koori kids just need a bit of praise now and again, any kid probably needs it if gets their self esteem up. "I've done well at this at least I've done well at this." and then they will try better and it will build them up. My eldest child was at school and his teacher she was really good and if he went well any little things she used to give him a certificate and he used to bring it

home and would be so proud of it and I knew he wasn't the best scholar and I knew he wasn't the best in his class he used to play up and he couldn't read, but just little things like that it used to show, I thought I would have a lot of problems with him wagging school but he used to attend school with no problems didn't have no hassle about getting up and going to school and and I found little things like that is encouraging to the kids and that is all they need just a little certificate to say you have done well and that you have been good in class you know if they are not good at their class work then say they are good at school, they have been really helpful in their class.

Geoff: When the kids get a bit bigger do a lot of them tend to want to drop out and is it easier to drop out of school?

Harry: Yeah it is.

Geoff: To be in the class and not have the right answer.

Harry: Yeah a lot of the kids they say I will be glad when I'm 15 and I can leave school I had one incident where one of the high school teachers and the headmistress said "You just might as well leave school because you're not going to make much out of yourself," and the teacher told this to one of the students and I reckon that is terrible to say that to a kid, "You might just as well leave because you're not going to learn." fancy telling that to a student, especially an Aboriginal kid.

Geoff: And with your daughter there is that little story about Ricky, she was looking after Ricky.

Harry: She was looking after him like the mother wasn't to be found any where and Lyn was looking after him and sending him to school and he was going to school and he went to school everyday and he got into trouble at school and they suspended him so my daughter went up and spoke to the headmistress and the headmistress said that he is too disruptive, he is causing trouble in the whole school, he might as well leave so Lyn was that upset with what the headmistress was saying.

Geoff: She took ...

Harry: She took XXXX and XXXX out of that whole school.

Geoff: And now they are at another school.

Harry: And now they have been out of this school since September 94, XXXX didn't even turn up for her graduation she was invited to the presentation night or what ever that they put on for the 6th class kids. I didn't even know whether they were going to make her repeat or what ever.

Geoff: So it was more important for your daughter to support the Aboriginal people than to send her kids to school.

Harry: Her principle was that if the principal is going to say that about any Aboriginal kid well she is not going to let that happen to her kids because if the principals have got that attitude well her kids are not going to be there.

Geoff: And now you are saying it is hard to find a school.

Harry: Stephanie is now looking for a school to send her kids to, and she's checked around and it looks like the only option that she's got is a Catholic school and I've got nothing against Catholic schools but she's got to go out of the area and you know it is out of the Greytown area

and the closest Catholic school is ... and I don't know what's going to happen.

Geoff: So does it mean it is different for an Aboriginal kid to turn up at school than it is for a white kid to turn up at school.

Harry: It is, yeah it really are, I think with an Aboriginal kid that they are frightened to go to school that if they get into trouble then if one of the teachers know that they are a problem in their class and I've come across this with one of the other kids Ben, well Ben is disruptive he is a menace sometimes but there is a lot of times when he said he didn't do nothing, he said that he was there but he didn't do nothing but he got all the blame because he was there and because he was there they said he is a trouble maker he would do it. So all the blame was going to go on the Ben because if Ben said look, he said many of times that I was there with em but I didn't do nothing, but all the blame went to him and this is why a lot of the parents hate the thought of sending their kids to school if they are having problems like that at school because they know that if he keeps going he will get suspended. I know what was happening with the kids when I was working around the schools, there was a couple of kids where the parents wouldn't come up to the school to see the principal.

Geoff: So then they just won't go to school again.

Harry: There was one kid he was at school when I was there and he was about 6 at the time and he had some problems before I got there and when I got there we was just having the problems with just trying to get him back into the school and I went down there and got him back into the school and he used to run away from school, he just didn't want to stay in the school and this is what I've come across a few times, I've had to chase them around the school, I knew where they was going so I just lobbed back down to there place or back down the Centre and I would say "What's wrong?" you know.

Geoff: So the biggest fight is just to get them in the gate.

Harry: It is to get em in the school gate, like as I said with their mates some are really nasty to them and if they know they are not going good at school or they are wagging school, they tell em that, but the Koori kids don't like being called a wagger or dumb, they don't like being called anything like that. But kids do call them that. I know that they are just being kids but it is so awkward for the Koori kids.

Geoff: Is it hard for the successful Koori kids, do they get pressure?

Harry: They get the pressure but a lot of the kids that went well at school they didn't live in the Centre, you would find out that a lot of the kids that are doing well at school do not live in the Centre. You will find that which is really, I feel really sorry for them because I've got a lot of kids in the Centre, I've got a lot of relations in the Centre and that is why I fear for these students even going into high school, my granddaughter going to high school. and I'm fearing the worst.

Geoff: Why is it so hard for a kid in the Centre?

Harry: Because it is the atmosphere of the Centre and with the pressure in the Centre that they got to go back into school and I don't know they just got that attitude that I'm not going to do well.

- Geoff: But you wouldn't ever want to leave the Centre.
- Harry: No, I've lived here for nearly 15 years and I'm one of the oldest from the Centre and I've got my life here.
- Geoff: What is so important about the Centre for Aboriginal people.
- Harry: Well, it's like having the mission back at Taree, I've got all my family with me I've got most of my family down here with me. I've got two daughters, my three nephews and my sister all live in the Centre, we are all virtually living in the one street too. We are so close especially in this Centre, we are so close. Why there is a lot of trouble is that in the Centre there are a lot of different people from different communities from different towns and that means they are different tribal areas and well a lot of the tribes got their own rules and they stick to their own rules and stick to their own customs but it is hard, if there is any problems in the Centre like take one of the people from say Walgett that problems could turn into a fight because I mean a fight, fisty cuffs, and were as my people from my tribe could never fight with one another and we are all living up in XXXX Street and XXXX and XXXX and all those from the old Centre itself is real different there is some thing like ten different tribes from ten different areas in this whole Centre and they're stuck together they have left their own town and they have come to the city to try to get some work and half the time a lot of em haven't got work because Aboriginal people find it really hard to find work when they haven't got any schooling and that is why you get these people that live in Centre that they would never leave it. It is hard to explain but I would never leave it.
- Geoff: Is the Centre like a symbol for Aboriginal people and their fights?
- Harry: It is it goes way back to the to one of our ancestors Pemulwuy, he is from this area and Aboriginal people have always lived here in Greytown, even years ago, the Centre has always been this community, it's like a meeting place a big meeting place for all the tribes and there is so many people here, different tribes, that's what I mean and you meet a lot of people who you haven't seen for years and years, I ran into one guy here that I'd never saw since the late 60s and I ran into him the other day and I didn't even know him and it's like a meeting place we may have passed one another along the street or down the city but we meet here and we sort of recognised one another and we got to talking and found out, you know it's a big meeting place.
- Geoff: Is there a feeling of hope in the Centre?
- Harry: Well there is but the notorious XXXX Street has got its reputation but a lot of people who don't know the area, the media is one of our worst enemies they make it so, they make it worse than what it is, like the other day when they had that problem with the police being hit with the brick, they said there was hundreds of people there but there was only about 40 people there, but they said there was 100 Aboriginal people there.
- Geoff: And not all of them would have been involved.
- Harry: Not all there was only nine people who were involved. The media said hundreds were involved, so the media ... That made me real cranky with the media because when they were doing the landscaping courses

here, the driving courses here, the vegetable garden, all these different things here, that they got going here. I asked the media to come and do a story on it, it's not news, if there is a riot they'll come here but this here is not interesting. When any thing positive happens they don't want to hear about it. They only want to come in when there is a riot or trouble.

Geoff: When you cross this street is that like going to another world?

Harry: It is yeah, like I've got to travel down to the city everyday to work and once I walk across the road I know I'm away from the Centre.

Geoff: And how does that make you feel?

Harry: I don't feel like going to work half the time, but I go to work because I know I've got to work but as soon as I come back and get off at the station and walk across the road, I breath a sigh of relief, I'm back at home. I'm not home. I'm just walking into the Centre and I feel so relieved, "Oh I'm home" because that is the way I feel about the Centre.

Geoff: Is it the same with the kids you think do they have to cross that road to go to school?

Harry: Yeah it is the kids have are protected on the Centre once they cross this road they're not protected and the kids don't look to the police for protection because the police are their worst enemies with a lot of the kids. And once they cross that road they say "I'm on me own." Down here you're protected.

Geoff: Protected from the whites?

Harry: Protected from the system.

Geoff: What system?

Harry: The system itself. They're got their friends and a lot of the Koori blokes and girls got white friends, boyfriends, girlfriends, but you notice they always bring em back to here, they will bring their white friends or their girlfriends and missus or what ever. I know one bloke. he's married to a white girl and he moved away from the Centre because his wife doesn't like the Centre, but every weekend he's back on the Centre, he brings his family back to the Centre, you just come back here. Nobody knows, you feel safe, you feel a lot of support here. it's sort of like, if I moved away from the Centre and I had, if someone picked me over nothing then I could get into a lot of trouble, if I had that same trouble down here with a person who picked me I've got all my relations here, I've got my support.

Geoff: And for Aboriginal people every day outside is a fight?

Harry: It's like you're going to war, once you leave the Centre you're going into battle zone and when you come back, back to the Centre you're back on your own territory.

Geoff: So even you as working in the city will still get picked because you're an Aboriginal person.

Harry: Yeah I've worked on trains, I've worked on the streets, but one woman one day she was standing on the corner and she saw me coming she had her purse in her hand, she grabbed that purse and she wrapped it around her shoulder, as soon as she seen me coming, and I felt so humiliated that she done that, I felt so terrible that she done that in

front of me, I felt like grabbing my badge and shoving it in to her face, look I'm here to protect you fellas, I'm not here to rob ya, I feel like doing that but I can't do that and that's happened many a times and many a times I've walked in to get on the train and a lady with her purse next to me, she'd leave and go to the opposite side of me, this is not fair.

Geoff: People see you as drunk?

Harry: No, I'm an Aboriginal, so I'm a thief, they say well he's Aboriginal so he is a thief but any body can go into the police station and check on my record, it would show that I've never ever robbed anybody. Because I wouldn't be in this position if I did.

Geoff: But every time you walk out there you feel as if you are suspected?

Harry: Yeah I'm a suspect, and the police have come along and saw me walking along or standing there but I've always wore my uniform underneath the shirt, and I've worked for the police the sheriff or corrective services.

Geoff: You don't wear the uniform.....

Harry: I don't wear it with out covering it up.

Geoff: Why not?

Harry: I just feel that I'm not in the system and I feel that Aboriginal people will feel that I'm a gubba lover or a cop lover, he's there to put us in jail.

Geoff: So that's hard for you?

Harry: And that is really hard for me to take some times and but ...

Geoff: When you are up at the school did you feel that some people felt that you were a gubba lover by working at the school?

Harry: No, a lot of people, that's a funny situation, in the job that I'm in now it's got its authority with it but with the school it didn't have the authority, they knew I wasn't there as a teacher and I wasn't there as anybody special, they knew I was just there to help em and that they can come to me any time so they never ever thought of me as person in authority and they knew that they had to do the right thing by me and they knew that I was strict but they knew that they could come and talk to me.

Geoff: Do you reckon its hard for an Aboriginal teacher in the school?

Harry: It would be, I wouldn't like to be a teacher because I probably would end up putting the Aboriginal kids on one side and end up teaching em, I probably would ,you know, do that in that position but I know you can't do that but that is the feelin that I've got. I just wouldn't be able to concentrate on the whole class.

Geoff: It is almost like you are on the other side?

Harry: Yeah, I just wouldn't be able to teach a mixed class, especially with the Aboriginal kids having the problems, I'm going to go back and help em with their problem and I'm going to even if all the other kids in the class is going to miss out from going forward because I'm teaching this Koori kid.

Geoff: I think we have just about covered it anyway. Can you think of anything else.

- Harry: No. Except I would like to see a lot of changes in the schools it's gone backward since we've been here I've been, with yourself like you were a big help to all the kids at school and before you were there, there was Steve, he was the other big help that kicked everything off, and you kept it going.
- Geoff: Aboriginal people really look to have one or two white fellows who are going to look after their kids ...
- Harry: Yeah they would like to have think that they got a couple of white teachers there in the school who they can, who know what they are going through, who understand what they are going through
- Geoff: But they don't expect the whole school ...
- Harry: If there was one or two that would be a big difference, and that's what a lot of schools don't realise, they've got to understand the problem that the Koori people are going through.
- Geoff: It's not just a school problem, its a whole ...
- Harry: It's on a whole, but unfortunately it's rubbin, it's carryin into the school and the kids are ...
- Geoff: They can't separate school from what's going happened out there.
- Harry: No you can't, and you can't blame school for what's happening out there either, but ...
- Geoff: They're tied up together.
- Harry: They're tied up together, if we had another Mr Munns there ...

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