



Keith Honaker

Great Basin Indian Archive

GBIA 056



Oral History Interview by

**Norm Cavanaugh
March 9, 2016
Duckwater, NV**



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H: I'm from Duckwater, Nevada. My family is the Blackeye family here on my grandmother's side, and on my grandfather's side are from the Sams from Smoky, over towards Round Mountain area. I was born in Schurz, Nevada, at the Schurz Indian hospital in 1960. And I grew up mostly here on the reservation, and I say "mostly" because I grew up all over the United States; I'm an Army brat. My father, my stepfather was an Army-enlisted man. And we moved quite a bit. But I spent most of my childhood here on the reservation, as well as places like Ohio, Missouri, Maryland, New Jersey. So, I went to school in a lot of different places. And my first language has always been Shoshone. When I was younger, I spoke really, really good Shoshone. I spoke old Shoshone, which I've lost over time being other places and not speaking as much as I would have been able to if I'd have just stayed here on the reservation, more than likely. But I'm bilingual. I'm still fluent in the language. It's important because it's a part of who I am, my identity. Growing up here, when we went to school—at the public school—we were punished for speaking our language, like a lot of places were. Because the idea back then was that if you were—the teachers' idea, the theory was, that if you spoke to languages, to move somebody that spoke a different language into speaking English very quickly, you had to remove that other language. And so, that's why we were punished. And they tried to promote the English language. And it didn't work too well, because we were pretty tough! [Laughter] And you couldn't beat the language out of us, or our cultural identity out of us, because that's who we were. And unfortunately, I think today that we lose a lot of that, because our children don't have that same identity that I had the privilege of growing up with. Because, that was my way of thinking. Because I

grew up Shoshone, and that's how we thought. That was all we knew; that's who we were. Now, most tribes, and the government putting—we're living on reservations and everything else like that. One of the things that happens is that we started identifying ourselves according to how much Shoshone we were, with our blood quantum. And that's when I—I used to, when I was growing up, I just thought of myself as being Shoshone, and it wasn't until the blood quantum started coming into play that I discovered that I'm not full Shoshone. And that was rather disturbing to me.

For me, growing up, when I was younger, with my grandmother and my family as it was, we weren't—we didn't hear a lot of the old stories when we were growing up. I heard a lot of the older stories as you grew up and got older. We didn't hear any of the legends, so to speak, although my grandmother probably knew them. And it was a little bit of that influence, I think, of not only the religion that—the Christian religion that was heavily influencing our community, but as well, the school system and stuff like that. And they were trying to look out for us. So, we weren't getting a lot of the old stories. But over time, we heard those stories and whatnot. So, for me, the culture, when I talk about culture, I'm actually talking about language, and the activities, the things that we do as Shoshone people. When I grew up, we didn't have running water or electricity in our homes. It was wood stoves, and it was outhouses, it was going out into the mountains certain time of the year to harvest the pinenuts, and to hunt, and to get deer, and to—I mean, we had to supplement everything that we had in terms of buying and going to the grocery store, and getting groceries with, also supplementing that with fresh meats. Like, we used to go rabbit hunting all the time. That was part of what we did. It was just the course of what we had to do to survive out here. And going and getting wood for the

wood stove so you could eat, as not only as a heating source, but also for, that's what we used to cook our food on, was the wood stove. And then, all the things that go along with going out and harvesting the pine nuts, you know? The first time I ever noticed, or *took* notice, is when I was a young man—you know, a teenager, a young man—and we went pinenut picking with my *tsootsia*, *Awitsoo*. Agnes Penoli. And I remember watching her. And she was standing out there, and she was saying her prayers to whomever she was praying to. And that was something that was new to me, because I'd never really paid attention to what went on, you know? [Laughter] You're young! And so, you don't pay attention to certain things. And so, the language was really important to us, and we all grew up speaking nothing but Shoshone, but some of the rituals, or the things that may have happened in the past, weren't happening anymore. They were changing, because we were Mormons. We were baptized as Mormons, and that's—in the religion, that's what we were growing up as. Now, that's changed since that time. But we go back, and I used to go listen to people like Danny Millett, and people that had those old stories. You know, the winter stories that you're not supposed to tell—[Laughter] or else you might **be bringing** trouble, and—you know, it was that kind of stuff. But listening to those stories, and then, it kind of teaches you more about who you are and where you're coming from, because those are important as well as those things that we think are important today. So, those things from the past that's handed to us, that's part of who we are, our identity. I've moved all around the United States, because my stepfather, like I said, was in the military. And we lived in places. But his family was from Cleveland, Ohio, and he met my mom in the days, in the 1960s, when the government was trying to lure Indian kids off the reservation to get them into urban areas so that they could

assimilate into the population. It was one of the ways to, I guess, answer the Indian Question, or the Indian Problem, was to get them off the reservations and have them assimilate. It didn't work out too well, but that was one of the attempts. But that meant that I moved around a lot. And I lived in a lot of different areas. And like I said earlier, I spoke really, really good Shoshone when I was a young kid, because I had the Shoshone mind. *Everything* was in Shoshone. The way I thought—everything. It was like thinking in a way that I can't think anymore, sometimes, unless I'm around family and we're just speaking Shoshone continuously all the time. And then, my mind will revert to that Shoshone mind where I think in Shoshone continuously, and the language just starts to flow, and it gets more fluent when I'm thinking that way. But it was real difficult, because when I would leave the reservation and come back, some of that, something would be lost initially when I would return. But because I was young and I was playing with the other kids, when I'd get back, it didn't seem to take very long to get back into the swing of speaking the language again. And so, I was back every couple years. I think that's the reason why I was able to keep the language. But then, the last time that I left was when I was about, around when I was thirteen years old. And we moved to Missouri. And then, fourteen, fifteen, and sixteen, I was in Maryland, and I didn't return until I was seventeen years old back to—I didn't come back to Duckwater, I was in Ely. So there was really, the only person I would ever speak Shoshone to was my mom. And—you know, you get lazy sometimes, and so what you end up doing is you speak what's easiest. And in the house with my dad and everything else, it was just easier speaking English. And everybody around you is speaking English. So, that's basically what ended up happening. But one of the things that happened during that time is that I returned to the

reservation when I was about sixteen, seventeen—seventeen years old, and I was trying to speak the language. And wherever I went, I spoke Shoshone, because that's what I had always done when I was here. So, I was doing that, and I was speaking to Danny Millett down here at the ball diamond, because we played a lot of baseball back in those days. And the Duckwater team was pretty doggone good, and we used to travel to places like Wendover, and down to near Vegas—Moapa—and play them in baseball. And down to Tonopah, we'd play baseball. And Danny was an old-time baseball player, and I remember standing there talking to him, and his wife, that I didn't know for the longest time was *taipo*, was sitting there. But she had lived with us so long, and she spoke such good, fluent Shoshone, that I never knew she was *taipo*. And so, I was standing there talking to Danny, and Danny's sitting there speaking to me in English, and I'm [Shoshone at 10:00] *Ne ma naiko niwiyaken. Ne semme ma newe taikwakante*. I was speaking to him in Shoshone every time he asked me a question, and he just didn't even notice! [Laughter] He kept talking English, because he was so used to talking to young people in English because that's what we do! We speak to our young people in English instead of speaking Shoshone to them. And he didn't realize it at first, and then until his wife said, [Shoshone at 10:22] “*E hakenee, mawai taipo taikwaken? Sote emmi newe taikwane mai ma niikwen.*” “Why are you speaking English to him when he's speaking Shoshone to you?” And then, finally, it dawned on Danny that I was speaking Shoshone to him. So, it was really kind of funny. But a bad thing also happened during that time—because that was encouraging. And because, you know, here you are, you sound funny because you haven't spoken the language in such a long time. And I remember being over at the, where the *hepittsos* were playing the *hepittso* game, the five-card. And I had

gone in to see my grandmother, and I went in and I was speaking Shoshone to her, and I forgot how to say something in Shoshone. I can't even—it wasn't important, because I can't remember now what I was trying to say to her. But there was another lady there that was really highly critical. And she said [11:11] “*Aishe tipitsi newe taipo muihante. Ehe naappéh newe.*” And she said, you know, “Look at you! You can't even speak Shoshone! Why you even trying?” And I remember thinking to myself, “How dare you?” And I told her in Shoshone—and I'd never been disrespectful to an elder before in my life, but I kind of got angry, so I was a little bit disrespectful. [Laughter] But I kind of knew it was okay, because I looked out sideways at my grandmother, and she had this smile on her face after I said what I said. I said, [11:40] “*Newehe, newe taikwan. Emmi tutuapéh?*” I said, “I'm trying—I'm speaking Shoshone. What about *your* children?” None of them, none of the younger ones that were my age—they didn't speak Shoshone. They spoke nothing but English to their kids, because they wanted their kids to do well—I understand the motivation, they wanted their kids to do well in school. So they felt, and they had been told all their lives, that by speaking Shoshone to their kids, that their kids were falling behind in school. And so they were stopping speaking Shoshone. But yet, she was going to be critical of me speaking Shoshone to my grandmother, and telling me that I shouldn't speak Shoshone, because I was basically butchering the language. And I still see that today, when I'm talking to little kids. Because I've been a school teacher for twenty-five-plus years. And one of the things that we've done is we've set up the Shoshone language program in our school, and I still have that same issue when I see adults—especially some of our elders—that will basically dress down a child for speaking the wrong dialect, or saying something the wrong way. And instead of

encouraging them, and modeling the way things should be said, or the way that the dialect is—very softly and gently telling them, you know, “Oh, I see that that’s Such-and-such’s dialect,” because we could identify ourselves out here in Duckwater by our families. Because there were those Shoshones that were already here before it was turned into a reservation, and then there were those Shoshones that came afterwards. And they came from a lot of different places besides just over at Smoky Valley. I mean, lot of them came from there. But there was a different—that dialectal difference. And so, our elders will speak to one another and never tell each other, “You’re saying it the wrong way,” even though they’re speaking from different dialects. Why they would think that’s okay to tell a child, that is beyond me. And that’s one of the issues that we need to work with in our programs, in our language programs, is we need to encourage *everybody*. To encourage our young people and our young adults to speak the language, and not worry about dialectal differences, or [**Shoshone at 13:55**]. They sound like they’re speaking—they’re “*taipo newe*” speaking the language. And so, we need to get away from that.

[Break in recording]

You know, it was never overtly taught, in terms of, you know, you need to do this, or you need to do that. Although there was probably a little bit of that going on. It was more along the lines of when the old ladies used to get together, and you’re a small child, you sat and you listened. You didn’t speak up, you didn’t put your two cents in, because that was just the norm—out here for us it was, anyway. It was the normal way of doing things. And you didn’t interrupt their conversations; you listened. And you learned that the older people were important. And they were important for a number of reasons. Their knowledge. The way they thought about things. They were the ones that showed us how

to behave with one another. Back in those days, we might've gotten into arguments, you know, those petty bickering and stuff like that, but because you're doing it in Shoshone, and there's no cursing in Shoshone, there's no inappropriate way to use the language—it's all just the language, just the way we communicate with one another—there was a little bit of softness to it, even though we're pretty tough and resilient, and we persevere. There was a softness to it because we know that by speaking to us—and it's still true today—and if you have people that are bickering with one another? I've discovered, and my mom's discovered this during tribal council, that if you switch over into Shoshone, and start speaking Shoshone, people start to calm down a little bit, and they're less likely to scream and holler at each other. Doesn't mean that the problem goes away; it makes it easier to talk with one another, I think. But back to the old folks, it was just a way of—they were the keepers of who we were. They're important. One of the things I noticed was, as I was becoming—I became a teenager and as a young adult, is that one of the biggest complaints we were getting from our elders when we would try to get them to be a part of our language programs and our cultural programs at the school, was that their biggest complaint was the kids are disrespectful. And I think it had more to do with an influence from the outside than it did with anything changing on the inside, because out here at Duckwater, we didn't get power and that kind of stuff until probably about 1973. And then, TV came shortly after that. And a lot of houses—our house here, this is my grandmother's house. We didn't have a TV in this house until the 1980s. [Laughter] My grandmother just saw no point in it, and then we got a TV for her one year; and the next thing you know, she was watching soap operas all the time! So. But, I think the influence of the outside, or the dominant culture, has probably created a little of that, what they

thought was disrespect. But I was always raised by my grandmother and my mother and the rest of our family, and my *tsootsis*, that you're supposed to respect and take care of your elders.

[Break in recording]

My grandmother passed away this—is it two years ago already? It seems like just yesterday. But, we took care of her. Because that's what we needed to do. We had to take care of her up until, all the way through her life. We didn't put her in a care home or anything else like that. My Aunt Adeline took care of her the last several years of her life. And my wife and I moved back here to be with her while she was still living here in the house, because that's just the way we were raised by her. We take care of our elders, and we stay with them until we pass on. And of course, after she passed, [**Shoshone at 17:40**]. And, just in that old way of sitting and being with one another when one of our elders or one of our loved ones passes on. You know, that's just the way that we were out here. That's what we were always taught, is we take care of them, and when they pass on, I'm sure that there's other family traditions that also take—I mean, back in the old days, they would have their *yakai tito'ihoyen*, and basically, taking all the possessions, and making sure there was nothing tethering them back here to—once they passed on into the spirit world—nothing holding them here. Otherwise, that could make you sick and things like that. Like, their possessions. And so, they would get rid of all that. But we don't necessarily follow those any longer. We give away a lot of the stuff and whatnot. And you're supposed to burn the pictures, but we just—it's not something that we did in our family, anyway. We keep those as remembrances. And we haven't had any problems, and haven't gotten sick of any of those other things. [Laughter] So we've kind of, things have

changed a little bit from the olden days. But we still follow certain things. Just minor things. As life changes, so does our culture changes a little bit with it.

[Break in recording]

[19:09] Well, *sunni yekwithehannah*, they cry. They laugh. Share stories. You know, that's what the feed's about too, I think. The feed's about closure. Because when I had a friend die, and I didn't go to the funeral, there was no closure for me. There wasn't that component in dealing with, you know, this is moving on now. You don't get that closure. But when we have our funerals here at the Rez, you basically, you get that closure, because we get that feed together, and people meet up afterward, and it's like that final release that things have come all the way around and it's over with as well. It's part of what we do, nowadays. I don't know if it's consistent with what they used to do in the old days, but it's definitely what we've been doing here for a long, long time in Duckwater. So.

[Break in recording]

I always thought of it as a spiritual journey of being on a different plane than us. So in other words, they're on a different plane, but they're *here* with us. Because I think they help us by guiding us along in making certain life decisions and things like that. And I don't think they're supposed to interact with us so much as anything else, but we can't see them unless they manifest themselves in some way. I mean, [20:32] *osu tso'ap*.

[Laughter] You know? Where would they be coming from if that wasn't part of the truth, or the way that we think about things? So, I think the spirit world is just that. It's on a different plane, and we're just making that next step to be where we're supposed to be. And so, [**Shoshone at 20:50**]! [Laughter] You know? Some day, we'll be going to our

ancestors. All of us. So, it'll be a good thing. It's not anything to really be afraid of, I don't think. I think that they're around us all the time. They help us. They guide us.

[Break in recording]

Well, Duckwater has always been a unique community. Because, like I said, a good portion of the population down here came from elsewhere. And a small portion of the population was already here. A lot of families were. And we can trace our lineages back—most people today, we've gotten to the point where we're related to pretty much one another. But we can all trace our lineages back and whatnot. But, back in the nineteen—I don't know exactly when it happened, but it was in the 1960s—my mom, as a part of the Relocation Act, decided that she wanted to go to business secretarial school. Well, people that were going in that vein from reservations, because it was free schooling and you got relocated to a major urban area; Cleveland just happened to be the area that she was sent to, because that's what she chose. My Aunt Joyce, she went down to Bellflower, or somewhere in the LA area, because she wanted to be a keypunch operator. If you know anything about computers, those were the ways that you input information back in those days, is you had to do it with cards. And as a keypunch operator, she was punching those cards out that would be fed into those building-sized computers back in those days. So, that's what she did for—and she worked for banks doing that for quite a while. My Aunt Adeline ended up in Oakland, California. But that was a different program that she was on. My Uncle Richard ended up in Cleveland to go to welding school. And he finished the school there. So my family, and a lot of the families out here in Duckwater, their kids all went to get some type of a training at some point, all underneath that act. And what they were trying to do, like I said earlier, is they were

trying to entice young Native Americans—and it did work to a certain extent. If you go to Cleveland today—and my mom worked for the Cleveland Indian Center for a number of years after that—these centers basically have a lot of, a rather large Indian population. But what's going on is, they might not be a Shoshone, or a Navajo, or a whatever; it's a mixture. The Indians congregated with one another! [Laughter] When they got to these places, and they created small communities of, where, you know, like, you might have a Cheyenne that married a Hopi, or whatever. And then you've got mixed children that're growing up in urban areas. And then, we saw at the end of the 1970s, some of these tribal people were going back to the reservations where their parents were from. And they had no inkling of what the culture, their language or anything else, or they were in search of their identity. I think you saw that with things like the AIM organization grew up out of—actually, I personally met Russell Means and Dennis Banks when I was a child, up in Cleveland Indian Center when I was a kid. Because that's where they were at. And these guys returned back to their home reservations in search of who they were. And that was a part of what was being attempted, was assimilating them into the culture. It's a little bit difficult. It always sounds funny to me as somebody that came after that, because assimilation doesn't happen through enticing people to be with one another. And we saw it with the Chinese. The Chinese came over to this country as railroad workers. And what did they do? They grouped together, and they stayed together. And there was no assimilation that happened there. We saw African Americans that grew—the populations grew out of the South, because of slavery, moved to northern industrial areas; they formed their own communities, because they were excluded from the other communities. So, assimilation doesn't happen unless the people that are the dominant culture invite you

in to their culture. We were never invited! [Laughter] They brought us to the urban areas in hopes of basically getting rid of the Indian people by having them assimilating and marrying outside of their groups; that didn't take place. Because they married other Indians, and they created—I have a cousin that's Cheyenne-Arapaho-Shoshone.

[Laughter] You know, how do you get all of those tribes together? Well, you send them to urban areas. But their identity is still Indian. They may not have the culture or the language any longer, but that's who they became. Some of your midwest tribes I think had rather large populations that were just near the urban area, and then you have whole groups like, in Minneapolis/St. Paul area, I think, what is it up there? The—oh, I had a friend from up there, and I can't think of the tribe now. That's what happens when you get old!

U1: Chippewa.

H: The Chippewas, yeah. He was a Chippewa. And they have a whole urban area up there, it's almost like a colony, like we have colonies on the small towns around here? They have like a—they're a major population there in the Minneapolis/St. Paul area. But that's not the same as the Relocation Act Indians, because I think they were trying to get us all off the reservation so they could have the solution to the so-called "Indian problem" they'd been having in this country for such a long time. Not a problem to us, but to them obviously, so.

[Break in recording]

I stayed here in Duckwater until 1972, and then I moved to Missouri like I said. And then I was bouncing around schools, and finally returned back here when I was seventeen years old, and graduated high school in Ely, Nevada, at White Pine High School. And I

was kind of bouncing around, doing a whole bunch of different types of things. I was a range rider for the tribe for a number of years. I was a cowboy. Can you believe that? [Laughter] I also worked a lot of things. I did a lot of odd jobs. And then, when I was about twenty-one—1980s, early 1980s—but I turned twenty-one, and I was looking for a job, and I really didn't have anything after—I went to college for a bit, and came back. I didn't have any direction. Didn't have any idea what I wanted to do with my life. I was one of those people that basically didn't—I didn't know what I was going to do. And so, I came back here, and I noticed that there was an opening for a bus driver, for the local kids from here going to Eureka to go to high school. And they wanted a bus driver to drive them up every day. So, I decided to go over to the school and apply for that job. And I went over to the school, and I applied for the job, and the person that was the principal of the school at the time took a look at me, said, "You'd be better suited to be a teacher's aide." And that was far above what I wanted, you know? So, I just looked her and said, you know, "I was hoping to just get the bus driver's job!" And she talked to me, she said, "No. Try it. I'll make you a deal: if you'll be the teacher's aide, and come to work in the school as the teacher's aide, and if you don't like it, I'll give you the bus driver's job. But first, you're going to work here." So, I said, "Okay." And so, I showed up to work, and I started doing the teacher's aide position at the Shoshone Elementary School here. And I worked at it for four years, and I enjoyed it. I found that I was really good at teaching. And so, it was something that I was really interested in. And you know how on the reservation how politics sometimes takes over. So, I had to kind of leave for a while, because politics took over at the school, and I didn't want to be there any longer, because of certain things that were going on. And so, I bailed, and I went elsewhere, and

I did some of my other jobs. And then there was a teacher's aide position, and things had kind of settled down, and so I returned to Duckwater, and I applied for the teacher's aide position, and this time the principal of the school was an old classmate of mine. And he had just gotten out of graduating from college, and he had his degrees and everything else and came back, and was—had his degree for being the principal and whatnot. And I hadn't really gone to college yet. And so, I was a teacher's aide, and after that year, he says, "You need to stop messing around, and you need to do what it is that you're supposed to do." And I said, "What's that?" And he said, "You need to go to school, and you need to get your teaching certification so that you can teach. You got to stop." And so, I did. It was just like, things fell together. I had a friend come back from Haskell Indian Nations University—before it was the Indian Nations University, it was still just Haskell Junior College—and he came back, and he said it was, he was like, "I didn't learn anything there. All I did was party the whole time. What do you say let's go to Reno and go to school at UNR?" I said, "Oh, okay." So I applied. They accepted me, accepted him, and then we took off and went to Reno. And I started school there, and I discovered I loved going to college! [Laughter] And if it wouldn't have been because of student loans, and the fact that you could only get a Pell Grant for so many credits, I would probably still be there today. [Laughter] But I had to graduate, so I graduated in 1991, and I came back here and I did my student teaching up in Eureka for two semesters, because I graduated with a dual certification in Elementary Ed and Special Education. And so I had to do two units of student teaching, and I did them both up in Eureka, and then I came back to Duckwater, they hired me as a teacher because they needed a teacher down here. And this is where I started teaching at. And I came back, and

I worked here for five years, and at the end of the five years—I promised them five years because the Tribe helped me out with school and everything else. So, I promised them five years, and then after that five years, I was going to go see what was in the rest of the world because that's just the way I grew up. I never really stayed any one place for a really, really long time. And five years was the longest I'd stayed anywhere, and that was living here at Duckwater during that stretch of time without going elsewhere. So I met my future wife, and we decided to move to New York, and I taught Special Education in New York for eight years. I taught the hard-to-handle kids for eight years in New York. [Laughter] And it really improved my skillset as a teacher, I think. It was very challenging to teach the emotionally disturbed and the behavior-disordered kids, because they were a challenge. But like I said, it really improved the way that I looked at kids. And then I was—we were sitting at home, and I got a call one night, and it was the chairperson of this school committee. And she said “We've got a job opening down here for the principal job, and we understand that you're finishing up your master's degree.” I said, “Yes.” And they said, “We'd like to offer you the job as being principal over at the school.” My wife says, “Take it!” So, we move all the way back down here from New York, and we stayed here for six years. And then, things have changed. I'm still a teacher, but I don't teach in school anymore. I teach in other ways. I work as a Dialogue facilitator for the Western Shoshone-Barrick Dialogues. Also, Barrick contracts me to do certain other activities. Like, I worked with the Te-Moak Tribe on their Comprehensive Plan. I worked with the committee that was rewriting the requirements for the Western Shoshone Legacy Fund. So, I'm a business owner in the sense that I'm a private contractor. I own my business, Honaker Consulting, who contracts with Barrick. I also

own a shop—since we've moved back to New York, we own a small shop that deals in Native American arts and crafts, leather and silverwork. And we also have home crafts. We do quilting and embroidery work, professional embroidery work for companies—marinas mostly, because that's where we're at. We're located on the St. Lawrence River, and we do business there during the season. It's a seasonal thing because the winters are really harsh there where we live at, so we usually end up back here down in Duckwater for the winters. I really am blessed because I get to come home, and spend the summers in a place that's absolutely beautiful with tons of water, and then I come back to the desert and we live out here, and I get to visit with family and do my job out here. So, I'm really lucky in that. So, I'm still a teacher in a lot of ways. And this last couple of years, I've also been working with the British Council, which is the arm of the British Consulate, which is the ambassadors that go around the world for the British government. British Council basically works with a lot of nations, and I help to teach this program called Active Citizens to other Western Shoshones. That's what we've been doing, is delivering that training. And we're going to continue doing that this year. So, hopefully we'll be doing a lot more of the training for the other Native American—I mean, not Native American, other Western Shoshone communities: Ely, Duckwater, Yomba, those more specifically, because we've been delivering that product to the Te-Moak Tribes and the Bands there. So, I keep really busy. Working for yourself, you're *constantly* busy. I was amazed at how much work I have to do now that I work for myself. In several different areas, my consulting business obviously, and being a trainer for the British Council, as well as being a shop owner, and partnering with my wife, and doing these things—I don't have any time for rest or vacation, it doesn't seem like, anymore!

[Laughter] So, but it's challenging, and it's a lot of fun. And I'm still getting to teach all the time. So. It's just not in the classroom setting anymore.

[Break in recording]

In 1973, the parents, after a comment made by one of the teachers in the Tonopah paper, the parents that were in the Duckwater area and down in Railroad Valley that took offense to the comment, pulled their kids from the public school which is down the road from here, about five miles. They decided to—they pulled the kids because they decided to do it in protest because of what was said. But the school district, the Nye County School District, threatened to put the parents in jail if they didn't have them in school by a certain date. And because of their statement that they were going to put the parents in jail for not having their kids in school, the parents decided to form a school board, and start their own school. And this is the product of that, that they got together, they started looking for funds to start their own school, hiring teachers which were VISTA volunteers the first couple years. But they were able to get it done to where their kids were in school, and they started here. This used to be a church. It was built in 1964—[19]65. It was built by the local community and the Mormon Church. But, the tenants had dwindled at that point in time, so the church was open to selling it to the Tribe, and they sold it to the Tribe. And the Tribe bought it from them, and they turned it into a school, and the school's been in operation, been tribally owned and operated, since 1973. It basically stays open through grants and funds coming through the Bureau of Indian Education now, in this era. It used to be that it was open because it was done through grants through the Office of Indian Education, which is a part of the Department of Education, and the Office of Indian Education under the Bureau of Indian Affairs. But they've separated out,

and now it's wholly supported by the Bureau of Indian Education. It doesn't belong to the Bureau of Indian Education or the BIA, it belongs to the Duckwater community. And it's the only school of its kind in the state of Nevada. There is another Indian-owned and -operated school, which is Pyramid Lake, but they came after. And both this school and Pyramid Lake used to be under the Sacramento office of Bureau of Indian Education. So. And now they've switched, and they're both under, I believe—Pyramid Lake is still underneath the California schools, and Duckwater is now underneath the Office of Indian Education, or the Bureau of Indian Education, in Arizona.

[Break in recording]

This was my first classroom. I had fourth through eighth grade, and next door they had K through three. And it's a multi-classroom setting, there's a real challenge, but it was very rewarding as well. It's changed a lot. I did put these whiteboards on the wall because I hated chalk dust. So, I changed that. [Laughter] And now they've got Smartboards, so.

[Break in recording]

I miss the classroom, and I miss the kids. I miss the kids because it was rewarding. It was very needs-fulfilling to watch a lightbulb go off in a kid's head, or to watch them make something and take pride in what they were doing and their accomplishments. And you—it's really, it's very addicting to see that. So if there's one thing that I miss, that's really the thing that I miss, is watching kids attain knowledge and have those "ah-hah!" moments where it just dawns on them. I don't miss the politics of school. I don't miss the government becoming involved in the day-to-day operation of schools and in the classroom, and what should be taught and what can't be taught, and all this other stuff. I think that they need to leave that to the professionals. But they've taken us out of the

arguments and the debates, so as teachers we don't have that say anymore. And it's being left up to other individuals to define what's going to be taught and how it's going to be taught. It's no longer an art form. It's no longer a way of reaching kids and developing those relationships that actually mean something. It's more about, "Well, here's the information. Now, let's test you to find out whether you kept it or not." I don't think that's education.

[Break in recording]

I think I was lucky. I was lucky in that moving around, as an Army brat like I said, it afforded me the opportunities to basically go outside my comfort zone and make friends very quickly. Not be fearful of something new. And basically, sometimes having to put yourself out there. Because I know that's a really scary thing for us. I mean, I've—when I was a child, I always kind of tended to sit and melt into the woodwork, so to speak, so that I was unnoticed. Because in our culture, sometimes, you know, we're not supposed to be putting ourselves out there in that manner. We're supposed to be quiet and trying to learn about what things are. And so, what's valued in that major culture out there is a little bit different than us. And even though we might not speak the language, and we don't know all the traditions and all the stories of the old, there's, it still had an effect on us as we've grown in our Native communities. And so, what ends up happening is we don't know how the roadmap to success in that other community works. And some of those values they have in that other culture, like being independent, and if you're quiet and whatnot people will just gloss right over the top of you and you'll never be noticed. You have to kind of stand up and—it's contrary to what we believe as a people, but sometimes necessary to have to put yourself out there and put yourself forth. So, the big

things that I've learned is that—in watching our kids—is that one of the things that we really, really get away from is being fearful of what we don't know. Because I think that fear sometimes holds us in the place where we're at. And I've seen a lot of people, and I know that I've seen a lot of *talented* people, *smart* people, hold themselves back because they're afraid to put themselves out there. They're afraid to leave what they know, to go reach out for what it is that they want. I've heard the stories of numerous young adults when I was growing up. When I leave this place—and it's the “I'm always leaving this place” story that you've heard if you grew up on a reservation or in a Colony or whatever, we always hear that story. “I'm leaving this place as soon as I get done with school! I'm going to go away, and I'm going to do this, and I'm going to do that.” And then you, you know, you turn around, you're twenty years down the road, and they're still there in the same place, and they really haven't gone anywhere, and you have to wonder why. And you come to the realization that oftentimes it's because that fear held us. That fear held us in the place. And then we start to resent the place that we now have found ourselves in because we didn't take that first step and make a move. So, even if it's not consulting, even if college is not what you're looking for, but you want to do something, you got to take that first step. You can't let fear hold you back. It's just that plain and simple: you've got to *do* it. You know, I mean, I was the first—[Laughter] here's the kicker of the story: I am the first Western Shoshone Newe person from Duckwater to graduate from college.

C: Wow. That's amazing.

H: Here. You know? And if it wouldn't've been for my mom, my grandmother, and those people just instilling that “You've got to go do this,” it wouldn't have happened. I mean,

my first attempt, I failed at miserably! [Laughter] As a matter of fact, they were about this close to asking me to leave the college that I was at, and you know, that would've done me in. So, I left voluntarily. But, when I returned, I was motivated. And I enjoyed what I was doing. I was focused, I was motivated, I knew what I wanted, and I didn't let those things that tend to get in our way get in our way. I know it's hard, because when we leave what we know and we find ourselves in a place where we're not speaking Shoshone, we're not being who we are, it could be rather disheartening. You get lonely. But, like I said, I got lucky, because I was able to—because of moving everywhere, it was easy for me to make friends that weren't Shoshone. And I've been doing it my whole life. Because there're not many—amazingly enough, there's not a whole bunch of Shoshones in our crazy world. Especially back East, you know? You're oftentimes the only Indian. And you become an anomaly, and a curiosity, and people ask you stupid questions, and you toy with them and tell them, “Yes, we still live in tipis and hunt buffalo,” because their ignorance is kind of funny to us. [Laughter] And playing around. But you always, you have to be able to strike those friendships, and make yourself fit in to where you're at right now, so that overall, when it comes to the end, you're getting closer to what it is that you're seeking in life and what you want. Because you can always return home. It's always here. We are lucky. Because we have someplace to go back to. If you take a look at the majority population, ask yourself the question, “Where do those *taipos* have to go back to?” They live in their little nuclear families with the mother, father, and their children, and they may have a little bit of extended family, but not like us Shoshone. We Shoshones have the greatest luck in the world, because we've got this huge extended family that we call our tribe. And we've always got a place to go home to,

no matter what. That's our safety net. So, there's nothing to be afraid of. Walk out there and just go do it. Because you can always return home whenever.

[Break in recording]

When I was a teacher's aide, and I was teaching the Shoshone classes over at the Duckwater Shoshone Elementary School, I was teaching a lesson one afternoon, and—this is before I went to Teacher Education and became a teacher, certified teacher, I was a teacher's aide—so, I didn't understand a lot about teaching, but I was teaching a lesson in the language, and I was—we were talking about Shoshone kinship and relationships and stuff like that, and so we were talking about these things, and I was speaking Shoshone, modeling and doing that kind of stuff. But I had one of the students, and she had to've been about seventh or eighth grade. And we were talking, and she was—you could just tell that she was not happy with the lesson, she wasn't happy with what was going on. And I finally asked her, I said, “Well, what's wrong?” She goes, “Why do we have to learn this stuff? It's not going to help me get anywhere. It's not going to mean anything. Why do we have to learn how to speak Shoshone? Why are we even doing this?” I said—I looked at her, and it just never dawned on me why we needed to do this. Why we need to learn our language, and our culture, and those type of things. What's so necessary about this? And I'd never been hit with that before. And so, it was just like an eye-opener. But, my response at that time was, “Well, because this is who we are. We're Shoshone.” And I remember her response to this day, was, “I don't want to be Shoshone.” I said—of course, that opened the door to the next thing, “Well, who do you *want* to be?” Like we can change who we are. And my perspective is, we can't change who we are! You're born who you are, and that's who you are. And her response was,

“Well, I don’t want to be Shoshone, I’d rather be white or something else.” And I’m looking at her going, “How much hatred do you have to have towards yourself and who you are to want to be something totally different?” And I remember just being totally flabbergasted. I had no answer for her, because—and to this day, I still don’t have an answer for her. And I see her now, and she’s an adult, and she has children. And she’s definitely Shoshone and whatnot, but she still doesn’t speak the language. But you can tell that she’s identified as—because you can’t, no matter what you do, it doesn’t come off, and you are who you are. I think one of the things in the majority culture out there is that people oftentimes define you by what you do. And we in turn start to do that. So, if you ask me who I am, I might respond with, “Oh, well, I’m a teacher.” But that’s not who I *am*. What we do isn’t who we are. Who we are is our language, our culture, who we are as a people. Who we come from. *Where* we come from. That’s who we are. And that’s important. So, if I had to speak to a younger generation of Shoshone children, I would say to them: do what it takes to learn the language and your culture, because that’s your identity. That’s who you are. That’s how you define yourself. And if you have a good definition of who you are, then you can go out and learn what it is that you want to do. That’s not your identity. If you’re saying, “I’m a doctor”: that’s not your identity, that’s what you do. Be passionate about the things that you do. Don’t let fear hold you back. But know who you are before you do, because you’ll get lost if you don’t. And that’s one of the things that I would like to point out to younger people, or educators that are teaching our young people. Don’t let people—don’t let that go away. Be who you—be. Because we’re *tamme Newene*. That’s who we’ll always be. And if you know who you are, and you’ve got your mindset, and you’re comfortable with that, and not hating

yourself because you were born the wrong color, or the wrong gender, or the wrong whatever, but once you identify and you get good and comfortable with who you are in the world, that presence will carry over to other people. And they'll know that you're okay with who you are. And so, no matter what anybody says to you, that has no effect because you're being the best person that you are and who you're going to be. And that, in turn, will help you find your roadmap to being successful in the world. Because, you know, one of the things that was scary about going to college is that, like I had mentioned, I was the first person in Duckwater to graduate with a bachelor's degree from a four-year university. There were a lot of graduates from other programs—like AET, Adult Educational Training programs and those type of things, or even Associate degrees. But never from a four-year major university with the bachelor of science degree. And I was the first to get that. Also, then upon after that, getting a master's degree. And that was a necessity—that was out of necessity. But, if you want to be successful in life and what you choose to do, you need to have that road map for success. Because if you don't have a way of navigating to get to where you need to be, you're going to get lost along the way. So, I think what I'd like to have for the future, for our Indian kids, is somebody that can serve as a guide to doing that. People. You need to go search them out. If you've never been to college, and you don't know what it is that you need to do to get there, and you want to go to the four-year university or whatever it is that you want to do, go look out people that can help support you in that journey. Because you need the guides to help you to navigate that system. Because, quite honestly, when you get to the college level, nobody cares. Nobody's going to push you along. Nobody's going to say to you, "This is what you need to do." You have to do it for yourself. You have to want it. Because if you

don't, it's not going to happen. You need to seek out people. I was lucky at UNR when I was out there to meet a lady at the Minority Student Affairs Office. Her name was Elaine Steiner. And obviously, she's probably not there any longer, because that was a number of years ago. But if it wouldn't have been partially for Elaine basically helping navigate the university system, I may not have made it through college. And it wouldn't have been because I wasn't bright enough, or book smart enough, or whatever it was that you think you need to get through these things. It would've been because I didn't understand or know how to navigate the system. And so, if you are living in a community where you have college graduates, and that's what you want to do, you need to seek those people out and talk to them. And if you're one of those people that's going to serve as a guide for our young people, you need to be kind. You need to be generous. Because that's the way we should be. We should be kind and generous to one another; not stingy, and secretive, and abusive to one another. That's somebody else's culture. That's not the culture I was growing up in. You need to give of yourself to your community. You need to help people out. And if that's in speaking the language, if that's in navigating the system that they don't know and understand but you do, you need to be generous in that in giving it to the other people. And if you're non-Native and you want to help our kids along, you need to start to understand their culture and who they are. Whether they totally understand their culture or not. Because those little things that have happened in the past—those little seeds, those little things that have happened to our forefathers—they're coming up, and they affect us today. And they're still affecting us. So, understanding that culture. And understanding that there's a different way of viewing the world, rather than the majority culture's way of viewing the world and operating. If you want to help a Native student

along, you need to understand a little bit about their—and stop focusing totally on what the dominant culture wants out of us. You need to understand where this kid is coming from. Because it's not the same situation that those other kids, those non-Native students, are coming from. It's coming from—your culture is fine and dandy, and we need to live in it. I always look at it as living in two worlds. I have a foot in both worlds. I can live in the white world if I choose to, and I definitely can't give up my Indian world, my Newe world, because basically, I am Newe. That's who I am. But I have to live in this world. If I need to learn technologies, that doesn't do anything to diminish my Newe-ness, or me being Newe. It just is. It's a part of what I have to do. And it's like, for, I guess in a sense, being a Newe in the twenty-first century means you have to have a lot of skills. Go develop those skills to do what it is you need to do. But always understand where you come from.

[End of recording]