

David Beaulieu, White Earth Ojibwe, Minnesota

Dr. David Beaulieu, White Earth, speaks about education, boarding schools, extended families, tribal schools/colleges and community life.

Well, I'm David Beaulieu. I'm a Minnesota Chippewa Indian from White Earth, enrollee at White Earth. I currently work as the director of the office of Indian education for the U.S. Department of Education. I don't know if you want to know any more about my background or whatever. I've been involved with Indian education, I guess, most of my professional life. I just recently was commissioner of human rights for the state of Minnesota in 1991, took a leave of absence to do that from being director of Indian education for the state of Minnesota. Worked at St. ?? University in Rosebud, South Dakota. It's the first tribal college ever to be accredited at the bachelor degree granting level, and the second such college to be credited in the history of the United States, in the late seventies, mid-eighties there. And at the center of history of the American Indian I did a post doctorate there. Did most of my research on the windows of opportunity because I did most of my research on the social political history of the Minnesota Chippewas. I spent a year at the time researching, reading letters, going through all of the letters of the Indian rights association, I limited myself just to letters by or about Chippewa Indians from Minnesota, and we did that and taught the Indian Studies department at the University of Minnesota.

I guess I'd have to start in the middle of that, and maybe work in both directions, and to kind of talk a little bit about what we've been attempting to do I think for the last eight generations or so, with regard to education. Primarily through tribal institutions. The real new feature of Indian education is the institutionalization of education for Indians under Indian control, and that process has been a process I think of, rather its amazing process of transformation, and of rediscovery and of serving one side as a people through that movement. And that movement has been as exciting at the same time as its been filled with deceits and false starts and so forth. I think what we need to think about is just how loose the schooling is, the schooling is for American Indians and for Ojibwe people.

They've always gone to school since ever Europeans were here, and the individual school went away from communities and there were opportunities for school, usually associated with churches, and with federal government, but for the most part schooling wasn't a routine part of a young person's life, going to school. And so schooling as a part of a person's education, more broadly speaking was something that was distinct, a few in the community. And at times for reasons which at times had little to do with what would appear to be educational purposes. There may be reasons why individuals went off to school learning just because of the needs of the family at the time, so not having a sufficient, large number of children, and not have sufficient resources of food, and a need for a place to stay, a warm place and a place for food and so forth.

A lot of children went to school often because of those kinds of circumstances. It's sort of new, Ojibwe people are going off to school, are amazing stories, going off to school stories and what happened. One of the major themes of there that is I think a sense of longing and returning. A longing of being away from home, and being uncomfortable about returning. And it starts with a collective feeling there I think of not, that sort of going off to school feeling, of separation, of longing, of memory, or them being uncomfortable when they return in some ways, certainly emotionally uncomfortable to return.

All those examples of many families and individuals who have done this. Whole collections of brothers and sisters who have gone off. The ones that I think of that fits most notable is from White Earth is from the Bender family and I think it's notable because of the fame that leads the two of them, real famous individuals, accomplished Indians in different areas. That of course is Charles Bender who we at least many of us I know would like to count as one of them, a famous people who was real good at baseball, helped by the Episcopal church, went to Philadelphia home school, and Philadelphia is a school sponsored by Episcopalians, brought Indians from all over there, that end of the world. A school, took some accomplished students Glen Picala Indian boarding school. In fact I just saw a web site of Carlisle which they're putting together a content of listings of all the students that have come to there between the late 1800's to 1918, and there's a listing of Benders that were there at that school. Charles eventually played baseball and did well in the world series, best strike out records I understand, and was put in the baseball hall of fame in 1954. They did a survey of him, of along with a lot of other students who

went to Carlisle, and asked him what it was like and he talked about the people treated him decently and kindly, gave him opportunities, he worked for a while, but he did not recommend anyone try baseball. He said it's a hard world to take and there are many distractions along the wayside, and he said, even with his numbers, I would not recommend that for anybody in that area.

His sister Elizabeth Bender from White Earth as well was the only Indian woman, the only Indian person actually in the country to ever have been involved in the creation of the only two national Indian organizations we have in the country representing Indians generally, one was the society of American Indians the other was the National Congress of American Indians. Very accomplished, she married a man by the name of Henry Whitecloud, a Winnebago Indian, was very active in Indian work nationally, all over.

There was sort of a success story of people that sort of venture through education away, It did a lot of work for the Depot and they're representing themselves well in the larger society and they're representing in associations and organizations. Two notable Ojibwe examples there, those experiences where I can comment, it came by way of circumstance, were not available for everybody. Nor do I think necessarily the community would have been comfortable with that. We don't really see public schools becoming important, or public education in general, or schooling becoming anything for Indians in Minnesota, I think even in the country as a whole until the end of lets see, 1920s, early thirties and it's the advent of astute public education. And when you take a look at the purposes for public educations, good public education, you think about Indian involvement in that. We really had I think the first real major threat to Indian culture, language in the sense of future which belonged to themselves and it belonged to the families and to the purpose of whatever that may be. That's the first time we found a whole generation, or a complete generation of children in school. And if they're in school and they're taking the lessons and the learning that's there, but they're not doing something else, they're not learning something else, and its interesting to think about that transition at that time.

Think about what was set up and established for Indian education at the end of the twenties and thirties, and what we've been wrestling with ever since, since that time. Its an

interesting thought to think about where we've come, and what we've done, and the greatest emphasis we have, it's an interesting question, it's a question about what it is we wish to retain and what it is we want for our young people it is distinctly alone, that involves what we want in the schools. And it involves the question to which we don't have much control, and even to this day we have little control, collectively or individually as parents or for what we'd like to see in that school and its an interesting question for that whole as to what we've done. It's interesting of change too.

Another factor that I think is so interesting is just as you think you have a handle on it, that you have some sense of definition for what it is that we need to do is change. The rate of change that is occurring now and has changed over time it's immense. Implications of moving off of Indian communities into cities, and the implications of changing our requirements for education, the advent of TV. One of the most disastrous things for traditional people is television, when you think about it.

There's an individual that I work with real closely in Rosebud and he once visited a traditional Indian Lakota, and we took a visit to I believe it was the Highrite(?) community, and he looked around that community and he says we've got to have this kind of a program, he was thinking, and we had an interesting talk about it and I guess we kind of came to the conclusion that the issue for culture is not in the community's ability to say yes, or within the ability of the community to say no. There has to be a mechanism to keep certain things at bay. Deliberately do so. To create opportunities which are important for one's self and one's family, for one's community, and to sort of keep the outside at bay, and how do you do that. How do you in a traditional society community faced with the inundation of what's coming at you and it's not just people taking land, it's not just people coming to take trees, it's not just people looking for a day labor or wage income or all these other things that so forth and then the need to supply food and all of that, but it's the influence of ideas and of language and all of that. It's an interesting question of how the community control that or do it to make those decisions. Especially when you're poor and powerless and haven't got an ability and sort of formal way to do that.

There were certain things that were set up early on in Minnesota that I think are kind of the major ingredients of what we have. I guess the main points haven't changed, and it's what we've done with those points I think that are interesting. And the state of Minnesota sort of assumed responsibility for the major part of the federal government's role in Indian education, the formal schooling role. It did so with a couple of promises in mind the connection with tribal leaders and communities in the state. One was that in distinctly Indian communities there would be a school who'd be maintained for Indian. The other was the question of equity that Indians would not because they were Indians be deprived of any other services that were around, and then the third was a recognition of the special educational culture related academic needs of Indian learners. We've been wrestling around those three points in different ways, and working in different ways and mostly in other places for a long time.

A lot of our state legislation you know that maintained Pine Point School, Grand Portage Elementary and so forth come from that original promise and despite real consolidation in Minnesota we still have small village elementary schools for Indians in some of our communities. And our state statutes that sort of back that up, and have continued that. We have a promise of equity and a unique role of federal government in guaranteeing Indians sort of an access to educational services coming out of the treaties. I mean it's original promise to provide for education in lieu of land and so forth and in lieu of at least in recognition of the community would be hard pressed to support itself without education and to find new avenues through education.

And lastly I need to recognize the purpose of doing education, what is culturally unique about Indian learners, and secondly is something, a part of the content of what education should include for Indians.

Those three points have been there since the late '20s, and we have struggled three different entities the tribal government, state government and the federal government to figure out how to do that and how to be able to be effective.

One of the most interesting discussions I think that has emerged which gets to the issue of culture and it sort of speaks to the purposes of education. I think Indians bring to this discussion this element more than any people in the United States, and I think will sort of keep us healthy in that regard as a community of people. The debate today is just amazing in terms of what people are talking about we've got to do something about education, our kids are failing. And yet the only purposes that are mentioned that are important for education is getting a job, of being employed, having greater math skills so we can do better at math work than other people in the world.

For little discussion nationally about citizenship, the importance of being a human being, of expressing one's self as a human, sort of taking who you are, about what you are, what's in your past, and taking a hold of it and sort of expressing it in the present. That's what a culture is. It isn't something that's stored away, put on a video tape, kept on tape, stored other places. It has to be lived, it has to be re-expressed with every generation in things which are appropriate I suppose because of the of circumstances we have. And so we sort of bring forward that treasury of heritage of language, of ways of doing things, of how we interacted with people, how we bringing forward of metaphors, and creating new ways of expressing it, and doing that, but it has to be a living thing to do it well. We do not save the culture by recording it, we don't save that at all.

There was a woman that I heard about some years ago I was involved with a library project the national Indian education association wanted to establish libraries in a number of Indian communities, and the idea was to, well it was radical in those days was to ask what kind of nation they would like, you and let them just transport existing collections, and then put them there in this community where they could use it, no I don't think so, not necessarily. The idea being is he had the kind of information the people wanted to use it. So he asked people what do you want, so we had a survey and, we developed bilingual surveys, and then they had people they could ask in native languages in the communities where we were and so forth.

Well there was this one fellow that we met, he was gung ho at the time. He wanted in the worst way to preserve, there was this elderly woman who knew how to tan deer hides in the old

way. She knew exactly how to do it, she was a, the belief was this young man and he had sort of a panic reaction that if we didn't record this that that custom would be lost for all time, and it was out of pressure put on this elder to relent and be recorded and she refused, she wouldn't do it. You know, he wasn't feeling good about that you know they put more pressure on her and she said no she says first of all she said as one of her defenses she said I cant imaging why anyone wants to learn how to do that. She says we'd learn to do it better you know, there are much better ways of doing it, she says and besides it stinks, it doesn't do very well and, we gave it up a long time ago, why does anybody want to learn that. Oh but you should you know, kept pushing her and pushing her, finally she relented and she said that she would but she gave some conditions that were important.

Those conditions have always sort of told me what is really important with regard to education. First of all she said it had to be done in the native language. It had to be done where it typically would have been done which was along a creek bed where you could wash out things and the water would sort of take care of things you know, and it had to be done with young people appropriately aged and appropriate sex, and all this other business. And they had to be there to help and assist and so forth, and I thought it wasn't interesting what she's interested in preserving, she doesn't care a darn about this custom really, just an elder who doesn't care, but she is caring about her relationship to young people, and how teaching occurs. That the education, what she wanted to preserve was education, and she wasn't caring too much about the topic, she wanted to keep the relationship of herself with those people.

And it's interesting if you think about it native people have always been adaptive. They have picked things up and taken them in and redid them and discarded certain things or added this and that and so forth, but has always been around something which is continuous in a sense of who they were and what they're essential belief was about who they were as a people, and for why they were living, and so that was what she wanted to preserve. It was a big lesson I think, it's a big lesson about what's culture and what isn't and what we need to preserve and what isn't necessary necessarily you know its nice to know that I mean it would be interesting to see that historically that kind of information, but its not critical. The culture's preserved I would imagine in how we interact with each other, how that woman interacted with those young people, how

they remember and think about that, and respond. Also it was kind of like a mini classroom and how could we ever enable schools, if we could ever make a school do that, to model that for Indian education.

We've been struggling to try to transform schools which were not Ojibwe inventions we've always had education we've had that kind of traditional learning that way of passing on what was important to live passing on the information. It was always done in an oral fashion, and it was done in a way that was remembered, and in a community of people who remembered and listened and told and talked and remembered and shared and so forth. And so you have this sort of sense of the world of story telling existing of people connected to each other in this constant of education all the time, and it continues that way.

How do you do that today? How do you, how we've been trying to transform that and it's interesting we had been trying to do that, there is nonetheless been a consistent constant effort to transform the schools in which our young people attend so they can be like that, they can feel like home, they had something that is of the way in which we think young people should learn, that's what we really would like to cause them to happen. The other part is interesting you want to allow them, a person to be a human being to express yourself. I think all tribal cultures had ways in which people could write songs, not write songs, that could sing songs, invent songs could, and could express one's self in art, and the way in which they around common themes could create beauty and craft and all this and so forth. How do we do that. How do we allow this sort of emergence of self today in our schools, and that's, I think we've always been trying to do that, incorporate what is part of our history, things that we can work with, the language and that too, to allow ourselves to re-express that in a contemporary sense, so we've been trying to do that.

Referring to boarding schools:

I think it affected the whole generation of people I mean and to the extent that it happened repeatedly among folks who going off to school, even if they, even going off to school wasn't in distance so far it was also I think going away, it's the idea of going to, a sense of separation and of being distant and from. I think that it is at least as you hear people talk about,

listen to stories about experiences at boarding schools or other places, they're not all bad experiences, and yet there is a sense of missing home, home sickness, there's memories of bad treatment of course, there's memories of being victimized for using languages and so forth, there's also other stories as well, stories of.

In fact I met a man in Haskell who went to school there when he was real little he said this is my home he said, I was born and raised here and this is my home and I've always been here, this is where I live, this is where I've grown up, all the Indians I know have been here at this place so. In a sense, he had a sense of being just connected to that experience. Can't deny it, the experience of going off to school as not being a part of Ojibwe experiences, as a real experience, just remembered and talked about thought about and dealt with. I sense and feel it is as I hear people talk about is sense, there's a longing in there, there's sort of a heart felt longing and a it's a, I think it's what was missing its sort of a contradictory way of saying it but, a contrary way of saying it but it's a longing something, longing for something that wasn't there, ever, and trying to have it, and not being able to grab a hold of it. You put that into a culture, and into a peoples sense of being you have in a sense I think a part of the collective desire to create something new. It's to fill that hole, to fill the void, put something there, to create something which is your own and to feel that you've done that, is to put that sense of being, and ownership of being back.

There's a lot of stories of that, that feeling, people write about it. Marriages were created in boarding schools, families were started there, people did lots of things, but they often did not come back home in a lot of ways. There was in many I ways I think an emotional separation, once you leave, once you, it becomes difficult, and I think in many ways the community became a lot like that, whether they did in fact come home, even if people did come home they came home with that feeling you know. So they were walking around in the communities feeling that they'd never come back home and when you think about what that does to a communities sense of self or the individual way of being. There was always sort of a heart break or something there, it's hard to put your finger on it. I think it's spiritual in character, it's spiritual in character, it's not just education that we're talking about its not just emotional or mental health or whatever, there's a spiritual thing there that needs to be allowed to express itself, and I think that's one of

the great feelings about tribal education. They've finally put up enough walls to be able to say no to the outside, that there is an opportunity to express one's self to feel that sense of being a human being in the way in which only you are feeling.

You're a human being because of yourself personally of course, but you're also a human being in a community of others that you can't ever separate yourself from, and that's the only way in which you can ever be an Indian is in a community of others expressing yourself. That's like how a culture lives from generation to generation, that's how it grows and develops and it's exciting, it's absolutely exciting. I would just give an example, this is a crazy example of education, it's mine actually, but it's not necessarily going to school.

It's an example of, an example of getting an education when the schools I went to didn't give it to me. I did very well in it going to school I succeeded, good achievement, did well. But nowhere did I find in the schools I went, and I went to the University of Minnesota back in the early sixties when the Indian student association first got started and you know all the days so to speak of the Minneapolis community there in all that sort of vibrant what was happening, but there wasn't anything at the University you know of Indian studies started here, the first department of Indian studies in the country there was very little that was reflective of myself of my family of Minnesota Chippewas anywhere. So I went out and looked for it. I went everywhere I possibly could to find it, to fill it up, and it ultimately took me on a journey that is in fact my career ultimately, I mean its been a constant, that. I ended up in the center of history for the American Indian for a year where I spent, I mentioned this earlier, I studied the social political history of that's what I call it Minnesota Chippewa Indians, but I did it through reading letters written by Ojibwe Indians to the Indian rights association.

A lot of the letters were advocating this or advocating that, or wanting help with a particular son or daughter who is at a school away and want some needed some eyeglasses and so forth, but these were the days before Xerox, before you could copy off of microfilm, and so I started hand copying these letters written from the late 1800's early 1900's all written by Minnesota Ojibwe Indians, and then some about Ojibwe Indians. Letter after letter after letter. It interesting what happens to you if you do that letter by letter. You almost become like the person

writing the letter, and you start to talk that way. I mean they used to sign these letters your obedient servant and all that kind of late 1800's kind of stuff and so I would often interject in conversations and kind of learned the language I was picking up from the letters but anyways, it was interesting to experience those letters one by one, each and every one over a period of about maybe 20 years. It was a snapshot of a communities ideas and concerns, really amazing to experience, to sense and feel that. I've always been affected by that knowledge of what I have learned sort of there's an intimate connection of letters and of people's it was almost, at times I felt a little bit like I spying something I shouldn't have, but you know, but nonetheless I learned a lot and it was an education that was really quite interesting.

Years later I went to the Smithsonian Institution with a fellow we were trying to raise money for the tribal colleges, and we got the tour through the Smithsonian, this is an elderly Lakota man and his daughter, granddaughter and myself, and we were walking through, getting a tour, they actually posed him in front of stuffed buffalo and mannequins and that type of thing. He did a good job of posing, he was very good at it, and he went a long with it. We ended up down in the basement of the national anthropological archives. There we were presented with a table full of photographs of pictures of all past delegations that had ever come to Washington from the spotted tail agency was at South Dakota.

And they also had pictures of from there, and we looked through every last one of those pictures and Stanley did too, he looked at front and back of every picture. He was a man who was in his late seventies and I thought he'd be kind of he wouldn't be that engaged with it but he did he looked at every single one and then looked discouraged when we were finished. I asked him what was wrong he had heard that maybe his grandfather's picture might be there, but his grandfather, he was hoping his grandfather's picture might be there, and I asked him why he said that he had heard his grandfather had come to Washington in 1908, he had never seen him before, never met his grandfather, had never saw an image of him, and so he was kind of hoping. I had asked the clerk to go look for this picture see if she could find it, it had a name, a time you know, a little bit of a history of it. She came back with a portrait of this man's grandfather's picture.

And I can't tell you, I mean it's really hard to express what occurred between him and the picture. People might think you're nuts to say this, but I almost saw something transfer, it was like an outpouring in a sense, it just became bigger it became like the focus of what I was watching, and it was really amazing, and afterwards he told story after story after story provoked by this picture and about this and about that and so forth.

It was very interesting, couldn't, could education offer this kind of opportunity for young people or to have the experience of someone remembering stories like that, and talking and expressing that and so forth, but we needed to do that to create those opportunities in schools. Its interesting that all those pieces which provoke memory that every culture has so much of that is not in the Indian communities, not used in the schools or in the colleges, but exists in places like Washington DC for people to use and make policy effecting those communities and well we publish large books who need a good picture from time to time, and it's completely out of context. So much of what we can do and should do is to enable opportunities to happen here like that.

The idea this of, the ability to say no... It so, its an issue, it is an issue of self determination and of control, but we think that we exercise that sometimes and that's one of the I suppose both because we're human we think that the biggest thing in the world is the ability to say yes to something, yes it's my decision is yes. But it's very easy to say yes to things, and what's difficult is to say no for a value or purpose which is important and particularly when the outside offers many things. It's the old story about how do you keep the bow and the form after the ???. To tell you the truth that's really what it's like sometimes you know if you want to, if you want to, if you have maintained aspects of a culture and so forth you have to be able to set up some boundaries. That's what sovereignty's about.

Sovereignty's not an abstraction that is somewhere else, a tribe is a community of people that can say no to something, can say yes too as well, but I think the future at times is more, the future which is determined by a small community that determine more by their no answers than their yes answers, and it's creating a sort of a place where it's the outside doesn't come, or which

litigates the outside, or translates it. Some boundary that allows in what is important and keeps that and doesn't allow in which isn't.

The biggest issue facing today or this is important is the issue of drugs, alcohol and all of the things which are so easy to say yes to. It takes a great deal of courage to, even for an individual who has an alcohol problem or a drug problem to say no personally, and the communities have to be able to collectively do things to say no if they want to keep that out, you have to also do that as it effects things, sort of confront issues as well I mean, and have to be able to know what that is.

And so I think schools do that, tribal control of tribal institutions do that and in an important way. First of all they enable the community to have some mechanism to do that in the first place to create an arena which is comfortable, and is a place where we, which is ours. You first have to do that I mean we can't say no necessarily unless you have some ability to do it in some formal way. I think it's really important, more so that it's interesting that we've been sort of I mean I'll go, Indian people have been litigating the outside and negotiating the boundaries for hundreds and hundreds of years. It's always been a fairly successful and creative process ... It's always been, not always, but it has been at times creative, and not only for Indians, but also for Europeans, I mean the negotiation has created some of the most amazing things in Europe to happen because of contact with the Indians and so forth and European culture and other things that have gone off in directions because of contact and knowledge of American Indians in terms of cultural ideas, and ideas about politics and just natural plants and foods and on and on it's ah. Chuck Weatherfield's book you know or books about them. Indians have also borrowed and exchanged, there's always been in an atmosphere of free exchange and people could say yes and no fairly easily.

There was a time when that wasn't possible, and the reasons why it became difficult are really tragic at times. When one thinks of the conditions of poverty and those types of situations or that sort of compelled things to occur and happen in ways in which people were uncomfortable with. So it's an interesting thing to watch this happen, and that is the most significant thing I believe in Indian education is the advent of tribal education. Tribal schools and

colleges. I think almost more important the tribal schools than tribal colleges. The potential of what those institutions can do, and what they have done are amazing and need to be a part of sort of Indian community life, sort of a new part. It's a new frame of to be what it used to always be a way of doing things.

People used to debate issues at meetings and council talk and talk and talk and talk for hours and hours and hours, and to resolve questions, to get a sense of what people believed. That's typically what colleges and universities allow people to do in a non political setting just to do that you know, a lot of discussion on way, places to create new art, to write, to write poems, to do all of that type of stuff to you know to do that type of thing, a place to keep the communities history, it's treasures in art and so forth and to show them all these things colleges and universities can do for society as a whole, and Indian communities used to do in their own ways, and so we sort of becoming ourselves again by this ability to say no to the outside and allow an opportunity for us to be, I think that's the new idea of what a school is. It's the idea of the school that used to be was something from the outside which helped to go there.

I have some specific things about Minnesota you know that we were involved in the, when I came back from Rosebud we did a lot of things, major legislation, and it was the state involvement of Minnesota is just absolutely fantastic, but, and IA and all of the business from the early years and maybe late sixties, early seventies, and Minnesota Indians all over that case you know. We used to have involvement on the state board and you know all that kind of thing.

Let's talk about the language then. It was the beginning point of that. I don_t know very much Ojibwe. What I_ve known, I suppose I could be polite and so forth, don_t know Ojibwe, but I know about the issue of language. I_ve listened to people talk about it, and I know one fact native languages are disappearing, and there_s a few studies out there that depending on what information you use you may argue about how fast they_re disappearing, but the fact of the matter is indigenous languages in North America are in serious trouble, and it poses some major issues and problems I think.

First of all for what we think about the purposes of education, and I think Indians bring to this discussion something really important for the rest of the country. I think Indians do this in many ways, not just in education but have always been there to say, you know, something. It's important for everyone else to listen to them, not just Indians. This whole issue of indigenous language and what's important about that issue is Indian people, Ojibwe people will tell you of course they'll tell you it's important, it's us, you can't separate the language from the culture, and we will no longer be a people without it.

And so there is of course that. When you think about it the, there was a study that mentioned I think we've lost a hundred indigenous languages that were being used in Indian communities within a period of about 15 years from 1980 to about the mid-nineties. That's a hundred languages out of maybe 290 some, I mean it's an incredible loss. I don't know how accurate that statistic is and so forth, but there is a significant decline.

When I was on Indian nations at risk task force we looked at the issue of language maintenance and utilization of the country and there was many of us on the task force have sort of a stereotype about language in terms of where it existed and where it was healthy and strong and so forth and I think we believed that maybe places like Alaska and in the Southwestern United States in the large tribal groups there was still a large number of fluent speakers speaking it very competently and it was developing and growing and it's not true. The people who are, who would be considered really fluent speakers are all in their fifties now. And those who do speak the language and are younger, their vocabulary has shrunk to I think somewhere around 400 words or so, I mean it's a shrinking vocabulary, increasingly filled with slang and other words and so forth, and so the language is threatened. A very short time in some of these other communities tribal languages are going to be in serious trouble.

What is the, well I guess there's a couple of ways of thinking about it. First of all is what about that. What about, I mean what does the public think just generally about the loss of a native language, an indigenous language. I bet you most people would say well that's too bad and yawn over the news about it. Just like they would yawn at the vanish of a species vanishing. There's a book I read not too long ago called the last of the kurus by Peter Bosworth I think it's

an interesting book. A kuru is a bird that would migrate from the arctic to the Antarctic and then back again. This bird did nothing but fly, and it was, the last one was seen somewhere in the 1960s, and the concept of the book is to write the story of the last one, and that bird disappeared. I often thought is it possible, is a question, is it possible for an Ojibwe Indian to be Ojibwe without wild rice. What would happen if there was no more wild rice? What would happen, what did happen, or almost happen to the plains tribes with the almost extinction of the buffalo.

There is a sense of connection of a, of human cultures to the world, real world as it is, and they sustain each other in some ways which are spiritual, and unique to each people. What happens to a culture when for example the last of the whooping cranes disappears, and the symbol of one of the Ojibwe clans no longer really exists. What happens if the language doesn't exist, or isn't allowed to be alive language is only brought out for ceremonies, for an individual to come and say the prayer, and isn't used to really talk, to converse, to tease and joke, to laugh and to tell long, long stories, usually a little bit on the fibbing side of things, but really long stories nonetheless.

What happens to a people's sense of themselves. What happens to knowledge, human knowledge. One of the things that uh, what happens to ideas if we lose diversity, linguistic diversity in the world. The idea that there's different ways of thinking about things, and when you put this perspective next to that perspective you get something new. That big aahhh disappears, and we all lose I think by that. So I think we lose something of our humanity collectively that's just lost forever, and nobody seems to care around the world.

Few places, I mean the French get mad when English words get in there and so forth, but basically there's this sense that the world's going to be McDonald's and in English, and there is a collective developing sameness out there, and so it's a tough road to think about doing that. I don't think we can rescue native languages through schools or public education at all. In fact I think a lot of our approaches that way, it almost encourages the loss of language. The way in which we teach it is not the way in which the language is used, and so it's going to be lost almost through the ways in which we try to keep it. In fact this whole bilingual approach, this whole

way in which we generally approach this it is not a real approachment. There is a way of doing it and it's very successful.

I met two Hawaiian educators about a year ago. They have a private effort in the Hawaiian islands, its an immersion program for children before they go to school, and all they do is speak Hawaiian. That's it. They're surrounded by adults and people who speak Hawaiian, and they speak Hawaiian. And one of the interesting things I was told is that there is a native village, Hawaiian village, where the young children speak only Hawaiian, and the children who come out of the immersion program, have an exchange program, and their competency in native Hawaiian is more than the people in the native village who only speak Hawaiian.

What else we, the other thing we also know is that when the these children go to school, the learning of the language learning Hawaiian, as these were basically Hawaiian children who knew English to begin with, that learning that language caused them to develop in terms of how they learned, their ability to learn everything else was important and so I mean, was, was enhanced and, and so what you have developing there is a community of people, you know two to five year old kids group after group after group speaking Hawaiian, and so it becomes a living language.

We had a conversation, and it was interesting that that particular language has extensive use of metaphor, and one of the problem is retaining the meaning of the words, and not just retaining the translation, but is in the play upon the words and how that occurs and so if we wanted to do that as a community of people we thought that was important. We could do it. But that was something that we desired to happen, but I don't think we can do it through schools. I would have to be done as a community effort, and a community of parents who say this is what we want, this is what we see the future to be, and just do it. It requires speaking and talking and that type of thing.

He is referring to Canada:

I don't know about that community, but the fact that they're using the language means that they made some decision to in fact to do so, to continue to do so, whether they ever had a

discontinuous experience anyway. I mean maybe they have been doing that all along and they can do that. Maybe they've been isolated enough to continue that. I've been in places as well where board meetings and council meetings are conducted in the language as well. That says something about it. It would be more interesting to see whether or not the, what the language is among young people, to see whether or not the language on the roads in the community and at play whether that language is being used as well.

Well there is a, it's understandable because there is a sort of a weird believing I mean a sort of ideology or a whole shopping list of beliefs about education in the first place, and one of the beliefs that is untrue is that native language is a hindrance to education. That the quicker you learn English then diminish your native language the more successful you'll be. It's a big belief and so in fact a lot of their responses are kind of connected to that because we see school based response is recognizing language in school, and yet I think it's untrue, it's basically untrue and we, I think a lot of the people in the education community as well haven't done enough study to look at the developing competency of our children to languages.

Fluency in their native language and in English or what that means for a neighboring child to be successful in school. So I mean you could in a sense kill two birds with one stone. You could have a student that is ready to learn, has increased his capacity for learning in all subjects simply by learning the language because the skill and the ability to think, and what part of the brain is exercised and all that is important for that.

Early childhood education is an area we really need to think about in terms of the future. I mean we have, we think of that as important, but it's important for three reasons I think for American Indian children. One is that I think it does deal with the issue of learning readiness, and we can also I think as we just talked about is have a look at ways of, cultural strategies of for young children, when they really can learn, where they just soak up everything that's around them, you know, of allowing them to have that kind of an experience, intense experience.

And then the third has to do with health and safety issues. Early childhood education would allow for the a way with the community can collectively protect young people, and

provide an environment which is safe and secure for them. Through the health and safety issues that sort of intervene in the lives of young people and intervene in their ability to learn and to be responsive in any kind of an educational environment is what needs to be addressed, and so I think we need to pay a lot of attention to those areas particularly, but you know.

Well, it's amazing, I of course I revealed a little bit of my age when I talk this way, but I happen to be in a particular place at a certain time and it's in the sense I've been riding the wave of that time period ever since so has the greater Minnesota Ojibwe community here and the country as a whole. Minnesota and the Ojibwe community in this state is absolutely one of the most vibrant Indian communities in the country. So much began here and so much has been fought about and tried and done with regards to Indian education had it been modeled elsewhere.

There's other places that have done things sort of like the first you have a rough rock school and Navajo, and then Navajo community college and so forth, but Minnesota really is a major place for innovation and nowhere was this happening more incredibly than in Minneapolis in the late sixties and early seventies. It's amazing what was happening there at that time. I entered the University of Minnesota in 1966, had a scholarship grant from Minnesota Chippewa tribe which paid for my tuition, books, and fees, and tuition was 90 dollars a quarter, so my entire years tuition was 270 dollars which was a lot of money. But at school we had a financial aid officer that was assigned to us because we were Indian students, I won't mention his name, but we all visited him uniquely so. He was over in the old armory building at the University of Minnesota, and our tribal scholarship money would be there and we'd have to go see him. We didn't get any other financial aid until he first took a look at our Indian dollars, and usually by then other dollars had disappeared and so we were pretty much left with what we had. Other dollars went to other students. And I didn't think they were so cool at the time, and later on we were able to change that whole process and so made Indian dollars the last dollars to be considered, all other dollars first, but I happened to learn at the time because of this process how many Indian students actually were at the university of Minnesota.

The entire university of Minnesota in 1966 there were 36 Indian students receiving some form of assistance because they were Indian. But it didn't take very long about in a four year

period that that number just went sky high, and continued to go sky high we had in 1969 with the first Indian studies department, that was really something when that happened. With a major in American Indian studies the first department in the country to offer courses on American Indians, and I attended nearly every one I could, I really did I went for, there was a course on urban Indians. My father had moved down to the city, we lived pretty much in the city, and they had a course on it, my goodness you know. We did all kinds of things, public TV shows on American Indian topics, community programs, project stairs, Indian upward bound, returning center for community programs, and all this was a connection of the university to the community. Not always a light connection, there was a lot of antagonism and some dispute about the university's leadership and all this and the community really should be doing it and so forth, but it was interesting.

I mean interesting times and those discussions and debates became important for the development of a lot of other things, but I found myself in the middle of the fray of it all and it was fascinating. Walk into the classroom and the professor says well how many Indian students are in this class, everyone would look around you know and pretty soon a couple of hands would go in the air and each one got a little bit bigger and pretty soon everybody's up like that. And to some extent that's exactly what it was about, who was Indian. And then all of the sudden bang. I'm Indian. That's what it was and there was a period of time there in that community's history, and the community, other communities histories that people said yes, I am Indian. And it was an amazing feeling to see that, to be a part of it. And of course people were saying they were Indian, but I mean it was just sort of in the classroom and in those places to do that and it became something, and it became something in a lot of ways, of course we know about American Indian movement and all of that history.

But think about the organizations that were created. Every corner in the community was an Indian organization with an Indian board doing something for the community. Every place you go. There were more, I think there were more board members than there were people in the community, you know what I'm saying. I mean you add up the number of board slots and you wonder, I don't think there's that many people in the community, but at any rate, just all of these

people doing this and so forth, and then Indian studies happening, and the most significant thing for me was being able to go to graduate school. That was really something for me.

There were a number of Indian graduate training programs in the country. I first wanted to try and go down to become a lawyer. There was an Indian training program in Albuquerque, I think it was the first year that, the first time they had this idea that, of doing that and I qualified to go and I couldn't get down there. There was no way, I was married and couldn't figure that all out and I started looking around for a something to do and I found out they had this educational administration training program for Indians who go to graduate school in education at the 'U', and I said oh I've got to try that and see if I can get in. I didn't know what it was really about to tell you the truth. I didn't know what an education administration degree would allow you to do and I found out that you become a principal or a superintendent by doing that. I didn't know that I wanted to do that, but I wanted to go to graduate school, and I found myself among a number of people from Minnesota, Ojibwe Indians, and then people from the Dakotas primarily, all going to graduate school, all from different experiences and backgrounds coming into one place and we went to school together.

We had our own seminar, we took kind of the same classes, we worked on masters degrees and PhDs and so forth, and that was exciting. And out of that group of students people went off into all different areas. A good friend of mine, Lionel Bordeaux went down to Rosebud became president down there. You know Rosemary Christiansen in the Minneapolis community with (???) programming, what's happened there nationally education association, leadership and all of that business, the intels(?) and so forth, a number of people involved with that, but what I'm trying to suggest is that there was a large number of Indian people who came to that program that went elsewhere, but never, it was always like we were a fraternity of people, and there was other programs as well.

Very interesting times, and in my career and the career of everyone else had sort of followed what occurred. But those were programs at that time really sort of was the beginning of leadership at least for Indian education, in the United States and Minnesota was the center of that through the national Indian education associations creation and it's development through

principally Minnesota leadership although it's interesting, it was a conscious decision to make sure that the board was diverse, that it was in fact a national association that there were people from all over the United States involved with that organization.

And then with the passage of the Kennedy-Mondale bill in 1972, the beginning of the Indian education act, all the title four programs and programs would try to bring Indian language and culture into the schools and that type of thing. Amazing, amazing time of vibrance and of doing things and of being involved. I don't know that we always knew what we were doing, but it sure, we sure hit a sense of why we were doing it you know and what was there, and so it was very exciting.

Years later I was appointed to the Indian nations at risk task force in 1991 by Lowell Kavosos and we had an opportunity to look back over 20 some years of history with that, we came to some startling conclusions about that period. It's one thing to complain about schools and about education when you've been left out of it, and to say what's wrong. It's another thing to take a long look when you've had unprecedented Indian involvement in trying to reform schools and to cause change, and then to be somewhat self critical about that involvement and what was happening, and what needs to be done and so forth.

One of the overall conclusions we had about that 20 year period of time was nothing had changed in some of the vital areas. If we paint the picture that Indian education is negative or bad because it's got high drop out rates, that the schools are unable to enable the Indians to achieve at least comparable to their non-Indian classmates, and that they are, that Indian young people and youth are really adversely affected by issues of health and safety, affecting their personal lives, maybe the homicide rates and the accidental death rates among young people is just very, very high and so theres a lot of issues facing up to.

If we paint that picture of Indian education and we look at schools as sort of the target, nothing's changed. Yet in that same period of time between the passage of the Indian education act into the early nineties we have had thousands of Ojibwe people become doctors, and attorneys, and have PHDs, and, or working as teachers, and so forth, and it paints a different

picture doesn't it. Something's happening out there that needs to be looked at very carefully. Schools at least for the majority of Indian young people are not working for them, continue to not work for them. But yet Indians are as a people, are becoming educated, and being successful and working in home communities and elsewhere because of education and because unprecedented numbers.

So what's happening well it's interesting to think about it, they, it's like salmon going upstream, there is something in the heart of people that want to become educated and find a way if it isn't working, if it's caustic, if it's not happening there's another path somewhere.

I know the state Indian scholarship program I managed, I was director of Indian education in Minnesota here for a number of years and the vast majority, nearly 75 percent of all Indian students who qualify to go into higher education qualified not by graduating out of high school, but by going on to adult education, and accomplishing a GED, going to college and then being successful out of their own efforts, and usually with young children and a struggle and all that, but an amazing struggle, and successful, but a lot of success there.

And the other areas I think is interesting is the difference between tribal education and public school education, particularly with regard to urban schools.

We have had some years ago we took a drop out rates of Indian students, and that's really a negative indicator isn't it when students just leave, and you look at the surveys of why they leave, and it's usually because they see no future connected to why they're there in terms of staying in school, and so it doesn't give them that. It doesn't allow them to see a connection, and so they leave. In schools in which there is a connection, and the future isn't always a job, that's what's so interesting. The future is something which I claim. It's my future, and I'm an Ojibwe Indian person, and this is the future I envision for myself, and I want to get there, I want to have a sense of myself and the future, and it's me that I'm talking about.

And I think tribal schools allow for that exploration that sort of sense of having an environment where you can stretch your own wings, you can try out leadership roles in an

environment which is somewhat safe despite all the teasing and joking that goes on you have opportunities to do things and to be. So young people sense that and can see a future I think more clearly that way. Look at those drop out rates than with urban schools. We have to work really hard at trying to deal with the situation of urban education of Indian people. The drop out rates when I had a handle on looking at them were astronomical and that wasn't too many years ago. We're talking about withdrawal rates which is different than drop out of maybe 33 percent per year each and every year. Students will come back, but, and that's exodus from those schools in and around reservation areas where we have tribal schools, we have an alternative and there's some movement back and forth, and the withdrawal rates are very, very much less and students are staying in school longer so it's a much better situation. But it's the advent I think, the most significant piece of history is the advent of the tribal schools. It's interesting how a lot of them in Minnesota started with Johnson O'Malley parent committees being so mad at the local school authorities that they literally moved shop outside the school and established in the education programs.

Oh Johnson O'Malley, yeah it's interesting Johnson O'Malley is a key piece of federal legislation way beginning in the thirties, and it really was a contract to begin with. I mean there was a statute that allowed for money to go to local schools for the education of Indians connected really to the fact that Indian schools did not have a tax base to raise money to provide for Indian education. So it was really a financial statute.

There was a, it works like ????? does currently, it does that same purpose, it used to. It changed it's purpose in the fifties, but in those days the idea was first of all to allow Indians to go to public schools, and to provide money to pay for them because local property taxes typically paid for education and Indian lands were tax exempt. There was contracts negotiated with each state under federal government with the state for the transfer of federal responsibility to the states so Indians could go to public schools. Those contracts, in fact I've got a copy from Minnesota, but these contracts are the same and other states where this happened, some kind of agreements and provisions, and it's interesting the states agreed to do things with this transfer in mind, one is that they would treat Indians fairly. They would allow them equal treatment and they could

attend all the course offerings anyone else could, they would also maintain Indian schools and distinctly Indian communities.

In Minnesota, in a lot of other places these were the old day schools that the federal government operated usually on Indian land, in fact typically on Indian land, and the school buildings built by the federal government for the education of Indian students, those buildings were transferred to the state typically for like a dollar. State gained control of the building and of the educational program there, but it agreed under those contracts to maintain the program in that community.

Almost every state has undergone a process of real consolidation in a sense, um I'm not too familiar with other states in terms of their legislation, but Minnesota's been somewhat faithful in its legislative history to maintain these goals, and Minnesota is the fine point school that's ultimately developed with a tribal council becomes the school board of the state school. It's an unusual relationship I mean in law, and, but nonetheless that school has stayed there.

Grand Portage elementary for years in fact when I was state director there was often talk of incorporating that school into Grand Marais district and to bus the kids and so forth. That school still exists, but it was a part of the agreement, that was the original part of the understanding, and the other was to recognize the culturally related needs of Indian learners. Now that's a phrase that's been around for a long time that goes into the original contracts with Johnson O'Malley, and it existed in title of Indian education act of 1972, still does in the title nine legislation which I administered, currently my position is director of the office of Indian education, it exists in the laws that provide for funding of tribal operator schools, and it's sort of recognition that Indians have needs, and needs which are culturally related.

Well what does it mean? Typically what it meant for this contract is that there would be a program that recognized Indian culture and language in the school so that it, something of the customs and of the language would be in the school that they attended. We have a statute in Minnesota that was passed in the mid 1970s, 1976 which is the mainstay of keeping honorable that promise for our state is called the American Indian language and culture act, and there's a

preamble in that statute that, it's a wonderful statute that we've, which we've used for a lot of things besides it's original purpose. It says in order for an Indian student to have an equal educational opportunity in Minnesota, he must have the same opportunity to learn his language and culture as that of his of other students.

So equal here is defined in a different way as in equal as in same, equal is same opportunity to have language and culture reflected in the school programs that they attend. Well that's a big deal, that's real diversity. That means if an Indian child goes to a school he should see himself reflected in that school for himself, not for the benefit of other students, although that's nice. I mean we think of diversity as trying to educate non-Indians about the whole world that they don't know anything about, but the purpose of this statute was that the student could see himself reflected there and that that was important to his education. That program of course has been around for a while now, has developed curriculum programs and so forth, but as long as it makes good the original Johnson O'Malley program.

Now the Johnson O'Malley program changed around the country when Indian reservation lands were included in the federal impact aide statute. It was typically used for federal lands not reservation lands, but used for like military bases, that type of thing. So when you had the local school district providing education and their tax base is impacted because of federal lands or activities, local districts can't tax the federal government, so the government provides money in lieu of that, and so reservation lands were included in that statute and so we had the impact aide and that's a major piece of the federal government's involvement.

Now in state public schools there's about 300 million dollars now in monies that go to state school districts in lieu of local property taxes to educate Indians. Fare share kind of idea. That's a notion anyway. But Johnson O'Malley transformed itself at that time. It stayed as a program and was focused to meet the special education needs of Indian learners, and what is interesting about that program in changes in it's regulations is that parents had a very major role in that program in determining not just what the program should look like, but how to spend the money. Parents ultimately by regulations had obtained the ability to actually control the expenditure of dollars, and so it gave them quite a bit of authority.

Now that came about because there was an investigation done of the Johnson O'Malley program by the NAACP legal defense fund which found that all those dollars, not all those dollars, but many of those dollars were not being spent on Indians, they were being used to purchase swimming pools which Indians could never get to, and to generally benefit the school district, but yet the Indians couldn't participate and so they changed regulations on that program and Indians had a greater control over those dollars.

Well therein laid the seeds for the development of tribal education because parents have ideas about what their children should experience in school, and they had a program to do something about it. They had a school authority, which controlled the grounds on which these programs could operate on who had different ideas.

So sometime in the mid early seventies you have a growing confrontation here of differences or what I should say purposes in meaning of education of my kids, and many, many Johnson O'Malley parent committees took the programs out of the school, established sort of a store front operations, after school programs and so forth and attempted to meet the needs of the students away from the school building. That's the beginnings of a lot, a number of tribal schools. And then the seeking of more funds to simply establish the school, and the whole process of finding facilities and some I mean collections of buildings often.

I heard one school describes as, in the early days a collection of buildings in danger of becoming a shanty town. I think people would simply use anything that was around to create a school, but it was what was going on that was important and it became a center for trying to define what that is. It's interesting when you think back and you remember a conversation and the energy of the idea of control so much in that, and then there becomes a debate for what should be and what shouldn't be and what is and how do we this and that and so forth. That was amazing conversation, and it was one that could not have occurred across the table with people in control in the school districts, and Indians as parents. You could never have had that kind of a dialogue across that kind of a table at that time. That dialogue was something that Indians among themselves in sort of tribal control situations had to have, and they did it, and invented I think some of the most interesting curriculum, ideas, there are some tribal schools I'm aware of where

they have an amazing, there's one here in Minnesota that I visited a while back, and I don't even know if they still have it anymore, but what I remember of the science curriculum at this school I, it was amazing what I saw.

The, there was an ecology program, teaching biology and ecology and so forth in the natural world of Northern Minnesota of what the seasons really are like, and then how the Ojibwe lived in the four seasons and what the animals were and then incorporating the Ojibwe words for those animals. It was amazing the interaction of all that and listening about it and hearing it and so forth. I heard that one of the instructors was a taxidermist, and the children were interested in that a lot. They were so interested they brought in all their road kills that they could find hoping that he could stuff them. A little too much I think, a little too much interest in education I think, too much excitement among the kids I should say. But that was something, that kind of thing happening all the time is something to watch and to see.

Now there's a wealth of knowledge being developed in these kinds of institutions about how to do things, that we're experimenting with ideas and trying to do things that work which can be shared with other schools and there's also I think a opportunity if we had equity in funding between tribal schools and public schools in the same area which Minnesota by the way was able to do through a piece of legislation a while back, the opportunity of having students at a tribal school tuition backed up by the school for certain things and vice versa. There was the possibilities of doing things and when you create a strong tribal education program in a school that's forward looking and developing and intending to authentically understand what the needs of the children are that they're serving, and to do that appropriately within the culture and the society to make it's reference.

We have the potential of doing things that have never been done before in a sort of regional sense. You can look above the overall system that educates all the kids in the community, this includes federal schools, tribal schools, public schools and put the strategy to work together among all that and I guess that's an area that's to come in that. In Minnesota it was the tribal school equitation bill that was the first beginning of that piece. It was an amazing time

period, a period between 1984 through the early nineties just before the Indian nations at risk task force.

I just returned from rosebud and we did something which was a little unusual, we as a community of people did the, what was called the statewide plan for Indian education. A comprehensive statewide plan for Indian ed. At the time it was my impression that most every community or Indian leader in the state was involved with education, had a particular idea about what would work and what was good and some communities were focused on this, others on that and so forth. It wasn't really a collective vision for Indian education in Minnesota. We went through a process to try to do that. It was an interesting one because we didn't eliminate anyone's ideas. We put it together in one plan, and made it make sense together, and we had some sanctioning by our state board and by the Indian affairs council, and we had a list of ideas, which we wanted to work on. And over a period of about three years or so we had seven new pieces of legislation passed.

A major piece of legislation called the tribal school legalization bill which gave state money to tribal schools to give them a greater, for equity say. What's interesting about that is that the state defined it's responsibility for Indian education, even the tribe wanted to operate it's own schools, the state wasn't off the hook in terms of it's responsibility to provide some financial support to those schools, or to those kids. Even if the tribe controlled the school and what was going on in the school, so that was a major breakthrough in defining state responsibility, and it had reversed in a sense that history to take and the federal government and move Indian tribes, giving money to the state to educate Indians, have your tribe educate American Indians and having the state give money to them. It was a major reversal which occurred in 1985 and that is a very significant piece of legislation. And what will come from that ultimately I think if things continue will be really quite remarkable.

I think the metaphor is more like a pendulum, and it's a pendulum that moves back and forth with a mind going in one particular direction. A federal policy is like that. The federal government never wanted to be directly involved in educating Indians. The minute the federal government ever got involved with Indian affairs wanted to get out of them as quick as possible,

and has always had an ambivalent relationship I think to Indian people in that regard. And it's been confusing I think to Indian communities and to not having any kind of consistent policy over a period of time to enable tribal people to be successful.

The reversals have been almost tragic and cruel in terms of the amount of time and energy people have invested with a sense of this is the policy that had been reversed and changed. Downright mean to tell you the truth when you think about it, it sounds trite doesn't it, but it is a, it's something that does exist this back and forth, and it goes around the notion of assimilation and protectionism, and neither idea is a proper one for dealing with healthy relationships in the trustee business. The idea of moving out of the Indian business and letting the state do what it has to do is assimilation of moving Indians into the mainstream and away from that. And you need to do what you need to do in order to make that transition easy. That's why a lot of the motivation behind some of the interesting pieces of that transfer, and of course Indians thought of it differently, but I think the motivation's where they're basically assimilationist in character.

The other aspect of the relationship has to do with the sense of protectionism that certain members in the Indian community they need watching and caring and as if they were like children. In this state in particularly at White Earth it is what we're defined as full bloods, at a very racist time period and the whole allotment of White Earth just tied up in these racist ideas that full bloods because of their being entirely Ojibwe were less competent to think for themselves, to manage their own affairs, and so forth. That's how the government thought. The laws were constructed to allow for mixed-bloods even if they didn't want to, to be free to their lands and so forth and it is amazingly stupid and racist period of history which went on from about 1915 through about the mid twenties, the same period we're talking about when the transfer occurred. We had realized at that time that the transfer of state jurisdiction, where the feds gave up a major part of this jurisdiction to the state to educate Indians. The transfer of lands were happening as well through allotment, through the implementation of the Nelson act, all of these lands, White Earth lost nearly 94 percent of it's lands through that time period.

Can you imagine the dislocation of the community and all that as well. There was another sense of protectionism, and of simulation. The policy has changed these days somewhat, and hopefully it's one to be sustained of government to government relations, of self determination in assisting tribes to develop, which includes education, includes all of these others, and hopefully that is a consistent policy it's hard to say if you look to what might be discussed in congress these days if it doesn't look an awful lot like the 1950s and termination again.

That's the other dilemma, any time an Indian tribe or community is successful, the federal government wants to end them as a tribe. So we have these three points of a policy triangle, which is very difficult to manage unless the tribes in fact are doing what they're doing. That's the only thing and walk forward and developing their own institutions with the notion that they of course are not going to disappear. ?? revelations I think, a major one, collective one of consciousness at the end of the sixties we're going to survive. It's a simple idea. That all of the inundations and the predictions of the outside and so forth and all of the beliefs that in a generation Indians will disappear if not physically by population numbers that were extremely low in 1910 I mean, that they would have disappeared in to the back of society, ended community life in a sense, but there was something about the end after world war two that the people said I think we're going to survive, and now we've got to do something about it, and so that's what's been happening.

But yeah, the Johnson O'Malley program was I think the motivations were assimilationist in character, and it wasn't until it changed it's purpose Indian parents got the kind of budgetary control over that program that it sort of transformed tribal education in a rather important way, a really important way.

I've got the, both the hand and the typed copy of those letters. There is a...peices coming out too, called story migrations, Loon Feather Press. I've got a story, the reason I know about it is I've got a piece in there, a piece of prose. I've been writing in sort of non-education areas the last two years I've been trying to read anything, read nothing about Indians, and then to read a lot of other stuff, and then I've been writing, but the story is Ojibwe, it's all Anishinaabe writers. But Paula Fairbanks Molin, Molin I think is how she pronounces her name, she's an Ojibwe

from Leech Lake. She's head of the Indian educational opportunities program at Hampton Institute. That was the all black agricultural school to which the American Indians first really went to school.

She wrote a piece for this book that's going to be published here in the next couple of months of stories written by Ojibwe students at Hampton, and it's just a little collection of their stories, and then her talking about it. She has a lot of, she's written articles in roots magazine for the historical society and a lot of others about Ojibwes going off to school. She is the expert on school experience.

Yeah, it's the Newberry Library. Yeah, it's the center for the histories of the American Indian. I had, I was the first Indian fellow to go there in the first school. Now they have the microfilm of the Indians rights association. And really the reason I had a copy of it is because it's on microfilm.

First Indian, as a post doctorate program, it's now called the Darcy McNichol, and I got to know Darcy McNichol before he died and that was interesting. He was with Collier administration and was the guy that sort of ran their anthropology unit, did all the writing of the tribal constitutions and stuff like that.

Yeah, we started a college down there, Native American educational services. Chicago is vibrant in it, yeah, I've been chairman of the board for 25 years now. Dave Smith, yeah, and we had an interesting collection of people. Oh I taught there. I was head of Indian studies. Lets see when was that 1975, '76, I left in '77.

I turned 50. Yeah I'm a... There was a couple of Indians... Chicago is wonderful. The Indian center there and, I've got a super eight movie, a whole bunch of them of activities that the Indians had there. One was the, every year they did this, I don't know when they stopped it, they should have stopped it before they started it to tell you the truth, but it was a basketball game of Indian men with the Indian women, but the men had to dress up as women, and the women could wear whatever they wanted to, usually it was the basketball outfit you know of some sort. And the men had to carry a purse in their right hand, and dribble with their left. I mean it really

stereotypic about how well they were and how poor they were you know, but it was funny as all get out, and there was a guy from Tama, Samson Yana that I knew real well. This, he wasn't a very good looking man, but he was the ugliest woman I had ever seen, and I've got him full face in this thing, you know it's just.. It was a good time. I really enjoyed that community a lot.

I was on from the board and then you know, it was just fun. There's a history being in bars in Chicago that is just amazing thing. They were bonnet through Bryetty's and Clifton Inn and all those places and funny stories about those places. He's been to the post office, well I would call a post office. Bryetty's was a bar that was, it was, the woman was Indian and the man was Irish, and it was an Irish bar after work, it became Indian bar upon nine 'o clock. And the woman who ran St Augustine's Indian center in Chicago had an apartment above it, so she would come and sit and drink out of this one. She would sip on this one beer, but there was a, all night long, but there was like a post office thing you know.

Indians from all over the country who couldn't find relatives would send to this bar and letter, and they would put it in the alphabet, and you know I was there more than once, more than once when somebody would come in and say is there any letter for so and so, yes there is. And I mean it was people like Navajos writing to some relative or whatever, and so it became a community post office, a little bit of a store, and a place to swap stories, and it was a wonderful place. Chicago.

We were back from White Earth down there named Bill Redcloud, a wonderful fellow and he was one of the, well he was sort of a group of founders what I can think of, that some of the original board people on the Indian center there and Bill was one of those individuals there.

Well it's very much somewhat about how we think about culture, about what is a culture, and it's interesting about the ideas I mean about it. That's important because if we talk about Indian education we always, I mean that's what in a sense makes this conversation distinctive because we're always in one way or another talking about Indian culture. We're talking about education in reference to something we see as Indian culture that, there wouldn't be a field called Indian education if it wasn't for that. I mean our statutes include this phrase culturally related needs, and it's amazing you know the diversity of opinion of what that need is. I mean what is a

culturally related academic need. We allow individual communities to define that so we don't have to get into the business of the government to say what that is.

So Indian parents are doing that. But culture it's a, is a community of people irrelevant of our experience with it you know. Even if we were adopted and never been there have this idea of a way of living, and a way of being that uniquely defines us as us, and for those who were away and come back home, I've seen families, I know some personally that have, it's almost like a whirlwind time. I mean a time that from the oh World War II time you know and the sudden movement away from reservations and you know all of that, that period that occurred because of what happened in reservations, the allotment and all of that business and off to school and so forth, I mean families suffered and people went, and many families went all in different directions, and I've watched this personally, I've seen people put families back together again. To find a relative, a brother, sister over here find them.

Well I had two half sisters too there, I never knew about them and so they find them, bring them back, put them back in so they relive and reshare and sort of reestablishing families. I mean that's not uncommon at all today. It's not just while I'm thinking about cultured self, but also thinking about families and that together. In White Earth we're going through the White Earth Land Claim Settlement Act processes, and my grandmother's allotment is being probated and you know so we went through that whole process of identifying who were all there for that, and it's an interesting findings in all that, the family history and the learning of what really happened and about that. But the, we all think of a way of living and a way of being and think about it in different ways.

It's interesting that there isn't a common community understanding about what culture is. It's thought of in different ways, it's even different emphasis and thought, there is a group of folks who tend to think of it as hard and strict, and something that is cherished and honored, and there's all of that, and it's an abstraction of a culture, and historically you see other communities doing that as well of going through that and then placing culture in this kind of, the elements of it or the language of it, of making things, of not only being respectful, but of treating things in a

sacred way, and of elevating that in a way that's, that's distinctive. That's kind of how all people experience it or think about it.

People approach the issue of language differently in communities of whether it's important to use or know it, whether they think it's important for the children, it's something from the past, those ways are the ways of the past, and we need to be modern now. The community different perspectives and ideas, one of the things that that tells you is that there has been in the past probably little opportunity for the community as a community to share and talk and think, and explore those ideas.

The closest thing I've ever seen to that happening is the Ojibwe art show. I don't know if the way in which it is presented today is that what I'm thinking about, but I'm thinking about the early days of the Ojibwe art show when it was first kind of started up, and I think the only criteria for entering the Ojibwe art show was you had to be Ojibwe, I don't think they even cared whether you could draw or not you know, or whatever. But everything was submitted you know the different categories and so forth. I remember listening to conversations of people looking at this, and I thought the conversation was fascinating because it was critical. It was critical about all of it. Different people in different ways, but what was interesting was that people were listening to each other being critical about it sharing that sense of what was good or bad or wrong or right and so forth.

Taken from them we were all Ojibwe, we all have not same expanses of sort of trying to explain and tell it to each other. Therein lies something that, how I think about culture. It is that, it is something that we share, and we come to understand through that sharing which we wish to pass on to our young people. That is a classic definition of a culture.

The opportunities that we need to create for that are important, what that will become like, we don't know. But unless we have it placed which is allows all those people who are in fact Ojibwe to talk and discuss among themselves what it is that is important. To sort of bring back the experiences they've had and share them. To listen to elders, to, in a setting which is

appropriate and meaningful so that elders listen to them and explain their own feelings about things.

So that can happen, I think that's healthy and that'll transform and allow for something to live and not be put on a shelf and not be put away, and not be artificial or to be read about. It's an interesting discussion isn't it. I think it's in the whole issue of Ojibwe music as well.

I have a friend who is writing a story about, about this idea, but you know the idea of the songs that were sung to anthropologists was sort of a general idea. These were elders in a sense that for some reason decided to sing their hearts out so to speak to anthropologists coming around that wanted to record some songs. Our current community thinks of that in a whole lot of different ways. Some say that ill came to those people who sang those songs they should never have sang those songs to that person, and they did wrong by doing that, and they should never have did it. In other words, other people say well nobody knew those songs anymore, and the only way to have ever found them was to go looking for them and to find them and to bring them back to life by now stating them, and to do it in a respectful way.

I wonder if the proper metaphor is a Wenaboozhoo in the flood. That some elders back there, that some elders back there had a premonition of a coming flood, and put all of life into the canoe so they could live, and hope that somebody would be brave enough to find those songs to sing them again. I think we need to think about the motivations of why people did those things, and to encourage opportunity to be brave, to go beyond being afraid to find who you are, and to explore the possibilities of that as an Ojibwe person.

There are powerful metaphors in those stories. Those stories are sacred because of the meaning they convey to real life, not to life that used to be. The culture is alive and the meaning those stories give to life, and life is something that's living and it's not something that used to be. So all of that, the culture lives to the extent that we live through the meaning and guidance and help of that, and bring it to ourselves in our daily lives. It exists in talking to people, and in language there is a part of that, the Ojibwe language is a part of that. Can the culture, in fact the Ojibwe culture live without the Ojibwe language? The answer is no. There would be a distinctive

culture, a distinctive way of being which has grown from and is transformed and is a continuity there which is Ojibwe, but something will not be if that is not so.

If I answer I mean the same question to even bringing it further is it, in fact we mentioned this before is it possible to be Ojibwe without wild rice? Is it possible to be without the birch bark or without the other elements of that world. And I suppose the answer is no in many small ways, in many small ways it's not, and maybe it's not so much the disappearance of the, of those things, it's the disappearance of meaning. It's the sense of meaning. It's meaning that exists in a collective sense. When you have that you can play upon it, you can have fun with it, you can use it to invent new ideas and to create double meanings and subtleties and so forth, and which allows us to be poetic in a unique way and to grow and develop that way.

So yeah, something would not be so unless that was to be preserved and maintained. Actually I shouldn't say preserved because it's almost like putting it away in a box some place and haul out your culture on the weekend you know. It has to do with how you live, and being an Ojibwe person means learning the language if you don't know it, using it, a lot of things like that.

What I think would be the real end to Ojibwe culture if it ever comes I mean for crying out loud I mean in fact it's threatening to debate itself is kind of non-cultural and it's not Ojibwe culture to be that way. There are two things I think that held it is a loss of the sense of Ojibwe humor, and the other is when Wenaboozhoo stories are no longer invented. We carry a sort of ultra sense of ourselves, which is like Wenaboozhoo, and we make fun of ourselves through creating stories in this fashion, and we also think about our creative self in the same way. And there is that story about when Wenaboozhoo and, went down to the canoe with his grandma and sailed away, and I think he went away, but he's been peeking around the trees lately you know and sort of looking here and looking there and you see these little sparks of life coming back again, and I think he's coming back, and if Wenaboozhoo doesn't return if that in fact is a story that the culture remembers that Wenaboozhoo got in his canoe with his grandma and went away, the culture's already gone. When Wenaboozhoo's gone, the culture's gone, but I don't think that's, that story will last on see. So when Wenaboozhoo's out there he's speaking to the writers,

he's talking to people who are, who are making laugh all the time by teasing and joking the way they do. He's, he's out there, and so yeah. That's what I think.

Well I suppose it could be a couple of reasons. I think it has to do, I don't know, I suppose it's the large, the largest band, and what do we got, 20 some thousand plus members, by percentage you're going to have more writers anyway I suppose, but I think it's something in White Earth history. White Earth is the broken heart of Ojibwe people and it's in the country and I think it's the broken heart of Indian people in many ways. And the reasons why is that the promises made there were so, so enticing, so wonderful, and so profoundly broken, yeah I think it broke the people's heart that is at least the metaphor for broken heart, that place that was to be the garden of eden, that was to be the place where Ojibwe life could live in there by itself it would be there people, people were coerced to move there or suggested to go there.

Some didn't, some went and came back you know the number of Mille Lacs band kind of got half way moved up there, some came back, but they stayed. There were those promises made and was broken and herein lies a great need to write. In some ways Ojibwe writers are not unlike Irish writers, O'Neil and others and trying to find a way to explain yourself, to explain your real history, tragic history. The memories of people who write and memories of a lot of Indian people are not unlike those of some Irish writers, come from broken homes, alcoholic families of trying to survive and to live and to find one's self and so there's a lot of commonalities there I think in that experience, and it's not just women, but it's men writers trying to do this and that is something that I think is amazing, it's something I think that really needs to be encouraged as a growing tradition of writing here. It's something I think that comes from too an interesting culture to the culture itself, this idea of writing of self, and of the oral tradition and the written tradition.

There one thing about the oral tradition that is very interesting is that it's alive and it's never the same. A story, you hear a story told and you know the basics of the story, that story's never offered in the same way. The story may be told lets say in detail exactly the same but also for different reasons so the story's different you know, and the masterfulness of Ojibwe story tellers telling stories and not just talking about old stories you know that are pulled out

traditionally, old stories, but telling a story of what happened last week you know or something and about something happened to somebody and pulling that story back, and remembering it all your life to be a part of something. That web and that weave of listening and telling it is a culture.

It's a real life culture that plays and mixes with itself all the time, you can't do that with writing, you can't do that in writing. I think writing, the purpose of writing is to leave things behind, to leave it in place to get rid of sorrow and sadness and to put it away over there, to explain and to leave it to the past, hopefully it will go dusty and musty and be there, and I think that's the motivation in writing, and I think a lot of the writing that is coming from Indian writers has that in it's heart, that is to leave things behind, to explain and so forth, it's creative and it's energy, but I think it's that it has that purpose in mind.

So we have sort of a...I think an oral tradition, written tradition has been going on here. I don't believe it's my ?? to tell you the truth that it's possible to write the old tradition. I do not believe that is possible, and if anybody has thought that idea, then I think they bought a story there.

Yeah it can only be, it only stays alive in the community of people...

There is a belief that once written down it transforms into a truth or something it's more valid or whatever. It's absolutely false. A well told story because of in fact this idea of the levels of meaning and the subtleties of which it's offered provide more truth in a sense. We all use that with quotes around it, but when I say that it conveys meaning, and it's a conveyed meaning it is communicating truthfully, and so to do that in that fashion in an interactive sense it's alive, it's creative, it's the only way we can express ourselves as human beings I think is to be engaged in that fashion.

Writing is a creative act that comes to a point and it ends. It dies once it's told, or once it's written I should say, and you can't ever take out that story and read it to someone, you can tell it I suppose you know and, but the it's different each time and so. Yeah you're right it, the idea of writing and that's the, that's one of the things I think writing is, and I love writing and a

good story and that type of thing in the process of doing it and reading it, but it's not the same as telling and listening and then engaging in a community of people to play upon these things all the time.

A classic case of what I think is the old miners canary story being told in a new way. This is kind of what I alluded to before about Indians sort of being a herald for the overall community, we've done this before by example of our experience in earlier times I mean when it would have to do with the idea of liberty and freedom. When Indians lose the right to be who they are something about the idea that you can be who you are is diminished you know and there was a period in the history of this country where Indians sort of were the example of that, so we herald a lot of things for the country, and we give example.

I think the greatest, what we offer now is the example of this idea of being who we are, and the sense of this country is becoming incredibly weak spiritually I think, and becoming increasingly journeyless and destinationless as individuals and as a society. We have a, our educational systems are increasingly thinking that the purpose of education is to get a job, and to become skilled and in skills. Skilled in skills. And with no sense of what the human being needs to be and to find ways to be a citizen to engage in a community of people we can interact with personally and to be engaged in civic life. All of what Indian people are doing is what this country was founded to do, and we're just doing it in communities of people, which is reasonable among people.

I mean this is, and to some extent communities are modeled with democracy, models of a political innovation, and in the ways of solving problems, of doing things which work, of recognizing people as human beings and then trying to solve their needs personally. They are not examples of extracting human needs of marketing images of solutions and so forth and so I think we offer something to the civic life in this country which is being lost.

What Indians offer is amazing, I mean if you think of and ponder upon what has occurred in one generation among tribal communities in the United States and think of where they've come from, and how they survived and thrived and become and have created communities and

despite resistance, despite all of that it's quite a remarkable story. It's something to be proud of, not only for our own people, but for this country as a whole, it gives an example of how to model other communities out there, how to do it, how to pay attention to people who are in need, how to respect and honor your past, and to make it something of your own, to live and to be for the present. It's really something, it's a rich life actually, and I think the country as a whole needs to feel that kind of thing.

It's incredible the level of anger though isn't it, in the community as a whole today, and I think that suggests a lot about, about what's missing and lacking there.

If I had wishes, if I had wishes.

It's an interesting question. It's I think the one unponderable is the amount of energy people my generation put into what we're doing, and yet I don't know that we think the next generation is secure to that future. I think that's one of the unponderables right now, and it may be because of we've put so much energy into it all, that many of us haven't put as much attention into some things that we should have, and then opportunities have been lost for that.

You spend a lot of time creating opportunities doing this and doing that and so forth, and all along you've had another generation right there, right with you. I think all of our families sort of maybe sensed that in some way, and hope that we you know the next generation will walk through the doors that have been created, live in the, with the opportunities that are there and that all this will matter. We have to hope that I suppose, and hope that the next generation doesn't have to repeat and do the work again. So I think it's in the sense, that the notion of trying to create some sort of predictability and for the future that's important there.

As for myself I would love an opportunity to recollect. To put together, to write to do that. I think there's a lot of people out there now, as we talk, that they would like to do that. I think spent energy into experience that has to be expressed eventually, and that's what I would like to do myself, just to do more of that. I used to teach. I used to teach when teaching was trying to get things accomplished through other people, if you taught a good course you sent

people off with this knowledge they would do good work out there. It's a relative sense of teaching on those days, which was like sort of a missionary in a sense, and I think a lot of that teaching was about that.

Now it feels differently, I think it feels differently to a lot of people that have been working in Indian education over the years. It's a time to reflect, a time to think about where we've been and to leave a legacy of comment of perspective about that to the future. The generation before us although they had those perspectives and ideas, often did not have the opportunity to share that with us. We had to go find it, create it, and do it, and so I think we owe something to the next generation to leave behind a sense of perspective and of experience to talk about it, to write about it or to share about it, that type of thing. It's almost like what you're doing with this program.