Bernice Navakuku, Hopi
Frank Carlos, Papago
Francisco Manuel, Papago

December 17, 1975
Phoenix, Arizona

This transcript is one of a series of interviews with American Indian people throughout much of the United States by S. I. Myers of the History Department of St. Louis Community College at Florissant Valley, St. Louis, Missouri, 63135.

The purpose of these interviews is to bring the Indian peoples' own comments to students in classrooms, and to foster greater understanding among the peoples of the United States by providing Indians the opportunity to express their ideas and opinions to a wider audience.

This transcript has been edited for clarity and ease of reading, but every effort has been made to preserve the original feeling. Conversations and opinions were encouraged on any subject of interest to interviewees; questions and responses do not necessarily reflect the viewpoint of the interviewer, the National Endowment for the Humanities, or St. Louis Community College.

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December 17, 1975
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Sam Myers:

Three young Indian people and I are sitting in the superintendent's office at the Phoenix Indian School. So, first of all, let me introduce Bernice Navakuku, Hopi, and Frank Carlos, Papago, and then Francisco Manuel, Papago. Bernice, did you come from one of the Hopi towns up north?

Bernice Navakuku:

Yes, I came from Polacca.

SM: Polacca on First Mesa. Do you know anybody named Ami up there?

BN: Yeah.

SM: Frank Ami?

BN: Frank Ami? I don't think so.

SM: I've been trying to find him. He carves beautiful kachina dolls.

BN: I don't think I know him. I might know him by a nickname.

SM: Well, did you go to school up there?

BN: Yeah. I went to elementary school up to sixth.

SM: Is that a BIA school or a public school?

BN: BIA.

SM: How did it go?

BN: It's all right. It's a small school.
SM: Where is it?

BN: It's at Polacca, just centrally located.

SM: Right in the town. Do you ever go over to those other towns like Oraibi?

BN: Yeah, I go to all of them.

SM: Do they still have the ceremonies up in the Hopi towns like we read about in books?

BN: Yeah.

SM: The Snake Dance?

BN: Yes.

SM: Have you ever seen it up close?

BN: Yes.

SM: Did it scare you?

BN: No. I don't know, it seemed like you got used to it.

SM: I've heard there's a Smoki fraternity or association up here at Prescott where a bunch of non-Indian men do the same dance that the Hopis do, that same Snake Dance. Is that true?

BN: I've heard about it, but I don't know just how true it is.

SM: You haven't seen one of them?
BN: No.

SM: I just wondered what the Hopi people thought about that. Did you ever hear any expressions?

BN: No, I don't think I've heard anything. Probably they would have gone against it.

SM: They probably wouldn't have liked it?

BN: Yeah, because that Snake Dance is supposed to be really sacred, and it's only supposed to be performed by those men that are initiated into that clan.

SM: The Snake Dance, though, part of it's performed in the kivas, but then after that, isn't the part outside sometimes open to the public?

BN: It is open to the public only that Hopis are supposed to be seeing that kind of ceremony, but this past summer they did open it to the public where white people could come and look at it, but all tape recorders, cameras, all those things, sketching, all those things are not...

SM: That's not permitted, is it?

BN: No. They have to leave them in their cars or something, they can't take them up there.

SM: Even years ago there used to be signs up there saying cameras will be confiscated.

BN: Yeah, they do that. One time they were having this one dance, it was a social dance, but it was early in the morning where not very many people were there, and it only just happened that my aunt and them
were sitting behind this one lady in the front, and she was sketching, you know, under cover, kind of hiding, she was sketching one of those kachinas that was dancing when they caught her, and they just took that picture away and it was burned, 'cause you're not supposed to do that.

SM: People should respect others more. At Old Oraibi they've closed the town because of what some people had done, breaking the rules and so on. Frank, you're from the Papago people now. That's down south of here, isn't it?

Frank Carlos:

Yes.

SM: Most of your people are way down by San Xavier?

FC: There is three different reservations.

SM: Where are they?

FC: There's Gila Bend, there's San Xavier, right by Tucson, there's a bigger one south, it's bigger than the others.

SM: There's one right out here south of Phoenix, that's the Gila River one, isn't it?

FC: That's Pima, the Pima Reservation.

SM: Is there another one there that's Papago?

FC: Papago Reservation starts about three miles out of Casa Grande, south of Casa Grande.
SM: It's south of that Pima Reservation, and extends to the Mexican border?

FC: Yeah.

SM: And there's another one down by Tucson, the San Xavier.

FC: And then Gila Bend, southwest of Phoenix, that's probably the smallest one.

SM: Do you speak your native language?

FC: Yeah.

SM: Can you say "hello" in Papago? Now maybe that's throwing you a curve, because in Pima there's no word for hello.

FC: Our Papago word means more like, "What do you say?"

SM: Oh, "What do you say," or "How goes it today?" A Pima man was explaining about the Pima. In the Pima language there is no word for hello or good-bye because once you have known someone you can never lose them, they're always in your mind, at least, and that since we're all part of the same Great Spirit we shouldn't have to say "hello" either. Instead they say, "How are you, how have you been," things like that, but just a straight out and out "hello"--they don't have a word for it. So it is kind of that way in your languages too? Is it that way in Hopi, Bernice?

BN: Yeah, I think so.

FC: We don't have no word for hello.
SM: Then, Francisco, you're Papago also?

Francisco Manuel:
    Yes.

SM: Do you come from the same area that Frank does?

FM: No. I come from a little town which is, say about 22 miles off the reservation. It's a copper mining town.

SM: Which one is it?

FM: Ajo. It's supposed to mean garlic.

SM: So you didn't live on the reservation then?

FM: Yeah, I did for a while, and then my father found a job in Ajo, and that's when we moved.

SM: So you live in Ajo. Now that's near Tucson, isn't it?

FM: No.

SM: There's a road down there on the south side of Tucson that's named the same, Ajo.

FM: Ajo Road, that goes all the way across.

SM: And it goes all the way to your town?

FM: Almost 200 miles from Tucson to go to Ajo.

SM: Well, that's certainly farther than San Xavier. I don't know if I'm
saying that right. You know there's about four ways to pronounce that, aren't there?

FC: Yeah.

SM: Well, Frank, did you go to school down there?

FC: Yes, I went to school in Pisinimo, a little village where I come from.

SM: What's the name of that town?

FC: Pisinimo, that means buffalohead.

SM: Was that a public school?

FC: That's a Catholic school.

SM: You went through grade school there, and then you came here?

FC: Yeah.

SM: Did you come up here because you wanted to, or is there a high school down there you could have gone to?

FC: Not until a couple of years ago. They started a high school there.

SM: Did you speak English when you started school?

FC: Not that much.

SM: Do you speak Spanish too?

FC: A little.
SM: More Spanish than English when you started school?

FC: Yeah.

SM: Was it hard then, going to school?

FC: Yeah.

SM: I would imagine it would be terrible. Everything is in English, isn't it, at school?

BN: Yes. My oldest sister, she's about five years older than I am, she was raised, you know, talking Hopi, and that's all she knew when she went to school, and it was really hard for her, plus she was a lefty.

SM: Left handed?

BN: Um hm. And the rest of the students, they were right-handed, and she really had a hard time, so she'd come home and she'd kind of cry about it 'cause she was always talkin' Hopi and the rest of the kids was talkin' English pretty well, so she really got herself pushing to where she could talk English fairly good. She made it through, but that's the reason why the rest of us didn't grow up talkin' Hopi as much as she did. We learned it, but English was our main language, you know, while we were learning.

SM: How about you, Francisco, did you speak English all the time, or did you speak your own native Papago first?

FM: I speak my own native language first.

SM: When did you learn to speak English?

FM: In kindergarten.
SM: So you went to school not knowing how to speak English?

FM: Um hm. I knew some words, I learned little by little. Build up.

SM: When you're young like that, people tell me, the kids are quick to pick up a new language. Do you remember a struggle, Francisco?

FM: I don't remember. You don't remember so well, first thing you know you're talking both languages anyway.

SM: Can you both still speak Papago?

FM: Yeah.

SM: At home now, when you go home and talk to your mother and dad, do you talk Papago?

FM: Yeah, we talk Papago.

SM: Your grandparents, are they living, Francisco?

FM: Just my grandfather.

SM: Does he ever tell you stories about how the people used to do things, and so on?

FM: My dad used to tell us.

SM: How about you, Frank? Have you ever learned some of the old ways from the older people down there?

FC: Yeah. My mom always tells me about the women's games they used to have. We've seen pictures, it looked like it was a lotta fun.
SM: They had pictures of them too?

FC: Yeah.

SM: What kind of games would they be?

FC: They have long sticks just like hockey.

SM: Oh like hockey or lacrosse, field hockey I guess you'd call it.

FC: Yeah.

SM: You know the Choctaws back in the Southeast were famous for playing stickball. Sometimes it got pretty rough. And that lacrosse game, probably like your mother was describing, or something like it, has been popular with many Indian peoples all over the country, way up in the Northeast, for example, they used to play it too. Did the boys play the same game?

FC: I don't know. I think they used to run or somethin'. Races.

SM: When you guys were younger, did you get a chance to go hunting much?

FC: Yeah, I did. I used to go hunting a lot.

SM: Still do? Where do you go now?

FC: The mountains and the desert.

SM: What do you go for in the desert?

FC: Rabbits.
SM: You've got to be a good shot to get a rabbit, don't you?

FC: Yeah. In the mountains we go for wild pigs and deer.

SM: No elk up there?

FC: No.

SM: Did you like hunting too, Francisco?

FM: I don't go hunting very often. I didn't go.

SM: That's a copper mining town, isn't it?

FM: Yeah.

SM: Does it have turquoise there too then?

FM: Yeah, they get turquoise out of that copper too.

SM: Turquoise seems to be where copper is, doesn't it?

FM: I don't think the workers can get it out. I think the only way they can get it out is to hide it in their lunch pail.

SM: Yes. They have a word for that. Highgrading. Did you ever hear it? Old Jacob Walsh, the man who was supposed to have found the Lost Dutchman's Mine, one story is that he got fired because he was doing that same thing when he worked at Wickenburg.

BN: Do they check them when they're going out?

SM: Well, they'd start checking them as they came off the shift. What's
the name of the turquoise that they get out of that mine?

FC: I don't really know what's the name of it.

SM: Over at Douglas or Bisbee, it's Bisbee Blue. But you don't know what it is down here?

FC: I don't know. There's some miners that has all the rocks, different turquoise, copper, and I'd go there every day, but didn't know the names of it.

SM: You like to look at them, but you didn't learn the names. Well, Francisco, then, you went to school down there and then you decided to come up here. Now this school starts at grade seven and runs through grade 12, doesn't it?

FM: Yes.

SM: What grade did you come at, Francisco?

FM: Ninth. Freshman year.

SM: Did you go to a school down there, public school?

FM: Yeah, public school.

SM: Through 8th. You went to the Catholic school, Frank, and you went to public school, Francisco. Do you like one better than the other?

FC: I like Catholic school.

FM: I like this boarding school better than the public school.
SM: You like it here better. Why, Francisco?

FM: I don't know. To me public school where I lived, I had to walk for a long ways. It was about three miles. I had to get up early, and school starts at 8:00 o'clock.

SM: Here you have to walk about 30 feet?

FM: I lived in Ajo, all the guys I knew were just the people in the home town, and sometimes they had classes on the reservation. I'd go there with my mom. I don't know nobody there.

SM: Yes. So you almost felt like kind of a stranger there?

FM: Yeah. I wanted to come to school here to see if I could meet some new people.

SM: So you like it better. Bernice, did you ever read a book called Me and Mine, about Helen Sekaquaptewa?

BN: No.

SM: You know the name, don't you?

BN: I don't really think I do.

SM: There are several of them up there in your neighborhood. Not in Polacca, but in Second Mesa, Third Mesa. Anyway, that is a fascinating story, and it describes how the kids were actually rounded up and taken away to school against their parents' wishes, and now you're coming here because you want to, and you like it when you get here. Do you like it here, Frank?

FC: Yeah.
SM: How about you, Bernice? Do you like it?

BN: Yeah.

SM: Having a good time?

BN: Yeah. Now me and Cisco are seniors, though.

SM: The Cisco Kid?

BN: See, it's gonna be hard to leave, for me. You come here, you're a freshman, you find all kinds of things that are new, and over the years you get used to it. By the time you're a senior you hate to leave.

SM: When did you come, Frank?

FC: Freshman.

SM: So you all came as freshmen?

BN: Yeah.

FC: I'm a junior now.

SM: So you spent four years, pretty closely associated, seeing each other every day?

BN: But you don't get to know all the students in one year. Next year you'll know some more. You get to know them through lot of different ways.

SM: Are any of you participating in the school government?
BN: We all are.

SM: What do you do, Bernice?

BN: I'm the president of student council.

SM: Oh, we got the president here. You're the president of the student council. Were you elected?

BN: Yes.

SM: Did you have to run for that?

BN: Yes.

SM: Do all the students vote, freshmen, sophomores, down to the 7th grade?

BN: Um hm. All the students.

SM: Did you have a lot of competition?

BN: No. I had one girl run against me last year. My term's up Friday, 'cause we only have it a semester, and next semester they get another one.

SM: You can't get into too much trouble in one semester, or can you?

BN: No.

SM: Is that the title, student president?

BN: Yes, you can call it that.

SM: Do you have control of student funds?
BN: Um hm.

SM: Does that sometimes get you into some real tight situations, if somebody spends some money that shouldn't be spent?

BN: No.

SM: Do you always vote on everything first?

BN: We all discuss the things that we want to do, so the amount that we take out of our funds, we always know what's taken out and how much we have. It's always reported back to student council how much money we spent and how much is left and how much was put in from this and that, so we all know what's going on.

SM: You have a good record-keeping system. You've got a good secretary and a good treasurer?

BN: Yeah, they're doin' pretty good.

SM: What's your job, Frank?

FC: Dorm representative.

SM: You kind of have to keep tabs on the kids in the dorm?

FC: Yeah.

SM: Like a house father?

FC: Nah. We got our president.

SM: You have a dorm president?
FC: Yeah, and treasurer and also representative.

SM: Do you represent the students to the dorm officials?

BN: He represents the students that stay in one particular dorm. We have seven dorms.

SM: Oh, then each one of the dorms can put in a vote like in your council?

BN: Yeah, uh huh.

SM: And you're the representative from your dorm on the school council, is that right?

FC: Yeah. What they're talkin' about in the student council meetings goes back to the dorm.

SM: And you take it back to the dorm too, just like a Representative to Congress?

FC: Yeah.

SM: What do you do, Cisco?

FM: Same thing. Representative.

SM: Different dorm?

FM: Representative of the dorm for 18 and 19 year-olds.

SM: Your people are 18 and 19. How about yours, Frank?

FC: Sixteen, seventeen, I think.
SM: I didn't ask any of you how old you are. Do you mind if I do?

BN: Eighteen.

SM: I would have guessed that. Frank?

FC: Sixteen.

SM: Now see, you look older than 16. I would have thought you looked 18 too. You're bigger, I suppose. Are you 18 too Cisco?

FM: Eighteen.

SM: Frank looks older than he really is. He's only 16. He's a very young fellow, isn't he?

FM: He's got an ID.

SM: An ID. I remember one student waited and waited until she was 21 so she could get in to buy beer at a liquor store, and finally she got to be 21, that's two years in college already, walked into the liquor store to buy a six-pack of beer and take it home to her dad, that's what she said, and they didn't even ask her for her ID, so she pulled it out and made him look at it. How old do you have to be to buy beer in Arizona?

FM: Nineteen.

SM: Now two of you guys can vote, can't you?

FM: Yeah.

SM: For the next president. What are the biggest problems on campus
right now that you're all coping with?

BN: It's going along pretty smoothly.

SM: We had a real hassle back home where they tried to impeach the student president.

BN: We haven't done that over here.

SM: You haven't done that, so you're still in office.

BN: Yeah.

SM: Your term is up Friday?

BN: Yeah.

SM: You can relax then, heave a sigh of relief?

BN: Yeah, but I'll still be in there.

SM: What will you then be?

BN: Just an honorary member.

SM: An ex-officio, sort of?

BN: Yeah.

SM: As an old, retired president?

BN: Kind of helping out the new president, I guess, get into the system.
SM: Do you have a fund that you can spend for student activities?

BN: Yeah. It's just under student council in the school bank.

SM: Council funds. It's in the bank under your name?

BN: Not under my name, under the student council, and all the activities that we have going on, or if we want to go out somewhere on a trip, we just get the money and then we go, because we have a store that's the main source of our money coming into the fund.

SM: This is from the students?

BN: Um hm. From the school store.

SM: You run the store?

BN: Yeah. We have a manager for the store. She has two workers that work with her, they run the school store.

SM: Now that's unusual. The student body runs the store on campus. Is that the bookstore?

BN: Not the bookstore. It's like a little canteen or something.

SM: Oh, I see. There's a bookstore, so that's separate, but you have a little store of your own, like a canteen.

BN: We don't have a bookstore on campus.

SM: Well, then, that's quite an undertaking, isn't it? You get a little experience in running a business already. Some of the problems that go with it.
BN: Yeah.

SM: Are all three of you involved in that then? Well, you are, you can't escape it, because your student council is responsible for it, and you're all on that council, aren't you? Francisco, is everything going good?

FM: Everything is goin' right, but the only thing that bothers me is about the boy students, they don't have too much interest in sports, and the school don't have no spirit. Just some do have spirit.

SM: A few do and a lot don't?

FM: When they have a basketball game, they should be all in there cheerin' for their team. Probably see some people walkin' around.

SM: They don't do it? I'm afraid that's all too typical of lots of schools. You've got a team that's doing well, haven't you?

FM: Yeah. That's basketball.

SM: Are you on it?

FM: I'm wrestling team this year.

SM: Is that how you hurt your arm?

FM: Um hm. We'll have about 13 boys out for wrestling this year. Like my coach said, seven years ago he had 60 guys out for wrestling every year.

SM: Now thirteen. Frank, do you like sports?
FC: I like football, but I didn't get a chance to get out this year.

SM: Well, 16 now. You've got two years ahead of you too, haven't you?

FC: Yeah.

SM: So you've got a good chance yet. Anything else bad or good that you'd like to mention? Our students back in St. Louis are interested in what you guys think and say, because they haven't had a chance to come out and see you themselves. By the way, I'll tell you right now, so I don't forget it, that if you do have a chance to come through St. Louis, I'll give you an invitation right here and now to come and visit our class, and the students would love to see you, they really would. They'd think that's terrific that you would take the time. Besides, they'd have a thousand questions that I haven't thought of to ask you.

BN: Maybe you could get a pen pal kind of deal set up, because we have some students that are kind of interested in something like that through government, and I think they'll be willing to do that with the students, share what they know.