HARRISON CORNELIUS, Oneida

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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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Sam Myers:

Today I'm in South St. Louis, talking with Mr. Harrison Cornelius. Harrison, would you tell me the name of this association that you run here?

Harrison Cornelius:

Yes. This is the Mid-America Indian Cultural Center of St. Louis.

SM: We'd like to get you introduced to our listeners. Have you always lived here in St. Louis?

HC: No. I lived in Kansas City, Missouri. I'm only here on an interim position.

SM: Well, before we get into that, did you go to school over in Kansas City?

HC: Yes, I did. I was born on the Oneida Reservation in Wisconsin.

SM: Oh, are you Oneida?

HC: Yes, I am full blood Oneida.

SM: Do you know Robert Bennett?

HC: Yes I do. A third cousin of ours. He was born there.

SM: You Oneida people were one of the first of the Five Nations of Iroquois to move west, and they did it on their own when they bought that land, didn't they?

HC: Yes, that is true. We were the first of the five of the Iroquois Confederation movin' westward.
SM: Did you go to school up there at Oneida?

HC: I went to grade school and high school in that area, and I did my college work at Kansas City, Missouri.

SM: The University of Missouri at Kansas City?

HC: No, it is ironic where I got my education. During the time which was in the late '40's and early '50's, the Bureau of Indian Affairs would not pay for any college education if you resided off the reservation. I tried my entrance examinations at Kansas State and Kansas University in Lawrence, Kansas, and I could not pass entrance, and could not qualify for the GI Bill of Rights there. I was determined to get my education anyway, so I enrolled in a school that was not accredited at the time, Kansas City Art Institute, and I did my collegiate work there, got my degree in Fine Arts, which I need like a shot in the head.

SM: You have a degree in Fine Arts. What particular kind of art did you specialize in?

HC: Sculpture and ceramics.

SM: That's interesting.

HC: I had no opportunity to pursue that ... fine arts. I needed a training period, an involvement period of approximately ten years to make them recognize my work, and I did not have the time, the opportunity to do this. I changed into administrative work and been in that line since.

SM: In various business firms?

HC: Yes, business firms and with the United States Federal Government Civil
Service. I spent approximately 22 years in that particular line.

SM: Working for different federal agencies too?

HC: Correct.

SM: At one time—when this center was beginning, weren't you the advisor from Kansas City or something? It seems I heard your name as the man they referred to when they had problems.

HC: I was involved with many American Indian organizations within this area, and started a lot of funding processes for many organizations here. I had been past president of Region Seven, American Indian Council. And this was predominately interested in new starts from the federal government getting funds for these organizations to get them started as organizations to deliver services for American Indians in this particular area. So, I've been associated with about five different organizations in receiving federal funds, and so forth. I don't care to be an administrator. I do enjoy the challenge that's there to get new programs started, and so forth.

SM: Once they're started you like to let somebody else run them?

HC: Yes. That's the reason why I'm acting here as an interim position at present time. It was only by error that I've been caught in this interim position, due to the fact that I arrived down here the day after the board met, and the former director here had resigned and they needed someone right now, and I accepted it on an interim basis.

SM: Oh, that was Miss Underwood?

HC: Yes.

SM: When was this?
HC: It happened the very latter part of February of this year, 1976.

SM: And then you're going to carry on here until the reorganization is complete?

HC: As a matter of fact, today was my last day; however, I will be here for ten additional days.

SM: Are you going back to Kansas City then?

HC: Yes. I have another assignment pending. I don't know whereabouts it is; it's another crisis situation, and I will be out again to another organization.

SM: Do you know who the new director will be?

HC: The board is meeting tonight on that question. I think the availability of the new director will be about four days away. No premature release today. I might add, too, that I am retired, and I have been in private business for myself. My wife is now operating a private business herself, too, as well as being a full-time federal employee.

SM: You don't look old enough to be retired.

HC: I have been for the last seven years, and so, when I take these positions with these Indian organizations, I do that at no cost, no wages, to them. My contract as far as wages are concerned here, was $1.00 for 90 days, and I will donate that dollar back, so it is some ethnic dedication on my part.

SM: You have expenses. They help you with that at least, don't they?
HC: Yes, they do help me with expenses, living expenses, but no salary, and I like to see the organization proceed, and I would like to see more dedication by many people who have the capabilities of doing it. I think this is the only way we're going to proceed, develop ourselves, look after the interests of those who are in need is by our self-dedication.

SM: You're very interested in education for the people, too, aren't you?

HC: Yes, very much so. I respect education. I find it as possibly the only ultimate means to escape whatever you're tryin' to escape, especially poverty. It's reflective in my family. I have three members of my family, two daughters and one son. One daughter is a graduate from the University of Missouri, Kansas City; she is a teacher now with the Shawnee Mission school district; I have another daughter who has been in school administration in the University of Wisconsin, Green Bay, also now enrolled in Rockhurst College as a part-time student in accounting. I have a son that's in the University of Arizona who's just finished his third year in communications, and also workin' as an announcer and cameraman for KOLD, Channel 13, CBS outlet in Tucson.

SM: Well, he will get some valuable experience there.

HC: Yes. And so I tried to impress on my children the values of education, and one might say, at the present time what are we tryin' to do? Equip them with European education? No, I don't think that's true at all. I think what we're attempting to do is deal with the situation, deal with realities in an educated manner. And I think this is the only course we can do.

SM: We have to learn all we can about whatever it is we are faced with.

HC: Right. Whether we're talkin' about European history, or whether
We're talkin' about scientific concepts, the economic concepts, and so forth, whether European or not, I think we have to understand those in order to understand our situation here in the United States, and deal with those in those realistic terms.

SM: That's where the basic conflict came—the conflict of those European peoples and their attitudes with the native Americans who saw things differently.

HC: Right. Even to the courses of religion. I find it very fascinating from the education point of view, and what religions have done, European religion more so, to lands, to peoples, to cultures, and so forth, and I think we can learn something from that.

SM: The Oneidas, they subscribe to the old Handsome Lake religion, don't they?

HC: Yes.

SM: Now it's called the Longhouse, or has been for a long time?

HC: Handsome Lake was one of the early philosophers of the Longhouse religion.

SM: That's still going, isn't it?

HC: Yes it is. Very much so. Reviving more each day.

SM: Dr. Spicer, at the University of Arizona where your son is, has written a short history of the American Indian, and he emphasises that very point.

HC: I am also a follower of the Longhouse religion.
SM: Your home town is not far from Keshena, is it?

HC: No, it's not. It's not far from Green Bay, Wisconsin, borders into the Stockbridge-Munsee, the Stockbridge-Munsee Reservation borders onto Menominee, so we have something very much in common in the state of Wisconsin. There's various tribes there--the Chippewa, the Menominee, the Stockbridge-Munsees, the Winnebagoes, and so forth.

SM: I imagine you know Ada Deer?

HC: Yes I do. She's a personal friend of ours. Very active in the restoration of the Menominee Tribe and the federal trust.

SM: The restoration was effective as of March 1, 1976?

HC: Yes, that is true. I think that time frame is a fact.

SM: It was dragging along a long time. It was accomplished, but it wasn't quite technically signed and sealed until that date. So then they had their status back the way they wanted it now.

HC: To say they're back in the way they wanted is a very broad statement, indeed. Lot of things have changed since they were terminated in the '50's, in 1950 specifically, and I don't think what they lost they can recapture at this time, but, however, they are back in the federal trust.

SM: And some of their land is gone, isn't it?

HC: Yes it is. Some of their land, some of their industries, and a lot of division of the people has been involved here. I don't know if they can ever restore the tranquility they had before termination.

SM: It is difficult. But they had a long, hard fight and, like Ada Deer
said, it proves that one person can do something, if they're willing to pay the price.

HC: Remarkable woman. A lot of dedication on her part. She must be only admired for her efforts and for her time that she spent there. She certainly was not being paid or reimbursed for many of the efforts she did.

SM: Now, back here in St. Louis, the cultural center, this has been going on now several years, hasn't it?


SM: It's two years old now. And then soon now it will be taking off under new management. I suppose it would be premature to ask you what the purpose of that new management will be, but the general purpose of the center, would you comment on that for us?

HC: I don't think we're going to have a change in goals and objectives. I think we'll have a change in personalities. Our goal is to service for a full-service program for the American Indian in the greater St. Louis area to meet his needs, whether it be in employment, whether it be in education, whether it be in housing or welfare or legal matters, and so forth. The office of Native American Programs has selected this St. Louis center here as a new start, received funding from the office of Native American Programs, in federal grant form, and this alone, you know, in 1976 here, the year of the budget austerity, was remarkable, and we see a lot of great things as going to happen in St. Louis. Certainly yet we're a growing organization; we have many things to work out, policies, procedures and so forth, training of staff, and all these inner development things, but I am certainly looking forward to, say a year or two years from now, to be a well-funded, well-founded American Indian center, in the interest of the American Indian population in the greater St. Louis area.
SM: Have you an idea about what that Indian population of the greater St. Louis area is?

HC: Yes. We have figures that deal with about 4,000, fluctuating, depending on the economic situation.

SM: That's in the whole area?

HC: Yes.

SM: In the city itself it would be somewhat less than that?

HC: In the city of St. Louis itself, yes. We have been assigned a territory to deal with American Indian problems here which consists of 13 counties and the city of St. Louis.

SM: Oh, the center covers all that area then? You could really get swamped with problems.

HC: Not only ordinary problems but political problems, geographic problems, and so forth. We have several counties in Illinois, and we find political and geographic problems somewhat of a problem. Let me point out that in education we have a state concept, Missouri State, we have a state concept in Illinois. We must deal with both of those. A state form of grants also in Illinois, and in Missouri; we have problems with, I don't know how many, probably 22 school districts here we're dealing with, besides the city and the various counties, so we have a lot of political, economic, social problems that we have to deal with also.

SM: Would you say that about the same proportion of Indian children are in school as the population as a whole?

HC: No. I think we're gonna find that--I think statistics will bear us out on this--we don't find as many Indian children in school as in other ethnic groups.
SM: Is there any way to account for it?

HC: Migratory reasons, following industry, such as construction and so forth; we find that interplays. There's a variety of reasons why they're not here. We find also lack of administrative necessities, such as transfer of school grades and so forth, health reasons, why they're not in school. I think the rate of achievement also is not up to the norm as an ordinary student here in St. Louis. I think we're below the norm, and it says that we need some remedial and some tutorial services to catch up.

SM: Can you touch on the cause for that, that below-the-norm position?

HC: Well, from the educator's standpoint, I think they would have a different viewpoint. From the lay standpoint, which I will comment on, yeah, I think there's various reasons. I think just the cultural habits of the American Indian has something to do with it. Possibly nutrition has something to do with it. Possibly the lack of clothing, even, suitable clothing to be a part of that group that's being accepted. These count from the lay point. I think educators would have other factors to contribute to this also.

SM: Because no one has ever really discovered any inherent difference in the abilities?

HC: No. I think if we would take one group or another, ethnic group and American Indian ethnic group, place them side by side, everything else equal, I think that we wouldn't find any difference at all.

SM: So I guess this has been pretty well proven and tested.

HC: Well, I think the American Indian is a very proud person culturally, and I can recall my own experience that many times I would not ask,
you know, for certain things in school. I'd rather do without. I think that cultural trait interplays here, and if we could overcome that ourselves with probably ethnic to ethnic approaches, we could survive much better and do a much better job than we are in the present colleges.

SM: Harrison, going on with the activities of the center here, can you tell us a little more about some of the things that happen day to day? What kind of problems do come up?

HC: We have probably all the types of problems that any social organization might have on the war for poverty; we have food problems; we have employment problems; we have discrimination problems; we have education problems; we have housing problems; welfare problems; legal aid problems and so forth. And if we can't deliver the services, then we act as a referral agency and refer them to the people that do do these services, and then have a follow-up to see that these services are delivered to the American Indians.

SM: Can you think of one of the more recent cases, and how it worked out?

HC: We had just recently a case of an elderly person who needs some dental work, and is a diabetic, who is receiving food stamps, and it seems that something is not compatible, and food stamps are not doing the job from the point of diabetes, and so forth, as well as the teeth problem, and so we'd like to see the community services do something about this teeth problem for nutritional purposes; she's an elderly woman, and I think the poverty level there, the family situation, is conducive to having some things done there. Another case, I think, we were talking about shoes for school children. One would like to say that they have a special pair of shoes they use to go to school, and they want to come home and save that one pair, so we have some problems there with a very large family that just
recently came here, and we'd like to readdress those problems immediately.

SM: So they come in and they tell you about their problems, and you try to work them out somehow?

HC: Yes.

SM: Do you have sources to go to for clothes or for shoes or for that dental care, that sort of thing?

HC: We do have a limited amount of monies on hand; we do try to find patrons to help us, assistance on this, and there is organizations here in the community who have those resources or would take these under a community project and do things for us. I might say that the community in St. Louis has been admirably responsive. And I can only thank many organizations here, and especially many of the interested Jewish organizations, who have responded very bountiful, and have done many of these things.

SM: That's great. Good news.

HC: We find people who recognize the need of these American Indian families, and who have taken them in the past, especially around the holidays, who have been more than abundant, and more than the usual case, above and beyond to assist these people. We also have a limited amount of clothing that's donated to us; we in turn issue it out to people in need; foodstuffs the same way, which is non-perishable. We've had some monies donated to us to buy non-perishables so we can deliver these kind of services to these people. I see we must do a lot of public relations work related to a lot of coordination, and I do see this organization developing to one of the finer organizations in the region. We'd hope to think that whatever services we couldn't
get from the community, or the responsible agencies to deliver these services, that we could develop these things within our own ethnic group, and we say this with pride, not with trying to get anything off any organization, but we want to do these things ourselves; to have the experience, the capability, and know that we can service these people.

SM: Indian people would like to be able to say, "Look, we did it ourselves, we didn't have to ask you."

HC: Right. In the past, you know, we've been recipients, and not the ones who were making the decisions of how you get it.

SM: There's been too much of that, hasn't there?

HC: Yes. This is all entirely a new experience to us. The other thing I think the people don't realize of this organization is that we're trying to give the American Indian the opportunity for experience in employment and so forth, in our jobs here. Our positions here are staffed by American Indians; we hope that they get the experience and the work history, and the opportunity to do these things in these capacities, so they can be more meaningful to their employment in the normal processes in St. Louis. We don't expect people to have employees here 10, 15 years. We're here to give those people the opportunity and experience, hopefully that they do fit into the mainstream in the employment process, and that is one of the intangible things that we have here.

SM: How about the employment situation in St. Louis? Is it pretty bad for Indian people, or is it the same for everybody?

HC: No. We have a very high unemployment rate here, and we have also a very hard core of Indians who we are dealing with. We have a concentrated employment training act of '73 program here, and we're tryin'
to upgrade, retrain, place in employment, these people who need training and who cannot at the present time get in the mainstream employment processes. It's not an easy job; it's a very difficult job. They have been said "no" to many times, and to try to train them now over a period of time is really a challenge.

SM: That feeling of giving up?

HC: That's right. Frustration and so forth. From this frustration, this rejection that they have experienced here, these lead to many other ramifications, possibly alcoholism, suicide, and so forth. Those kinds of things are very prevalent among the American Indians, because of frustration. The concept of American Indian centers is relatively new, and the Office of American Indian Programs is relatively new, and the whole idea behind this thing is to give the Indian the opportunity to make the decision for the first time in the history of the American Indians in the United States here. So it's a new challenge to us, a new experience to us. It's a new experience to the federal government; it all comes under President Nixon's self-determination policy of 1971, and we find it very exciting at times, and very frustrating at times, but we're hopeful that we can work out some workable solution.

SM: Was that self-determination legislation finally gotten through Congress?

HC: Yes, it had been a very, what do you call it, weak program, I think, at least it's a start, and I think from that we'll have to build on constantly, be aware of this, be cognizant of it, and try to implement it as much as we possibly can.

SM: The whole thrust of the federal government now is to foster self-determination, isn't it?
HC: Yes.

SM: A change from what it used to be.

HC: I think we're probably on the same basis there, and the same interest as the emerging nations of Africa, Asia and so forth.

SM: That's a good way to put it, yes.

HC: I like to look at it from the international basis that some day we could be probably another Israel--we have that capabilities, we've got not only economic, social and political issues, and to deal with them and too we could be involved with those.

SM: You mean a regular Indian Nation?

HC: Yes. Those reservations could be very much similar. They are sovereign nations in nature at the present time, limited very much, and I think they can emerge through this process by looking at these, studying these groups and so forth. I see the Jewish country of Israel emerging from desert to a valley of green in possibly 20 years.

SM: A lot of work there and a lot of progress.

HC: I think some of our reservations are very large; we have quite a few million acres in holdings in federal trust at the present time. I think we as American Indian people owe it to all the rest of the American Indians here to do something about these lands, to get the control of these things so we can emerge. I think the basic thing of feeding ourselves is my primary interest, and I see all this land laying there, wasting, contracted out, and I would be interested in saying, "Let's have the ability to feed at least these people, get them off the welfare, so they can become independent, responsible
to themselves. But if you're captured into welfare and the dole system constantly, from generation to generation, I don't think you ever could move these people out of the present status.

SM: This group of young Indian people who came through St. Louis last week. What did they call it, The Caravan for Self-determination?

HC: Trail of Self-determination.

SM: Now they are working on this same kind of thing, to encourage and make an impact on Washington for more self-determination, aren't they? Is that their purpose?

HC: Yes, that and the other issue there is treaty status. I think predominantly--are the treaties viable in 1976, 200 years after they made the treaties? The Wounded Knee issue was primarily started to test the Laramie Treaty of 1868.

SM: The one here two years ago?

HC: Yes, that was tried in Lincoln and Omaha, and so forth. The American Indian Movement at Wounded Knee basically had this in mind to test the viability of the treaty, the Laramie Treaty of 1868, and whether it was viable in 1976. And the Judge up there in the Federal Court ruled that it was not a matter for the Department of Justice, but a matter for the Executive Department, the Department of State to adjudicate, and to offer a solution to this. So I think that's where we're at right now. Trying to make endeavors to get into the Executive Department, in particular through the Secretary of State, to see if the treaty is viable or not viable for American Indians. The Sioux especially there, it's a precedent case.

SM: In other words, this caravan, this Trail of Self-determination, is
working on this very point—how viable are those treaties?

HC: Exactly. And we have many treaties on resources—fishing, hunting and so forth—and I see once the question's settled that economic progress, economic development can be based on those. The 20 points, or the number of points that the Trail of Self-determination has does not differ that much from the 20 points that was taken to the Bureau of Indian Affairs in 1972, they're very similar in demand—and I wish that group a lot of luck. I think the points are very applicable; they should be addressed; and I hope that they are addressed by the Congress at this time.

SM: We were speaking a moment ago about the sovereign Indian nations on the reservations. I think it was last year, a year ago in May, that Peter McDonald, the tribal chairman of the Navajos, spoke at Tablequah, Oklahoma, about an Indian nation. Did you by any chance hear him?

HC: Yes, I heard that message.

SM: Was he talking about the same thing you were just speaking of yourself, or was he talking about a political separation, or just what does he have in mind?

HC: I think ultimately we're all talking about the same thing—a sovereign in all aspects. I think some of us have different phase tables of how we approach this; I think we differ from that, but ultimately I think we all agree on the same thing.

SM: That the Indian people on their respective reservations would function more like a state, for example?

HC: Yes, very much under the control of the United States Federal Government, not under state concepts.
SM: Then each reservation would be more like a state then, like the state of Missouri or the state of Illinois, rather than a reservation?

HC: Exactly.

SM: That old federal ward idea is getting kicked out of shape too, isn't it?

HC: Yes it is. It's only recently, in the last 20 years, that any of us have done anything about this. In the past we've been very passive on the issues; I think as time proceeds, in the last 20 years, the last 10 years, I think you can see the progress; the more advanced we become each day, each year, and I think during this generation, why our students in school and college at the present time, you'll see some results to the viability of the treaties. I think we have to go back almost to the treaties, because we had made treaties, not only with the United States, but with foreign entities. I know my tribe has treaties with Canada, with France, and also with the colony of New York, and the jurisdiction of the colony has been turned over to the state of New York, so we have state jurisdiction, we have federal jurisdiction, we have international jurisdiction, and these are the questions that we address ourselves to—which is just to say we have treaties, and those treaties go international in scope, and others just go nationally and some go with the colonies, in case of New York, when it was a colony and turned over to the state for adjudication.

SM: The big reservations like the Navajo or the Sioux, you can think of them as viable states, functioning with the government and the rest of it. But how about some of the very tiny reservations? Would they consolidate with others, or would each one plan and hope to be a separate and individual state? Sometimes they would be smaller than a county in some states.
HC: Sometimes they go into minute acreage, possibly 20, 25 acres, and in some cases . . . in Oklahoma many of the tribes are landless. I think that what we're talking about here at the present time is our own reservations. We have not progressed to the point where we talk about situations that do not pertain to anyone else's reservation except our own. I don't see right now, maybe possibly in five years, a forum comin' together to deal with this kind of an issue. I think right now we have to start some place, we have to press it at this thing, and get goin' on it, and you know, Peter McDonald is right, and I think we've got many of the people on the Sioux Reservations are the same way, and some of the larger reservations that include counties, yes, I think right now we're talking about those federal lands. We're not talking so much . . . we're interested in the landless tribes, but at this time we're dealing now with the federal tribal trust lands--those reservations.

SM: And then, of course, going back to the treaties, there would be a lot more land probably added to the existing lands?

HC: Yes. We are gaining in land each year. I know our tribe now has got capability of buying back lands that were formerly in trust and awarded to the tribe that were sold, and now we have the privilege of buying these back again, so we have an increase in our holdings each year. I think it's prevalent in many of the tribes across country.

SM: The Taos Indians and the Blue Lake country they've got, the Pyramid Lake thing, and the Northwest coast fishing situation have been settled in the courts.

HC: And I think more so too now we recognize with the energy crisis on, that there is a tremendous amount of energy-producing elements on the reservations that haven't been tapped, and we won't have control of; we'd like to have control of those, I think we can become
self-dependent. Economically we can have resource monies for economic development, and all the things we need on the reservation, through these few depositories we have there. I think Cheyenne River coal deposit there is a good example; the uranium that's on the Navajo Reservation; the coal deposits there on the Navajo Reservation; some of the Colorado-Utah places, the reservations there have all these. I think the timber alone by itself on the Menominee Reservation is a great asset, and as you said, fishing in the Washington-Oregon tribes. I think we can build ourselves a mutual kind of a trade pact. We would trade lumber for fuel, coal, and we could trade foodstuffs and so forth. We could interchange amongst ourselves, if the Bureau of Indian Affairs would give us these permissions. I think that one of the most significant points, recognizable points that I foresee as an American Indian, and that was a lack of the contracting authority of the tribal chairmen. The Bureau of Indian Affairs retains this.

SM: He's under a superintendent?

HC: Yes. And they could not make a determination of who was going to contract what. This was out of their hands completely. I think that's one of the biggest demands we have right today, and I see more interest in this; I think this is just a matter of time to be dealt with, and the authority to be dispensed to the tribal chairmen. I certainly don't envy Peter McDonald, who runs the biggest reservation in the country—he has many problems. I would like to think that Peter McDonald would be the final authority on all the resources on the reservation, in concurrence with the tribal council, the governing body there. I don't think that situation prevails. I think final authority lies with the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and I think very demonstratably that the Bureau of Indian Affairs take-over, the building itself, was not a point to do away with the Bureau of Indian Affairs, but to modify or change its methods of operation.
SM: It has changed a lot in the last few years, hasn't it?

HC: I would hope that it is, and I foresee many more changes coming.

SM: With all this in mind, and with these assets and these natural resources on the various reservations, and we know they are there in some cases, the Indian people are not concerned now as they would have been a hundred years ago about losing those resources. Now this you don't fear any more?

HC: Yes, I do fear that. Yah, I think we have to put this on a corporate level now. I think that we're talking now not on individual part, individual fear as we did in the early time periods of the country, but I think we're dealing with corporations. I think once these corporations, they do their contracting through lobbyists in Washington—we never physically see 'em, nor do we physically deal with 'em—but all this invisibility there. But corporations suddenly find they have leases, and suddenly find such ramifications as this, as saying, "The surface land is yours, Mr. Indian, but the resources underneath the surface land is not yours, the treaty doesn't say so." Those are the kinds of things that I fear.

SM: Oh, I see. In other words, it would get to be a sort of legal battle. Of course no one can get those mineral rights without somebody having signed something?

HC: That's right. And also with the environmental processes, who is to say that we on the reservations could not be, these couldn't be circumvented because they're trust lands, and those things be placed on there for . . . well, in smoke abatement. Use the issue about the four corners, Mexico, Arizona, Utah and Colorado, where a power plant was goin' to go up on Indian lands, just spewed out smoke and everything else, the waste in the air, and what could you do about it?
SM: Converting coal to electricity or something?

HC: Yes. To furnish to Los Angeles. Those kinds of things are our concern now.

SM: Did that one go through?

HC: No, that project, I understand now, is stopped. It won't go through.

SM: The Indians did keep their control of those coal canyons, they call them, don't they?

HC: Yes, they did. We're not that dumb, you know. With a little education we can foresee possibly the location of new kinds deposits around the Great Lakes, because of Kansas being a former ocean and so forth. If that theory is correct, that around former waterbeds and waterbeds we find mineral deposits, possibly fuel deposits, and you can see around the Great Lakes this possibly could be developed. I don't know if geologists have done any exploration in that area or not, but we hope that maybe in the near future some of these could be. We would say then how far and how much of that would be on former treaty rights, because the Great Lakes was given to them as a water body means of communication, a food resource kind of thing. So they extend out into the Great Lakes, and we would want to know in the future how to get involved in those.

SM: If someone did discover something offshore, for example, under Lake Superior or Lake Michigan which would affect your town up there, because you're only about, what, 50 miles from it, aren't you?

HC: About 10 miles. The original treaty took us right out to the lake. And so we're concerned about these things, we're cognizant of them, and so at the present time, you know, we're possibly helpless right now to do something in this area, but we're very cognizant of them.
SM: Yes, it really gets complicated, doesn't it?

HC: Yes. We're observant of what happened in Alaska, what's going on there with resources; what's going to happen in the future.

SM: There was a court decision in favor of the Indian people up there, wasn't there?

HC: Yes, in a limited fashion, a limited way, yes.

SM: The pipeline companies were going to do something and the Indians said, "no," and went to court and stopped them?

HC: Yeah, that's correct.

SM: Well, in your town of Oneida, are you an enrolled member of the tribe up there yet?

HC: Yes I am.

SM: So you have a stake in that too, don't you?

HC: I certainly do, and I'm very interested in economic development. We have a 34-acre industrial park in the heart of Green Bay, and we recently recovered some land adjacent to the airport, which is very feasible for economic development; in high demand, and I'm interested in seeing this developed, and the Oneida people being the beneficiary of these profits. I would only say that a lot of not only federal, but state, county, city ordinances interplay in this thing, and we're bogged down, I think, in those kind of ramifications. It's very costly to deal with this legally, and these tribes are not that rich or have that much money for legal services, so I think we're stalematin', we're bogged down now, but I think sooner or later we're
gonna pull out of this thing. We also see in our reservation an expansion to the west, west of Green Bay, approximately 10 miles. Green Bay cannot go east, it is into the lake at that time; it cannot go any further to the north, nor can it go any further to the south. West Des Peres is on the south, to the north we've got the peninsula, and so the only direction they can go is west, and we're faced with the reservation.

SM: That's where the Oneida Reservation is?

HC: Yes. We see much luring, and much enticement tryin' to get those lands for development process and expansion of Green Bay, Wisconsin.

SM: Are the people going to be wise enough to hold out?

HC: I think this is where our collective efforts will have to come into play. I think that sooner or later we will have to regroup on the reservation and lend our talents to prevent this if that's what we want.

SM: Frequently Indian people say, "We don't want the money, because the money is here today and it's gone again, but the land is here forever, and so we don't want the money for the land, we want the land." That's a basic attitude, isn't it?

HC: Yes. It's strange to me yet. We own property in the city, in Kansas City, and it's strange to me to think that one man would be so jealous of his land that he would prevent anybody from even walking across it, even to say that a dog would cross it, he has a phobia about this. We got kids playin' on it, and so forth, and this is rather strange to me yet, even although I have been in the urban area since 1948, to think that someone wouldn't allow this on the land, and such asinine things. So there is some kind of a cultural tradition with me that really I can't understand myself. I did make
this statement to my wife. I said, "I wonder what would happen, like in my community here, if I would take a quarter of a beef, or a bag of fish and start up on the corner house, and ask those people if they would like to have some fish or some beef, and there would be possibly one or two things would happen. They would call for the psychiatrist, for the mental people to come in; otherwise they'd call the police and say I stole it, or otherwise they'd say there is some kind of gimmick here and they'd call in the detectives and say it was a con man." And this kind of situation prevails on the reservation. They think nothin' of it. If a man came with some fish they would take what they'd need and he'd go on to the next place, they'd thank him and he'd proceed down until he got rid of the fish. But in an urban area this would never take place. And I fail to understand this, you know. Probably it's cultural.

SM: Yes, this sort of thing does happen in small towns and on Indian reservations. The Indian people have always had this attitude, haven't they? Whoever is fortunate enough to be the successful hunter, shares what he gets with the other people, doesn't he?

HC: Yes, that's correct. Another thing which I find rather strange to accept. On Indian reservations, if one was to go from one village to another, maybe 20, 30 miles or so, and if there were teenagers the family would have no worry or no fear of what's happening to their children and so forth, because once they got there the family they were visiting, or if they just came for one night and they dropped in this home, they would feed them and they would put them up for the night, and think nothin' of it. So they were always in good hands. This is not prevalent in an urban area, but you can see the juvenile delinquencies, the enticements, the danger that we have in the cities, and this is not really prevalent on the reservation amongst the Indian people.

SM: Reservations have their good points as well as their bad ones?
HC: Yes they do. And in spite of all what's happening on reservations, many people visit reservations and say what horrible conditions we see, they have a lot of pity for the American Indians. Yet, on the other hand, I have a different attitude. I look at the reservation as the last place that we have to go. I feel that it's home, it's a sanctuary, it's my homeland, and in spite of everything that's goin' on there I can say, "I'm home at last." If I have no other place to go I can always go back to the reservation, and this I feel very proud of. I think the same feeling is in probably immigrants who come to this country and always have some longing or some place to say that they'd like to go back to or have a homeland. I think this is the only homeland we have left, are these reservations, so I take great pride in the reservations in spite of everything that's goin' on there, or in spite of all the conditions that prevail.

SM: Because some of the conditions are pretty hard, but still there is that feeling about it that you're among friends, or among your traditional enemies, but at least you know where you stand.

HC: And maybe to some people the conditions are looked upon as very hard, very severe, and so forth. I can reminisce now of some of my youth on the reservation, and I thought it was very fascinating; we were very close to nature, very close to Indian life, and so forth, and I'm just sorry sometimes that these same practices and habits are not carried over into the present American Indian communities or cities or metropolitan areas we have in the United States. I see a lack of it . . . of concern of the people in the city here. A door away from you, they could care two hoots and a heck what happens to you in case of an emergency or anything else. In case of need they could care less. This does not prevail on the reservation. We're concerned on the reservation with one another, and I think it's built through the clans, through the concern of family relationship.

SM: Family is not just a man and his wife and his children, it's the
whole extended family--aunts and uncles, relatives, friends and the whole thing.

HC: I think that extended families are very prevalent, and are going to continue to be prevalent on reservations.

SM: On the Pine Ridge Reservation, when Russell Means was out there running against Dick Wilson two years ago, someone said he had a good chance of succeeding except that he brought some outsiders in to help him, which didn't sit well with the local people. Is that a traditional kind of attitude?

HC: No. I think that this is created political factions to prevent working out the election. I think there was some hanky panky on some federal agencies involved here; I think this is just exactly what the Bureau of Indian Affairs would like to see happen to all reservations to keep them divided, keep them from coming together for mutual interest on issues; I think this is traditionally a thing that has occurred on reservations for many years, and I think that now and in the future many of these issues will die out; there will be no more political division and so forth, and they're comin' together. I can see this in a number of reservations. One of the particular examples of this is the Navajo Reservation, the largest reservation we have.

SM: And they're pretty well unified now, aren't they?

HC: You bet they are.

SM: One council and one chairman?

HC: Yes. Very strong chairman, and a very strong tribal council, and they are making progress in spite of all the conditions imposed upon them by the Bureau of Indian Affairs.
SM: Then at Pine Ridge now, this election that just occurred, two years after the one that Russell Means was in, a man named Trimble won. Is he kind of a compromise candidate between the two?

HC: Well, he has been a former employee of the Bureau of Indian Affairs in the capacity, I believe, of one of the past superintendents of a reservation. I know not too much about his background; I think that election did indicate that he was a choice of the people, and in spite of maybe Mr. Wilson's capturing of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the Office of American Indian Programs, jobs that, you know, you get your political backing from, and so forth; in spite of that, Mr. Trimble won, and I'm looking forward to a great change in Pine Ridge Reservation, as well as the other Sioux reservations up there. I think it's just a matter of time before we lose this division, and we've got to come back together very strong.

SM: This might have been a step forward then?

HC: It's no more or no less than what occurs in, well, the national political parties we have in the United States, nor is it any different than any division we have in any other ethnic group. I think it's more predominant because the press had something to play up.

SM: Another point that comes up. This last summer, you know, when the two FBI agents were shot out there, and somebody was saying, in fact I think it was a reporter for one of the Washington, D.C., papers, a writer, saying that both the AP and the UP were there; and that both were concerned with being first more than they were concerned with being accurate, and that they blew the thing out of proportion.

HC: Well, again I have to go back to my theory of the press, and I think it's dealing mostly with sensationalism rather than real issues. I think that's a product of the papers.
SM: So like in that thing out there in '73, Wounded Knee, and then just this last year the FBI agents, and then the other BIA take-over, a lot of this was sensational reporting rather than pure fact?

HC: Yes, I think it is sensationalism vs. objectivity, objective reporting, yeah. I was in Israel when the agents were shot there, and the press came out with the agents shot on the reservation in Pine Ridge, and it gave nothing but sensationalism.

SM: You got the news over there too? It made the world news?

HC: Yes. International news, and I was appalled to think of the headline that I see in the paper. I seen two FBI agents were shot there, and it gave the impression that they were blatantly murdered without cause, and so forth, and I never did see a clarification to this in the foreign presses. And I went from there to Rome, and I didn't see anything, and I was tryin' to follow this case very closely, and I did not find any clarification to the fact of what actually happened until I got back to the United States and started reading again what really took place.

SM: This sort of thing really doesn't do us much good in the world, does it?

HC: No, it doesn't.

SM: The first sensational thing, and then they forget it and let it go, and then the impression is made and never corrected.

HC: Yeah, and you pick up the paper and you read it, and possibly you miss the next issue, you never do find the truth. So I think it's not only international, I think it's local, national, what do you call it, international, kind of a sensationalism that they're pushin' across. I
find it very similar to Watergate, you know. What was the truth to the beginning of Watergate? Had everyone wondering who was right and who was wrong. I think in the end it showed exactly what happened, where the wrongs were. That kind of reporting was missing in that Wounded Knee and that reporting of the shooting of the two agents that was killed there.

SM: Well, the center here is going along in good shape now, and pretty soon we're going to have a new director. Is director the title?

HC: Yes. Director.

SM: And then it'll be carrying on with pretty much the same policy, just new personalities. You're going back to the Kansas City area?

HC: Yes I am. I don't know where I will go next. Certainly there will be another trouble spot someplace. Not to say we don't have organization problems; not to say that we will not have difficulties; we're all new at this. For the first time in my life I've been given the chance to be an administrator instead of a person that was capable of seeking and writing proposals and finding funding processes. So I find this very, very challenging, and very, very much new, and because of its newness, and the experience that we gain each day will help us certainly, but we don't have all the answers yet. I don't think we'll have them yet for many years to come.

SM: Well, it seems that the people here will vote you thanks for your helping out, and that big salary you got.

HC: It certainly won't buy another acre of land at this time.

SM: No, I'm afraid not. Not even on the reservation.

HC: I should have worked for $21.00 and then bought back Manhattan.
SM: I hope it does work well, and that the people get all the good services that the staff here wants to provide them, and that they need. So I do appreciate your help and your time today, Harrison, and it's been good meeting you.

HC: Well, thank you very much. I had the pleasure of talking with you and I hope that you can find some use for this information.

SM: It will help our students and listeners understand better.

HC: Thank you, sir.