LISTENING TO INDIANS

BRENDA UNDERWOOD, Comanche - Cherokee
MARY GOODVOICE, Sioux
September 10, 1975
St. Louis, Missouri

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.

This transcript series was made possible by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, and by support from St. Louis Community College.

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Glen Rock, New Jersey
Microfilming Corporation of America
1978
Sam Myers:

Today we're in St. Louis, making a tape with Brenda Underwood and some of her friends. What do you call this organization, Brenda?

Brenda Underwood:

The American Indian Cultural Center of Mid-America.

SM: And you're located here at 910 South Vandeventer in St. Louis. This is comparatively new quarters for the association, isn't it?

BU: It's not "the association." Yes, it is new quarters. We keep taking positive steps in positive directions in our programs; the obtaining of this building was one of those positive steps.

SM: You have space here, and it looks like it's shaping up to be an attractive place where you can work with a lot of different people at once. Brenda, first a little bit about you. Are you a native of St. Louis?

BU: No, I'm not. I'm native to California.

SM: Been here long?

BU: Yes, I've been here ten years.

SM: Were you born on a reservation?

BU: No, I was born in Los Angeles County Hospital.

SM: It kind of surprised me the other day when someone said that Los Angeles has the largest Indian population of any of our cities. Is that true?
BU: I think they and New York are in close competition, but Los Angeles has an awful lot of Indian people, and these are, for the most part, urban Indians.

SM: Some of them have never been on a reservation, I guess.

BU: True.

SM: Then can you tell us a little about yourself? You never went to a reservation school?

BU: No, I never went to a reservation school. I never lived on a reservation. I'm a half-blood Indian— I'm Comanche and Cherokee and half white. My family lived in Texas, and as far back as my grandfather, were threatened by the Ku Klux Klan. He had a cross-burning incident, and they had to leave town rather hurriedly.

SM: Was this in Los Angeles?

BU: This was in Texas. I have a history on the Comanche side which comes down through the females of the family. My Comanche relatives never went on reservations; my great grandmother was a member of the Quohada band. When Quanah Parker finally gave in and decided to go to reservation, to keep all his people from being killed, she refused to go. She went down into Mexico, was connected with the Comancheros for a period of time, and after a while came back up into Texas.

SM: Then how do we get you into St. Louis now?

BU: Well, my family lived in Texas for quite a long time. My grandmother who was Comanche, and my grandfather who is Cherokee, lived in Texas. They're the ones who had the cross burned on their lawn. My mother was a small child when all this happened, but she remembers it, not
very clearly, but as a traumatic kind of experience. They moved to
a different county but stayed in Texas. My grandfather had a very
small, modest farm, which he lost during the depression, and at that
point in time the family moved to California, and my mother, who is
Comanche and Cherokee, married my father who is Cherokee.

SM: So then you went to school mostly in California?

BU: Yes, I did. Exclusively in California.

SM: And after finishing school in California?

BU: Well, I didn't exactly finish school. I always was known as "the
half-breed kid."

SM: Did you run into prejudice in the schools?

BU: Quite a lot. Until I was in high school I lived in a slum project
in Long Beach, and, because we were different . . . well, really and
truly we had to like fight our way to school every day, literally.
I caught a boy twice my sister's size beating up on her one day, and
he clobbered her over the head with a two-by-four, just split her
head open. I had to pick her up and carry her home, and I went back
out looking for the boy, and he was sorry he did it, but that's the
kind of upbringing I had. I fought literally for every inch, and
we were known as "that bunch of half-breeds" and I guess there was
a lack of respect by the other students for us, and we were always
put aside and were different than everybody else. I quit school
after the tenth grade, and I did finish up; I got a G.E.D. later,
and I've got a certificate in business management now, and I am
intending to continue my studies in one of the local universities.

SM: I think you'll have less of that kind of problem here in the area;
at least we haven't noticed it out at Florissant Valley.

BU: I think we have a different kind of problem here. I think we have a definite problem. It's just a little more undercover. We don't have the Ku Klux Klan any more, that's true, but we have a group known as the Citizens Advisory Committee.

SM: I haven't heard of that.

BU: That's just like the Ku Klux Klan only they don't wear sheets. They are actually going around recruiting Indian members into their group; I know of quite a few Indians who are members of this group; it is against every philosophy of Indian life; it is like being a traitor to your own people to belong to something like this. We have people here, white people, who will take an Indian, coerce them through liquor, money, or whatever means, but we have some middle-class Indians that have forgotten that they're Indians, and these people will be thrown in our face constantly, and their goals are not the goals of the "poor" Indian, who is still struggling to get there.

SM: Are there quite a few Indians in the St. Louis area?

BU: More than one might think. We estimate that there are approximately 6,000, and I don't think our number is too badly off.

SM: By Indians you are using a definition like 1/4 blood or more?

BU: That's right. 1/4 blood or more. Now we have many, many people here that are mixed bloods, not only mixed with white, but mixed with black, mixed with Mexican, Puerto Rican, you name it.

SM: There are quite a few of these in my classes, but anyway, about 6,000 people here in the St. Louis area, that's the whole city complex?
BU: That's the standard metropolitan area.

SM: There must be some reason or need that caused you to get this movement started, the cultural center going. You did start it yourself?

BU: Yes, I did. I worked at Washington University for some time, and I became friendly with some of the professors there.

SM: You weren't going to school there?

BU: No, I had a job. These professors weren't involved in teaching Indian programs; however they were very interested in Indian problems, and the fact that St. Louis did not attempt on any level to deal with Indian problems was very obvious. During the same time period, my mother had come here on vacation, and she asked me, "Where's the Indian center? Let's go by." And I just looked at her very blankly, and I said, "You know, Mom, I don't think there is an Indian center here." So we started looking, and we could not locate anything, and then I started talking in earnest with these professors about getting something going, and they encouraged me, found meeting space at Washington University for me; I put some articles in local newspapers advertising the fact that we would have a meeting. We held our first official meeting in January of 1974. This was a small gathering; there were people there, many Indian people; there were some people that were not Indian; there were some people there that considered themselves authorities on Indians, and when we Indians would talk about how we felt, they got very irate. We actually got cussed out by one woman, because our views on our religion didn't comply with what she as an expert knew we should be feeling.

SM: By the way, the Indian center reminded me. Have you seen the one in Minneapolis?
BU: No.

SM: It's the only Indian center I know of that's been built for that purpose from the ground up. It's a magnificent building.

BU: Are you familiar with the one in Wichita?

SM: No.

BU: There they're doing the same thing. It's not built yet, but they have broken the ground and the construction is started. I believe that the city is funding them in part for that building.

SM: I think federal funds get in there and help a lot too.

BU: Yeah, matching funds.

SM: HUD I think they said supplied the bulk of the funds. I was amazed to see how large and uniquely designed and so on, so if there is one in Minneapolis, and if there's one going up in Wichita, in a center like this there might be hope for one too.

BU: Not until the city of St. Louis overcomes some of its own prejudices. We are generally not recognized as being here in the city.

SM: So anyway, you got the organization started out at Washington U. and it pleased you, I imagine, to see quite a few people come out those early meetings?

BU: Yes it did, and it also distressed me on the attitudes of some of the white people there that were expressed.

SM: Do you mean antagonistic attitudes?
BU: Well, I would say the attitudes of some of these people were antagonistic, and I would also say that if somebody has spent a month or two on a reservation, or if they've read a book about an Indian, that does not make him an authority, and it is not proper to go to a meeting which was called for Indian people, and quarrel with what the Indian people are coming out and saying.

SM: It's a very complex situation. One can't expect to live long enough to learn to be an expert in the over-all picture of Indian affairs, because there are 357 different tribes, or 1600 different groups that identify by different language or dialects, and who's going to know all of those?

BU: We've actually been confronted right in here by an Indian person, that we were not Indian because we couldn't speak Indian. Now you know, under a definition of "Can you speak Indian" there is no such thing as speaking "Indian." You speak a dialect.

SM: You speak one of the languages. Incidentally, there's another note of hope. On the White Earth Reservation in Minnesota, they have a Chippewa Indian language teacher now, and at Bemidji State University at Bemidji, Minnesota, the northern part of the state, they also have an Indian program with instruction in music, in language, history, all the different facets of Indian background, which is something new because it wasn't there ten years ago.

BU: Right. There was a period of time when Indian people were not encouraged to speak in their own tongue; were brutally punished for doing so. Then we have Indian people coming around and telling us that we're not Indians because we can't speak "Indian." Now I don't understand this, but I think these are things that are . . . well, I know you've heard the term "apple" before, and I think just because all Indians don't get along is no indication that things
are not going well for us. We're beginning to make some gain.

SM: Well, the mere fact that you're still here after almost two years now, that alone is an accomplishment in a city starting from scratch, isn't it?

BU: Yes, and we did, I think, have worse problems than you would find in cities that are acclimated to having large numbers of Indians in their city. St. Louis has not traditionally been a city that thought of itself as having Indians here.

SM: No, there haven't been as many. Like Minneapolis has a whole recognizable area with Indian population, for example. Now, your organization again--do you want to describe it so we can understand what its purposes are?

BU: O.K. Well, from that first little meeting that we had, which was just kind of a bull session, we scheduled another meeting the following month of February. Surprisingly enough, three times more people showed up to that meeting, more Indian people, than showed up for the first meeting, and every meeting that we had after that January meeting, more and more people would come in. We had a difference around in May of last year with a group of people, some of them were Indian, some of them were not Indian. Most of them were very middle-class people who didn't have the problems that the poor people have. You know, you can be Indian on the outside and be white on the inside, which is the definition of an "apple." We do have that here, you have that anywhere where you have more than two Indians. These people took exception to some of the goals that we were concentrating on; we elected a board; the board was all Indian, with the exception of one person, and we proceeded to work, sort of stumbling in the dark, really. We had ideas of what we wanted to do; we had met, talked to enough Indian people that we knew the
direction that we wanted to go into, reach and help these people, to
do something substantial; to leave a mark so to say, on the Indian
community, a positive mark. We began formulating plans to get into
alcoholism treatment; we began thinking about federal funds to run a
center; to offer effective services; to in some way reach out, touch
these people's lives and improve them. We were quarrelled with by
some of the "apples." The Indian people were being coerced or talked
into some of their actions by non-Indian people.

SM: Some of them attempted to dominate the meeting?

BU: Right. We had a case in point where all of the white people came in
and sat at all the chairs in the front of the room, and all the
Indians had to sit in the back. The white people were trying to
restructure our by-laws, and tell us what we should do with our by-
laws, and all the Indians couldn't even get a word in edgewise, and
got disgusted with the whole thing.

SM: Is your organization now for Indians only, or other people as well?

BU: We limit our membership to Indians only, 1/4 blood or more. We judge
Indian people on two basic criteria for membership. As urban Indians
we have a very, very large problem with identification. Some of us
have never lived on a reservation; some of us are members of tribes
that have been terminated or the tribal rolls have been closed. In
cases like this it is very difficult, sometimes impossible, to obtain
documentation. What we do is, if we're in doubt, if the person pos-
sesses a number of physical features that indicate that they're Indian--
of course you know by looking at a person whether they look Indian or
not. If they really don't look Indian, if they're blond and fair,
we will ask them for an affidavit from their family. There has been
one case where a man was denied membership because he could not
prove that he was Indian; has not proved to this day that he is
Indian; and he doesn't look Indian. There's no Indian physical characteristics there to be seen. You know, just because he says he's Indian, we just can't always take someone's word. We also had understood that this particular gentleman had had some dealings with, or was a member of the Nazi party. Now whether they were trying to infiltrate us, I don't know. I do know that the Nazi party and the Ku Klux Klan and the Committee for Social Action, or whatever that group is, do not like Indians, you know, because we're a minority group, we're animals still. They still have that idea that anything that's not white is less than human. These exist in St. Louis. There is a very strong Nazi party in St. Louis. Very recently we've had a lot of pressure from a group of individuals who are affiliated with another group which is located in Florissant, because we've become funded, we've reached a lot of our goals; we have been able to help a number of people here in the center, Indian people, and accusations have flown every which way from some of these people. Now we know, we have no doubt, and we know that the people who are putting the ideas into their heads who are making them go out and make these accusations are not Indian, but they won't ever come out of the shadows. Well, we don't want to confront them; we don't care what they do in their own group setting, but when they start accusing us of being, for instance, dishonest, we would say back to them, "How can you say such a thing when we managed to maintain this center for darn near two years on nothing?" It's very recently that we got funded for anything.

SM: Up until recently then you have been operating on contributions from various people?

BU: No, we didn't even get contributions. We had membership dues in the beginning, and that amounted to very little. We actually sat around the table and took contributions from each other, Indian people, in
order to file our first not-for-profit charter with the state. That cost $60.00.

SM: You have to file with the state to get a charter?

BU: Well, it's a not-for-profit charter, indicating that we're not-for-profit corporation. We're legal in every way. We've been accused of having, well, myself especially, I keep getting accused of not being Indian, and I think the next time this happens I'm going to drag out my pedigree, and put salt on it and force the accusers to eat it. Unfortunately, this is coming somewhat from Indian people. Part of it is not Indian people, part of it is. It's a very small group, though. We cannot please everybody. We have served many, many people in the center, and done something substantial that affects their lives.

SM: What are some of the aspects of the program, that is, the goals and so on, the kind of activities you are into?

BU: Well, the first thing that we did was we got into a consortium for the Title III Manpower Program. This was a consortium of Indians and centers on a three-state area--Iowa, Nebraska and Missouri. At present the consortium consists only of the states of Iowa and Missouri; Nebraska has their own kind of sponsorship now. As soon as we got the funds, we had people coming in and telling us that we should fire all of our staff, and hire volunteer help.

SM: Do you mean from these government agencies?

BU: No, this was from people within the Indian community, and some of the people were not Indian. What I'm trying to say is--I don't want to blow this out of proportion--we keep getting these thorns in our side. It's a very small, select group of people; they're all
middle-class; not one of them has to scratch for a living, not one, and they come in and say things like, I guess because they don't understand, and these other people have convinced them that we're all a bunch of ogres, you know, but they'll come in and say such things, they'll say, "Fire all your staff and hire volunteer help. We'll come in and take your volunteer work for you." And you'll say back to them, "But under Department of Labor guidelines we have to hire these people; they're part of the program, they're being paid for public service employment, which is taking them off of the unemployment rolls and giving them gainful employment."

SM: In other words, you would be an equal opportunity employer like any other?

BU: Well, yeah. And another thing we've been accused of, is we have a black on our staff here. And these people have gotten pretty irate about his presence here in the center, and he happens to be a very, very nice person; he's very easy to work with; he was hired here under a Title I grant. It wasn't even our Title III grant. You see their lack of understanding, and their lack of communication with us, except to come in here and yell and get hostile, has caused them to get irate about certain things, you know. Because they don't understand it they think they're justified in getting mad. In their own minds maybe they are, but if they had all the facts I don't think they could be.

SM: Well, are you getting some federal money now?

BU: Yes we are. Our first program was the Manpower Program under Title III under this consortium. We do not have direct control of those funds; that all comes out of Kansas City. We put vouchers in and requisitions, and everything is very closely monitored. We have records of every client that we've served; we've been accused of not
serving one single Indian. Now that we can blast all to heck, because we have. We've served a lot of Indians. From the Manpower Program we were not given any monies for administration costs, you know, such as your rent, your basic, your utilities, your electricity; we couldn't even afford to rent a typewriter, I had to donate my own typewriter from home, you know. But everybody thought we had gotten a tremendous sum of money, where, in effect, if they would have studied the problem and taken a realistic look at it, we got nothing; our money goes into client services.

SM: Everything you got under this program went out for some part of the effort?

BU: Now we get, like $75.00 a month for rent, and that's not a large sum of money. They were paying our heating bill last winter, because if they hadn't we didn't have enough money to pay for it, and we would have had to close down our program, so we did talk them into paying that heating bill. The other bills we had to pay ourselves.

SM: With your own funds that you raised yourself?

BU: Um hm. Now we had a raffle sale, for instance. That kept us going for a whole winter. So truly what we've done, we've done out of a lot of dedication from a lot of people. For the most part, the people who have been the most dedicated get the most criticism. We do have enemies, you know; we can't hide from the fact. These enemies are very vicious, their form of discrimination is very subtle; it's like a little undercurrent in the ocean, but if you step in the wrong place it's going to drag you under; that undercurrent is rather strong, even though you can't see it from the surface. I don't know if I'm drawing a clear enough picture.

SM: That's a good analogy.
BU: I think in places such as South Dakota, I would much rather live there, because I would rather deal with a form of discrimination that I could confront; that is public and that everybody knew was there; the kind of discrimination that we have in St. Louis is a different kind, just as serious, but it's much more hard to confront this kind of discrimination. I don't know what the answer is.

SM: Well, I wonder. Maybe if you keep on working as you have--you've survived nearly two years now, and you've begun to get recognition from the federal government, and the longer you last, well, success would beget more success, I would imagine.

BU: Yeah, but every time we have one success, this little group of people just pops out of the woodwork.

SM: Can't you just sort of let them go by and get on with your work? That's about all you can do, isn't it?

BU: Yeah, I think we're learning to do that. But I do resent the fact that, I don't know, I guess it's a situation that I can't change, and nobody could change, but I resent the fact that we work very hard here; we've been very dedicated. Last year I put, of my own money, out of pocket, $3,000 into this center. I quit my job at Washington University in August of last year, and worked for the center for no pay; I got nothing until March of '75, so, besides the $3,000 that I contributed, and the money that I lost when I quit my job, and then people say that we're not doing anything. It does kind of rankle you, yeah.

SM: You work full time at the center?

BU: Yes, I do. I'm the director of the center now.
SM: So then you have other people here helping you in various programs?

BU: Yes, we have three full-time staff people on our manpower program, and we have four full-time staff people on our administrative program.

SM: Is Mary one of those here?

BU: Mary's the manpower specialist here, and she's also, on her own time, working on our alcoholism program. Her and I have been involved in trying to write up a good proposal that is acceptable with the state to get a small program funded here for some kind of alcoholism treatment to native Americans.

SM: Mary, Brenda was just referring to you. You're Mary Goodvoice. Are you a St. Louis Indian girl?

Mary Goodvoice:

No, I've only lived here for the past 15 years. I was raised on the Rosebud Reservation in South Dakota.

SM: Do you know Sylvester Roubideaux?

MG: I didn't know him until I came to St. Louis. I didn't meet him until just a couple of months ago.

SM: Are things going along O.K. out there now, in Rosebud?

MG: Oh, I was home last October, and the reservation Indians seem to be doing real good in some areas.

SM: Lot of them have new housing projects going, and so on, now. But now, like Brenda was saying, you're one of the staff members here at the
center. What's your area of specialization here, Mary?

MG: Well, until recently it was mostly outreach work.

SM: Could you define or explain what "outreach" means?

MG: Outreach is going out to find... .

SM: Go out and see people, help them?

MG: And working with them, taking applications, finding them jobs.

SM: Do you mean applications for membership, and also helping them locate employment?

MG: Yes.

BU: Well what we have under the CETA program, we have standard forms that we require people to fill out when they apply for services here. We have to be accountable to the Department of Labor. She has to make sure that all these forms are filled out for anybody applying for services through the center.

SM: So that's part of the paperwork of the job. And then Brenda said something about alcoholism, a program in that area?

MG: Yeah. We've been working with several alcoholic Indians, and we're trying to get our alcoholism program here, but meantime, without any funds, we've still been working with them.

SM: Helping as much as you can until you get more funds to do more in that area? Do they come here for meetings and that sort of thing?
MG: No, it's just mostly social service work, you know, like they spend all their money for drinks, and then they have no money to pay for their rent, or pay for their food; so it's just mostly a matter of tryin' to find funds to pay their rent, buy the food.

SM: How's the whole thing going so far? Do you see some progress being made?

MG: In the alcoholism program? Not much.

SM: Not much yet, but you're hoping to make more?

MG: A big run around so far.

SM: Where would the funding come from, Brenda?

BU: Well we applied initially to the state, a Missouri formula grant, and they did give us the run around. When we left, Mary Goodvoice and I and a man by the name of Harrison Cornelius, who's Oneida, he's our technical consultant here, we walked out of the building, and Harrison looked at us and he said, "Well, they just made three new Indian alcoholics. Let's go have a drink." It was really the kind of thing that we're growing used to around here. Whenever we apply for a grant we have to put up with a lot of, I would say, discrimination. As an ethnic group we're treated differently. For instance, at state level they told us to apply to NIAAA for funds, because NIAAA has a special fund for Indian projects, and we explained to them that NIAAA had already told us--we had a site visitor out here from NIAAA.

SM: Would you tell me what NIAAA means?

BU: National Institute for Alcoholism and Alcohol Abuse. But a site
visitor came out to see us; he was an Indian, by the way, and he told us that it really wouldn't do us a lot of good to apply to NIAAA until we had obtained state monies and operated a program for about a year, and then we would be eligible to qualify for funds through NIAAA. So this is what we did. We started a proposal to the state; submitted it; went through the months of waiting that are inherent in proposals; went down there in July for a review of the proposal--Mary was with me.

SM: You and Mary and Cornelius?

BU: No, just Mary was with me in July, and it was just a small, informal gathering of some of the staff in the mental health office there at Jefferson City. They reviewed our proposal to see if there were any bugs in it; if there's anything wrong to have it rewritten before it went before the board. Well, when we walked out of there the only thing they told us to do was clarify some points on our budget, expand on them, and clarify some statistical points. Mary and I came back, we did that, we sent the necessary copies in; in August we were called down there for the formal board review, and the board told us that we would have to rewrite our proposal because it was not acceptable, and that the basis under which we had to rewrite it was to get our staff more educated. That was a very insulting remark. In other words what they said to us was, "You don't have any Indians to qualify, so either you're not gonna use Indians on your program, or you're just not gonna have a program."

SM: This was out of Springfield?

BU: No, at Jefferson City. And we do not feel that we're uneducated around here. Mary has been taking formal training at Forest Park Community College, and doing all she can to go to school at night, which is quite an effort. She's a mother on top of everything else.
Well, they didn't even want to consider the fact that she was trying to gain that education. They didn't even want to take into consideration the fact that she watched close friends and family literally drink themselves to death on the reservation, and she had an understanding of the Indian alcoholism problem. That made no impression on them whatsoever. Education! She had to have education! So anyway, we rewrote our grant to their specifications, and they told us we could possibly submit it to be funded in January. And they just called us the other day and backed down from that statement, and said that we couldn't possibly get funded before March, even if our proposal was a good one.

SM: And your federal funding depends on this?

BU: The NIAAA funding would to some degree, but see what's happening is the same thing that happened when we applied for our ONAP funds. This agency says, "Oh, we're not responsible for you, you go over here to this other agency," and when you get over here to this other agency, they say, "Oh no, we can't do that. You have to go back to this agency," and you've lost a year to six months in the meantime. Now no other ethnic group has to get sent through that kind of rigamarole that I know of. I'm thoroughly disgusted with the process of the funding of native American programs. We also have this mentality that's saying to us, "Why do you want to separate yourself and be different from the rest of society? We're willing to let you in, why don't you take us up on our offer?"

SM: There are people around the country who have been quite successful in getting various activities, buildings, whatever, funded. Maybe some of them could show you the way to go at it that would be successful. I know for example, some of the school programs. Maybe others know how to handle the filling out of forms better than most of us.
BU: Well, I don't think our problem here is that we don't know how to fill out the forms and write a proposal. We submitted a proposal to ONAP, Office of Native American Programs, and their comment to us was that it was the best proposal they had ever received. And that was our first proposal. We had never submitted a proposal to them. They have grantees that have been funded for four years whose quality of proposal wasn't as good as ours.

SM: So they said your quality of proposal was good, but you didn't get the funds?

BU: They ran out of money. So the only point I'm trying to make is that we can do everything right; we have good technical consultants; and they're Indian technical consultants, and this is part of the total self-determination plan, and you know, still you're frustrated time after time after time. And then we have to sit here; we fight very hard. We put up a battle for every cent we get in here on any program. The CETA program--you just wouldn't believe the battle they had to put up to get those funds. I mean they had to put a lot of political pressure on to get those funds.

SM: Do you have some coming in now?

BU: Through the consortium. This is one point that a lot of these people that come in here yelling at us have misunderstood. We do not have direct control over the CETA money. That's all in Kansas City. You know we've been accused of mis-spending those funds, and every other darn thing, and this isn't true. We don't even have control over those funds.

SM: The headquarters or the area office for CETA is in Kansas City?

BU: Um hm. We hope to rectify this and get our own private sponsorship
some day, but if we again as Indians have to put up with inefficient systems in operating the program, it really makes the program a little less effective. This consortium is too far-flung, too widespread, too many centers involved in it, too many different interests involved in it, and it does lose some of its effectiveness in the long run.

SM: Do you have some hope of getting a local center, a local headquarters in this area then?

BU: Well, as far as the CETA program goes, yes. We are going to be applying for private sponsorship. Wichita has one; the state of Nebraska just got theirs and dropped out of our consortium, and I think, in the long run, the stated purpose of the program is to get the centers operating at the maximum level where they can undertake a private sponsorship and self-determination, and get out of the consortium.

SM: That would make things move along a little faster and more efficiently, wouldn't it?

BU: As far as that program is concerned, yes. Now you know, things like our alcoholism program, well, naturally that has to be handled on a local level. There were some mistakes made, for instance, by the Kansas City Indian Center in their alcoholism program, and when they reviewed our proposal, that was one of the reasons they turned us down, because they felt we would repeat the mistakes that were made in Kansas City. That is not a fair assessment to my way of thinking. They didn't even give us a chance to prove that maybe we could do a good program. I doubt very much that people like the people that were on the alcoholism board in Jefferson City could really relate to and understand Indian alcoholism. I did not see one minority person on that board.
SM: The reasons for it?

BU: Well, not only the reasons for it, but proper ways to treat it. We've developed to a high degree here, and are recognized by the Office of Native American Programs, as having very good management in our center here in St. Louis. They were very impressed when they came in here and did a site visit. Our information is accessible. When they asked a question we could pull it right out of the files. This is something that, you know, most centers have to learn the hard way, but, what I'm trying to say is, we have a good grasp of management procedures here. We do have good management here, and we've been able to impress quite a few people at high levels of government with our efficiency, but that didn't make any difference, well, it didn't have any effect on the board down there at Jefferson City toward our alcoholism program, even though we proved to the federal government we do have good management here. The state wouldn't give us a chance to prove it.

SM: Mary, when you lived out on the Rosebud Reservation, did you encounter alcoholism there too?

MG: Let's see, just roughly about 50% of the adult population.

SM: Fifty percent of the adult population is actually alcoholic?

MG: Well, let's see, I'd say so.

SM: Of course then we'd have to define what's an alcoholic, and that varies quite a bit, but somebody involved with alcohol to a degree that it becomes a problem?

MG: Well, there are some that, say, are week-end drinkers, but even week-end drinkers can be classified as alcoholics, but, just, I don't know,
about half of the town just lives to drink every day.

SM: Now this kind of carries out the lead that Brenda gave us a moment ago. Then what is the cause of this? Have you got an idea about the reasons for that?

MG: I don't think they have enough to do on the reservation. Now the statement I made before about Indians living real good on the reservation, well that's true. Physically, a lot of them are living good, but I don't think their minds are active, they don't have enough activity actually.

SM: Do they have a school out there, do they have a college on the Rosebud Reservation? They have one over at Pine Ridge, don't they, a junior college?

MG: I don't know.

BU: I think one point Mary just brought out, and it's a valid point, and it's one that we've had trouble with here in the past. The reservations perpetuate and encourage a handout system. Like she said, they may live very good on the welfare system there. They're not doing anything to earn that money; it takes away a person's pride, for one thing.

SM: We have a kind of double-edged problem there, though, because like when termination came along for the Menominees, for example, that was disaster too.

BU: Yeah, but I don't think a welfare state is desirable either. Number one, of course, everyone wants to see the reservations maintained.

SM: Maybe you're going to come up with an answer here.
BU: Well, I'm thinking the Indian people on the reservation should be allowed and encouraged and financed to go into businesses of their own choosing. Don't you see, the funds are not made available to them? The only time they'll put in a good business that will support people and pay salaries and so forth, it's something that's owned by a white person, or a big company. Like on the Navajo Reservation, you know, they've got that big factory there.

SM: That Fairchild factory?

BU: But the Indians don't own it.

SM: I thought they owned the plant or the land and leased it to Fairchild.

BU: Yah, but the plant itself . . .

SM: It's run by Fairchild, yes. That's where they had the occupation here last winter?

BU: It wasn't too long ago.

SM: Maybe it was in the spring. I have a newspaper clipping. There wasn't much news about it really.

BU: But you get into this state where your ambition is stripped away from you; you know that all you have to do is go to the office, get your welfare check, you don't have to do anything for it; your pride is stripped away from you; you turn into a beggar; you know you go in there with your hand out every week for your money, and naturally you're going to jump into a bottle if it's convenient.

SM: Is this the way you see it too, Mary?
MG: Right.

SM: I could give you a few statistics to back you up. Like for example, in the city of Phoenix, I got these from the Civil Rights Commission: 25% of the male alcohol-related arrests were Indians, and 50% of the female alcohol-related arrests were Indians, and the population is 1%. That's a shocking thing, isn't it?

BU: But an Indian, too, will be spotted as a drunk and thrown in jail a lot quicker than any other person.

SM: That's part of it, I think, plus the frustration of the culture crush and all the rest of it that you were referring to, I think, and then the lack of incentive, Mary?

MG: I believe that's basically at the root of it. One thing that's been mentioned, in this town where I live, it's 27 miles off the reservation, but it's still under the jurisdiction of the reservation. It's about 27 miles from Rosebud.

SM: Is that Parmalee?

MG: No, White River. Well, the population is about half white and half Indian, and in the city jail, in the town's only jail, there's been only two white men in that jail since they built it. All the rest were Indians.

SM: It seems like the alcoholism problem among Indians is fed from both sides.

BU: It's not a problem strictly confined to reservations. The alcoholism problem is just as great in the cities, maybe a little greater. It's not easily treated; most of the treatment centers here in St. Louis,
from our research, will admit openly that there's not a whole lot of success, in fact they have never had a success with an Indian patient.

SM: Like AA for example?

BU: Yeah, and they're very anxious for us to get a program started. All of the treatment centers here--the Detox Center, for instance, the state hospital, they're all very anxious to see us get a program going, because they have not been able to have an impact on the Indian alcoholic--none whatsoever.

SM: Now you feel that being Indians yourselves, and having had experience seeing the problems and the trouble it causes you might be able to do more. But the thing that's holding you back right now is funding, so you can get organized and start getting yourself a staff together, and you are approaching first of all the state, and then from the state you're going to the federal government?

BU: And that seems like to me a natural stepping stone.

SM: But right now you're sort of bogged down in red tape?

BU: Yeah, in the bureaucracy. We have a lot of programs that we'd like to get into. We recently, just very recently, got our administrative funds, which enable us now to have a full-time director. I've always had to do that on my own time. And we have an administrative assistant now, a secretary, you know, the nice little things that you need. Now we can really put a lot of effort into going after these funds, you know, actually getting them in here. We're interested in education. It's got to be improved here. Education for Indian students.

SM: Have you checked out the opportunities for education the BIA offers, the Bureau of Indian Affairs?
BU: Yeah. In some cases we've used them, scholarships from the BIA for students to go to school.

SM: Does an Indian have to be enrolled on a tribal roll to get help from the BIA?

BU: Yes they do. And this is unfortunate in the case of people whose tribes have been terminated.

SM: And the urban Indian is sort of at a loss then too?

BU: Not always. If they have documentation, then they can get BIA scholarships.

SM: Now, for example, in your case you're not on any tribal roll, Brenda, because you grew up in Los Angeles, whereas in Mary's case, growing up on the Rosebud Reservation, are you on the roll up there?

MG: Yes.

BU: Well, one thing, my father's on the Cherokee tribal roll in Oklahoma. He came from Oklahoma, so is my grandfather. Now I'm not, but I can be.

SM: You could get on a roll?

BU: Yes. If I really wanted to pursue like a scholarship through the BIA. No, wait a minute, I think the Cherokee roll is closed. I think they closed it.

SM: This Menominee Tribe in Wisconsin, that was terminated and the rolls closed. The rolls are opened again now, picking up all the people.
BU: Well, look at the fight they had to go through.

SM: Yes, it took years. In fact, it really hasn't been all done even yet. There are still some papers to be signed.

BU: The Comanche people, they're going through the same thing. They're getting everybody enrolled now, and those rolls are getting cut off very soon. Now what happens to that baby that is born next year when the rolls are closed?

SM: They're not being terminated, are they?

BU: They have been, they've been terminated quite a while ago. In fact, to my understanding, and I may be wrong, but I don't think that there is one reservation left in Oklahoma, I think they've all been terminated. There are still groups of people; there's a lot of Comanches down around Apache, Oklahoma.

SM: I'll check on that, and maybe I can bring back some information for you, because I plan to go out there in just a few days now.

BU: Well, of course, the Cherokees, they haven't had a reservation for many, many years. They were one of the first to be terminated.

SM: They were one of the most successful of all the tribes, really.

BU: But is success measured in the fact that you get your reservation terminated, and you get to assimilate like me? You know, is that success?

SM: You know, there was a time when some of the people did think so, but I think many have given up that idea now. The Klamath and the Menominees are the two most in the news about termination, and the
Menominee have reversed it. I just came from there, and they are feeling very good about it. It has taken years, since '61, and they still have a few formalities to complete. But, like they said, it took years to accomplish it, and it couldn't be reversed in a matter of minutes either.

BU: I think for the most part, people who belong to tribes that were terminated quite a while ago and can't get on tribal rolls, this problem has to be confronted on a federal level some day, because if this trend were to keep up, eventually there would be no Indians left.

SM: Some of those smaller tribes that were terminated in the '50's have disappeared, but the trend, I think, is going in the other direction now.

BU: But you see, we have people that are members of tribes. Like there'll be a member of a certain tribe, and yet they're not an enrolled member because the rolls were closed through no fault of theirs. But the government will not recognize that person as an Indian. Now this is a sad state of affairs.

SM: For example, I had one student who got a BIA scholarship by applying, and he was on the rolls, and he got $1,500 a semester to go to school. He said he could go to school quite comfortably on that.

BU: Well, I've had this question raised here quite a lot. What about the Indian child that is adopted into a non-Indian home, and loses their enrollment through that manner, although they can be full-blood Indian?

SM: Do they lose it?

BU: I have quite a few cases right now where they've adopted this Indian
child. One person adopted a child that's Indian and black, but because the adoption agency won't give the information on the natural parents, then they have this obstacle to obtain that child's enrollment number, if and when they want to send that child to college.

SM: I know a woman who has two adopted Indian children, one Hopi and one Sioux, and after we're through here I'll give you her name so you could ask her about that, and maybe she could tell you how they cope with it. What else can you think of that we should cover today in describing your operations here and how it's going?

BU: Well, we kinda got off the subject, you know, the handout system on the reservation. That's deplorable. I personally hate that system. I'm not a reservation person, but I think that that robs a person of dignity, of pride, of just every human element, which is why the alcoholism rate is probably so high. We do not perpetuate a handout system here. One of our firmest policies is self-determination. By this we interpret self-determination to mean getting that Indian person a skill, whatever they need to make it in the world, and to hold their head up while they're making it.

SM: In the larger society, the non-Indian society, so they can compete and make a living?

BU: But at the same time to remain Indian. That's a tricky little step.

SM: How are they going to retain their Indian culture if they want to?

BU: The first step, number one, no handout system. We don't tolerate that here. We have people we have actually furnished an apartment for. However, we don't go give them a handout. We say, "O.K., we've got the furniture here, you can afford $5.00, we'll get you the furniture." A nominal sum, but at least they're giving something, and it's
theirs, and you didn't give it to them outright. If they have no money, and we know that they have no money, we'll say, "O.K., as soon as you get on your feet you can take care of it with us."
And they always come back. Well, we have a few exceptions, but for the most part they'll come back, and they will make every effort to give us something, even if it's just a little time to do some work around here.

SM: It's better than nothing. At least they stay in contact with you.

BU: Right. Anyway, we had a group come in here from Lincoln, no less, and sat out in our office and yelled and screamed and cussed. They wanted $30.00. "Give me $30.00, I want to go home, and I don't got any gas money." They had a Master Charge card, though. "You better give me $30.00." And we just looked at them and said, "We don't keep money around here to give out that way. We'll get you in touch with Travelers Aid, or we'll do what we can to put you up for the night, and what's wrong with your Master Charge card?" And I think it was just a reason for them to come in.

SM: Testing you a little bit?

BU: I think so. Another accusation that we get a lot around here is that, "You aren't Indian because you can't speak Indian." Really, I'm a half blood, and I think that you can tell by looking at me just exactly what I am—I'm half Indian and I'm half white.

SM: You actually could, I think, appear to be more than half.

BU: Well, I know that I'm half, and like I said, I'm going to get my pedigree drawn up, and the next time somebody asks me about my lineage, I'm gonna put salt on it and make them eat it.
SM: Are you going to help her, Mary?

BU: One of the things, and I'm kinda proud of it personally, is the fact that I've done a lot for the center out of pure dedication to what I'm doing, and I put a lot into it, and so has everybody that works here on this staff.

SM: Brenda and Mary, the end of our tape has come, so I want to thank you very much for your help today.