LYNDALE HUTCHINGSO N,
Haida - Tshimshian
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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 talking to a young lady from way up North, up along the northwest Pacific coast of Canada, and her name is Lyndale Hutchingson. Lyndale, is your father or your mother a Haida?

Lyndale Hutchingson:

My mom is a Haida.

SM: And some of them live in Alaska, don't they?

LH: Most of them are in Alaska.

SM: Where is your home?

LH: Prince Rupert, B.C.

SM: Oh yes. Now that's a very scenic part of the world, isn't it?

LH: It's beautiful. I like it.

SM: How's the climate. Is it cold up there?

LH: No, it's not cold at all. It rains. I think it's one of the worst places for rain.

SM: It's like Washington, isn't it?

LH: Yeah, it's almost the same as Seattle. It's very similar.

SM: It does freeze though sometimes?

LH: I really can't remember. I don't ever remember it getting too cold.
SM: Well, that's kind of remarkable because most of us, when we think of the west coast of Canada, just this side of Alaska, we think of icebergs and glaciers. And that's not true, is it?

LH: No.

SM: It's a mild climate because that's the Pacific Northwest where the ocean currents keep it mild.

LH: It doesn't snow very much. When it snows it usually gets washed away by the rain the next day.

SM: Now you said your mother was from the Haida Tribe. And your father?

LH: My father's a Tsimshian.

SM: Did you grow up there then on the coast, near the coast at Prince Rupert?

LH: Yeah, I was born on an island on the reserve. I lived on Queen Charlotte Islands. It's all owned by the Haidas. It's all reservation, and I was born there and I lived there until I was about eight.

SM: You lived there with your mother's people. Is that customary? Is it a matrilineal society?

LH: Yeah, it is.

SM: So, in other words, when a Tsimshian man marries a Haida woman, then he moves to her people?

LH: Um . . . really, not. . . .
SM: It's not that rigid any more?

LH: No.

SM: It used to be maybe, but not now so much. So then you went to school at first on Queen Charlotte Islands at the reserve? They call reserves the same things we call reservations here in the States?

LH: Yes.

SM: Are they about the same? Are they operated much the same?

LH: No, I don't think so.

SM: How would they be different? Would the Indians have more control over their own land and affairs?

LH: I think they do. Like down here you don't have a chief any longer, and there you still have a chief. He doesn't really have power at all, but, you know...

SM: He's a figure of respect. Did you know the chief of your people in Queen Charlotte Islands?

LH: The last one. My grandfather was one before, but then he died and some other guy...

SM: That makes you the princess, doesn't it?

LH: In a way. I just found that out the other day. But they have one now that's kind of related. He's a cousin of mine.

SM: He's the chief now?
LH: Where I'm from just about everybody's related.

SM: I suppose because it's been many centuries. Of course there's been migrations of peoples in and out, haven't there?

LH: Oh yes.

SM: The Haida and the Tshimshian. Anyway you went to school there at the island till you were about eight, and then you moved to Prince Rupert?

LH: Yeah.

SM: And that's a city. And then you went to public school?

LH: Yeah.

SM: How was that? A good experience?

LH: It was good. Yeah. Never had no problems at all.

SM: You went to high school there?

LH: Up to the eighth grade, and then I went back to Alberta and went to school there.

SM: That's moving inland, isn't it?

LH: Yeah, and it's cold there.

SM: That really gets cold, because then you have a continental climate rather than a coastal climate. In Alberta, what town was that?

LH: Cardston. It's just a little town.
SM: Would that be near Edmonton?

LH: No. It's way down by the border. Montana.

SM: You went to high school there. How did that go?

LH: Well, there I had problems because, right off, Cardston is one of the biggest reserves in Canada, the Blackfoot Reserve, Blood Indians.

SM: Blackfoot and Blood both?

LH: Well, Blood is kind of a part of Blackfoot Indians. They're actually Blackfoot, but they call themselves Blood.

SM: Well, why did you have problems there then if it was on a reserve?

LH: Well, it wasn't on the reserve. We all went to school in Cardston, you know—the majority was white. I think about 1/3 was Indians that went to school there. A lot of the white kids had bad experiences with Indians, I guess, and they kinda looked down on all of us.

SM: One-third white and two-thirds Indian kids?

LH: No, one-third Indians and two-thirds white.

SM: Is Cardston what people call a border town?


SM: What kind of troubles did you have?

LH: Oh, I don't know. I kind of had conflicts between both the Indians and the whites. I was kind of in the middle because the Indians didn't like me because I lived with a white family, and they kind of
looked down on that, and the whites didn't like me because I was Indian, but other than that I really had a good time. You get to know your people that, you know, accept you, and you have your own little group.

SM: It seems a shame that kids have to have those problems.

LH: Yeah, because while I was there I taught in an elementary school, I was a student teacher for a while, while I was in high school. I worked with the Indian students, the slow ones, and watching the Indian students, I noticed they had their own little group, they don't even associate with the white ones. I was there to kind of get them to associate with the white students.

SM: You don't have any accent at all that I can detect. Do you speak any of your native languages?

LH: No, none at all. I know a few words, I understand it, I can understand.

SM: Haida?

LH: Um hm. Haida.

SM: Is Haida different from Tshimshian?

LH: I imagine. I don't know anything about Tshimshian, but it's quite a bit different, I think. Some can understand, I've heard, but I'm not sure.

SM: Throughout all your schooling, then, and at home too, with your parents too, you've been talking English?

LH: Yeah. The only person that I've ever known that spoke Indian to
me was my grandmother, and she doesn't speak it very much to us at all.

SM: Is that the wife of the chief?

LH: Yeah. My mom's mother, but she's the only one, but she never used to speak it to us much. I guess she wanted us to learn English. She speaks very good English too.

SM: And your mother and father?

LH: Um hm. I even have a great grandmother that spoke really good.

SM: Of course that wouldn't be going back so terribly far, I guess, a great grandmother. Is she still alive?

LH: She died. She was 116 when she died. She just died about three, four years ago.

SM: Was she in good health until she died?

LH: She was in good health until about six years before she died.

SM: One hundred and sixteen!

LH: She was close around there. She wasn't really sure about how old she was.

SM: Could she remember all the things that happened way back when?

LH: Um hm.

SM: One hundred and sixteen. This is 1975. She was alive when the Civil
War was going on.

LH: Yeah. She was pretty old. I can't remember. I was little when I last saw her. I used to really enjoy being around her. She didn't know our English names, she only knew our Indian names.

SM: You have a different name in Indian? What is that?

LH: I can't spell it, I don't even know what it means. She was the only one that knew what it meant. She knew all our Indian names.

SM: Well, after you went back to Alberta then, you got through high school there?

LH: I finished, graduated.

SM: Did you come to the university after that?

LH: I went to Ricks College in Idaho after that.

SM: Did you graduate from there?

LH: I graduated from college at Ricks.

SM: What are you doing here? Working on a master's?

LH: A bachelor's. I don't think I want a master's.

SM: Is Ricks a two-year college?

LH: Um hm. Yeah. I got an associate degree in sociology.

SM: Then you came here. So when you started at the university you were
already a junior. Are you a junior now?

LH: Yes. This is my first semester here.

SM: Going well?

LH: I love it here. I could stay here all the time.

SM: I gather from a lot of you that you really like it here.

LH: It's really a good school.

SM: I watched you and your friends rehearse for that Lamanite song and dance performance. I think it's a great performance. It really is good.

LH: We're touring back East in the summer.

SM: How many are you in that group?

LH: Between 35 and 40, I imagine.

SM: The way you all move . . . your hands are so expressive. Are you taught that, or do you learn it somehow?

LH: They taught us. Some girl, you know, that knows sign language taught us.

SM: And your group includes Indian people from you way up there on the north Pacific coast, and all over the United States pretty much, and Mexico, and you even have some Polynesian people.

LH: Two Polynesian girls, four Mexican-Americans, and all the rest are Indians.
SM: Do you plan to tour back East soon?

LH: In the summertime.

SM: Do you have any idea what your itinerary will be?

LH: No, I don't. I just heard about it.

SM: Well, I'm going to find out what your schedule is. The singing was good, the dancing I thought was good. That hoop dancer was nothing less than fantastic.

LH: Oh, he is really good. He's one of the best. He's been with the group for about two and a half years. He's really good.

SM: Well, I hope your itinerary brings the group to St. Louis. I would love to see the show. Now, what is your major here?

LH: I started out in sociology, but I'm changing now to public health.

SM: You're going to be a public health worker?

LH: Yeah, I'm specializing in alcoholism.

SM: You're going to help people who are addicted?

LH: Um huh. Hopefully, I'll try.

SM: This is a problem that exists everywhere among all kinds of people. I talked to a man directing a rehabilitation center, and he had been an alcoholic. They were doing good work. It looked like it was working. You won't have had the benefit of his experience, though.
LH: I've never even been around one.

SM: Well, I hope you don't have any unfortunate experiences. This is your first semester so you're taking all kinds of courses related to the major, of course. What kind of courses are there that are related to alcoholism?

LH: Right now I'm still in sociology, and still taking sociology courses, but for public health it's mainly sociology classes and health classes.

SM: Then you will eventually get into some specialized courses dealing with the psychology of the alcoholic.

LH: Alcoholic, yes. They have a class like that.

SM: Do you have any idea what part of the country you would like to work in?

LH: I don't know. I've always wanted to work in Arizona.

SM: You don't have in mind going back to Canada?

LH: No. Maybe some day.

SM: If you did go back to Canada, what part of it would you like better?

LH: I never really thought about it.

SM: The coast or the interior?

LH: I'd like the interior.

SM: Would you? Cold as it is?
LH: I really like the interior.

SM: And your experiences were better on the coast?

LH: Yeah, that's probably why. I feel they need it more in the interior.

SM: Oh, you're going to go right in and ask for problems?

LH: Yeah.

SM: Arizona, though. Any part of Arizona you have in mind?

LH: No. I've always wanted to work in Arizona.

SM: Would you be working with Indian people or all kinds of people?

LH: Indians.

SM: Do you have a reservation in mind? There are lots of them in Arizona.

LH: I haven't really decided.

SM: Have you been down there?

LH: Yeah, I went once. It's hot.

SM: In the summer. Right now it's beautiful.

LH: It was terrible when I went down there.

SM: I imagine you have quite a bit of snow here. But you weren't here last winter?
LH: No. I was in Rexburg, but there is a lot of snow here.

SM: I guess so. There's a lot of skiing here, this is a skiing center too. Down in Arizona there are lots of mountains too, but they're quite different. They do have some snow too. Are you in any other activities besides the show that you were performing in yesterday?

LH: Yeah. I'm in a choir. It's the BYU Inter-tribal Choir.

SM: All Indian kids?

LH: Yeah. We sing Indian songs.

SM: Oh, is that Mr. Ranier's choir?

LH: Um huh.

SM: Oh, I talked with him. He's the director from Taos Pueblo.

LH: Yeah.

SM: And there's a record. Were you in the choir when they made that last record?

LH: No.

SM: Then I won't hear you.

LH: We're making another one.

SM: I wonder if it will be the same or a different one?

LH: I imagine it will be pretty well the same. We've learned a few new songs, but it's really a fun choir.
SM: Can you tell me something about these songs now? When you say "Indian music," a lot of us would say, "Well, is that a chant for a dance then?"

LH: More or less.

SM: Are there songs in the sense of . . . you know, a western European kind of song?

LH: No, they're mostly chants, the kind you'd hear at a powwow.

SM: But then they are different, because you can't go on doing one chant for a whole record.

LH: No. We take them from a lot of tribes, you know. Right now we have some Creek ones and Crow and Hopi, Navajo. Mostly Navajo. There's a lot of Navajos here.

SM: More Navajos than any other one. They have several remarkable ceremonies--the Yeibeichai and the Fire Dances, the Beauty Way, that's all I can think of right now. And you have a different song, or a different chant for each one?

LH: Um hm.

SM: Do you have to memorize all these?

LH: Yeah. They're not really that hard. They come natural, because the first time I came in the classroom, I came late, and I just had no problem learning them. I never sang Indian songs before.

SM: Do you mean you didn't sing any Haida songs back home?

LH: No.
SM: Did the people up there have ceremonies or celebrations where they sang songs?

LH: Yeah, once a year.

SM: Most of us don't know anything about the Haida people. Do they have powwows, for example?

LH: No. The Indians up there, they don't keep to their tradition as they do down here.

SM: Do you mean they have adopted the ways of the Anglos? Do you call them Anglos or white people?

LH: I just call them white people.

SM: Around here in the Southwest they usually say Anglos.

LH: Like no one my age, I don't think, knows the language any longer. I think after my mother's generation she's the only one left to know.

SM: The culture, then, is being lost?

LH: But they know dances. I have two little sisters that are in a dance group. They do traditional dances and sing traditional songs, and they've gone to Spokane and everything, and they try to keep it, but most of it's lost.

SM: Yes, that's what the Indian people here in the States are doing--putting quite an emphasis on preserving culture so it doesn't get lost. But up there they haven't done that?

LH: No. They're starting now, and it's kinda late.
SM: Well they can still recapture it, though, because there are still some people who remember.

LH: Um hm. Yeah.

SM: And then there are many records. In fact there are whole books published about your people. The totem pole. Can you explain that to me?

LH: I don't really know too much about it.

SM: Now I'm talking to an expert. You came from there.

LH: Yeah. Well, they used to build them years ago, carve them, they're mostly for . . . well, see, they have old houses and they tell the story of your family, your clan. Like every Indian, I think every tribe, has clans. Like I belong to the Raven Clan.

SM: Oh yes, the raven figures very large in the symbolism of the Haida people.

LH: Yeah. Each person, years ago, outside their house, they'd have a totem pole which represented their clan and told the story, and there were never two totem poles alike. But I don't know very much about it.

SM: Would the totem pole have religious significance, or would it be mostly like a family coat of arms?

LH: I think it was more both, really.

SM: What would be the religious significance, do you know?

LH: No, I really don't. I feel really bad because I never really bothered to learn about it until people start asking me.
SM: You have been almost completely assimilated, haven't you?

LH: I feel really bad. My mother, she knows quite a bit. She carves, my brother carves.

SM: Wood?

LH: My brother carves slate.

SM: This is the one you're wearing, this pendant?

LH: Um hm.

SM: There is a figure there like you might see on a totem pole.

LH: It's a sea monster. My brother carved it for me. That's how he makes his living. He makes quite a bit of money just carving for people.

SM: It's made out of slate, and it's pure jet black, isn't it?

LH: Yeah.

SM: Do you have any more of those?

LH: I have silver. We do silverwork too. I have silver jewelry that my family has done. Most of my family carves. My mother does a lot of carving on wood. She does plaques and she can tell you a story about 'em usually.

SM: Each one?

LH: Um hm. I haven't been home for so many years that I never really learned it. I went to Cardston when I was about 14.
SM: Did your mother go with you there?

LH: No, just I went.

SM: So you've been away from home since then?

LH: I go home just usually in the summer.

SM: Are you going home this summer?

LH: No, I don't think so.

SM: I'd like to learn more. but we're getting very close to the end of this tape now. So I thank you for coming to talk with me, and if your show ever comes our way, please let us know.

LH: I'll let you know.

SM: Thanks very much.