JUDY IRWIN, Creek
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Longview, Washington

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 Longview, Washington, talking with Mrs. Judy Irwin. You are on the faculty here, Judy?

Judy Irwin:

Yes.

SM: What classes do you teach?

JI: I teach English composition, literature, Shakespeare, contemporary literature. I do not teach any courses in Indian studies.

SM: But you are of Indian descent, aren't you?

JI: Yes.

SM: Can I ask what tribe?

JI: Yes. Creek.

SM: Now there's one of those neat stereotypes. Here we are in Washington, talking with a Creek Indian.

JI: I would like to speak to that. I think it's important to say that I am probably fifth generation, and I found it in my own family fascinating that, though my great grandfather came west, settled in Oregon, pioneered, and we then have been several generations removed from our Creek ancestry, it took that long for my people, my forebears, to become proud of their Indian ancestry. My father had a small pride in the fact that he was part Indian. I and my sisters and brothers have a big pride in the fact that we are part Indian.

SM: It reveals the change in the times and the attitude nationally, doesn't it?
JI: Yes, and I think it reveals something else. I had a chance to read letters that my great grandfather had written to other relatives at the time that he was coming west, and I was honestly shocked at the language he was using as he was describing the savages and the hostiles, as he was coming west, just as if he had no Indian blood himself.

SM: Well, of course, the Creek people had been in contact with Europeans for several hundred years already.

JI: Well of course they had.

SM: And some of them had assimilated quite completely.

JI: Well, perhaps, but that's not the point. The point is that here he was, not full blooded, but half or quarter blood at least, and yet, in his language, not only denying his own Indian blood, but even speaking against it. And what I'm saying is that it has taken the family this long to come to the place where it can take another kind of look at it, and I think part of my own attitude is not only being Indian blooded, but also growing up where I did, because in eastern Oregon where I grew up, we are relatively new territory. In other words, in my growing up years we were still just coming to that kind of stage of civilization where, oh, well ... there were cars, of course, but it's the sticks out there, and I grew up very close to the Columbia River, to the river, to the soil, to the rocks, to the sagebrush, to nature. And so I think I'm saying two things. I'm saying that I find it really astonishing--I can't generalize--but that some blooded people actually, in my own family, have denied their blood, and the farther we seem to get diluted, the prouder we are. That's not a fair generalization, because happily many people with half, quarter blood are very proud of it, but I have seen in this community of Longview, people who are behaving now precisely the
way my great grandfather and grandfather behaved. In other words, they will admit in certain company that they have blood, but, by and large, they tend to try to remove themselves.

SM: Generally, though, don't you think people are taking a greater pride in their Indian blood nowadays than they did, say 30 years ago even?

JI: Yes.

SM: That booklet you gave me the other day about the Cowlitz Indians. The Cowlitz people weren't at all typical of the Pacific coast Indians in the sense that one thinks of all of them as salmon fishers and people living off the rivers and the sea. They were quite different, weren't they?

JI: Yes, they were. Probably the reason that you expected them to be salmon fishermen is the fact that their territory is on the Cowlitz River. The Cowlitz River, mounting in Mt. Rainier, flows due west and then south into the Columbia River, and, of course, traditionally there are great salmon runs coming from the ocean up the Columbia River, and one would expect because the Cowlitz River is a major tributary of the Columbia River that there would have been great salmon runs up the Cowlitz as well. This wasn't so. The Cowlitz was so swift from the waters rushing out from the snow from Mt. Rainier in the spring, that the salmon naturally could not get up the Cowlitz in great numbers. That's the first reason the Cowlitz weren't salmon fishermen. They did take certain kinds of salmon at other seasons, like in the fall, the autumn runs; then the steelhead when they came in, when the river was low and the salmon could come up. But the main reason the Cowlitz weren't salmon fishermen was because the Cowlitz country was primarily a prairie country. And if you have seen that prairie that spreads from the Cowlitz about 30 miles due north of where it enters the Columbia River—perhaps your students could see
this on a map—and that prairie country spreads flat for . . . oh, a hundred miles, running east and west, with little montings of hills and copes of trees, evergreens usually, and spreads north about 40 miles. On that prairie country was excellent digging grounds for the various roots, principally the camas root, but also wild onions, wild carrots, and other kinds of roots too. For that matter, the wild celery wasn't a root, it was a stem. But the point is that they had lots of vegetable-type material from that prairie, and lots of grass for their horses, and they were chiefly horse people, and while they were master canoe men, and dug-out men too on the river—almost all of them were expert in the boats—they were also very fine horsemen, and, in fact, they were reputed to have the best horses in the whole area, vying even with the Yakima and the Klickitat on the eastern side of the mountains, and I don't know whether your listeners are going to be aware of the great division that the Cascade Mountains makes in Washington terrain. But on the west side of those Cascades we have wet, green, lush, evergreen forests, and on the east sides we have plateaus that stretch dry, not any more with so much sagebrush, but sheep grass, bunch grass, various grasses, and now with some irrigation, fields of various types, but it's a tawny colored country, with lots of rugged, basaltic rocks outcropping, and fairly shallow ground cover in many places. High plateaus. And dryer. But here it is on the west side where you would expect lots of trees, but we have not so many trees, but the broad prairie. We have room then for the horses to graze, and become really healthy and fat, and the horses then were the chief means of travel, going up into the mountains on that yearly migration that the people made in pursuit of their livelihood, their food.

SM: The unique thing is that here we find these prairies on the west side of the Cascades, where we didn't expect to find them, but they are there, and this is where the Cowlitz people mostly lived.
JI: Well, actually there were villages all up and down the Cowlitz, all the way from very near the mouth all the way up to the top of Rainier, where it mounts, and another thing I think we should say is there were the Upper and the Lower Cowlitz. Now the Lower Cowlitz did tend to be more fish people, and the Upper Cowlitz, moving on up towards the mountains, were almost, not altogether horse people, but more emphatically horse people.

SM: And hunters of deer, and so forth?

JI: And hunters of deer, right.

SM: And they kept the trails over the mountains open to people of the interior too.

JI: Yes, for trading and for socializing, and those trails went over what we now call White Pass, which is really between Mt. Rainier and Mt. St. Helens, and then there were other trails which are less often used because we don't have roads over them now, which are south of Mt. St. Helens, but which were commonly used in those days, main trails.

SM: So here we have these Cowlitz people, the Cowlitz Indians, probably not as familiar to everyone as the Chinooks or the Haidas maybe, or maybe some of the other names that maybe have been given more attention, but here they are living in the same territory, but have quite a different life than the typical—if there is a typical—northwest coast fishing people.

JI: Well, of course, there really isn't a typical northwest. We're dealing with a stereotype, but I think your point is that they were utterly unlike what you'd expect in this part of the country, and chiefly then because they were on a river where the fish didn't mount, and on a section of the country where the plateau, the
prairie country permitted grazing.

SM: The people next to them, closer to the Columbia, were they the Chinooks?

JI: Chinooks were running on the coast, at the mouth of the Columbia for, oh let me think, about 50 to 100 miles south on the coast to maybe another 50, 75 miles north of the Columbia, all the way up the Columbia into, not quite to the Dalles, but past what we would call Portland today, and certainly up to the Hood River, so they literally managed and had territorial prerogatives on all of the Columbia River in this southwestern section, as well as sections of the coast. Now the Cowlitz didn't tend to live directly on the Columbia River, but rather tended to hold the land which sometimes was rather prairie-like, back from the river, moving up towards the hills, and then finally, of course, into the Cascade Mountains. I'd like to just mention something that perhaps your listeners know about, and that is that the Cowlitz did follow a migration pattern, a circular-like pattern within their territory, moving with the seasons from the streams or rivers where they probably wintered, to the prairie where they dug camas in the spring, then up to the higher country through the summers, so that in fall they were in excellent position to hunt and to take the huckleberries that were so plentiful on the flanks of Mt. Adams, in particular, but also to some extent on Mt. St. Helens. I haven't had a chance to say to you this, but I'd like to mention it, for those of your listeners who happen to come west, and they want to be sure and get off the freeway and take a little detour trip up to Mt. St. Helens country. That's really spooky country.

SM: It's pretty too.

JI: It's beautiful country, it's a perfect cone, but the Indians hesitated to go up in the Mt. St. Helens country. There was Sasquatch up there.
SM: Oh yes. Tell us about that, will you?

JI: Well, actually, the Cowlitz don't like to talk too much about Sasquatch, because to talk about him ... Sasquatch has ESP, according to my Indian informants, and if you talk about him you are liable to bring his special powers down upon you. But several of the Cowlitz have recorded seeing him or feeling, or having evidence of his presence, and recorded instances in which he has brought messages, left messages, or indicated by his presence or special sounds--he makes a high, whistle-like noise, although you may not see him you will hear his whistle--that there has been something special happen, usually a death in the family. And there have been a number of instances where the Cowlitz have spoken of getting message by way of Sasquatch because something has happened in their family, usually a death.

SM: They're fearful of him?

JI: Well, of course, he's a huge creature--a monster, well, monstrous in the sense of size only. We don't really know about his personality or character, except that he is completely recluse, and your listeners should be made aware also that in the Mt. St. Helens country we have a number of underground tunnels which were left as the lava flowed over giant trees that had fallen, and then later the trees disintegrated and left these tubes, or for some reason or other some hollow was left in the lava. But we have a number of these lava caves, and it is very likely that Sasquatch has some of these caves as a site for living purposes, and this is one of the reasons why this particular territory is popular. There have been sightings of Sasquatch up in there.

SM: Some of them are called ape caves?

JI: Ape caves, right, up in the Lewis River country.
SM: Is there any description of Sasquatch that people have given?

JI: Yes, oh yes. And of course it's not uncommon these days to find pictures even, because there have been enough sightings of him with photographs taken, so that we even have photographic evidence, if one is inclined to believe that these are not a hoax. There are still a number of skeptics, not including myself. I grant you there are a number of instances where they've been . . . I am sure, pretended to be where there aren't actually, but, yes, maybe ten feet tall, in other words, giant size, apparently hairy on the body. The footprints, when they have been found, are 18 inches.

SM: This is one of the greatest pieces of evidence--the footprints, isn't it?

JI: Yes. And the toes indicate that it's a humanoid rather than a bear or some other creature. There have been stories told of Indian women who have been kidnapped by Sasquatch. My best informant is Joyce Iley, who does not speak much English, who by our "educated" terms is illiterate, but is the most knowledgeable about the Cowlitz of all the Cowlitz I have met, and she calls Sasquatch "Seatco."

SM: That's her word for him?

JI: That's the Cowlitz word, Seatco for Sasquatch.

SM: And how do you spell the name?

JI: I spell it "Seatco," I suppose it could be Seatko, or it could be Seatcho, because it is a guttural sound, and that's as close as I can come to it.

SM: So when she tells you about Seatco, you'd better listen, maybe?
JI: I do, and I want to make clear that there are many Cowlitz who will not talk about Seatco.

SM: I knew a young man who was not Indian who didn't want to go up there.

JI: Yes.

SM: Because he had read accounts of this and was frightened.

JI: Yes. As a matter of fact, the first explorers of the Mt. St. Helens area couldn't get anybody to take them up, and the Indians were really skeptical that they could come back alive. In fact, that first account is rather interesting, because they had difficulty coming back with storms, some very sudden storms, coming up and, from the Indian point of view, what else could you expect?

SM: You might have known it was going to happen.

JI: There is a great deal of lore in what I'm saying connected with Mt. St. Helens. Not just the Seatcos, but there are old traditions of gold mines in that area. But if any of your listeners come to the Pacific Northwest, they might want to take a side trip up into this---about a two-hour trip off the main highway.

SM: It's a cinder cone, Mt. St. Helens, which erupted in the 1840's?

JI: About 1845, about then, or 1846.

SM: And then it smoked and shuddered and smoldered for a few years after that, and then, not far away is Spirit Lake, which is a beautiful place!

JI: At the foot of it is Spirit Lake, which indeed has spirits in it.
That's part of the Cowlitz country.

SM: That was sort of a border, a fringe of it?

JI: No, as a matter of fact the crest of the Cascades is further east at Mt. St. Helens, and so most Cowlitz would claim that territory between St. Helens and Mt. Adams, which is due east about another 50 miles I would judge. The good berrying is over there on the flanks of Adams, and I'm trying to say that there was some brave Indians that went to St. Helens to berry, but not very many would huckleberry on St. Helens.

SM: A little bit more comfortable in another area?

JI: Well, yes. Also I hope your listeners will have a chance to see maps of that whole territory, because I think they can appreciate how the river routes and the stream routes, which would make all of that what we consider now back country accessible to Indians following the rivers into them, and then taking the ridges and using the trails that were frequented by Indians on both sides of the mountains.

SM: Another curious thing. Doesn't the Lewis River flow into the Columbia, and then as you go upstream you take a curve, and it parallels the Columbia for a ways?

JI: Yes. Well, I'm not too sure about that. It seems to me it might for a little ways, but it seems to me it's mostly . . . due east.

SM: Here we had the Chinooks on the Columbia, and about four to five miles away we had the Cowlitz villages, and sometimes going up one of these rivers like the Lewis or the Cowlitz, you'd have a Chinook village or two, and then a half or a quarter of a mile away, the beginning of the Cowlitz villages, and apparently they lived peacefully together.
JI: I think one has to understand that our western way of making neat divisions between people was not the tribal way. And what am I trying to say? I'm trying to say that this business of Cowlitz-Chinook is a neat classifying device for western-minded historians, but that, in fact, what you might find, probably found, were mixed Cowlitz-Chinook in those areas in between, and then, as you got on up, you found families who were inter... and the tribal relationships were made, not because of where they were geographically primarily, but because of the tribal, the family relationships. And keep in mind that as long as you, as a person, belonged to a village which was on good terms with the next-door village, then he would have hunting rights or fishing rights in those areas too. So what separated the Cowlitz from the Chinook were actually the families getting along and not getting along together, and there had been some tradition of the Chinook and the Cowlitz being competitive, and so what we're saying then, it is competitive families with rather different lifestyles that is making for what we then come in time to call the different tribes. But in those days, I think probably Edward Curtis is right. A person spoke of himself as belonging to a village, and the term "Cowlitz," which our anthropologists debate now whether Cowlitz means just the Lower Cowlitz from say Mossy Rock south, or whether Cowlitz includes the Upper Cowlitz, called the Teitnapums.

SM: Now they were affected by people over the mountains, weren't they?

JI: Precisely. They were more like the Yakima-Klickitat. And let me spell that, Taitnapum. Obviously you spell it different ways.

SM: And they would merge or sort of come in contact with each other over the mountain ridge, in a sense somewhat similar as the Cowlitz and Chinook would down by the river banks?
JI: Yes, and some of their differences resulted from the terrain they did live in, because the Taitnapums on the Upper Cowlitz area would be more hunting people and less fish.

SM: It was interesting, for example, that if there was a generalization it would be that the women of the high plateau peoples would tend to move into and marry with the Cowlitz people on the west flank of the Cascades, because they had a better life, and the Cowlitz women would not be caught going east, because they didn't want to go out there for that harsher life.

JI: Where did you get that idea? (laughter)

SM: Out of Ray's book (Verne F. Ray, Handbook of Cowlitz Indians)

JI: Let's not generalize too much on that.

SM: In fact it got to the point where some of the language from over the crest even began to be used by some of the Upper Cowlitz people, didn't it?

JI: There was a lot of intermixing. I'm thinking specifically of Joyce Iley's grandmother. Joyce Iley's grandmother is Mary Kiona, and Mary Kiona is a descendant of Chief Scanewa, who, around 1820, 1830, was the big Cowlitz chief, and I do mean big. He was powerful. He was taking homage, if you can put it that way, from villages far to the northwest and east, as well as down on the Cowlitz, and Mary Kiona, who was from the Lower Cowlitz down there close to the Columbia River, had married a man from the Taitnapum, and they would make yearly sojourns to both parts, visiting the relatives over the pass and then down on the Columbia.

SM: That goes against the generalization that I just spoke of.
JI: Exactly. Let me speak to something else that comes to mind, and that is that in this plateau country with more horses... well, horses as well as boats, the women had perhaps more say in the tribal life, in the village life, in the family life, and therefore the women tended to take on more responsibility for decision making, and were respected and called upon to help make major decisions about movement and who would marry whom. They, like the Chinook, tended to have division of labor, but whereas the Chinook women would tend to take care of all of those chores dealing with maintaining life, the Cowlitz women would get some help, perhaps, from her men, and she, in turn, would give help with skinning out of the deer brought in from the hunt, or perhaps even go hunting. In other words, there was less of that strict division of labor. I would also like to put on the record that the Cowlitz women are noted as being some of the very best, if not the best, basketmakers in the Northwest, even in the country.

SM: Do they still do it?

JI: Joyce Iley can make them, but I haven't seen her make one. In other words it's virtually a lost art. And the baskets have a unique, special shape, as certain of the southwest potters have certain traditional shapes or patterns for their pottery, pueblo to pueblo, so the tribes in the Northwest have special pattern, shapes as well as designs on the surface that they would use as typically Cowlitz. And when a woman married, she would carry those skills with her. In fact, I interviewed a woman in Yakima who was sure that her grandmother was Cowlitz, because she had brought to her mother and herself the Cowlitz designs and tradition of basketmaking.

SM: You know, they might, if they're interested in developing these things, like some of the various groups of Indians have done on the second mesa Hopi Culture Center. They have the jewelry and the pottery and the baskets for sale. The baskets are bringing the most money---$300, $600, $900, $1,100 for a basket.
JI: Is that right?

SM: So if that works, and of course everybody isn't gathering up baskets, but still they are so intricate and beautiful that it's not hard to understand why they would be priced so.

JI: I hope you can get some pictures when you get up to the Bird Museum, or to the Washington State Museum--the pictures of the Cowlitz baskets--to not only see the fine workmanship, the implication that is used in getting a fine surface, and these nice designs that are built right into the very weave of the basket, but the very fine work to make these into baskets that could hold water.

SM: They were that tight?

JI: Yes, that tight, because they used them in cooking, and by soaking them overnight they would then be cooking vessels into which they could put the hot rocks to boil the meat. The point I am making is that they had a variety of kinds of baskets, and they had some that were quite coarsely open woven deliberately to permit air circulation for storage of berries, let's say, after they had been suitably dried, or for other carrying purposes.

SM: This chief that you mentioned a moment ago and his power, that's all the more unique when you realize that they didn't have an absolute authority, as in the sense of King Louis IV, for example. They ruled by persuasive personality more than anything, didn't they?

JI: Yes, and ability to politically lead.

SM: In other words, all the more credit to the power that this man exercised over the people, because he had none to start with, he wasn't born with it in his hand.
JI: Although, again we have to qualify. George Umtuch, who I think I mentioned to you yesterday, descends from Chief Umtuch, who was one of the successors of the powerful chief who, after Scanewa was killed, and after the Chinook, Tasseneen, a powerful chief on the Columbia, died at about 1840, a chief that came into leadership then of the Cowlitz was the Chief Umtuch. And George Umtuch, a descendant of his great grandson, I believe, told me that there were families which carried leadership in them, and one of his purposes even now is to try to not only himself marry, but see that his children marry, into suitably "noble" families. I use the word noble realizing it's a western word, but suggesting the connotations that that word of responsibility, the carrying of responsibility, the carrying of oh, a kind of grace.

SM: The talents and the skills. Like the Hopis, for example. The Bear clan usually produces the rulers or the chiefs. If you were born into one of the others you aren't expected to become a chief ever, even though you might be quite outstanding, but in this case, well, it's heredity and it isn't, but the heredity helps a great deal.

JI: The family helps to train.

SM: And just a frame of mind even. Could you give us a kind of verbal description of a Cowlitz village?

JI: Well, it's a wet country, and there were, and still are, ample evergreens. They, like so many other Northwest tribes, used the cedar, which, when it is felled, can then be cut into slabs quite readily by splitting, and the tools of horn, of rock, made the splitting quite possible. Huge trees.

SM: How would they cut one of those huge trees down?
JI: I hope you ask that question when you get up in Klallum country. Honestly, I haven't heard any of my Cowlitz informants tell me, and the only information I have is that that I got from Ruth Underhill and her book, or saw when I was up in the Puget Sound country and got to see one of the old dug-outs and see what they said up there about it. But, as I understand it, the technique was to burn, use burning as a way of charring and softening, and then to use axes made of stone or horn, and just chip away at it.

SM: It took a while. It wasn't as fast as a chain saw by any means, but they did accomplish it, and once they got the tree down, then they became marvelous craftsmen with the way they handled the wood.

JI: Really. Digging out, but actually using fire or a system of fire and water to control where the burning took place, to get the wood charred to the point where they could chip it out more readily.

SM: And even reshaping the trunk to give it a bigger bow.

JI: To bow it, right, and then using the water in time to. . . .

SM: They understood steam bending?

JI: Yes.

SM: They used it well.

JI: And then caulking and finishing, and the precision of their work. They used mathematical computations. When you see the pictures of how the design is drawn you can see that actually they have prede- signed it. They would predesign it and get the full thing and line down the center and squared off, and knew exactly where they were chipping, how much.
SM: They made a blueprint of the work they were going to proceed with?

JI: Yes. And they didn't do it just by haphazard. Now I do some work with my hands myself, and one does get an eye for proportion, but they did use the blueprinting to make it more exact. And when you get into the Puget Sound country, I think you will see, not only from modern practitioners of the art, but also from what the museums can tell you about the older practices, that this was so.

SM: So they used these planks to make boats, but they also made their houses out of them?

JI: Well, they would take the trees, the larger supports, and set them into the ground, four at each end, and then build the planks up on the sides and steeple it slightly, to shed the rain on the top, as I recall. Now I'm going to have to qualify here a little, because I'm not quite as familiar with the details of that house as perhaps I would like to be. A lot of the tribes, the Chinook too, used special entrances, and had totems and special carvings that they might put at the entrances, though I don't know whether the Cowlitz did or not.

SM: Whether they used totems?

JI: Or whether they used special carvings. I have to imagine that they did. They were skilled carvers of things like spoons and great huge dishes which they used.

SM: Did they make masks too?

JI: Not that I am aware of.

SM: Did they make totem poles?
JI: Again, not that I'm aware of.

SM: This was more in the coastal villages, wasn't it? Anything else that could give us a mental picture of these Cowlitz people living there on the prairies where you don't expect prairies, but there they are, and with their horse culture, in a sense? Kind of an in-between. They were connecting the prairie peoples east of the Cascades with the fishing people to the coast and rivers, weren't they?

JI: Yes. You mustn't assume that they lived in these log houses, these cedar houses all year round. They lived in them over the winter, and they would fit them out inside with furs, which would make very comfortable quarters. They were huge, some of them as much as 70, 100, 150 feet long, holding several families, and be quite comfortable with a number of fires, quite well secured against the elements, because they had mats which were made out of bullrushes or out of the cattails that would act as wallpaper or sidings, and so they were quite secure, but they could also become very flea or louse-ridden, and of course they had their dogs that lived with them. So come spring, it was a pleasure to get out of doors and, either in their boats or with horses, with a kind of travois pulled along behind them, they could carry the light equipment that they would need to make it to the camas grounds, and there, if the weather was good, they would set up temporary shelters, again using the mats over a kind of light frame which would give them simple security for the night, and portability. These they would tend to live in through the warmer summer months going into the autumn, until it was time to go back to winter quarters again. Joyce Iley describes wintering in make-shift dwellings. I could just see them, because they used the materials that were in the terrain. They used the back of a big tree, and then they would use boughs that were hanging over, and maybe put up a few more sticks to kind of give sides to it, and then they would cover over with
boughs if they didn't happen to have their mats with them, and they could very quickly make out a dwelling in almost any circumstances.

**SM:** It's just amazing, and the more we learn the more respect we must have for these people who could accomplish things so well and so effectively.

**JI:** The things I think I delight in and marvel in, if I could speak to that, is their intuitive awareness of where nature was.

**SM:** Do you mean a storm coming, for example?

**JI:** Oh, I mean that, and I mean recognizing by the signs where the food was, that kind of skill, but I also mean the kind of intuitive respect for the natural environment so as not to destroy it or to mar it more than was actually necessary. They didn't want fancy dwellings, they didn't need them. They wanted a secure housing against the elements of winter, and so they used the cedar to do that, but what I'm saying is they didn't have to have a fine summer house, you know, up on the Toutle River. They were able to withstand the elements, and if you want to see them physically in your mind's eye, you want to see them as being as little clothed as was necessary, and they, from the time of birth, literally inured their bodies against the elements. I have heard stories and read where the mother would literally plunge the newborn baby into cold water—not just like a doctor would slap a baby on the back to give it the stimulus to breathe, but by way of saying, "Nature, here is this new one now. If it's not going to survive, let us find out right away." In other words, from the moment it was born, it had to be hardened to withstand the cold and the rain and the wind.

**SM:** Did they have any attitude about defective children?
JI: Not that I'm aware of.

SM: Like the old Spartan's used to do--destroy them?

JI: I don't think they did that, but I expect that they had to hold their own.

SM: If they weren't strong they didn't survive anyway, probably.

JI: That's right. And there was no special effort made to help someone survive if he wasn't able to do so. They had a curious respect for the individuality of the person.

SM: And they respected the older people, didn't they?

JI: Yes, yes. But when the time came--and it was inbred into all of them to be able to hold it on your own. I'm not going to make any value comment on that, except that it's the way it was.

SM: Can you describe them physically?

JI: Being horse people they tended to be taller, and the description of Chief Scaneva is a man about six foot tall, a very fine figure of a man. The Chinook, as your listeners may be aware, were always described as chunky, short, squat, and it depends again, of course, on your values, whether that to you means beautiful, or whether that means what. But by and large, the Cowlitz tended to be lankier and taller, although that doesn't mean they always were.

SM: And then, maybe there was some relationship with these people over the mountains too who might have been taller?

JI: I would judge.
SM: Referring to the author, Ray, again, the women coming over to marry into the Cowlitz Tribe from across the mountains tended to bring their language with them until, in spite of the fact that it was only an individual woman, one at a time, coming over to accept the proposal of marriage and live there, that eventually their language from over the mountains became the Upper Cowlitz language.

JI: Well, when the anthropologists and subsequently the government are trying to figure out what is Cowlitz and what isn't, then the language becomes one of the criteria by which they judge what was Cowlitz, and this was a really interesting point, as you're saying, because the original Cowlitz on the lower Cowlitz River was a Salishan language, but as you got up river, and then as you approached the crest of the Cascades, we get into a Shahaptian language. That's one of the ways to say it. But anyway, Shahaptian are a language group which the Yakima and Klickitat on the east side of the mountains would also be members of, and what we're saying then is that the Upper Cowlitz tended to be a Shahaptian-speaking people, and the Lower Cowlitz a Salishan, and yet in between there were both, and they were able to converse without too much difficulty.

SM: And that brings us to another point. Most of them were bi-lingual or spoke even more languages, didn't they? Which makes those of us who haven't learned a second language feel kind of ashamed.

JI: You know the thing that really makes me feel ashamed, and I'm talking in a personal sense as well as a cultural sense, is that we don't learn Indian languages. I mean, in our schools we say, you know, it is neat for the Yakima children to learn the Yakima language. But it doesn't occur to us that it would be a value for all of the children of the Yakima Valley to learn Yakima. We expect them all to learn English. I sometimes wonder what would have happened to the history of the United States if our white settlers would have had
as much respect for the Indian languages as some of the Frenchmen coming in had had.

SM: Some of them did learn, and of course others too. A few instances of one man who might have learned six or eight different Indian languages.

JI: Simon Plomondon, who was French Canadian by descent, and the first white man into Cowlitz country, learned Cowlitz, became in his way of living, thinking, like Cowlitz, retaining his French-Canadian. . . .

SM: He married one of the daughters of the chief, didn't he?

JI: Of Chief Scanewa, right.

SM: And was sort of sharing the power of the chief's sons?

JI: Yes. And he became then a tribal leader. He couldn't become chief, but he became tribal leader, especially during the Indian War of 1855, '56, he became what would be the head man.

SM: Kind of a lesson there for us. The chief was willing to accept this alien in the family, but the aliens hardly ever accepted any of the Indians.

JI: Well, let's qualify again. The chief tested this alien. There had been a number of French Canadian and British tried to come up that river, and forced back after one bad misadventure we won't go into, but where a trust was violated, and after that first trust had been violated by the British and the Iroquois who were the servants of the British on that expedition, and one of my dearest people in all of history, Peter Skeinogden, was one of the people in charge of that, and wouldn't have had it happen for anything in the world, but
this massacre of Cowlitz did take place, and consequently, Cowlitz weren't about to let any more aliens back into the territory, until Simon Plomondon did go in, and they watched him, and they watched him very carefully for many months. They tested him, and they saw how he behaved among them, and they saw how he behaved when he went back among his own kind, and sent some of their warriors back to keep tabs on him before they finally permitted him to marry one of the chief's daughters and become a settler in their territory. But I think we have to also say that whereas Simon Plomondon was successful in living among them, many of the British were also successful. Peter Skeinogden himself married to an Indian woman, and Chief Factor McLaughlin married to an Indian woman.

SM: He was probably one of the most outstanding European or non-Indian figures in the territory, wasn't he?

JI: You know, I really would like to see our history sometimes--I have never seen it, perhaps it's been done--look into this question of acceptability of an Indian woman as a wife as a question of cultural. . . .

SM: I think that changed with the years. For example, Pocohantas went to England and was treated royally by the Queen.

JI: But I'm talking about those settlers, those American colonists who came, you see, into the country. Now after the British and the French had been here and many of them marrying Indian wives, then the Americans began to come in, with the sense of . . . bring your wife with you, have your family, and never the twain shall meet.

SM: There were some heartbreaking situations that developed out of that.

JI: Yes, and a good deal of the history of this particular area has been
a result of that shift in attitude. In the communities we see residual attitudes even now as the result of the settler families assuming that they were somehow "better."

SM: Looking down on the Indian wife of so and so, and sometimes even to the point where he would abandon her.

JI: Well not just that, but the half-breed children, you see, or quarter­breed children were outcast in the society.

SM: Would they be outcast among both the Indian and the white society then?

JI: They were in a really difficult position, and we're talking of 150-175 years ago, but what I'm saying is that part of the complexion of this present culture right here in Longview, Kelso, Toledo, still retains certain attitudes which makes it difficult for many Indians to speak up and say, "I am Indian."

SM: Even now?

JI: Even now. And this is what makes, and I hope you talk to Barbara Snyder, what makes the Indian Parents Council coming this last year and this year out of the school district out of federal impetus, so significant, because this is the first time in this community that there has been a group organized of many tribes on saying, "We are proud to be Indian in this community. We are proud to have ourselves acknowledged as that." And that's a big thing for this community.

SM: That's interesting to hear you comment on the present situation here.

JI: I think there's only one thing more I really want to say about the Cowlitz, and that is that during that time, in 1855, Governor Isaac Stevens was making the treaties with the various tribes in this area,
and the Cowlitz were certainly the most powerful tribe in this area, one of the most powerful tribes in the Northwest. And the Cowlitz did not sign any treaty and did not receive subsequently any reservation, and the tribal members had only a few options after that. Some of them moved to reservations of relatives; those who had Yakima relatives would sometimes move to Yakima Reservation, or the Chehalis or the Quinault. But many chose to try to continue to live in the community, and I hope you get a chance to talk to some of the Cowlitz people whose families have tried to survive without a reservation, and in a society which did not want to acknowledge that the Indians were here or had any rights, or were of any value.

SM: They did not have any reservation, their country was simply over-run by white settlers?

JI: Yes, they were. And the thing that makes it so painful is that they were a cooperative, friendly people. And even during the war they cooperated in repelling the hostilities or the hostiles, as they were called. They did not, even though they had relations among the Yakima-Klickitat, participate in that war. And yet for all that they did, the thanks they got was nothing. They got left out. And their injured pride.

SM: Is there any way of knowing approximately how many Cowlitz Indian people there are here now?

JI: Well, the tribal roll, which Evelyn Byrnes can speak to, has, as I recall, about 2,000 people on it, and that is now people who are Cowlitz and not some other tribe as well. But let her speak to that. I think that would be a good question.

SM: Because there would be more, some of them on other tribal rolls if they had moved in with those other people, those relatives?
JI: Right. In other words, we're making the distinction between being on a tribal roll and having Cowlitz blood.

SM: You see, some people think that if you have no reservation there is no tribal roll, but there is one in this case.

JI: The Cowlitz Tribe has been trying all these years, literally since 1856, to gain from the government recognition. It has never stopped making that effort, sending delegates year after year on their own expense, back to Washington, D.C., and trying to meet with the Congressional committees, doing all the things you did politically to get that recognition, and again, Evelyn Byrnes could speak to that, and Joe Cloquet, up to the recent successes or partial successes and hopes for the tribe.

SM: Well, that's an excellent summary of the situation affecting the Cowlitz people, without going into the details of personalities and all those other things, although I know you could do that, because you spent a lot of work on the Cowlitz people, haven't you?

JI: Well, my students, like your students, wanted to know more about the Indians in our territory, and we found that there was very little written—no books, just a few articles—and the best thing that we found was Verne Ray's *Handbook of the Cowlitz*.

SM: Are you in the process of publishing or getting a book ready?

JI: I'm in the process of taking my voluminous notes and getting them into a rough draft, and I'm halfway through the rough draft of 130 pages.

SM: Will this be on the Cowlitz people?
JI: It will be on the Cowlitz people, and the students and I have developed slides, photographs and tapes to go with our material, too, as you are, so that we can present programs in the community and to the schools and have materials available. We even have a special project related to the plants the Cowlitz used, and have put certain of these plants into resin, so that the plants could be handled. It takes time, and, hopefully, in two, three more years we'll have enough projects so the schools can begin to use the materials, and the slides can be used, the book will be done, and so on.

SM: We'll be waiting for the book, Judy, so we can read that.

JI: As long as we're not going to talk more about the Cowlitz, let me just say to your students that I've also had the pleasure of working on the Cayuse Indians in relation to the Whitman Massacre, and I have written a play called "Chief Tilacutt" on the death of Chief Tilacutt, an "American Tragedy," and I mean that title ironically, because when Chief Tilacutt was subsequently hanged along with other of the Cayuse for their murder of the Whitmans, it was, from my point of view, an American tragedy that our justice works so unjustly in this way. But it's a very complex issue, and I don't know if we want to get into all the causes of the Whitman Massacre from the Indian point of view or not.

SM: You wrote a play that explains it?

JI: Yes. It's a three-act play, and I use a thrust stage and a proscenium stage combined, so that the Whitman scenes take place in the proscenium stage and the Indian scenes take place in the thrust stage. I did that deliberately because I wanted the audience to empathize with the Indians, and the closer they are...

SM: They're out here.
JI: Right. So it worked very effectively to gain that distancing on the Whitmans and identification with the Cayuse.

SM: Is the play in published form?

JI: It is in published form and it is copyrighted, and I'm sending it out to different playhouses. I think I'm going to have to send it to a publisher and see if they won't accept it.

SM: I do want to thank you for a remarkable summary with enough detail to intrigue us to want to learn more, and so I'm grateful. I hope our listeners appreciate how much effort and time and work you've put into acquiring this understanding.

JI: I suppose that what you're emphasizing is that we can't stereotype?

SM: I think you've put that over very well, very clearly, and we're learning that, and also how complex the whole situation is across the United States.

JI: Right.

SM: Thank you, Judy.

JI: You're welcome.