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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LISTENING TO INDIANS
No. 105

CANDY SHOPBELL, Santee Sioux
CHRIS WRIGHT, Tulalip - Puyallup
November 19, 1975
Midway, Washington

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

Today I'm at Highline Community College at Midway, Washington, and I'm talking with Candy Shopbell and Chris Wright. Candy, where is Midway?

Candy Shopbell:

Between Tacoma and Seattle.

SM: It's really a solid town all the way. But this is Midway, and this is Highline Community College. This is one of the big ones in the state, isn't it?

CS: Yeah, it's pretty big this year. I think there's 7,000 or 8,000 students.

SM: That's bigger than most of them in Washington. Candy, are you a native of this area?

CS: No, I came from South Dakota.

SM: So, would you be a Sioux?

CS: Uh huh. Santee Sioux. My mom's a full blood.

SM: Your mom's a full blood and your dad is?

CS: Half French Canadian.

SM: Oh, so that's where you get your brown eyes. Most Indian people who have full blood don't have brown eyes, they're pretty dark.

CS: My mom's got brown eyes.
SM: Well, remarkable. I've heard of blue-eyed Indians too. In fact, I met a little girl in Santa Fe who had red hair and freckles and blue eyes, and she was a Cherokee.

CS: Gee.

SM: That was a little unusual. Anyway, Candy, how do you spell your last name?

CS: Shopbell.

SM: That's a French name?

CS: Um hm.

SM: How come you're out here on the West Coast when you are from South Dakota?

CS: My dad came out here to work for Boeing, and my mom came along.

SM: And so you came along with your mother. Are your brothers and sisters with you?

CS: There's eleven in the family.

SM: Is it right here in this area?

CS: Seattle.

SM: How far is it from Seattle?

CS: I think it's about ten miles. Only about a 20, 25-minute drive.

SM: Tacoma, Midway, Seattle, they're all really close together here.
CS: That's where I spent most of my life, though, was Seattle.

SM: Did you go to school there?

CS: Uh huh.

SM: Have you ever lived on a reservation?

CS: Yeah, when I lived up in South Dakota. I lived on the Makah Reservation too.

SM: Makah. Where is that?


SM: Way out at the northwest tip.

CS: By the Strait of Juan de Fuca.

SM: Do you know how they got that strange Spanish name for the straits way up here in the Northwest? The captain of a Spanish ship discovered it and they named it after him.

CS: But I don't know, I found good and bad, you know, throughout my life, growing up.

SM: On the reservation and here?

CS: Yeah, and growing up in the city.

SM: Do you think you'd rather live in the city or back on the reservation?

CS: Now?
CS: Um... I don't know. After living in the city... I think it would be hard for me to go back to the reservation, because the way it is now, I don't know if I could really get along.

SM: Yes, it's quite a different life really. Some people prefer the reservation life.

CS: Oh yeah. Like I could go live on the Makah Reservation, although that's not my tribe.

SM: You like that place up there? Is it very scenic or pretty?

CS: Oh yeah. That, and the people too.

SM: The people are nice?

CS: Yes! The people are really nice. Their hospitality is just... neat.

SM: So now Candy here is from South Dakota all the way out to the West Coast and she likes the Makah Reservation. Chris Wright, you're from this part of the country, aren't you? Let me get your name so it's clear for everybody.

Chris Wright.

SM: And what tribe do you come from?

CW: Tulalip.
SM: Do they have a reservation?

CW: Uh huh.

SM: Where is it?


SM: Is it on the Sound?

CW: Uh huh. It's right on the Bay.

SM: Now the Makah Reservation that Candy was speaking of. That's way up there on the straits on the northwest tip, almost out there in the ocean?

CS: It is right on the ocean. It's right at the head of the ocean.

SM: The corner. Right where the land makes a corner there, the straits are on the north and the ocean is on the west. But yours is far inland from there, two or three hundred miles?

CW: Yeah.

SM: But still, both the Makahs that Candy mentioned, and your people are, what should we say, the sea-going or sea-using people?

CW: Coastal tribes. Well, the Makahs, they're more like, how do you say it, they're like the Alaskans.

SM: Makahs used to be whalers. Are they still?
CW: Uh huh. They still make dug-out canoes and everything just like they did. A lot of their traditional dances are the same as the Alaskan tribes too, aren't they?

CS: Not really, 'cause I've seen a lot of them done. In a way they're similar, but not really. Their dress is pretty similar. The colors black and red are their dominant colors.

CW: The Tulalip Tribe, they're sort of like the Makahs, but there's a lot of difference. Their dances aren't that similar to the Makahs, and their songs, the way they sing, is a lot different too.

SM: Did you live on the reservation up there?

CW: No. My mother did. My father's a Puyallup, so we lived in Puyallup.

SM: Oh, that's farther south. In fact, that's south of where we are here now.

CW: But the Puyallups don't really have a reservation. Their reservation is along side the riverside, so we live on the riverside.

SM: Then do you live down where your father's people are?

CW: I still live with my family.

SM: But now, is this a dormitory school?

CW: No.

SM: How far away do you live?

CW: About 12 miles.
SM: So do you drive back and forth?

CW: Um huh.

SM: How about you, Candy?

CS: I drive back and forth too.

SM: To Seattle?

CS: Um hm.

SM: I didn't expect that because, you know, I thought there would be more space up here, but all along the east side of the Sound here it's solidly built up, almost. Can you tell us any more about the reservation up there? Have you been up there quite a bit?

CW: We go up there almost every week-end.

SM: Your mother's folks are still there?

CW: Her father is, but my grandmother passed away.

SM: Have you ever participated in any of the dances?

CW: Well, there's the one that's called the Potlatch, and you have to become a member of that society to dance. And you go to watch the Potlatch. You watch it and you take part in it, but you don't dance.

SM: Is the Potlatch like it used to be where the chiefs gave away gifts to everybody and so on?

CW: Certain times of the year, yes, but not every one, not every Potlatch.
SM: Have you ever heard about it, Candy?

CS: Um hm. I've seen 'em. I've gone to 'em in Neah Bay.

SM: If she makes a mistake you can correct her then.

CW: Ours is different than the Makahs.

CS: Yeah, this is probably different. Like at Neah Bay the Canadians come over, different chiefs from the Canadian side, and they bring gifts, and then the Makah people, they give away gifts too, and each tribe gets up and sings their songs and their dance, and it goes on for hours and hours. 'Course they have a dinner first, and they give away.

SM: Would you tell us all about it that you can remember.

CS: I can remember going for I don't know how long.

SM: Take the last one you went to, Chris. How did it start? Were you invited, or does everybody just go?

CW: It's tradition to go. You just go. And the tribe that gives it, like the Tulalip Tribe, you have a dinner about 5:00 o'clock, and about 7:00 o'clock you take around the Squeedelesh. It's two boards and they clean the potlatch of any evil spirits, of anything that will harm anyone.

SM: These boards are sacred?

CW: Uh huh.

CS: They don't have it in Neah Bay.
CW: I'm not sure how much I can say, because at these kind of Potlatches you can't have any cameras or any recorders.

SM: Don't give away any secrets you shouldn't, but tell us all you can, if you would.

CW: And it's like the Makahs. Visiting tribes come from all over, and you stay there until early in the morning, and each tribe go around the potlatch, around the longhouse, and each tribe sings their song, all of their singers sing, and then they move on, like in a circle, and the home tribe was always the last tribe--they let everybody sing first.

SM: Are gifts exchanged too?

CW: At certain ones. Like last year we had to give away for my grandmother, the whole family gave gifts.

SM: Do you mean when she died?

CW: Um huh. It's like a memorial. You know, a year after she died then you give away gifts, to thank all the people who helped you during that time.

SM: In the old days sometimes people would give away gifts until they were broke. Does this happen?

CW: Not so much. It's more like ... it's not like all on one family now. The whole family, like five families work together.

SM: You still call them potlatch ceremonies, and they are sometimes without gifts, sometimes with them, but it isn't carried to the extremes it used to be?
SM: Now, can you tell us any differences, Candy? That was Chris telling us about that one. She's been there. Now, Candy, you've seen them at the Makah Reservation. Are they different?

CS: They're pretty similar. But they'll go on for maybe two or three days. That's just because more tribes come from a further distance, but then they have their dinner and then everybody gets things their size, and they thank everybody, and generally afterwards they have bone games.

SM: Is that a gambling game?

CS: Um huh. Slahal game. It's known as a bone game or stick game. Lot of tribes play it.

SM: Is it like throwing dice?

CS: No, it's two cylinder bones. One has a mark and one doesn't have a mark, and you have two teams on each side. The other team tries to guess which hand the unmarked cylinder is in, and you have counting sticks for each team.

SM: It's a contest to see who can be right the most times?

CS: Yeah, who gets the most sticks. The object of the game is to get the most sticks. The team that gets the most sticks, they win the money, 'cause at the beginning of the game each team matches their money and antes in.

SM: Do they do that, Chris, at your potlatch ceremony?

CW: Yeah, I think they do all over the north coast.
CS: Generally after every ceremony, every get-together, they drum all night.

SM: Well, you've really surprised me, both of you, because I didn't know that this was still being done. I thought it had probably faded away, and here it is still going on.

CS: That's really a main part of the... Back in the old days when they held potlatches they'd go on for seven days and seven nights, and they would do it after someone had passed away, but whereas now, I've seen them take place just for, like, lot of them I've seen just for name giving, name-giving parties. They'd give the kids, the grandparents give the kids their Indian names, and it will just carry on as a long ceremony.

SM: Do you kids have Indian names besides the one you gave me? Chris and Candy?

CW: I don't.

CS: My grandmother gave me one when I was small, but I don't remember what it was.

SM: You haven't used it? Before we do anything else, though, I want to be sure we've covered this potlatch thing as well as we can in the time we have. Is there anything else you can add, Chris?

CW: Not that I can think of. Well, maybe the first potlatch is always the one where they open the... they clean the house.

SM: With those two sticks. What did you call them?

CW: Squeedelesh.
SM: Anyway, that would be something like a blessing of the house, cleaning the evil spirits away and so on, before everything begins?

CW: Uh huh. So the first potlatch is to clean the house, and then all the others can vary, like they might have one where they have all the new dancers, the new ones that have been brought into their society, and they go through their initiation. And then they have the new dancers, so the whole potlatch is for them. And then they have one at the end of the season. It's the last potlatch of the year.

SM: This is unique that we've discovered someone who knows about the potlatch. Anything else you can add, Chris? And you, Candy, anything else that you've seen over there with the Makah people? Anything you can think of would be great. You said it goes on longer sometimes?

CW: It does. And the elderly people, that's what I like. They join in, they take the head thing of it.

SM: They're in the lead? And then young people, like both of you girls, would you have to sort of wait until the end of things?

CS: No. You just go up with your family. But I mean generally when they have a potlatch the senior citizens, what they call them, they have a group up there. They sit in one corner and they head drum and things, you know, and everybody else goes along. At the beginning they usually do a prayer, they sing a prayer, and drum before you eat, and after you eat they thank.

SM: Visitors are not permitted at these ceremonies, are they?

CS: Yeah they are, but you cannot take pictures or tape recordings of some of the songs.
SM: That would be like the Navajo Yeibichai Dance. You're welcome, but no pictures, no cameras.

CW: If you're invited. Generally they give out invitations.

SM: Do they? Printed ones you mean?

CS: Just by word of mouth.

CW: Word of mouth. Like at Tulalip ones it's usually when you're invited by one of the tribal members that you can go. It's not something everyone knows about unless you're in contact with a tribal member.

SM: It's still kept kind of closed, it's a closed group. People don't wander in and out. It isn't publicized or anything like that. It's not a public function, it's private among the people who are participating and who are invited. Well, that's interesting, especially because two young students are telling me that this is still going on and you've both been to these ceremonies.

CS: They still make their dug-out canoes too.

SM: The Makah people. They're famous for whaling and fishing in the sea, aren't they, whereas your people, Chris, would be more fishing in the Sound and the rivers that come in to the Sound. Would they use as big a boat as the Makah people?

CW: No, I think now it's just competitiveness when they use the canoes. It's just they're gonna race with the Makahs.

SM: They do that too? They compete against each other?

CW: Yeah. There's one big one, like the Samish, and Makah Days, Lummi
Days, they have different days and they have canoe racing. It's really big up here. They'll have maybe 10 or 12 canoes from all over Canada everywhere. They bring their canoes. They're 11-men canoes, dug-outs.

SM: Where do they hold these?

CW: Lummi.

SM: Now where's Lummi?

CW: Bellingham.

SM: Up near Bellingham, Washington?

CW: Um huh.

SM: Right near the Canadian border?

CW: Right.

SM: You told about something that came right out of the past there, and that's interesting. How about you now? Have you kids had any problems growing up and going to school? Sometimes people say there's a lot of discrimination and that sort of thing. Have you run into any of that, Chris?

CW: I haven't. I think that's because of my family, you know. We're down in Puyallup, our family all lives right together, like my aunt lives over here and my uncle lives on the other side, so....

SM: The whole area is full of your family members.

CW: And my father kind of, well, paved the way and made it a lot easier on us.
SM: Was he a leader in the tribe?

CW: He was tribal chairman for ten years.

SM: So he commands quite a bit of respect around there. Then when you came over here now, is everything going O.K. here at school? No problems?

CW: No.

SM: How about you, Candy? Do you remember back there at Pine Ridge, or was it Rosebud in South Dakota?

CS: I really stayed at Flandreau, South Dakota.

SM: Do you remember that? You were pretty small, weren't you?

CS: Yeah, I can remember that.

SM: Do you remember any problems? Your mother has told you about a little bit.

CS: But I don't really remember any back there, but here, you know, as me going to school, I don't remember any, because I went to school with different races, you know. It was mostly Oriental and black.

SM: Black kids, Oriental kids and white kids and Indian kids, all of them. Where was that?

CS: That was over towards Beacon Hill, north of Seattle.

SM: Was that high school?

CS: No, I went to elementary and junior high, and I went to high school
in a more ... what will I say, non-minority, white, more of a white....

SM: More white kids. How about that? Everything pleasant?

CS: No. That's why I never participated really in any school functions.

SM: Did you feel kind of left out there?

CS: Yeah, but I suppose if I really wanted to get into it I could of. It didn't excite me any, so I'd just go to school just to go to school, you know. My outside functions were within the Indian community. I just went to school just to get my diploma.

SM: So you've had a lot more experience in the Indian community than one may expect by just looking at you. You could pass for a Spanish girl, for example.

CS: Yeah, I could. But as a family we even had problems with different families just moving around. And people moving next door....

SM: It's hard to imagine that, but it happens, doesn't it? Have you ever had any experiences like that, Chris?

CW: Not with any white people in the community, because, like I said, my dad had been there ever since he was a little boy, but I think the most problems were within the ... how should I say that? When we were having the fishing rights problem....

SM: Oh yes, that's another big one right now, isn't it?

CW: Uh huh. And like, when it just started, my dad started it and we had a lot of threats....
SM: Did your dad fish?

CW: He works. He's the tribal relations man for STOWW.

SM: Oh, STOWW. Small Tribes of Western Washington. And where does he work, where's his office?

CW: Sumner.

SM: There's a newspaper published over there.

CS: About five miles from Puyallup.

CW: Yeah, that's right close, and that's all the real small tribes in Washington. They deal a lot just with the Washington tribes, just with the fishing rights. They're the ones that are really helping with the Boldt case.

SM: Candy is the girl from South Dakota, and your folks don't fish.

CS: No.

SM: But Chris' folks, native to this area up north along the Sound, have been in the fishing business.

CW: From all sides of the family. My dad's family's always fished, and so has my mother's.

SM: This Judge Boldt Decision is pretty prominent in the problem that exists here now, isn't it?

CW: Um hm.
SM: Is it going to get straightened out?

CW: Oh yes.

SM: 'Cause, as I understand it, first of all, the Indians were being sort of shoved out of the fishing grounds, right?

CW: Um hm.

SM: And Judge Boldt said that they would have what, five days out of seven to fish, and then white fishermen are moving in, and law enforcement officers are not protecting the Indians. Is that right?

CW: My honest opinion is that the head of the state department isn't enforcing the laws as effectively as they had in the past when it was the Indians who were fishing when they weren't supposed to. Now the white fishermen fish on the "Indian Only" days, the state patrol, the fisheries patrol, they don't seem to hand out as many citations, and then they say they don't have enough men on staff to, you know, help to do it. In other cases where the Indians have had "fish ins" there's been more than enough. They call out state police and everything.

SM: Seems like then they have enough men to stop it? Can you add anything to that, Candy? You haven't been directly involved in that, have you?

CS: No, not with the fishing.

SM: Your dad still working at Boeing?

CS: No, he's passed away.

SM: That was recently?
CS: No, I was in second grade. My mom had to take care of us by herself.

SM: Your mother's been doing a nice job. Well, the fishing thing, what do you think is going to happen? Aren't there law suits pending again now?

CW: I don't know. I don't really think I know that much about it.

SM: Well, Candy and Chris, we are going to have to give up Mrs. Piper's office, which she was good enough to let us use for this interview. I'm glad I found you both here today, and thank you very much.