

VENITA TAVEAPONT INTERVIEW, *WE SHALL REMAIN: THE UTE*

Interviewer: What does it mean to walk between two worlds? What's the experience like?

Taveapont: Okay. You know, they have some people say that they walk in two worlds. You know, the non-Indian world and the Indian world. But one of the things that I've found, as an Indian person, is that I think you have to be strong in your own language, in your own culture, in your own identity, knowing where you come from, and in knowing where you're going and to be able to do that. If you lack knowledge, in either, then you're not going to be able to do that. If you have knowledge of non-Indian culture, non-Indian world, non-Indian language, you know, you're going to be able to do that successfully. But if you don't, if you don't have a good command of that, then you're not going to be able to do that. And I found that most of the Ute people that are successful can do that, but they also know their own language. They also know your own culture, and participate in the cultural practices, traditional practices, and they're able to move easily between the two worlds. And I find that, in my own experience, that in living in the Uintah Basin, and working with what we used to call the good ol' boys, you know, I knew what kind of language to use with them. And it's English, but it had to be the way they thought. And I couldn't do that if I didn't have knowledge of them. And, in working with my own people, I have to have knowledge about the language and the cultural practices—because if I didn't, then I would be ignorant, or looked at as ignorant, and being impolite and disrespectful. And so that helps me in my other world. And I think the students today, or young people today, have a hard time, because they don't have that knowledge of being able to move easily between the two. And sometimes I see them hurting because of that, not being able to. And my experiences, I try to share with them, so they'll be able to see, and be able to do that.

Venita Taveapont, interview with Nancy Green, n.d., *We Shall Remain*, KUED Public Television,
<http://www.kued.org/productions/weshallremain/pdfs/Venita.pdf>.