PATTY TIMBIMBOO-MADSEN INTERVIEW, *WE SHALL REMAIN: THE NORTHWESTERN SHOSHONE*

Interviewer: What does it mean to be federally recognized, what does it mean to you to be a Northwestern Shoshone tribe member? What does it mean to be Northwestern Shoshone?

Timbimboo-Madsen: I think about so long ago when Columbus came and what did he call the Indians? He thought he was in India and called us Indians; not really knowing where he was, the label he put on us and it stuck. I think about when the trappers came into the area and they came with an Indian guide probably. And they asked, what, "Who are these people?" We call them Shoshones. Well then, it's another label given to you by somebody else. So then if you ask me who I am, I would say I'm Newe; Newe meaning "the people," the people of this area. I think you have a lot of Native American people who are going that way, the Ute, Nuche. You have Denai, the Papago people, Tohono O'odham, are going back to the traditional names. And I think that certainly for us, is our identity, not somebody else identity that was given to us. So, to recapture that, it's almost like we talk about the circle. We're coming back to where we were. And I think a lot of the stuff that we are doing to try to enrich our children's lives is what we need to do to make them whole too.

Interviewer: Do you feel like you are defined by everybody else? That the Newe, the people, have been defined by the surrounding culture?

Timbimboo-Madsen: I certainly think at times that they have, they have stereotyped us and it's been done by TV—you think about Buffalo Bill. Buffalo Bill started the powwow, it wasn't the Indians. It was him. Because of what he created and at times, you saw the savage part of it, and there was also at times, the romantic part of it. But I think that in any culture there's always good and there's always bad. And that's the same way with the Indian people. But how did you deal with it? You don't blame a whole group of people for what one person did. You deal with that one person and that's the way the Indian people would deal with, with things. There was a lady who came into our encampment here last week and she says, "My word, you speak good English." And I thought, "How am I supposed to speak?" Certainly in our household, my mom and dad both spoke Shoshone and I always thought it was a language for them. They didn't want us to hear what they were saying. So it wasn't really anything. As I got older, I realized that my mother was spanked during her school years for speaking Shoshone. And in my mind I thought, maybe that's why we were never taught. Because she didn't want us to go through what she did. I really didn't think about the way I spoke as anything different than anybody else. Only 'til I got to school, when I went to Utah State, that was probably back in about 1972, and the Indian students, the other Native American students, came and says, "You don't act like an Indian." And that was the first time I ever hurt, I ever felt prejudice, was that my own, I thought were my own people telling me, "You're not an Indian because you don't speak like one, you don't act like one." But it didn't, for me it really didn't matter because I felt that if they don't like me it's ok, and just move on. And after about a year I got to know more of 'em and it was ok. But I could still feel that, a little uneasiness in my life.

Interviewer: Do you think that's because the Northwestern Shoshone, and correct me if I'm wrong, have lived more of an assimilated lifestyle?

Timbimboo-Madsen: Umm-hmm.

Interviewer: Explain to me that assimilation, and the way that affects you.

Timbimboo-Madsen: I think for those of the Northwestern band, the assimilation came, it was both good and it was both bad, because you had to give up something for the other. But it was a way to survive, too. I think after the massacre they felt that it could happen again and maybe next time there will be none of us left anymore. I think they had to try and if the leaders of the tribe said, "This is the way we need to go to survive; this is what we're going to do." They embraced the Mormon Church.

One of our elders, Kenneth Neaman, said that it, the religion, was so much like our own religion. We believe in life after death, we believe in one great being or spirit or god. Maybe the difference is how you pray to it, to them or to him or whatever but it's the same. I think the idea of family also touched them because you know, without that family structure for Native American people, you can't survive. You need all those helping hands. You need to pass on your skills to the next generation. So that unity was important.

Interviewer: Is there a cost to that assimilation? Is there a cost to the living with both worlds?

Timbimboo-Madsen: I think the cost for the assimilation for us has been the, the loss of some of the living skills of our ancestors. Certainly, and the skills that they had then, how useful are they now? But I know and my husband has certainly said, we can survive if anything ever happens. We can put meat on our table. We can clothe our family. And we can probably survive in the elements. And those skills, so many people don't have and take it for granted that the store is always gonna be there. Look, is there gonna be gas there tomorrow? But trying to recapture it, it makes it so much more important because it was lost. It means more. I think as far as living in the communities, I would say, education was important to the people our tribe. But not everybody was fortunate enough to take advantage of that. But some of 'em were, and some of 'em did go far with their education.

There's a lady up in Fort Hall, and we would go up there and they would say, yes you guys are our relatives and you were the people that wash a lot. Or you were the, we wanna come down and visit you people because you people put up fruit.

But that's what they learned from the Mormon people, was that part that people looked at us and said, "Those are those Indians, those Mormon Indians." It helped because the people of the communities knew us. I think back around 1860s, seventies and eighties, when the communities were still trying to settle in. There was a lot of dissension. I think land ownership was important to the nonnative people that came in to here. And so it caused some problems.

Patty Timbimbo-Madsen, interview with Nancy Green, interview #1, *We Shall Remain*, KUED Public Television, http://www.kued.org/productions/weshallremain/pdfs/PATTYTIMBIMBOO1.pdf.