

**ZahPeterson 2007-06-12 (01 through 05)**

PZ: [0:00] OK. My name is Peterson Zah. I don't have a middle name. And I was born in Keams Canyon, Arizona, on the Navajo Nation. And Keams Canyon is within the Hopi reservation, and there was an Indian Health Service hospital that was shared between the two tribes. And we lived something like eight miles north of Keams Canyon. And my father had about an eighth-grade education, and he was one of these individuals that sought education -- that wanted to learn the white man's language, white man's culture, and the way the non-Indian people do business. And so that was his desire, and because of those kinds of desires, he was able to enroll and get some education.

My mother, on the other hand, never went to school. To this day she doesn't know how to speak English. And between the two, they were very, very good partners in terms of raising children, because one was a very traditional person, and the other one had some education. And they mixed the two very well, and the end result was that the eight children that they have -- and I'm the first one -- that the eight children they had, they really, really instilled into them the values of Navajo tradition,

the values of keeping your tradition, and then the value of continuing to talk Navajo. And to really live the tradition. And that was their teaching. And it was one of those things where as a kid, you wonder about certain things -- their teamwork and to ensure that we enjoyed life and everything that we needed was provided.

And so we stayed there, and we didn't even know -- we didn't even know that we were on the Hopi reservation, because there were all these meetings and negotiations that was taking place right about at that time, between the Hopi/Navajo nation and the federal government. And when they did the Hopi reser-- exclusive Hopi reservation and the partition, the land, they put a fence around the original Hopi reservation, we ended up on the inside. So we were given notice, and we were told that we had to move out of there. So our family had to pick up pieces and move outside of the Hopi reservation, towards Low Mountain.

[3:00] And just -- immediately after that, the Hopi reservation line, we were able to gather our things and start chopping some trees to make our -- make our home there.

And so I remember -- I was a young man, but I was expected to perform a lot. A lot of responsibilities I had to shoulder, because all of my younger brothers and sisters, they were too small -- they were too young to really help out the family. So I had to help in the process of moving. Dismantling the hogan, dismantling the corral, herding the sheep over to a new place where we were beginning our new life -- our new home.

And so that happened right about -- that happened right about that time. And I think the war had broken out, and my dad was called on to go into the services. Ultimately, he became a trained Navajo Nation code talker. But he never used the skills that he learned in combat. The war was over before he was able to use that. And so, anyway, I was ready for school late. And the reason for that was, there were only a few schools on the Navajo Nation at the time, and they were mainly elementary schools. Because they had what they called outside the reservation boarding school for children who were in the ninth grade on up, or eighth grade on up. And these were just small, small community schools. And at Keams Canyons, it being one of the very few schools, it was always occupied with school

kids. And there were hardly any room for everyone's children to enroll there. The school was too small for the community. So I ended up being left out, and that's why I didn't go to the Keams Canyon boarding school.

And the other thing is that between my mother and my father, one having an education and the other one didn't. And then with my grandma and my grandpa, living always with the family in the same community, there were a lot of discussions about my future and the future of other children. [6:00] They really weren't so sure if it was the appropriate thing to do to get an education. Because some members of my family wanted to have me become a medicine man. And I guess the reason why they thought that is that I showed, at a young age, some interest in what the elderly people, particularly the medicine people, had to say. And I exhibited that by going and joining them at the sweat bath, or at a local ceremony. When the medicine men would come in and they would do their ceremonies and they would bring their paraphernalias, I was interested in that, and then I was interested in their prayers and their songs. And my grandfather, I remember, and my grandmother, kept on saying that I was very interested in seeing and listening

and looking and talking with some elderly folks.

I guess for me, it was really gaining knowledge. Learning from the elderly and what they had to say. Because whatever they said or sang, or the prayers that they used, my curiosity was motivated. And they looked at that as a kid being interested in all of that. And so -- that was one [spectrum?] of the family, debating whether I should go or not.

On the other hand -- I think this was led by my dad -- he kept on saying that I need to get an education, that I need to learn how to speak the white man's language, and I need to learn more about the way they do things, their lifestyle, and some of the things that they live by. That I needed to learn that. Not necessarily to become one of them, but to be educated. And to become aware of all of the other things that the white man was able to bring to the Navajo, or to the Navajo reservation. For example, cars, the language, and the writing skills that they have. He thought that I should learn all of that. And if I can do both, that will make me a better person.

And so a tremendous pressure was laid right on my shoulder, where I had to make a personal decision in terms of what I wanted to do. My aunt -- my aunt Julia -- had several boys, big healthy boys -- my cousins, first cousins. [9:00] One day they came to our hogan, and they said that they decided to all go to school at a far, far away places called Tuba City. And that we had to drive all day to get there. Because there were no highways. It was all dirt road, and we had to go through Hopi Nation, and that we would be going through many of the Hopi villages. And so one day, they said that you need to get ready, we'll come on this day and we'll take you. And my question was, what do I need to take? They said, the only thing you need to do is just get some clothes that you own, and that you should just jump in the pickup truck with us, and we'll go. But I didn't have any clothes. The only clothes that I owned was what was on my back. And then they said that, well, we'll give you some clothes -- you're still a small boy, and your bigger cousin has outgrown some of his clothes, and we'll give those to you. And so I was all excited, and I think by that time I had made my decision that, yes, that's what I'll do. I'll go to school. And it was a big decision. It was sad, because I had some -- by that time, maybe one or two more small brothers and

sisters. And it was one of those days where, you know, on one hand you're happy that you're jumping in with your cousins to go to school; on the other hand, you're leaving your mother and father behind, and at such a young age -- I was about nine years old. Now, it's probably a little older in the dominant society for somebody to enroll at that age. But there just weren't any schools on the Navajo Nation. There was just no place nearby where we could go.

And because of that, I went to Tuba City -- some seventy to eighty miles away. And I remember we had to stop twice to eat and to find some gas. There were maybe only one or two gas stations. And we ended up at Tuba City boarding school. And when we got there, I thought it was strange to see all of these big, huge buildings, made out of beautiful sandstone. And that kind of caught my eyes and my curiosity, because there were so many rooms, and it had two, three floors. And they said that this was going to be your place to live there. [12:00] And they had two dormitories, one for what they called the big boys' dormitory, and one for the small boys' dormitory. They took me to the boys -- small boys' dormitory. And I remember when I signed in, they gave us a small bag, and

they said, this is going to be your bag. And all the things that you need is in here. And then when you put them in the appropriate place by your bed, any time you have dirty clothes, you also put them in here, and the helpers at the dormitory will wash them for you for the first few times, but then after that you're expected to wash your own clothes.

And so in the bag was tooth powder, toothpaste, soap, a wash -- washtowel, the bigger towels, and I thought that what a strange thing it was to give you two real nice white sheets for your bed. And they said that one is for to cover your bed, and the other one is to cover you. And you had to sleep in between. And they were cold. And then they also gave us some extra blankets, and they gave me a bed. And then they said that there's going to be about 35, 40 other students in here, and this is going to have your name on it. And when I enrolled there, I didn't have any underwear. A T-shirt. I just had two pairs of pants and maybe two shirts, and maybe a jacket to keep me warm. That was about it. My shoes was maybe one that was oversize -- it was maybe either too small or too big for me, and I didn't have socks. So that was the things that I carried.

The only things that I carried. So there wasn't much to taking care of all the clothes that you have, because I just simply put it under my bed, and that's where my clean clothes was. And I didn't have to worry about all the other things that the other kids may take, so I had less worries. And that was Tuba City dormitory.

And I remember, when I enrolled there, the boys' adviser and the matron, our mother that was at the dormitory, was very helpful in giving us those instructions. [15:00] And then the cafeteria was in between the boys' dormitory and - - I mean, the large boys' dormitory and the small boys' dormitory. And when I first went to eat at the cafeteria, there was a large variety of food that you could have. There was some meat; there was a lot of vegetables -- corn, watermelon, squash, spinach, beans, tomatoes. I could identify some of those because we tried to raise some of those back home. Things like potatoes and beans. But I didn't know how the others were raised. I kept wondering where they got it -- where the school got them, and where did they come from, and how were they raised and grown.

So that was kind of like my curiosity. And several months

after enrolling, they had a program there at the boarding school at Tuba City, where if you were interested in agriculture, you were taken to what they call the Pasture Canyon. And that was owned by the school -- by the federal government. And that was where they raised all these vegetables. And Saturday and Sunday, if you wanted to be involved in that, you signed up and you tell your head of the boys' dormitory, advisers, that that's what you wanted to do. And so I signed up. And I ended up going to the pasture canyon many, many weekends, and that was to learn how to plant food and vegetables, and learning how to take care of horses that they used to plow. And I remember when we went down to Pasture Canyon, which was about maybe seven, eight miles, maybe even ten miles down the road -- we went in a wagon; they loaded us in the wagon. Nice, beautiful horses. One of these mid-size draft horses. And so when we went down there, we had to learn how to use a plow. We had to learn how to use a hoe, and rake, and shovel. And there was plenty of water down there to irrigate the farm. And I remember we had to pick tomatoes and we had to take the potatoes out of the ground. And we hauled all of these over to the school's cafeteria, and then the kitchen workers there prepared them for food. And so it was a self-contained boarding school, where you had

to learn all of that.

For me, that was good. Because it meant extra activities -  
- it meant that a lot of learning process and procedures  
that took place. [18:00] Now, some of the boys didn't like  
that, because they looked at it as work. As work, and they  
didn't want to do it. But I, for some reason, I loved  
doing it, because I was interested in how those things were  
raised to begin with. And that's the only reason why I  
went. I also wanted to learn how to take care of horses.  
Because back home, that's what I did.

And so that was boarding school. And I -- we stayed away  
from our parents. Our parents never came to visit us  
during that nine months' period. And I remember, even at  
some points I got so lonely. I got so lonely for my  
parents that I -- you'd sit under a tree, and privately  
you'd cry. But at the same time, you don't want to have  
the other boys see you cry, because that was looked upon as  
not being manly, and perhaps still being a little boy. And  
so basically that's what was happening in my own head as I  
was -- as I was going to boarding school.

And so we never got back in contact with our -- with our parents. My father had... my father had obligations with the United States Marine Corps, and he was in and out of services at the time. And so the month of May came, and we were told that we're all going to take you home. And I remember getting in the back of the truck, and we were driven all the way back to Keams Canyon. And when we got to Keams Canyon, they'd call out your name -- who gets off at Keams Canyon Trading Post? And I remember I was one of the people whose name was called, and I got off the bus and I got my little bag. I didn't have a suitcase or luggage or anything like that -- it was just a paper sack with all my belongings. And I went over to their trading post, and my mother was sitting over on the north side underneath a tree. And when I went to her, I remember, she broke down crying. And I was wondering how come she was crying. She says, I'm just happy -- happy for you, that you have grown, you're a big boy now, and you look a little different. So it was a happy cry on her part.

And so she says, we have a wagon here, and we want you to drive back. [21:00] And she was with my grandfather and one of her other siblings. And so we drove back to where

we were living, some twelve, fifteen miles to Low Mountain. And so that was my first year in school, and it was very intriguing -- a lot of learning for the first year.

And then the next year, I went to what they call the big boys' dormitory, when I enrolled again with my cousins. And I remember when I went to that second dormitory at Tuba City, the thing that really caught my memory -- I shouldn't say memory -- the thing that really caught my eye was there was a man by the name of Byron Tsingine. And he was a tall Navajo person, nice-looking, and he had two, three little boys. And he was just such a wonderful, wonderful man and educator. And Byron Tsingine was the one that taught me a lot of things about life and about school and about what to be and what not to be. And he was very, very concerned with every kid that was going to school there. And always talked to them in Navajo. And so that was Byron Tsingine.

Now, in school, at the boarding school there in Tuba City, the teachers and the boys' adviser, they all drilled in our heads that we need to use the English language as much as possible, because you're here to learn English. You're here to learn the white man's ways. And that you shouldn't

use the Navajo language -- as little as possible, because you should only use it when you have to, to communicate, so that you understand things a lot better. So they really frowned on us speaking the Navajo language.

It was also a giant experience for me to be grown up with the little boys -- and that's when I got involved in and interested in athletics. We had a baseball team, we had a basketball team, we had -- tried to have a football team. And so it was a lot of physical activity that took place -- at the same time, going to the classroom every day. And I got to learn how to get along with all the other kids.

[24:00]

And when I was going to school there, my cousins, when they outgrew their clothes, they would always give them to me. And so that's... that's how I was able to generate enough clothing so that I could remain in school. It was one of those things where my cousins were so kind in letting me have their clothes, the ones that don't fit them anymore. Because there was two boys that were bigger than me. And so -- because my mother and father, they couldn't buy clothes. They just didn't -- they just didn't have the

money. And so you had to learn how to shift for yourself at an early age, in terms of how you can get some of these things for yourself.

And so from there, I went and I enrolled in Tuba City boarding school in 1947. In 1949, two years later, I was out of there, and I went to a Flagstaff public school called South Beaver. Because my father got a job at Belmont, west of Flagstaff. And that was during the Korean War. And a lot of the Navajo people were called to services to help the United States and the armed forces to load a lot of those bombs -- ammunition, and put them on trains. They were sending those across the sea for our armed forces to use in the war. And so he worked there for several years, and I went to South Beaver Elementary. And then, from there, I was persuaded by the principal and by the people who were working in education -- and, again, by my cousins, the same group that I went with to Tuba City Boarding School -- and they were on their way to Phoenix Indian School. And they said, you should come along again. And we we're all signed up to go to Phoenix. And we are going to go on this date, and you should come. This time, we're not going to take the pickup truck. (laughter) We're

going to meet a bus that's going to take all of these boys at Chinle, Arizona. And these are the dates, and you should come.

And so I signed up to go to Phoenix Indian School. And again, we were always poor. And when I went to Chinle to get on the bus along with the other students, they were going through Phoenix Indian School -- I didn't have any luggage, nice luggage, so I used a gunnysack to carry all my clothes, and in some cases a flour sack to carry my clothes in. And I saw where all the boys had these nice luggage and suitcase, and they used to laugh about how I was carrying my clothes. So that was probably my biggest moment, was getting on that bus and being driven, along with probably 40, 30 students, in two buses that come all the way across the Navajo Nation into Holbrook, Winslow, or Flagstaff, and then coming into Phoenix. And seeing these palm trees, and all of these cities, like the big, tall buildings -- that was really something to see.

And I ended up at Phoenix Indian School. And when I got to Phoenix Indian School, I was enrolled in what they called Navajo Special Program. And that was a five-year program;

it was not a regular high school. It was a special program that was initiated by the federal government for those students that were late in enrolling. We were too big to start off, let's say, at grade two, three, or four. We were too big for that, and so they started this Navajo special program. And you could only go to school for five years, and then you got a certificate at the end of that five-year period. And the challenge, when I enrolled at the Phoenix Indian School, was for the people who were responsible for running the program to say, "This is a special program. You could stay within the system and get your certificate in five years, or you can accelerate your learning experience. You can try to pick up two grades in one year. And if we think you're capable of doing that, we'll just go at your own speed." And right across -- right across from the Indian school where we were staying, they said, [30:00] "There's a regular high school. You could graduate from here and then go there. Or you could do so well academically that we'll just put you in a regular high school program."

And one other thing that I saw there as I was being brought into this special program for the Navajo was the high

school had athletic teams. They had football, they had cross-country track, they had a baseball team, they had a basketball team. And we went to their games, and I was -- I really became interested. And I wanted to play, but the -- the school said that you can't really -- you can't really do that while you're on the special program, because we really don't know how that would interfere with your class work. And the only way is if you transfer over to the high school system.

So then I asked my teacher what it would take to do that, and she gave me some goals to follow, and some assignments that I should be doing. So I did very well -- I did very well for that one year, and then the second year, they put me into the high school. So I started out as a ninth-grade student. And I think even at the ninth grade, I spent a year, then they put me in the tenth grade, going into my second year. So when I got into the tenth grade, I was eligible for all of the other school activities. And I became a team -- joined a team in basketball, football, and track my first year there, as a tenth grader.

And then they had a school election in my tenth grade, my

sophomore year, for the incoming -- incoming students in the following year, junior year, for what they called student council. And I was elected. I was elected as a treasurer for the student council, just the year that I joined the high school. And so that's what happened -- that's how I got interested in class government, school government, and we began talking about a lot of human issues, [33:00] school issues.

And at the same time, I was participating in sports. And I looked at that as something that occupied my time. Because going to a boarding school is hard -- it's hard. Because you're isolated, you live in a dormitory, you live in a compound; you don't really have access to the outside world. And participating in sports and all of these school activities keeps you occupied and does not allow you to go crazy. (laughter) And so that's what I did, and it was kind of like my way out with the boarding school system.

They didn't have the best academic situation there. They -- the school really taught a lot of vocational education. And they looked at their job as educating the Indian students, having them become painters, electricians,

carpentry, and sheet metal workers, and then if you graduated, they'd put them out on the job. It wasn't really geared towards college, because there's only a few students that went on to community college, for example. But that was not the emphasis. And when I was graduating in 1958, it was really, really scary, thinking about -- I've been in the boarding school system all these years, where I got fed, I got my food, I got my bed, I could stay there and I could go to school. And I never really, really had to worry about me, myself -- how I can function in the outside world. And so approaching graduation during my senior year, knowing that in May, they were going to kick us out of this campus and you had to learn to shift for yourself -- that was a really a very scary -- scary feeling.

So I decided that what I should do is go to college. And to enroll at a college, you had to have recommendations from teachers. And none of the teachers that I had would recommend me as an academic student that's capable of going to college. I remember one teacher telling me that "I don't want to embarrass the school [36:00] and myself and recommending that you're college material and that you

should go on to college, because you're just not. You're a carpenter. You're a mason. You're a painter. And that's as far as you probably will go -- you should remain there. Don't agonize about the idea of improving your stature by thinking that you're going to make it in college. And so don't bother me." (laughter) And so that kind of angered me -- I was mad. And I thought to myself, well, that teacher doesn't know me that well. And the only person that probably knows me well on that campus was the coach. And I remember it was Coach Joe Famieullette (sp?), and he was a basketball and a football coach. So I went to the coach, and I explained to him what I had in mind -- that I had some thoughts about going on to a community college, but I was having a tough time trying to get recommendations from teachers. And the coach said, "Well, you could either listen to that or challenge all of that and enroll." And he said, "Let me see if I can figure something out and talk to some people, where you can enroll at one of the community colleges here in the state of Arizona."

So one day he called me, and he said, "There's a place for you at Arizona Western College in" -- it wasn't in Yuma, it was on the road to Los Angeles. What did they call that

place? There's an Arizona Western College out there. Palo Verde?

PI: [38:11] Oh, Palo Verde -- that's the Blythe area, right? Blythe?

PZ: [38:14] Yeah, Blythe area -- yeah.

PI: [38:15] Yeah. Uh-huh.

PZ: [38:16] Yeah. It was that institution. He says, you could play basketball there. I talked to the coach, and you could play basketball there. So I think we went out there; we drove around, and I visited the place, and then the next thing he says, "Or you could go to Phoenix College," which is just down the street. And you could walk -- you don't need transportation; you could walk there. And so the coach was really responsible for getting me started at Phoenix College.

And when I went there, I met the basketball coach, and he put me on the team. And for that, I got tuition waived and I was able to eat and buy books and all of that, as long as I was on the team. And so that -- it was really nice of them, the two coaches to work things out.

And so I graduated from Phoenix College in 1958 with an AA degree. Then I went to Arizona State University -- the huge Arizona State University, I thought at the time. And I went to school here for three years, and I graduated in 1963 with a degree in elementary education. And I got my degree, and then I went back to Window Rock. And I got a job at Window Rock High School, working for the state. And just as a young man, I always liked working with the young people -- the students there.

And then, just like anything else, I got a little disgruntled, because I thought that by doing what I was doing, I was confined to a classroom. That I was interested in what was on the outside -- looking out the window, looking out -- and I wanted to do more; that I was capable and able to more than just sit in the classroom being with students. And so one day, I was talking with some Navajo people that were working for the tribal government, and they said they had a position open here at design and construction. They were looking for estimators, and you could become an estimator, where they will give you a blueprint -- a blueprint of a building, and then from looking at the blueprint, you could figure out how much

[41:15] the building's going to cost, and then what kind of materials people have to buy -- the construction company had to buy. And how much money it will take to build that. So you have to figure out the labor costs as well as the material costs.

And so, basically, that was the position that they were advertising, and so I applied. And I applied, and I got hired. Do you want to take a break?

PI: [41:51] Yeah.

PZ: [41:51] Yeah.

PI: [41:52] I think your voice is -- water, or something. Let's see, so... Drink?

**END OF AUDIO FILE 01 ZAHPETERSON-2007-06-12\_01**

PI: [0:01] Hello?

PZ: [0:02] Yeah, OK. I would like to insert two other points.

[knocking sound]

PI: [0:06] Oh, and here she comes, of course. Sorry.

**END OF AUDIO FILE 02 ZAHPETERSON-2007-06-12\_02**

PZ: [0:00] At this point I would like to include two other things that I forgot. One of them is graduating from Arizona State University in 1963. I remember upon receiving my notice that, yes, I have met all the requirements and I'm going to be graduating with a degree, I should invite back -- I shouldn't say back -- I should invite those Indian school teacher who would not give me a recommendation to go on to college. And that I made it -- I'm getting my degree, and I want them to celebrate with me. So I sent out all the invitations, and I didn't hear from any one of them. (laughter) And the only person who was so happy was the coach. He says, "I knew you were able and capable and you just did what needs to be done, and congratulations." And he called me and I think he even wrote me a little note. So that was something that I did.

The point is that upon graduating from Phoenix Indian School, a situation where not many teachers were oriented to having their children get -- receive a college education. And going around and talking to them about the possibility of recommending me -- if they could sign a statement that says, yes, I'm capable of doing the college work -- they were not in tune with that. They just

absolutely refused to do that. And they said that "we're a good school, we're a vocational school, a boarding school, and we do very well in an industry that are building buildings out there. We're not a college-oriented institution, where we prepare students for that kind of desire to go on to college. And we believe that the majority of our Indian students are better off going into the community with some trade that they learn here. And they're very good with their hands, and they're good workers." So that was the reason they gave me for not recommending me. [3:00]

But, you know, in every group like this, there's always somebody that has a higher goal and higher aspiration. I guess I was one of those individuals. And my point to them was, OK, that's good and fine, yeah -- I know that the institution, that's what it's all about. But I just want a simple recommendation that says that I am able and I am capable, if I can apply myself, that they can gamble and take a chance on me. That's all I wanted, was that opportunity -- the door could become open and get me into a small community college. Which shouldn't be any big difference between what was at Indian school and what was

at a community college. That's all I was seeking. But unfortunately, they didn't agree with that.

Let me go back to where I was. So as a construction estimator, I was able to read blueprints and figure out the labor costs and the material costs. And then about how long it will take to build those facilities. That was challenging. You had to really, really study the blueprint. You had to understand the work of the architect, and then you had to understand your labor force and all of that. And I really liked it, and I liked working there for about two years. And then one day, Bob Russell, the late Bob Russell, gave me a call. And he says, "There's a guy that you should meet who has a grant from the federal government. And it's a program that is like the Peace Corps program. And this person that I want you to meet, his name is Malin Parker. And Malin Parker wants to talk with you, and you, I think, will do a good job for him in training the VISTA volunteers and getting involved with some of that volunteer work." (sotto voce) ...I think it's this one.

**END OF AUDIO FILE 03 ZAHPETERSON-2007-06-12\_03**

PZ: [0:02] Hello?

PI: [0:02] OK.

PZ: [0:03] I guess we start now, huh?

PI: [0:05] I guess so.

PZ: [0:07] Anyway, so I came down from the Navajo Nation to talk to Malin Parker, who told me at the time that ASU has gotten a federal grant to do Vista volunteer training. And VISTA volunteer is an off-spin of the Peace Corps program. And it's something that ASU was very proud to receive. And VISTA volunteers were volunteers that came to ASU for their training, and those students were then assigned to an Indian reservation. And not necessarily with any specific duties, except to help the community. Write proposals, make contacts for the local communities to outside businesses, and write letters, write resolutions, and in many cases getting involved in school, community activities, and all of that. But before they go out, these VISTA volunteers had to be trained, and become sensitive to Indian desires, Indian wishes, and the kind of activities that they can get involved in. So during the training program, while they were on campus here at ASU, we work with them and place them, during the training, as part of the training process and put them out in Indian

communities. And my job was to bring them together in the evenings and have lectures on what they experienced during the day. And they were trying to get themselves involved and off the ground with some of the projects that they were involved in with local communities.

And so that was my job -- was really to help the volunteers. And it was done right here out of ASU. And so I did that for two years, and I really enjoyed working with many, many American Indian leaders. Not only here in the Southwest -- and I had to take these volunteers to the local tribal government. I also went and drove across the country to places like North, South Dakota, to visit the Indian tribes up there and some of the VISTA volunteers who were assigned to those tribes and to Minnesota, St. Paul, Oklahoma. And so I got to know many Indian leaders at the time. Here in the Southwest, it was with the Pueblos in New Mexico, and then practically all the tribes here in the state of Arizona. [3:00] So my job was to visit them out in the field and give them some encouragement and then try to correct some of those things that they ran into as a volunteer.

And so that was something that I really, really cherished. And doing that, I think I'll never, ever get involved in that kind of services again, where you had nothing. You didn't even have any money. Pay-wise, yes, I was paid, but it was very little. And I had to live like the volunteers, and be able to start projects without anything, and it was just getting the community residents involved and [in?] solving some of their local problems.

And so I left that after two years, and I think this happened in something like 1967 -- that's when I resigned, or maybe it was 1966 I resigned from here, from ASU. And then went to work for DNA People's Legal Services. I believe I was the second or the third person employed by the Legal Services program. There was a young man by the name of Theodore Mitchell, and then a Navajo person, Leo Haven. And I was the third one coming on board, and our job was to meet every day and to plan the Legal Services program and on the Navajo reservation. And once we start - - started the Navajo program, then we branched out into Apaches, White Mountain, and on to the Hopi reservation. And then we also took in other poor folks -- all the indigent people in the Southwest. And so we established

offices in Tuba City on the Hopi reservation, White Mountain, Apache, and then all the five agencies on the Navajo. Then eventually branching out into the Farmington area, and Flagstaff, and those places where there were high population density of the poor folks. And so we were at that time just representing everyone.

And the money that we got came from OEO - Office of Economic Opportunity in Washington. And I remember it was right about at this point that Hillary Clinton, the Senator from New York and now the Presidential candidate, was involved in the Legal Services program. And she served on the Legal Services National Board that was appointed by a Democratic President. [6:00] It may have been Jimmy Carter that appointed her. And so I had to work with all of the National Legal Services Board to keep the American Indian legal program going. And DNA, being the largest legal services program in America, it had a lot of spunk.

(laughter) It had a lot of good things that we were doing that attracted some excellent lawyers to the program.

And my job was to recruit lawyers from across the nation. I always started each year, let's say at Harvard or Boston

University, and came down through Yale, Cornell, NYU in New York City, and John Marshall in Chicago, and then here in the Southwest, University of Arizona, UCLA, USC, University of California, Stanford University. So I had on my list maybe something like 20 or so law schools. And I kept a record of all the students that I interviewed, and at the end of their third year, upon graduation, I just wrote them a letter and revisited some of them. And they came to work to DNA, and during the summer months. Of course, they came to DNA on the Navajo and we placed them out in the agency field offices to get their work experience. And so that was one of my responsibilities for DNA.

And as we were taking in cases, because it was a free legal services, we had all these Indian people that just came. Left and right, and our offices was always full, every morning, with people that came with legal problems -- whether it be a divorce problem, or employment problems that the Indian people were facing; discrimination that they had experienced in the cities, and land problems, or problems with their Social Security, or problems with them being fired by the tribal government, BIA, Indian Health Services; maybe a malpractice case out of Indian Health

Services. So we were involved in so many cases -- an assortment of cases -- there was just no limitation as to the kinds of problems that the people brought to us.

And one of the things that was an outstanding feature -- two outstanding features of DNA People's Services that I really liked was, number one, [9:00] instead of putting out all of your workforce out into the agencies, and they taking your case day after day after day, which was endless in terms of accepting those cases, we created what we call a law reform unit. That meant that you went out and you got the most experienced lawyer and put it at your central office, and all they would worry about was looking for those law reform cases. Where we can pick a case, one case, go to court, win it, and then that will allow all the other cases to follow suit -- to follow the example and the decision that people derived that, and they covered some of the cases that were pending at those local offices. And so it ended up reforming the laws -- the laws that were affecting the poor people here in the Southwest.

And so that was an important feature. And we had some of the great lawyers, with much, much skill. And we took from

that law reform unit, took many cases to the United States Supreme Court. And I'll just talk about one or two of them. One of them was the McClanahan case. The McClanahan case was a case where Rosalind McClanahan was being taxed, her personal income, while she was working and living on the Navajo Nation. And we handled that case and took it all the way to the United States Supreme Court. And the Court ruled in her favor, and she said that she has her allegiance back to the Navajo government, and that she does not have to pay the state income tax, because if that was the case then, she would be allowing the state to tax her, those tax money would be used off-reservation to build roads and other infrastructure. And the Supreme Court saw where all of those monies were needed back on the reservation. So that was a very, very important case that DNA was involved in.

Another one was what they call a controversial one -- a trader case, where we had traders on the Navajo Nation, and those traders that were at the time doing business with the Navajo people. The Navajo people would pawn their saddles, their jewelry, any belongings that they have, they would pawn it with the traders. [12:00] But in return, the

traders did not give them any kind of a receipt, and the interest rate that they would collect once the Navajo people would generate enough money to get those pawned articles back to them. And so there was no way of keeping a record of that, and the traders were really taking advantage, in many cases, with the non-English speaking Navajo. The cost of cigarettes would go way, way up high, below the -- above the market value, and many of the items that they were selling, their trader would essentially be the same. But what we were concerned about was the Navajo poor folks that were dealing with the traders, and how the traders would intentionally lose much of their pawned articles. And according to them, they would walk off the premises, and you would never see it again, and the poor Navajo people said, "I pawned my saddle here, and I pawned my jewelry here, how come it's not here?" So that was kind of like an endless argument that happened. And so we brought in the Federal Trade Commission to get after the traders and the BIA and have some kind of pawn ticket that they can issue to make sure that the interest rate that they were charging was reasonable, and then it was their ticket, also, to ensure that those pawn articles don't get lost and sold to tourists and other people. And so that

was also a famous case that we handled, that it was mandated by the courts to do that.

Of course, there was education. Right about this time, in 19... late 1960s, '68, '67, there were practically very, very few public schools supported by the state financially. And having those public schools located on the Navajo Nation. And I can think of schools like Chinle, for example, and Rough Rock. And Window Rock High School. Tohatchi High School, Newcomb, Crown Pointe. And Navajo Pine. Right at the sawmill there. Those kinds of schools -- they were nonexistent. And it was through a case that DNA has been involved in, that we handled through the federal system, where the judge mandated that these local school districts also bill schools on the Navajo Nation as well as in their own county. [15:00] And what really moved the judge in those cases were how the Navajo people wanted their children to get an education. They were very insistent.

And then the other thing that really caught the eyes of the judge was that many of these Navajo kids, when they got on the bus in the morning, they had to be bused 60, 70 miles,

80 miles away to go to a public school off-reservation. And I remember a federal judge in Salt Lake City making the comment "When do they study if they go out into the street, go out into the highway at 5:00 a.m., 5:30 in the morning to catch a bus, and then by the time they get to their school and then they're preoccupied with their class all day and then get back on at 3:30 and then they don't get down until the sun gets down in the wintertime? It might be snowing, and you let them off the bus at those highways when it's snowing, aren't you really jeopardizing the safety of those children?" I remember a judge making those comment.

And so as a result, they were all mandated to have schools on-reservation, and because of that, the birth of public schools on the Navajo. In the state of Utah, that was how the Monument Valley High School was built -- the White Horse High School. And now the Navajo Mountain High School. It was really by a mandate by the federal judge. And they're still carrying out the spirit of that judge's decision, or federal court's decision.

And so basically, that's the kind of cases DNA was involved in. And DNA was very, very controversial, needless to say, because of what we were getting ourselves involved in. And it wasn't really DNA employees sitting down and scheming and conniving as to what we should do. We were pushed by our clients. The Navajo people were really, really pushing us.

And the last one I'll just mention is a case against the Navajo Tribal Council, where the issue of reapportionment was raised by a Navajo client from Shiprock, New Mexico. And his question was very, very simple, where he said:

[18:00] "If you look at the Navajo Council seats, there is a council delegate from the western agency that represents 200 constituents. And he goes to one chapter house -- his constituency is 200. I have a council delegate that represents Shiprock, and we have several thousand Navajo people that is represented by that council, the council delegate. But when the both of them get into office, they vote on issues, and my council delegate is carrying the weight of several thousand people, while on the other hand, the other delegate is only representing 200. Where's equality? Where's fairness? What does the law say?" And

they wanted us to handle that case, and we had to handle the case.

And so we went into the tribal court and we handled the case and the decision came down from the tribal judge that Navajo Nation just has to reapportion its voting district to reflect equal representation among the Navajo people and equal representation by the council delegate. And that really turned the tribal council and what they do and their responsibility and the controversy that it generated, turned the tribal government upside down. And as a result, people were raising questions about what DNA was doing and why we were handling those cases. But people didn't understand that the Navajo also had a law called equal representation, and the Navajo Bill of Rights states that. So it was our own Navajo law that dictated that there's got to be fairness and equal representation.

On the federal side, there was the United States Civil Rights Act that mandated the same thing. So in our case, we were backed up by a federal law and by a tribal law, and that was very, very controversial. And as a result, the United States Senate and other representatives,

Congressional representatives, also started raising the issue on DNA People's Legal Service. And I could remember a book that somebody wrote called *All the President's Men*. There is a page or two that mentions and talks about DNA People's Legal Services. [21:00] And as I remember, President Nixon got on the plane from Washington, and I think he was on his way to California, and he gave Barry Goldwater a ride to Phoenix on Air Force One. And one or two other congressional delegations from Arizona also hopped on the plane. And one of the things that the reporter wrote that Barry Goldwater was concerned about that he wanted to talk to the President was, how do you eliminate DNA People's Legal Services on the Navajo? And they're getting involved in a lot of these situations and they should not be involved in them, and he wanted to do something, legislatively, to limit DNA's ability to some extent.

And so it got to that level, and ultimately we also had to fight for our survival, and managed to do that, all the way from the Navajo Nation local government agencies all the way into the United States Senate. And it was one of those things where you know that -- you know that fairness could

only be rendered by local people to the people that they represent. And here we were, constantly suing BIA, the Indian Health Services, state government -- we were winning cases from those folks. But there were a lot of other people who said, hey, how come you guys are always after us? What about your own tribal government? They're just as unfair as we are, and you should also go after them. And so that was something that the people -- that we were always fighting with [Reagan?] on the services, the kind of services that DNA was providing. And as I said, the end result was Washington having to make that decision to keep us going.

And so basically that was my work for DNA. And the second feature that I really, really liked was, we did not have one single Navajo lawyer at the time. And we brought in a lot of non-Indian lawyers from those schools that I named. [24:00] And we wanted to... (pause) We wanted to see if there is a way that DNA can generate enough interest among the young people at the local, high school level to see if we can have enough young people get interested in becoming lawyers. And at that time, it was considered probably not the right time to raise those kinds of issues. But we said

that while we can't be any [more?] controversial than what we have done the last previous years, why don't we just go into the high school and talk to the seniors and juniors and the sophomores? Every major high school on the reservation, we should go in there and explain to them what DNA is confronted with, and we don't have any Navajo lawyers.

And so that was a systematic way of going after, solving a problem that was institutionalized by the Navajo government and the Navajo people. And to change a big, huge government, and the attitude like the attitude Navajo Nation possessed -- that's really, really hard. And so we spent a lot of time educating the young people, and within the next three to five years, propped up a lot of Navajo youngsters that were interested in law school.

And I just will name several of them to indicate the interest that was there. One of them was Claudine Bates-Arthur, out of Shiprock area, and she ultimately became a director of litigation at DNA, and then she also became the first -- first attorney general for the Navajo Nation, and then she also became the Chief Justice of the Navajo

Nation. And she was one of those individuals that we worked with at an early stage to get her interested in law, because she was so bright. And so she ultimately became almost like an institution on the Navajo, with that generation of the Navajo people.

The other one was a young man by the name of Herbert Yazzie came out of Kayenta, who also became the attorney general and now is the Chief Justice of Navajo Nation. [27:00] I remember Herb Yazzie because he went to school -- both Claudine and Herb Yazzie went to school here at ASU. He was one of the first students at the law school.

And then the other one was Louis Denetsosie, who's now the attorney general for the Navajo Nation. So these were kind of representative of Navajo people at the time that grew out of that concern for getting more Navajo people interested in law. And I like that -- I like that feature of DNA, and DNA going out and promoting them. There was no rules or regulation within the legal services program telling us to do that -- we just did it on our own, because we knew it was needed. And I remember a legal services official in Washington, DC, asking questions about how come

we were -- what were we doing in school, talking to the kids about DNA and talking about all of these things? And we just explained to them, you know, how something like that was a necessity. And it wasn't something that we got together, connived and schemed on it, and decided this was what we should do. This was what people demand. They said, "How come we have all these non-Indian lawyers here? Why couldn't we have our own Navajo people become lawyers?" And that "You guys should get involved in that kind of education, and produce Navajo lawyers." And so, you know, within a short period of about ten to fifteen years, we were able to get 30, 35 Navajo Indian lawyers. And I think that's a progress -- a big, huge progress. Probably more important than many, many other cases that we ever handled. And so that was something that was close to my heart at DNA.

And so, that was kind of like the end of my work with these different agencies on the Navajo. And then came 1983, when I decided to run for the -- excuse me, I should say 1982, then. Came 1982, when I decided to run for the tribal chairman, because I was pressured into doing it. I really -- I really didn't plan it. I never, ever thought in my

younger days that I would ever become a tribal chairman.

[30:00] But it was one of those things that you don't work at, but people notice and people will hear you, people will see how you have certain abilities, perhaps, that you ought to try some of those things that I keep on doing from the Navajo government level. And so I ran in 1982 and won, and then served for three years, from 19-- I mean, four years, from 1983 to 1987. And that was my involvement with the Navajo Nation government.

And since -- since we're talking about education... There were many things that we did during those years, and I'll mention three or four important things that I think we did during the year 1983. One of them was the establishment of the Justice Department for the Navajo Nation. It was just barely getting off the ground when I took office. My people were telling me that we need to make it larger and bigger and really get serious about a bigger establishment of the Justice Department. Because up to that point, it was only two or three office people that commanded the desk at the Navajo Legal Counsel. So we made it into a Justice Department that the Navajo people can be proud of. And

again, my choice was Claudine Bates-Arthur -- that's how she became the attorney general.

And so we established that, and got all these cases back from non-Indians that were representing the Navajo Nation. We had lawyers in Salt Lake City; we had lawyers in Phoenix and Washington, D.C. And they were handling Navajo cases. We decided to take all those cases back to the Navajo in Window Rock. And literally drove a truck around to haul all of these cases back, because we had established a big huge justice department. And so that was one success in terms of what we were doing.

The other one is the establishment of the Supreme Court. Navajo Nation's Supreme Court was born during the first four years. And because there was a huge demand for that, and then people wanted to appeal their cases, and they wanted the Supreme Court that would be staffed with some knowledgeable people in law, [33:00] and then the panel -- the panel on the Supreme Court would be judges that came from the old Navajo judges, that had a lot of sense of native justice, and they would bring that kind of schooling to the bench in the Supreme Court. And then the other one

would be recent law graduates -- a person who's licensed in the state to practice law, and he would bring in the modern idea, the new justice, and the new sense of fairness from the Anglo world. But with that person being a Navajo at the same time.

And then in the middle would be a person who would be appointed as a Chief Justice, working with these two justices, that will have the ability to speak Navajo and English very well. That can look at both a traditional tribal judge's point of view and the modern, young, college and law school graduate's. And so we created that Supreme Court, and to this day, as a result of -- as a result of establishing the Supreme Court, it has blossomed into something that is highly respected by all the non-Indian communities nationwide. The Supreme Court of Navajo Nation comes to these law schools, like ASU, Harvard, Stanford, and all these other major law schools. And they hold their cases there. And the judges -- they were here recently, at ASU. The judges use both their Navajo knowledge about custom and usage in settling tribal disputes, as well as the modern law governing some of those controversies or disagreements.

And so it was something that -- it was something that we saw, back then, and because of that, we created the Supreme Court. And I don't know if people know that I really agonize -- agonized over who I should appoint to the Supreme Court. And these were all the things that were on my mind. [36:00] And I had a vision in my head that we can't have that be completely dominated by the recent law graduates, because we'll lose -- we'll lose the other part. The Navajo sense of justice. So we've got to bring those older, elderly people, and their sense of what is fair and what is just, into the Supreme Court. And then we'll have somebody that appreciates both -- both worlds. And so I agonized over that, and I am very happy with people that we appointed to the Supreme Court. It was a huge success.

And I guess the third one is -- the third one is the trust fund. I was very, very lucky -- extremely lucky -- to be put in office with council delegates that were highly dedicated. Their integrity was beyond reproach. They were very visionary, in terms of things that they looked at. I was -- I was -- I just happened to be elected at the same time that the Navajo people elected them. So I give much

credit to the tribal council that came into the office with me at the time, in 1983. And one of the things that happened was that when we passed the Navajo Nation tax law, when we said, "We're going to begin taxing the companies that work on the reservation," -- and at that time we had one or two taxes that had just been passed by the council, before I got into office. And then we wanted to make it bigger, more fair, and have more companies pay taxes. And so we put all that together and had a big tax legislation that was passed by the council.

Immediately thereafter, we got sued in a lawsuit called [Kermogy?] v. Navajo Nation, where the companies did not want to pay taxes. And I remember calling a meeting of all the companies that were on the Navajo Nation doing business -- I remember calling a meeting and having them come to the council chambers, where I had really talked to them.

[39:00] These are the CEOs, the heads of the companies. And pleading with them, saying, "Let's work together," and, "We want you to do business with us." But they were so angry -- they were so angry that the Navajo Nation saw fit to pass taxing legislation so that they had to begin paying taxes. And my point to them was that, listen, everywhere

you go you have to pay taxes, and why don't you want Navajo Nation to do likewise? The company that you have, you have business in Virginia, you have businesses in Appalachia, back East. You all have to pay taxes. And what would make you believe that you can come to the Navajo Nation and expect not to pay taxes? We're hungry. We're short on revenues, and our people need jobs out there, and our people need services. It's badly needed, so we need to generate revenues.

But they went ahead and filed a lawsuit anyway. Well, that suit was won by the Navajo Nation in my fourth year, and I told the companies that they could pay the tax that they were supposed to pay to the Navajo Nation into an escrow account. So that escrow, during that four-year period, generated something like \$217 million, or \$214 million, during the time between the time they filed the lawsuit and when the case was decided in the Supreme Court, it generated that much revenue for the Navajo Nation. So my point to the company was, OK, since you sued us, you've got to continue paying in escrow, into an escrow account at the bank, so that when the case is decided, if you win you take

your money back; if we win, as the Navajo Nation, then we take everything.

So the \$214 million was then given to the Navajo Nation when we won the case, the tax case. And the question was, what do we now do with that \$214 million? There were a lot of needs. The needs back then were the same as the needs now. [42:00] But the council were very insistent that if we use all this money now, it won't really generate a whole lot of meaningful answers to our problems. Why don't we put it into some kind of savings account, where we can generate interest off those savings? So by having more discussions with money managers and people and members of the Budget and Finance Committee at the time, we decided that we should put these monies into trust.

So we established something like seven -- seven trust accounts. Excuse me... yeah, seven trust funds for the Navajo Nation. And there was a trust fund for the elderly, trust fund for Navajo Prep School. There was a trust fund for students who wanted to go to vocational education. There was trust funds for the scholarship funds. The scholarship one was depleting at the time, and we had to

replenish that. We established a trust fund for all the chapters -- chapter houses -- called the Nation Building Fund. And we had a trust fund for the elderly folks, because up to that time, the federal government had decided that they were not going to fund the senior citizens program anymore -- to buy them glasses, wheelchairs, these kinds of basic, basic needs that the elderly people have. And so we decided that we should put some monies into trust for those folks, and so we have an elderly trust fund. And then the last one was the handicapped -- next to the last one was the handicapped trust fund, for the handicapped people.

And the last one was the permanent fund. And the permanent fund, we put \$26 million into trust and decided that the council, each year, should invest 12% of the total tribal revenue for that year into the permanent fund. And then the permanent fund, the interest that it earns will go back into the fund. So you had two monies going into the permanent fund. One from the council, and then the interest that it earned. [45:00] And I never, ever thought that someday we would be talking about having the trust

fund reach a billion. And as of last week, I was told by the money managers that we are now at \$958 million --

PI: [45:15] Wow.

PZ: [45:16] -- and that during either this quarter at the end of June or the next quarter, ending in September, that we would reach one billion. And \$1 billion is a lot of money, and the council and I agreed that we would leave this money alone for 20 years, and we'll see how much money it generates. By all accounts, the money managers and people who do this for a living, they were saying that you will probably have 300-some-odd million dollars. And then here we are at the year 2007, it's at 958, and it's going to generate over a billion sometime this summer.

Now, I also talked to some money managers that handle these kinds of accounts, that say if the Navajo people decide to leave that \$1 billion in trust -- leave it alone, then you don't have to wait for another 20 years to generate another billion. They said that it's going to be shorter. It may look something like maybe 16 years that it can generate all that amount of money within that period of time. And then if you want to leave the money in there after that and try to reach \$3 billion, then it's not going to take 16, 15

years. It's going to be shorter. So as years go by, the money that it's going to earn -- the fund income -- the number of years it could generate a billion is going to get shorter and shorter.

So it's something that we're very proud of -- something that I'm very proud of. But I keep on going back to the council -- if I was not put into office with the kind of council that we had back then, we wouldn't be talking about a trust fund that big. And I was extremely lucky, and I consider myself lucky to have had the honor of serving with that council that was elected in 1982 and took office in 1983. And so it was really because of them that we have generated this much money for the Navajo Nation. It's really done to ensure the future of the Navajo people. And it's going to be up to the young people as how they may want to use this. [48:00]

So that's kind of like a highlight of my first year -- first term in office. And then, second term, we also did some outstanding work in terms of buying more land -- adding more land to the Navajo Nation. And the reason why we did that is, the Navajo population will keep on growing,

but our reservation is going to remain the same. It's going to be the same size, size-wise. And we need to continue worrying about increasing the land holding of the Navajo people. And so during my second term, that was our major, major goal. It was something that we really, really wanted to do. And to do that, we had put some money into trust for what we called a land acquisition fund. And about a week, two weeks ago, I was told that that is all the way up to 47, 48 million. So we have that much money to buy additional land adjacent to the Navajo Nation. And that's in keeping with what we were doing in the first term.

So it's something that we're very proud of, and there were also many other things that happened during that second term in my office. But since we're on education, let me just tell you, also, what happened, and this may lead into now our discussion on education.

In my first term -- in my first term, we decided with the education committee that what we really, really need is Navajo education policy. Because we did not have any instrument, document, law, policy, that indicates to the

people on the reservation as well as the people surrounding the reservation, including Washington -- what is our goal? Where are we going? Where do we want to go in education for the Navajo people? People were continuing to ask questions about how important is the language? What about culture? Aren't we really losing the Navajo language? And if you think we are, then what is being done to enhance the language? [51:00]

So there were many, many questions that were raised by the public. Not only on the Navajo, but the state offices -- the Department of Education. And what that did is, it brought on this whole idea that we should have a statement of purpose. And thus the birth of Navajo education policy. And again, working with that tribal council committee on education, headed by David Tsosie -- it did the job that we needed it to do, which was to establish and to have an active Navajo Nation council clearly indicating that education was important, and that how we wanted to enhance education. And that was the purpose of the Navajo education policy.

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PZ: [0:01] OK. I think we're back on.

PI: [0:04] Think so.

PZ: [0:06] OK. I'm on education policy?

PI: [0:10] Mm-hmm.

PZ: [0:12] Education policy was a policy that needed to be done by the tribal government. Wherein we can state how we feel Navajo education should be in the future, and that culture, history, language, life -- Navajo lifestyle, the Navajo way of life, including the retention of the clan system and k'e. Those are all important to the survival of the Navajo nation. And we shouldn't lose it. We should enhance it. And the best way to do it is with the young children -- the young Navajo people. And that we're going to mandate the schools, that they should teach the language, they should teach Navajo culture and Navajo history. And that is a good beginning -- it's a good start with the young people.

And so we did that. We did that. And we also knew at the time that this is an instrument that could be used by a lot of folks that are in education, whether that be the federal government or state government or other tribal governments. That it was a model education policy. And it was a statement of desires -- statements of belief by the Navajo

people in education. Certainly a continuation of what Chief Manuelito said years and years ago, when he talked to the Navajo people about how he felt about education -- and that it was time for Navajo to embrace fully the education of the white people. And I think at the time, what he had in mind was the Navajo people getting and gaining knowledge about the work of the non-Indian people. And that we need to know how they come to certain conclusions and all of that, and that you just can't continue fighting somebody that you don't understand.

PI: [2:52] That's right.

PZ: [2:53] And yes, we may not like many of the things that they do, but why do they do it? And we need to understand them. And to do that, we've got to have an education, so we've got to send our kids to learn more about the white man's way of life -- and that's to go to school.

And so from the Navajo side, it was really a policy that states the obvious -- which was that we need to tell the world about how we feel about education and how we view education, and that we want our children to remain in school and get the education that they deserve. And so that was why we did what we did.

And education policy also was not cast in stone. That, when time goes by, it has to be changed to reflect the growth of the Navajo people in education. And as a result, the Navajo nation, this past two years, three years ago, passed another education that replaces that. Not completely throwing away the old Navajo education policy, but really to update it and to enhance that. And the way I put it is, to put it into second gear. We had the truck running in first gear, and three years ago it was a matter of shifting to the second gear, because of all the process that has taken place in the area of education. So that was education policy.

On the Navajo, we have a large, large area to cover. We also have many, many Navajo children out there that need to go to school -- that should be in school. Somebody told me the other day that we have something like 72,000 students, Navajo students, of school age. That means from kindergarten all the way to Navajo students that go to graduate school and they become doctors. Those are people that are of school age. And that's a huge group of people. And they go to these different schools, like the public

schools, the contract schools, and then the grant school. They also have mission schools. Then they still have some boarding schools on the Navajo Nation. [6:00] And then you have schools that are run by the state adjacent to the Navajo Nation, with a high population of Navajo students. And they weren't all following the same policy. Each of those six schools had their own policy. But they really didn't consider what the Navajo wishes are.

I'll give you one good example: one of them was the mission school. The mission school were really only interested in their own denominational agenda. And so they promoted that. But what education policy is supposed to do is not to completely replace that, but to supplement that in some way and say Navajo culture is also important -- language is also important. And so the result of the questions that were raised by those local educational agencies was to refer them to the statement and the education policy, so that all these six different kinds of schools of the Navajo could follow that.

Somebody also told me that there's something like 240 schools, physical schools. These are federal schools,

public schools -- those are facilities that are out there. And Navajo schools also employ a large number of Navajo people, as well as the non-Indians. So education on the Navajo is a big business, and you have to deal with it that way from the tribal government's side. You have to look at it as a big business, because food has to be given to those students. Buses have to be... have to be obtained by the local school boards. There's a lot of things that it generates, business-wise, in the community. And so school becomes a big business on the Navajo, and you have to look at it as such.

And we try to do things in such a way that education policy would pull all of that together. Or at least bring about an understanding from the community, what that was all about. And that was something that I believe education policy, at least the way we viewed it, was supposed to resolve those issues.

And so that's something that the Navajo people face at this point. [9:00] And it's something that I think goes back into the history of the Indian people, where to me -- to me, way back years and years and years ago, before the

coming of the white man, Navajo people, as well as other Indian people, were living certain ways with certain values. They had their goals and they had their aspirations. And they were self-sufficient. They were doing things on their own. And then all of a sudden, the white man came to this country. And they began looking at the land, they began looking at all of the other resources that the Indian people had, and I guess the question was, the Indian people are always in the way of our progress. We wanted to branch out into these different areas and increase the land base that we have, and we need to go out there and claim the land. And the Indian people and the Navajo people -- what they were doing, simply, was protecting their own turf. They were protecting their land -- their land base. And they did that in the name of their children and growth of the tribe. And the non-Indian people, on the other side, did not really see it the same way. They said that "we need to expand, we need to follow this manifest destiny to the letter and be able to achieve those things that we want to achieve in terms of grabbing the land as much as we can while we can."

So basically, the two opposing views clashed, and Indian people had to be gathered and taken to certain imprisonment camps, in my book -- to try to, I guess, convince us that we should go to one place here in the United States and that's where the Indian world, Indian country is going to be.

And so the Navajo was no exception. The Navajo people were taken to Fort Sumner in New Mexico, some four, five hundred miles away. [12:00] And they were taken on a long walk where many, many of them died along the way -- young children, women that were pregnant and that couldn't walk anymore were just shot to death. People that broke out with sores on their feet because some of them didn't have any shoes -- they were just killed. And so it was such a devastating period in the history of the Navajo people.

But since there were so many of us, we managed to survive. And when we managed to survive, we signed a treaty at the end of a four-year period with the federal government, because the Navajo people didn't want to be taken all the way into Oklahoma. And so they decided that they should just start negotiating as looking for something that would

take them back to their home -- their original homeland, back in the Four Corners area, here in Arizona and New Mexico and Utah and a little of Colorado.

And so they negotiated a deal. They weren't so much concerned about how big a land or how small a land they were getting. According to some of my friends, older friends and relatives, they wanted to leave the size of the reservation until a later date. So they went back to this three million acres of land -- only three million acres of land, and they said that, OK, we'll go back to that area. But as years went by, they branched out into different areas beyond that three million. And so they told the federal government they were just simply going back to before the long walk period, to the land that we used to occupy.

And so from the year 1868, for the next hundred-some -- over 120, 130 years, we have increased our land base from a tiny three million acres to, now, almost 17 million acres of land today. And we're still buying land, because we saved money and put money into trust -- a land acquisition fund. It's now holding almost [15?] million, and that

money will be used to buy additional land. So we're not finished. We're not finished, and we're going to continue buying a lot of those land back.

And so when they signed the treaty, they were allowed to go back to the Navajo Nation. [15:00] And one person -- there were many, many Navajo leaders. Barboncito was one of them -- Ganado Mucho was one of them. Chief Manuelito was one of them. And Chief Manuelito and his wife, Juanita, they were -- they were just visionary leaders, between those two. And I say his wife, because his wife also had a lot to do with Manuel-- Manuelito was governing the Navajo people in his area. And since we're on education, it was Chief Manuelito who said, we've got to send our kids to school. And that's the only way -- that is something that we need, we absolutely need to do.

And he said it at the time that education was not popular. Many, many Navajo people did not want to send their children to school because of what the white people did to them. But Chief Manuelito says, "Listen, there's more of them and less of us. It seems to me that we should try to

understand the situation that we're in. And the way to go about it is getting our children educated."

So I, for one, also really, really believe in that. And the reason why I believe in that is that if you look at all of the other Indian nations -- other Indian people, they had famous American Indian leaders. Sitting Bull is one of them. Red Cloud is another. Chief Joseph. You have Geronimo. You have Alchesay, for the Apache -- White Mountain Apache. And you have all of these Indian leaders that had to negotiate a deal with the federal government. But many, many of them were so stubborn that they didn't want to come off their basic beliefs. And as a result, they clashed with the federal government. And in the process of clashing with the federal government, they got so angry at one another that neither one of them were able to give in. And as a result, many of the Indian tribes lost much, much, much of their land. Maybe because of the attitudes of either themselves or their tribe leader.

Navajo -- to me, the Navajo people took a different approach, which was, we should negotiate while we can.

[18:00] And not worry so much about the details of the

agreement. All we need is something that could take us back to our original Navajo land. And once we get back over here, we'll increase our land base. We'll do all of these other things that we need to do. So as a result, they were so lucky -- they were so lucky that they got sent back to their original homeland.

I can't say the same thing about other Indian tribes. Because they were relocated to different areas than where they wanted to be. And so one has to think about, what is it -- what is it that these older people, the Navajo leaders at the time had that convinced them and persuaded them that they should -- they should do the things that they did? And it's because of their leadership -- it's because of their vision that we now have the biggest land base of American Indian tribes in the United States. And one just has to -- one just has to look at the ability and the vision that they had back then to do what they did. I'm -- I'm not so sure our current leaders could have done the same thing.

So basically, I think that this is where we should end our conversation. Then, tomorrow, go into the discussion on

the general education and what happened -- why we do some of the things we do today.

PI: [19:41] OK.

M1: [19:45] Good.

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