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San Jose Experiences of American Indians in  
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## Arvine Pilcher Interview

Arvine Pilcher

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San Jose State University Department of Anthropology  
San Jose Experiences of American Indians in the Urban Relocation Project

Date of Interview: 3/23/16

Interviewers: Professor Jan English-Lueck and Assistant Professor A.J. Faas

Interviewee: Arvine Pilcher

I: Beginning with how you first became involved, can you tell me the story of your experience relocating from your reservation and coming to San Jose as a part of the Urban Relocation Project?

A: Uh, yes. When I got out of high school, there was no employment on the reservation. There weren't any jobs. There weren't any companies that you could go to work for. And I was living with my dad. And I thought, I can't... Well everyone of my brothers and sisters- there were 8 of us- As soon as they finished high school they left. They either went into the military or my sisters went into the training and then they married and then they left. I think I have had four of my brothers and sisters that have went on relocation. So, I thought that was my opportunity to leave. And I knew that I couldn't stay there with my father and have him take care of me because everyone else grew up and left. When they were 18 they left. They left home. And I felt like a burden because I stayed there for a year with him. So I went and I signed up. And they had four different cities that you select. And I selected San Jose because during high school I came out to stay with my sisters. I came at Christmas time I came with my mother and then I came out in the summer of '68 and stayed with my sister who was here on relocation. I had two sisters here on relocation. And I had a brother in Hayward who was here on relocation. So the family was here and I got the opportunity to come and see San Jose. And I loved it here. You know, I thought it was just amazing. So, when I went back, my mother had wanted me to go to nursing school when I graduated high school but she passed away. [Close to tears] Can we stop?

[Camera shuts off]

[Camera turns back on]

I: Okay. Now we're rolling.

A: So I went to the relocation office. I selected San Jose. And I can't remember it took them to process me. The memories of those are so long ago. This was in 1971. But I remember my dad took me to the bus stop. I got on the bus- it was a greyhound bus. And I rode the bus from South Dakota to San Jose. And I remember getting off the bus at San Jose and I could have kissed the ground. I was so happy to be here. It was like, "Oh my God! I'm here!" [laughing] And I had my little suitcase with all of my little belonging in it. And I went to the Bauer of Indian Affairs office, which was located right over here. The building is still there. The BIA building is still there. You go up and you register with them. They provided you housing. They provided you money for food. And they provided the school. I went to secretarial training for a year. And it was called Bryant and Stratton. And I finished- I must have came out in '70- because I finished that in '71. I completed that in '71. But when I came, they took me to a brewing house. It was located on the border of San Jose- Santa Clara. Very nice area. And it was right near the school I was going to. We could walk; it was like a block away. And we were with a family. It was a huge Victorian-type house. We were upstairs- there were three of us. My roommate was an Eskimo from Anchorage. My other roommate was a Navajo from Arizona. Her name was Ellen Yazzi. I'm sorry I don't remember the one from Anchorage, I don't remember her name. But Ellen and I got to be really good friends. We only lived there, I would say 5- maybe 5- months, and the family didn't want to any longer board us. Because they provided our meals, they cooked for us, and we lived there in two separate bedrooms and then we

would walk to school. It was a very good school. And we had some very intense training. I carry some of those ethics and what they taught me at that school now in my work life. Everything they have taught me I have used.

[5 min mark]

At the time that we came, I believe it was the Zodiac Killer was active then in the Bay Area and we were scared to death. I mean, we came from the reservation where we lived in our own little worlds. We had never been in the cities. And we used to never go anywhere after dark [laughs]. We would get home from school and go and get something for dinner if we didn't have dinner with the family. We would walk down the Alameda and I always remember there was a Taco Bell. We lived at that Taco Bell. And then there was a Safeway next door- I believe the Safeway is still there. And we used to go out and buy lunch or whatever. But I remember thinking, This place is so beautiful. Cause we used to walk through the neighborhoods to get to Taco Bell rather than go on the main road because we were so afraid. We were afraid of strangers. We didn't know really how to interact with people. I always remember there was that Zodiac Killer and he was on the loose and it was so scary. And then they moved us to a rooming house down here near San Jose State. It was on ninth street. It was a huge rooming house with a kitchen that everyone used. And the entire rooming house was full of Native Americans. It was all students who were on relocation- going to different trades, getting different training. Some of them were into drafting and auto mechanics and we had everything. But the girls were on ninth street. The guys all lived on fifteenth street. So the guys would come over to our rooming house so that's how everyone started having boyfriends and girlfriends. But we rode the bus every day to class. We had never ridden the bus before so our guidance councilor from the beau rue of Indian Affairs had to teach us how to ride the bus. We didn't know how. He had to teach us how to use a phone. Because we didn't have phones. There were no phones at home on the reservation. And for socializing, we would meet friends downtown San Jose. It was very active at that time. I mean, it was huge. Active people in the streets. I mean, it was a regular downtown city. And that's where we met other Native Americans and interacted with them and that's where I met my husband. In downtown San Jose in a bar. There were like three Native American bars downtown that we would all go to on the weekends and just mingle and, you know, meet each other. And that's where I met my husband. When I finished my stenography training he asked me to marry him because I was gonna return to my reservation. And he asked me to marry him so we went to Reno and got married [laughs]. But when I first finished my training, my first job was first in a lawyers office. But that was only just temporary. Because I think they just needed someone on a temp basis. But the relocation program found you employment after your training was completed. They guaranteed you job placement. So they searched and searched. They found a job at Stanford that was a temporary position. That was being a secretary in the anthropology department. So I did that for a time while the girl was on vacation. And then in the meantime a job opened up over at Stanford Medical Center.

[10 min mark]

So I moved over there and I got hired for a time by Stanford as an employee. It was a regional medical program where I work with professionals who went out into their different fields in the Bay Area and outlying areas and provided assistance to people. They worked on programs and educated them on medical issues. Can we stop?

[Camera turns off, then back on]

So I finished my training, got the job at Stanford, and Clint- his name is Clint Patrick- I married Clint. We worked for a year. And I always wanted children. Can we stop? [Starts to tear up]

[Camera turns off, then back on]

And after we were married about a year, I became pregnant with my daughter Stacy. I was so happy. Because I always wanted a huge family. You know, with a lot of kids. And then she was born and my career- when I got pregnant with Stacy I quit my job at Stanford- this was just after I delivered her. And I stayed at home with her for a year. My husband let me stay home with her and take care of her. Because I really had no family left that could help me. My sisters had returned to the reservation by that time. So I was here with my brother but he lived up in Tracey at that time, Manteca area. And I didn't want to leave her with a babysitter for her first year so I stayed home with her. And I was lucky that he said I could stay home and didn't say, "No, you need to go to work." Cause we managed on his salary. I don't know how we did it when I think about it now but we managed for a year. And then I decided I needed to go back to work. At that time the employment rate must have been not good I remember looking and looking and looking for a job. I had to apply everywhere. In town there was a small company near where we lived. I applied there and nothing. And I go to all these companies and nothing. Finally my husband said why don't you come to Locked and Troy and try to get hired? So I walked into the employment office. And they had you register when you came in. They had you write down your name and your address and kind of job you were looking for. And the gentleman who was running the office, he said, "What kind of job are you looking for?" And I said "Secretary? Anything clerical?" And there happened to be a back gentleman standing at the counter. And then he said, "Oh, you're a Native American?" And I said, "Yes." And he said, "Schedule her for a typing test." So being Native American helped that day [laughs]. So, he scheduled me for a typing test. Because you have to pass the typing test before you get hired. And I passed and he hired me, the gentleman who was standing there. His name was Hal. And I always thanked him for that because I ended up staying at Locked for 18 years. And it was a wonderful 18 years. They were so good to us. In the meantime, while Stacy was growing up, I wanted to keep my culture from home. So I would go home every year for a visit. I would drive back to South Dakota and take her with me and then we would visit my dad and all my relatives. And one summer when we went home, one of my neighbors that was a good friend of my mother's came over and she said, "Oh I see you have a daughter. Does she want to start dancing?" In Pow-wows as a Native American dancer.

[15 min mark]

And I said, "That would be fun!" Because we go to the Powwows. So she gave me, which was a very special gift for us, an eagle feather. And said, "You need to put this on her once she gets a little older and she can use it in her dancing." And then she gave me a pair of moccasins for her. So someone one in my family- I believe- made her a dress. So she was maybe 4 years old when we started taking her to powwows and she started dancing. And it was really fun. She was so brave. She would just get out there and strut and she would get lost in the crowd. And I would have to keep looking for her because she was so tiny. But she would just go. And one summer we went to Montana to a coronation powwow, my husband and I and Stacey. And Stacy had a brother Marren so he went with us. And it's one of the biggest powwows in Montana. It's called a crow fair. And we camped and Stacy danced. And there were hundreds of dancers. And I panicked at some point because she went out into the Grand Entry which where everyone got out and she's dancing away and I lost her at some point. Where is she? And here she came! I always remember that. That was so fun. Because that was like her first time getting out to dance. And then she danced at Stanford for a while. But the older she got she didn't want to. I don't know what happened, why she didn't want to dance anymore. But I think maybe she just got shy, she just got a little shy as she got older and she thought I don't want to do that and she stopped. But that was our way of teaching them the culture, by teaching her the ways. So we took them to celebrations and at the time Stanford was a real small powwow that happened on Mother's day weekend. And we got involved with

that powwow. We had some friends- I think you'll will probably interview them. The Breen's? Renita and Pat Breen? And they had an Indian taco stand. So we would go to the powwows and help them with their Indian taco stand. Because they needed help- they didn't have enough people. But it was very small powwow at that time. And that was a lot of fun too. And that was another way of carrying on the traditions and handing it on to Stacy. And she knows where we come from. She's taught her boys, we've taken them back on vacation so they do both of those know they are Native American. I have two grandsons Steven and Matthew. So I am very glad that they know where I came from and then I always tell them, "If something should ever happen and you have no where to go you can go back to the reservation and live on my mother's land." She had acreage that we call "The Old Place." And they can go down there anytime if they feel lost or something, if they have no where to go, they can go back there. [smiles and sighs] Can we stop?

I: Mhm.

[Camera turns off and then back on]

A: [laughing] She (her daughter) was so cute. She was so independent. She was a little tiny thing- four years old. She was out there just boogying [laughing].

Man: I wish we had a camera beeline her as she was traveling.

[everyone behind scenes laughing]

A: [laughing]

Man: Ma'am, do you want to say your tribal nation of which you are a member just so that...

I: The camera will know.

A: Oh, yeah, yeah. My name is Arvine Pelcher. I come from the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. I am a member of the Oglalastein Tribe.

[20 minute mark]

I: So when you came here, you mentioned you had your suitcase of belongings.

A: [smiling] Mhm.

I: So, um, what did you bring with you?

A: All I remember bringing is clothes. I didn't bring, you know, anything. [thinking] But I remember writing to my dad a lot because I knew he was probably lonesome because he was living alone now for the first time no one was at home, no one was there with him. But he was still working at that time. He was a janitor at the boarding school where I had gone to elementary school and high school. He was a janitor in the elementary school. And he continued to work until he retired. And I think he died when he was 73. My dad passed away. But then my other sisters were there. And they always took care of him. They checked on him and made sure he had everything he needed. But I did write to him a lot. And I did go home that first year I came out, I did go home at Christmas because we had a break in our training. So, I got a bus ticket and I rode home to see him. And then I came, I returned after in time to go to school and finish. [pausing] I lost my thoughts now.

I: Well, when you said that you first visited, you said that you loved San Jose. What was it about San Jose that you loved? That made you really want to stay out here?

A: It was exciting, it had everything. Where I come from is in the country. We had no neighbors. When we first moved there, we had no running water, we had no electricity because my mom and dad... well let me back track to when I was young. My mother and father and all of our family lived- it's called Holy Rosary Mission; it is a Catholic boarding school and it was for Native American students. My father ran the dairy and my mother ran the laundry. She washed all the clothes for the Mission and my dad took care of all the dairy. He took care of all the horses, he took care of all the cows cause they had their own milk so he would bring in the cows every day. I don't remember how many cows they had but they were milk cows so he would milk them everyday. And the milk was used at the mission to feed the students and the priests and the nuns. It was run by nuns and priests. We had a small house in the back. They provided us housing because mom and dad worked there. I don't know if they charged us rent. You know, I was too young. I didn't understand that part of it. But my mom worked in the laundry and that was very hard work for her. They had these huge, huge washers that you would throw all the laundry in. And they spun like this [making hand motion]. And then when they finished, you had to pull all the laundry out of these. They were big like barrels. So they pulled them out, and then they had to ring them out and then they had to go dry them on the lines. They had to hang everything outside and they didn't have any dryers then. But my mom and dad worked so hard. And then, I think the mission, it just got too expensive to take care of, to do the laundry that way. And then they decided to just go to an automated system so my mom lost her job. And then they decided to reduce the farming part of it so they got rid of- they used to have pigs, cows, chickens, horses, everything- and they started selling them off. I don't know if they ran into financial problems. And then they closed the barn, so my dad lost his job. So then we had to go look for another job. Luckily, they found a job in town which was called Pine Ridge South Dakota. And it was working at the Collin Memorial Home. Which was a home for the aged, for the elderly. They managed it. My mother cooked, my dad was the janitor and the care taker.

[25 min mark]

A: So we moved there. And this was like heaven, when we moved to the... Because they provided housing. So we had an apartment there. And we would go- my sister and I- would go and help my mother cook. You know, for the elderly. And then we would have to wash all the dishes and take care of the place. And I went to high school from there. I remember catching the bus and going to the high school and it was right there in town. It was called the Oglala community high school. You see, living on the reservation you go to school with all Native Students. And we had very few Caucasians. Most of the Caucasians were the teachers. And we had very few blacks. We had some who were teachers. But this was the only exposure we had to other races. The whole reservation was Native American. After they worked at the Memorial- Elderly home, I don't know what happened again, but they lost their job. And I often ask my brother what happened and he said people complained, someone complained about them. So, we had no where to go because we always lived at the Mission and their housing so we had no where to go. But my mother owned land. And years before, they had built a log cabin. A very small, one room log cabin. So, she owned two pieces of land. One was very remote, off the highway. And the other is where we- where the homestead is now. They disassembled the cabin and moved it to the land that was closer to the road. And in the meantime, my mom and dad had to live in a tent. Luckily it was summer time. So they pitched a huge tent down by the creek and they lived there until they could rebuild the cabin. And the cabin is still there. It is still standing. It is sturdy. It is made with huge trees. But it was the cutest little thing. It was so sturdy. And while they were building the cabin I lived with one of my sisters. She was a nurse at a hospital. So luckily I had her. And my other sister had married by then. She had

found a man and married. So there was just myself for my mom and dad to take care of. So I lived with my sister until the house was done and then I moved back there and then we had no running water, no electricity. My dad would bring in the water. He would go and get it in huge tubs. And for electricity we had oil lamps. So we would use those at night. We had no TV. You know, we had a radio. We had a little transistor radio. And we would listen to that at night. But radio back then was nice. You could have stories. They were just like, like, you know, stories on TV now but you just listen to them. So we would listen to the radio at night. And we did a lot of puzzles. You know, reading. Everyone read. You know, but we all lived in this little one room house. Then finally, when I was almost a senior- I think I was in 11th grade- we got electricity. We had the line. You have to go and request the line of electricity come onto your land. We had to go through all these steps. You have to get it approved through the tribe. And then we got the electricity, and then a little bit later we tried to get water. But because the land we were on was so sand, it was all sand, every time they tried to dig a well the sand would get in the water and all it would pump up was sand mixed in with the water. So we did have a pump that was on the hill and we could at least have a garden. But we had to continue to get the water.

[30 min mark]

A: But the water that did come out had a bad smell to it. So most of our water we just kept bringing. My dad would go and get and bring it. So my plans when I was in high school was to go to nursing school. I was going to go to college. My mother even considered becoming a member of the Mormon church because we used to have elders who came to the house to visit her- she was very religious, very strict Catholic. We were all raised Catholic because we lived at the mission. But one of the elders had her convinced that maybe we should become Mormon and that way I could get my education through the Mormon church and go to BYU. So we were thinking about that but she was just took strong Catholic so she decided not to do that. But we were trying to get my into nursing school because my sister was a nurse. Now I just remember my sister telling me, "I don't know if you want to be a nurse. You don't know until you have had to empty that first bed pan." [laughing]. She said, "You need to think about this. You can't do it jus because mom wants you too." And then I kinda thought, I don't want to become a nurse [laughing]. But I didn't want to tell my mother. And then when I was a senior my mother passed away. She passed away from a hernia which she developed from working in the laundry. Having to pool the laundry up out of the- [starts to cry].

[camera turns off and then back on]

A: So, my mother went in for surgery and they- this was the second surgery she had to have because she had it removed previously and then it returned. So she went in to have the surgery, came out of the surgery fine, was getting better. And I went to visit her one day, and she said, "Look at all those kids looking in the window." She said, "They keep peeking in the window." So I turned and I looked and there was nothing there. But in our native culture, our traditional beliefs, our Native beliefs, is that the spirits come to get you when it is your time and they start appearing. So the person who is ill starts to see the people who are coming for them. So we think that was her relatives who were looking in the window, you know, telling her, you know, "It's time. It's almost time." And what happened was, she was doing fine, talking; up; looking like she was going to come home in a few days. And she got hepatitis, and they didn't know it. She got hepatitis from a blood transfusion from the first operation. So she went for like 2 years because she really gained a lot of weight. But it was from the hepatitis. That's what it does to you. It gets you almost bloat. So we didn't know. And then her organs just start shutting down. And she was gone in like a week. And that was my senior year in high school. So that's when, after I graduated, I thought, I better stay here for dad. Because he really took it hard. But like I said, I stayed for a year but I couldn't find a job. There was just no employment, nothing. And I was just a high school graduate, fresh out. What

jobs were there were being taken by the older people. But on the reservation there's no factories, there's no businesses. At that time, there was nothing. And there is no way that you can make a living and exist. So that's why I went and signed up for relocation and decided to come to California.

Man: Alright, I've got two questions about when you first arrived here in San Jose. There are a few things you mentioned.

[35 min mark]

Man: The first thing I want to talk about was what your social network was like. You mentioned you had, was it two sisters here in San Jose?

A: Mhm. But they were here when I was in High School. They returned, they returned.

Man: They returned?

A: They both returned to the reservation. They were both married. Mary, my sister, married someone from our reservation. They had two children. David and DJ. They had two boys. And they just couldn't adjust. They just couldn't make it here. So, I think it was her husband that wanted to return to South Dakota to the reservation and went back. And then my sister Thelma, she had two children, she had two sons, but she divorced and she left. Because of the divorce she left. So by the time I came, they were gone. But I did have a brother. And I believe he lived in Hayward at the time. And he came out on the Relocation Program also. He came out in the '60s with his family. He has a very interesting story and I am trying to get him to contact you. I don't know if you need any more stories. But he has a great story of how he came to California because he drove his family in the winter from South Dakota. And they had no idea what they were driving into. Kind of like the settlers, like the Dawner (?) party. And he had him and his wife and his sister-in-law. And his sister-in-law had a baby, and his wife, they had a baby girl. Named Debbie. And they drove in the wintertime. And when they came to Reno, and there were mountains ahead, he said he said, "Oh, mountains. Just a little up and down. I didn't know this went on for sixty miles." He said it was really, really hard. He said because in those days they were just little two lane roads. And then they were pulling a trailer with all of their belongings. He said, "I don't know what I was doing!" He always tells this story. "I don't know what I thought I was doing. There I was a dumb kid with my family in the wintertime." [laughing] So he was here when I came. And he really helped me. He would come down on the weekends when I first got here and take me to Hayward and I would spend the weekend with them. And he made me feel good because I didn't have the chance to get lonesome and want to go home. I think maybe because of that, I stayed. Because he did help me a lot. So I would go and spend the weekends with them and then they would bring me back on Sunday to go to school.

I: Uh...

A: And the social networks? Are you referring to what we did socially?

I: I am curious to what your community was like. You mentioned being in the boarding houses. With the girls on ninth and the boys on 15th and you mentioned visiting each other back then. So the rooming houses, were they all Native American?

A: They were all Native.

I: Okay so was that your predominantly social network was like here? Most of the people you spent time

with and interacted with were Native Americans other than the relocaters?

A: Yeah. I think we all looked to each other because we had left our families and everything behind. And basically you didn't know anyone. If I didn't have my brother, I didn't know anyone. And I roomed in the second- the first rooming house with my family was very uncomfortable.

I: The one by Seneca Lake?

A: Yeah, it was very uncomfortable for us because we had to walk through one of the girls bedrooms to get to the bathroom. And we could feel that she didn't like it. So we always tried to use the bathroom when she was gone. Or take our showers. Because there was only one huge bathroom that was upstairs. So I was kinda glad when that fell through and we had to move because they didn't want to take in boarders anymore.

[40 min mark]

A: And then we moved down on ninth street and that was so fun. I just loved it. Everyone would cook together. And we had a big kitchen where you could fix your meals if you wanted to. And then we had our own little rooms around. And in the center was a living room area. I don't think we had a TV. I don't remember there being a TV. I don't remember ever sitting around and watching TV. So I think it was just the house itself. But the rooms were all around, and then the kitchen and then the living area. And the guys were always there. Always. And we were supposed to lock the doors at a certain time but a lot of the girls kept the guys in their room. But you had to be careful going to the bathroom. Because it was a shared bathroom. But you always had to make sure you were covered up and wore your clothes because you never knew when you were gonna run into a guy [laughing].

Man: Talk about the San Francisco Bay Area in the early '70s.

A: Yeah.

Man: I wonder also thinking back to that same period of time, I know the one sort of headline case you are pointing to is the Zodiac Killer. And I can imagine for young women coming into that area for the first time that-

A: [nodding] We were, we were terrified because no one knew who he was and no one knew when he was going to strike again. And I believe at that time they were still finding women that he had killed. And we were terrified. So we always made sure that we were in a group. We never went by ourselves anywhere. Which was our way of protecting ourselves. Because we would go downtown San Jose. It was called Pay Day. They would give us spending money. So we would have to go to the Beater to collect our money and we stayed together. There were always two or three of us. And we would get our money and then we would walk all the way back to our rooming house just to save money. We did a lot of walking. I must have walked up and down San Carlos I don't even know how many times [laughing]. But we tried to stay together. No one every wandered off alone. A lot of the girls developed boyfriends and these boyfriends helped take care of them too, I believe. They helped protect them. And when I met Clint, he was a homeowner. He lived in Santa Clara. And he had his house already but he was divorced and he had a son Warren. Most evenings I would go over to his house and do my studying there. I mean, he was very good for me. He taught me how to cook! I was talking to him yesterday, and I said, "I didn't even know how to cook when I met you!" He taught me everything. But he protected me at that time too. And then he would bring me back to the boarding house very evening so I could go to school. And through

Clint, I met all the other community members. That's how I met Pat and Renita. Because Pat lived with Clint at the time. You know, he was rooming with Clint. Cause Pat finished his training at that time and he had no where to go so he lived with Clint. So I met Pat and Renita and we made all these friends that we used to go bowling, and we used to go to the bars, yeah, but we didn't go and get drunk every time. It was our way of socializing. So we would go and listen to music and the guys would play pool and then at that time they had Western bars as they had Western bands. So everyone would go to the Western bands and just dance and have a good time. So that was our families and all our friends. And I've known most of these people the whole time I have been here. The entire time [smiles]. And I went to Pat and Renit's wedding. But it was fun to see them become a couple and then get married. But Clint and I did the same thing. We married and we stayed. And we've stayed in California. And I'm glad I stayed here. I did try to move away in 1989. We moved to Albuquerque because we were having problems with someone who was after my daughter Stacy.

[45 min mark]

A: We lived in Sunnyvale and I think she was 15 at the time and he was like a stalker. And he would come to our apartment and he would watch her and he would follow her. And we reported it to the police and they went and talked to his family and he was supposed to stop but he kept coming around. And we were scared. I was afraid he was gonna get her. I didn't know what he was gonna do. And of course the parents told me, "Oh, he's harmless. He's not gonna- he wouldn't hurt her." But it scared us. So I quit my job. First I went home on vacation. And my sister who was in South Dakota- the one who was a nurse- she was ready to retire and she said, "We're gonna move to Albuquerque. Why don't you move there with us?" because I had told her what was going on, what had happened with Stacy. "Why don't you go there? We can live together down there." So I came back- I shouldn't have done this- but I was scared. At the time I was having a hard time with the guy going after Stacy. So I resigned my job. We packed up, me and Stacy in the car. Loaded everything we could into the car. We drove to Albuquerque and I have a nephew there. He lives in Santa Clara Pueblo it's called. One of the reservations down there, one of the pueblos. He married a pueblo. So, my other sister was there and she said, "Why don't you come? You can live with us until you get on your feet and find a job here." So we went and we lived, I had savings that I had accumulated at Locked. When I got my savings, we moved into Albuquerque and we got an apartment and it was very hard leaving here and going there. Because here I had a good job, I had a lot of experience. I felt really valuable here. When I got there I couldn't find a job. They would not hire me. I think it was a stigma of coming from California. At the time, it was 1989, they didn't like California people because I don't know why. But I went to so many jobs and I just couldn't find a job. I couldn't find anything. Finally I ended up working at the University of New Mexico. I went in as a temp. And then I got hired into the admissions office. So I worked at UNM. And we were there for... I don't remember. And Stacy had met the father of her two sons there while we were in Albuquerque. And first she had Matthew and then she had Steven while we were living in Albuquerque. But, the University doesn't pay very much money. They salaries were lousy. People were working and they were on food stamps. Because they were paying, what? Seven dollars an hour? So trying to take care of Stacy and the two boys I ended up working a second job. It was a struggle in Albuquerque. Finally, Stacy's dad said, "Why don't you come back to California?" You know, with the boys. I can't remember how we decided but it was Stacy's decision to come back to California because she didn't like Albuquerque. She didn't like it at all. So she returned to California with the boys. I stayed in Albuquerque. I tried to stay there but it's very violent, violent town. There's so many gangs in Albuquerque at night. I was right near the center of Albuquerque, near Central. Center is what it's called. Which is right at the center of Albuquerque. And I didn't have a car so I had to ride the bus. And then the bus dropped me off far from where my apartment was. So I used to have to walk to my apartment.

[50 min mark]

A: And then I worked at 7/11 in the evenings. And then after she left I quit the 7/11 job because I was in a cheaper apartment that I could afford. But I still worked evenings. I was in a cafeteria type restaurant that was close to my apartment. So I would come home from work and go work over there in the cafeteria in the evenings. But it was good because I got my meals free. Because I was doing everything to pay my rent. So all my money went to the rent. And then I had to pay the bus, and buy my food for work. So I was struggling there. And I always think, what am I going to do? Because it was so scary there. You lay there at night and you can hear gunshots. You know, and you'd hear about killings everywhere. There are female gangs too and they are very violent with each other. And I had a sister who was very sick in LA, one of the sisters who had divorced and move away, and she ended up in LA. And she was very sick so my sister- Remember the sister who was supposed to move with me to Albuquerque? She never came. She never retired and moved like she said she was. So she said, "You need to come home. You don't need to be down there by yourself." So that's the feeling on the reservation. They always want you to come home. When are you coming home? When are you moving back? So I thought, well I'm here by myself... She said, "Come home. You need to come home." Because she's so ill that you need to take care of her. So then I moved back to Pine Ridge to the reservation and I did get a job right away because of my experience. Also I think [laughing], I got a job at the Indian Health Service Hospital, because my nephew was the director of the Indian Health Center hospital they gave me priority. My sister did pass away eventually. She would not stay. I got a house and took care of her. She did not like it. She wanted to go back to LA to the city. She got urbanized [laughing]. She just didn't like it. She used to tell me, "You brought me back to this little town. There's not even anything going on here." So she got on a bus, she went back to LA, and she passed away in LA by herself in a rooming house.

[53 min mark]

Interviewer:

Arvine: Then, it was like two years, maybe, I was there. Not quite even two years. And Stacey called me and said, "Can you come back to California?" And I thought, I'm not liking it here now. I just couldn't fit back in, back at the reservation. I didn't have any good friends anymore. The ones I had were drinking. I mean, they were alcoholics. They would borrow money from me so they could drink, and I could tell they were killing themselves. But there's nothing to do on the reservation. There's nothing, you can't even go to a movie. There's nothing there. So they all become depressed and they drink and now they're doing drugs. Everyone's into drugs. But I just didn't feel good there. I did have my two older sisters near me, but they have their own families. There I ended up, living by myself in a little farm town. So when Stacey said, "Mom, why don't you come back to California?" I said "Okay!" [laughs] So I quit my job there and I came back to California, and I've been here since.

Interviewer: Sorry. You said there's always kind of this tone from people back at the reservation saying, "Come home. When are you coming home?" What is home to you? What does that mean to you?

Arvine: Well now, home is California. I've been here my entire adult life, except for those few years I moved away, which was like three years. But I ended up back here. And I've been here ever since. I've seen it change, and grow. I'm nearing retirement now, so I'm conflicted now. I don't know what to do. And the cost of living here is so bad. I mean it's...I'm thinking of moving back, to be with my sister. But I don't know. Like I said, I'm conflicted. I don't know what to do. And I have a brother and said that brother is still here. He lives in Santa Cruz. He lives like a block from the ocean. He has this beautiful little condo-condominium that he owns. So I do have him to be with and to talk to. So I don't know what to do. Because home is here, but my sister is there. She saying "Why don't you come home? Why don't you

move back” But she’s unpredictable too. She could up and move herself. Her and her daughter, they move every six months or every year. So I don’t know. I don’t know what I’m going to do. Because all my friends, my close friends back there, they’re gone. [in tears] My brother is gone. My sister is gone. I just have the one sister to turn to. We were eight and now we’re down to three. So...[pauses] That’s my story. Now I have the big decision, what do I do? [pauses] Is that good? [laughs]

Interviewer: Be sure to look at Briana (?) when you answer.

Arvine: Okay.

Interviewer: When you came here, did you experience any forms of prejudice or discrimination for being indigenous? Maybe in workplaces, or even just, like, socially? And if you did, how did you go about navigating those oppressions?

Arvine: If I did, I don’t remember, because, like I said, we- the native stuents- we kind of created this bond where we were protecting ourselves. So that’s why we all stayed together. I remember, though, when I did go to work at Lockey, I was hired as a file clerk. All I did was file these little cards all day. I worked in the employment office. And all the women I worked with, they were caucasian. And there was some treatment there, that was different. But I think when we first came to California, when we first went into the workforce, we were very timid. You know, we were very, kind of, wary of people. It’s our culture. That’s the way we were. And we were, I could really honestly say, probably scared. A little frightened of people, because of being on the reservation and not having interaction with other races. So I remember being very quiet and doing what I was told. In those days, you know, it was the ‘70s. It was 1975 when I went to work at Lockey, and they were very stric with the workers. You punched a time clock when you left, you punched a file clock when you came in. When I worked in the file room, I finally got promoted to clerk. Another type of clerk. And I was put into a desk where I did typing. The desks were all lined up and the supervisor sat at the back and watched you.

[1:00:00]

Arvine: And I remember one day, I ate lunch at my desk. And I always liked to read the paper. I’ve always loved to read the San Jose Mercury, for some reason. I have the paper and I’m reading, and I didn’t pay attention to the time. And one of the supervisors came up and said, “Put that paper away! Don’t you know it’s time to get back to work?” And I go, “Oh. Okay.” That’s the way the workforce was then, though. They were very strict. And I’m sure I had prejudice, but, you know, I think I wiped it out of my brain, because I don’t remember. I don’t remember any of it. I’m sure I was treated differently, but...But I can say that I did learn a lot at Lockey. Through the years, I did get promotions. I did move up. I did work for some great, great people. That’s where I learned my work ethics. From then.

Interviewer: Just to spend another minute or two, perhaps, on the same theme that was bringing up. When we spoke to, and this will likely- I can’t imagine this won’t be in the exhibit, there was something that Renita Brien said to us a few times in the course of her interview. When she talked about moving here, first, actually, as part of the, not just the Urban Relocation Network, but the Urban Relocation Lockheed-Martin Network that you guys are all part of. She talked about, that she came here, kind of, in very different ways, back and forth like you did. She came into Anaheim as a young girl, first when her parents were at Disneyland, and then came here to San Francisco. And when she talks about moving here to San Francisco, she was very young when she moved to Anaheim, later on she moves to San Francisco when she’s a teenager. And she said it a bunch of times, “We knew we were Indian. We knew we were Indian.” And she repeated that, and I asked her, sort of, how or why you knew this. And I want to

be careful here and point out that she didn't say, "We knew we were Nez Perce." She didn't say that. But she said, "We knew we were Indian."

Arvine: Yeah. Yeah. That's a good point. We've all become one nation, living in California. That's what I think. We're not Navajos, Eskimos, Sioux, Nez Perce. I really feel like we're all one nation now. That's why when we go to the Stanford powwow, it makes you feel so good. Because we're all one. It doesn't matter what tribe you are. And that comes from depending on each other and forming our own little communities here and our own families. Yeah. It's different. It's different.

Interviewer: Do you think it's because- and there are likely, you know, many reasons, big and small- but I wonder...I was thinking back to, you know, your support network, and getting around the rooming houses on Ninth and Fifteenth streets, and how you guys all seem to have stuck together. And you talked about your networks around the reed bars. Do you think, is that...Was the sense of community you got from just knowing Indians from other places? Was it sort of internal that you got the sense that "we know we're Indian"? Or is it also in the sense that Steve was talking about? Is it the sense that, perhaps, other non Indians reminded you at times that you were Indian?

Arvine: Yeah. Yeah, that's it. I think that's part of it, too. That's kind of why we stayed so tight with each other and so close. We were, like I said, protecting each other.

Interview: Thanks. Yeah, we had, similarly, in an interview with Al Cross, he mentioned that, in many ways, the Urban Relocation Program was an attempt sort of to assimilate American Indians. Bringing them into the city so that their American Indianness would go away. And, in some way, American Indians actually discovered their Indianness. Their shared Indianness.

Arvine: Yeah. It's gotten stronger. We've carried everything into what we are now. And we all still communicate.

[1:05:00]

We get newsletters from Vernon. It keeps us going. The Indian Health Center has all kinds of activities where we all get together. Dinners, Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter. They're having an Easter egg hunt for the kids. A picnic and Easter egg hunt. And it brings everyone back. And then Oakland is very active. They have everything. They have beading classes, dancing classes, singing classes. Where you can go and learn everything about your culture. They're very very active. They put out a weekly newsletter, and it goes to all of us. I mean, we all share it. And it tells you all the activities that are going on. And they're all in the Bay Area, or they're powwows in Sacramento or down Salinas (sp?) way. They let you know what's happening. So it's grown into a real community. That's why we love the powwows. Al Cross was saying that's how powwows came to be. The powwow gathering is what's...The California Indians invented it so we could get together and be together and eat and have some dancing and drawing. That's what I was saying about Stanford. If you go to a Stanford powwow, it is so big now. It used to be so tiny, they used a parachute as the cover. It was a really tiny arena with two food booths. Now it's this huge celebration where natives come from all over the United States. And we have arts and crafts booths. They sell everything, every kind of food you want is there. It's amazing how huge it has become. And it just grew from a little tiny powwow over the years. Now it's one of the best known powwows. And everybody's happy there. You go to a powwow, you just have fun. You laugh and joke with the people next to you. If you don't know them, then you get to know them. And it's, like we said, it's one big family again.

Interviewer: [unintelligible]

Arvine: And if you have a chance, try to go one day. It's Saturday and Sunday Mother's Day weekend. Friday night, too. They start Friday night. But it's Mother's Day weekend.

Interviewer: May I ask a question? When was the first powwow that you went to?

Arvine: Here?

Interviewer: Yeah, here.

Arvine: It had to be Stanford. It had to be a Stanford powwow.

Interviewer: What year it was?

Arvine: Oh no. It was when Stacey was small. It must have been...It must have just started. Like '73, '74. It must have started in the early '70s. So, she was like four years old when she started dancing. And we had gone before, seven- 1977, maybe? It was real small. It used to be on the soccer field. We used to hold it on the soccer field, I remember. After, when we moved away- when I moved back to Albuquerque and South Dakota and I came back and I couldn't get over how huge it was. They moved it to the eucalyptus grove. It's huge, it's so big now. It really grew. I did go to De Anza College while I was working at Lockheed. I used to go in the evenings to classes. And we started a Native American powwow there. We started the Native American group, and then we started the powwow. And De Anza went for quite a few years, and it was run by the students. By the De Anza students. Then something happened and they lost the funding and it was discontinued. But it had gotten to be almost as big as Stanford. So people would go to Stanford, and the next weekend was Dianza. But at the time they had a Native American instructor at De Anza named Ed Morton, and he's the one who was the force behind the powwow. He was the best instructor. I took all of his classes. I mean, he could tell you stories about California and the...I'm sorry, but the elimination of the natives. He has some stories about the Bay Area. He passed away, but he had so much knowledge. He used to tell, in the Bay Area, when they used to come and they used to go out and kill natives on the weekends just for sport. That they would go out and just slaughter them. Because they didn't understand. That's why you find so many burials here, too. They were all killed. They were all eliminated. So you find the huge burial grounds. Every now and then they'll be doing a construction and they'll find artifacts and bone. It's from the California Indians who were here and were murdered, or died, probably from diseases or whatever. But that...Poor De Anza powwow. We were really sorry when it went away, but they cut the funding, I think, because there wasn't any Native American instructor anymore to push it. But we developed that. I was the first president of Dianza powwow committee. There were five of us. [laughs] We had...[video cuts out]

[END]