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LaVerne Roberts Interview

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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: 1/16/16

Interviewers: Prof. Jan English-Lueck

Interviewee: Laverne Roberts

J: Jan English-Lueck

L: Laverne Roberts

J: Let's make sure this is in fact in record. And my backup recorder. [beeping] Ok, here we go. So, Laverne, I think I would like to start out with tell me a little bit about your life and your experience relocating. Tell me about your home and the home reservation you come from.

L: Uh, ok, well my name is Laverne Roberts and I was born in Schurz, Nevada which is an Indian hospital that all the Indians were born in in Schurz in Nevada. And I lived in the Yerington colony in Yerington Nevada for about 18 years of my life and spent most of my time there growing up. After that I went and worked in Hawthorne Ammunition Depot for about a year to go and get money so I could go to school. And then my orders to come- um, I wanted to get off the reservation because I wanted to experience the world and travel and get to meet new people and move around since the population that I grew up in was a small farming community. Probably about two thousand. And so, there was not much in Yerington at all except for the Indians and the farmers that are around the area which was mostly Italians and Portuguese. So, I decided that I was going to go to Haskell, which was the Indian junior college in Kansas because my aunts went there. And I also applied to go to the army. So, both letters came in at pretty much the same time so I had the choice to go to Haskell, the Indian Junior college, or go to the army. And I chose the Indian Junior college because of my need to travel. Looking back, I should have done the army because they would have paid for my education but you don't think, you make choices that you have to go with that choice and you have to move forward with it. So, I chose to go to Haskell and I stayed there two years, graduated in photography. I wanted to be a writer back then. And the only thing that was open at that time was... [coughs] excuse me, I wanted to be a *nurse* first but all the slots to get into nursing were filled. So, writing was my second choice and they put me in printing. So, I learned how to be a photographer and that was my life and I met a lot of different tribes from around the United States. Some of those friends are still friends to this day that I used to communicate with and still see and move around. So, it's very, very fortunate that I met a lot of good people in my life and always felt that the Creator has always been with me and showing me different choices and what I needed to do so I went to Haskell for two years and when I was there they basically had us take tests because they wanted to send us on job interviews. So, we took the tests and I don't know my time finally came and he took me into his office at Haskell. He had this huge desk with this huge map on it. It was a map of the United States and you could see pinpoints- little pinpoints- across the United States. And he said those pinpoints were all BIA offices to go on relocation. Where do I want to go? And I looked at the map and I looked at him and my mind was just reeling, saying, "Oh my goodness, there's so many choices." So, I said to him, "Well, I'll go do four months in Washington D.C., see how it's like, and then I'll go do four months Denver, Colorado, four months Albuquerque, and four months San Jose. Because that's the end of the map on east and west. And he looks at me and he shakes his head and he says, "You only have one choice. Where do you want to go?" And I'm going, Oh my god! You know when people do that, it's like pointing a finger, and your mind goes blank. And so I'm like, *What do I do?* And so, I said a little prayer and that song, "Do You Know the Way to San Jose" came filtering through my brain and I said, *Ok, Creator. I'm going to San Jose, California*

[5 min mark]

L: And, uh, I went home. They said they're send me orders about San Jose when I went back home. So, I went back home to Nevada. And I worked at Stewart. Got a job working at Stewart for HUD; Housing and Urban Development. And I was a clerk there. And I really liked my job. And around that time my mom worked in the ammunition depot in Hawthorne. And how strange it is that that was the same building I was working before I left for Haskell that blew up. So, if I stayed there I would have been blown up. And

my mom she was one of three people that were severely injured and they had to fly her all the way from Hawthorne to Reno and a helicopter because she was really bad. She had shrapnel all over her back and she had problems all the way till she passed away and so while I was working at that store, my orders for relocation came in. And I didn't want to leave because my mom, you know, she was home at that time healing. I had six brothers and one sister and my stepfather was there taking care of her. And I told the guy, "I don't want to go on relocation at this time. Maybe later. But right now, my mom's really seriously hurt and she needs my care." And he was at this point in his life where he was just up to here with people saying "I'm going" and then "No I'm not." And he looked at me and he said, "You're going whether you like it or not. I'm tired of you 'blank blank' Indians saying you're gonna go and then you don't go." You know, he was just at that boiling point where I pushed his trigger. And at that time, you were respectful. You know you don't talk back and you listen to your elders. And to me he was an elder. I didn't say anything and I walked out the door and I went and talked to my mom and talked about what was going on and she goes, "I'm being taken care of here. Don't worry. I've got people around that are supporting me." She goes, "You go to San Jose. You can always come back." And I said, "Ok mom. I'll listen to what he says." So, the next day I went into his office and he looked at me and I told him, "Ok. I'll go on relocation to go find a job in San Jose." So, he said, he showed me this picture of San Jose and he said, "The tallest building in San Jose is where you need to go." So he says, "Here's your bus ticket and \$15. You go to San Jose and go to the tallest building in San Jose and then they will help you find employment." Growing up on the reservation, it was just a small farming community. So, we didn't have a phone or anything else and we walked everywhere. So, we didn't have transportation it was, my son used to call his feet Mo and Joe. And so when I got to San Jose off the bus depot I was thinking as I was traveling and going on the bus I could still see the scenery pass by and how scary and lonesome at the same time it was to go to a place that I didn't really want to go because of my mom and my family back at home. And I had a good job. And I had to quit that job. And I said to myself, "Ok. Mom says, 'Go there. Do what they say. You can always come home.'" And I had \$15 so I said ok, well, go there and do what he says and I said, "Ok. When I get to San Jose, I'll wait there for them to come find me." Because I figured somebody was gonna come pick me up and show me where I need to go to next. And so I got off the bus and I walked outside- I had my suitcase- and I waited and waited and nobody came.

[10 min mark]

And I said to myself, "Oh my goodness. He said, 'Look for the tallest building.'" And to me, all the building were tall. I said ok, well, I'll keep looking. There must be a tall building around here. And so, I got my suitcase and I started walking. On the sidewalk, and moving. And I said look I have a strange feeling that somebody was following me. And so, when I looked around I saw this small Mexican guy following me as I went. He was just shadowing me as I went. Finally, I went and found a park and I said oh grass! Dirt! So, I was all happy that there was dirt in the city 'cause I was seeing nothing but concrete all over and I couldn't find that tallest building so I said, "Ok." At that time, I don't know if you remember, there was a Red Skelton. He was a comedian. And one of the roles he played was Clyde (Clem) Kadiddlehopper. And so I thought, oh well Clyde will find a newspaper and sleep on the match so I didn't know how long my \$15 would last so I didn't eat all day and I said, "Well I'll just wait here and tomorrow we'll look for that tallest building." And so, there was no newspaper around and I sat on the bench with my suitcase and that little Mexican guy came up to me and he says, "I've been following you." I go, "I know." He goes, "What are you here for." And I said, "I came to find a job. They sent me out to find a job." And he says, "Well why don't you call somebody." I go, "I don't know anybody. And I don't know how to use a phone." And he looked at me kind of strange and he said, "Well why don't you go to a hotel." And I go, "What's a hotel?" In Yerington, there was just a farming community. There was no hotels at all. And he finally says, "How much money do you have?" And I stood up and I pulled out my \$15 and I said, "Fifteen dollars." And he looks at me and he looks at the fifteen dollars and he looks at me again and you could see in his mind he was struggling. It's like he wanted to grab the money and just leave me but for some reason, yeah I guess the Creator was with me, he got at all mad and he's like [grunting] and he turned around and he says, "Follow me", a little roughly. And I was really naive and trusting at that time and for some reason I wasn't scared of him more than anything else and so I followed him and he took me down to the De Anza hotel which was then a skid row hotel. It wasn't as nice and beautiful as it is today. Its luxury is great now but back then it wasn't- it's where a lot of winos and different people stayed. So he went in and he took five dollars out of my hand and then he went and paid. I think it was \$3.65. Don't ask me why I remember that but that's what I cost to get a room and he walked me up to my room and gave me my change back and he said, "Now, when I leave I want you to lock the door. And I don't want you to let

anybody in. Including me." And so that was my first night in San Jose. Was staying at a hotel which it was so bad that I didn't crawl underneath the sheets or anything. I slept on top. But at least I was safe. I wasn't out there in the world. And the next day I got my stuff and left and started walking again with my suitcase looking for the tallest building in San Jose. I finally found it. It was a community bank back then. I think the name is changed now. Maybe it's the same. But I went in there and I looked at the directory and I said, "I've got to find employment." And so I look for employment agencies. And so there was three of them at different levels so I said, "I'll start at the top and work myself down." So I walked in and the first one they asked for an application so I filled it out. I sat there and they were taking people that came in behind me. And they were just ignoring me.

[15 min mark]

So, I said to myself, "Well, they don't want me here. I'm gonna... I'll go check the next place out." So, I got my suitcase and I went down to the next one and they had me of course fill out an application but this time they made me take a test; a math test. And so I filled it out, I did my test. And pretty soon this lady-Caucasian lady- came out and she sat there beside me and gave me this real funny look and was like, "Uh, you made a hundred on the test. How'd you do that? Did you cheat?" And I go, "No." And she said, "Well how did you learn to do that?" And I said, "In school." [laughs]. And I knew that she was prejudiced and I didn't say anything and I just got up and left. I didn't want to deal with a person that didn't like me at all. I had one more employment office to go to and as I got into the elevator this really nice man in a business suit and everything got on and he noticed that I had my suitcase and he says, "You just came to San Jose?" And I said, "Yeah, I came to find employment." And he goes, "Well, I had my secretary just leave. Do you want a job?" And I said, "I would, but I promised that I would come down here for employment at this other place. So I can't take your job." He goes, "Well if you want to, I'm a lawyer. Here's my card. If you change your mind, call me. I'll leave the job open until you contact me." So, I was really into 'my word is my bond' so I told him, looking back, I'm going, "You fool." So I went with the elevator open at the time and here I could see Indians walking out of the office and I go, *Indians! Indians!* So I got off that thing real quick and I went in there and it was my future roommate was there. Her name was Wanda, Wanda Hadley. And she goes, "Laverne! We've been looking for you. Where've you been?" And so, I told her and then from there they set me up with other Indian women on 15th street for all the women who are coming in for employment and they're from the BIA. And that was my first inkling of coming to San Jose and the relocation program and doing that so it was an experience back then. You know, when you're 19 and you're naïve. I always felt blessed that the Creator was there with me as I moved along and made these different choices. I have been grateful more than anything else.

J: So, about what year was this?

L: It was '71.

J: That was the year I graduated from Haskel school [laughs].

L: [laughs]

J: So we're close to the same age. [pause] So, what job did you end up with?

L: Well, the job I ended up with is they made me take another test and I did well and they wanted to send me to school and at that time the BIA would pay for schooling over everything else and had a choice [phone ringing] of where I want to go. Even to colleges if I want to. But I chose, back then, on the reservation, if you had a college degree, you were thought of 'less-than' and you were kind of shunned so I chose to do a vocational. I went into computers at that time. I figured that was going to be the world. Even looking back, I was totally right. But, you know, that was the feeling and I completed that but I never did get into that. I got a job cause I had to get a job. And I worked at Aetna insurance and then there was a position at the Indian Center back there on 2nd street- 92 South Second Street- that opened and the lady that was the boss wanted me to come work for her so I chose to be around Indians instead. So I worked at the Indian Center for a couple years as an Information Referral Specialist and then they started a Recovery home and the director then was Enoch Jackson and he'd seen me work with all the downturn, skid row alcoholics that came in, the Indians, and I treated them with respect, you know? Cause we grew up in a reservation that's all that was there; alcohol and so I didn't think twice about it. They were still

almost like relatives so you treat them the way you would want to be treated.

[20 min mark]

L: And so, he wanted me to become a counselor for the Four Winds. And I said, "I have no experience about it." And he said, "Yes you do. I see you working with them all the time." You know, because it was ignored to me. And he asked me again and I said no and the third time he said, "Laverne, I'm going to send you to this conference, this workshop. And if you come back and you tell me no you don't want to be a counselor" because he thinks I would be good at it. And I said, "Ok. I'll go to the conference for you just to let you know but I'm not going to take the job." And he said, "That's fine. Go to the conference." And at this conference there was a medicine man that was there. I don't know if he was a medicine man or just telling this story, but he just felt spiritual to me. He said there was talking about a vision that either he or somebody had and in this vision, he was fasting and praying on this mountaintop on the edge and around the 4th day what happened for him he could look out all over and see sky and land and he said way in the distance, he seen a little black dart started. And this little black dot started coming toward him and the more it was coming toward him the bigger it got. It come and cover him. It was all around. He could feel the blackness, the despair, the loneliness and, you know, he was crying because it felt so bad and a lot of hurt and everything else was in that blackness and he started praying harder and harder and finally, as he prayed, this blackness lifted and went back to where it came from and he looked down and all around him on the mountain there was Indian laying side by side all around the mountains. And because of what the blackness felt for him, he thought it was a destruction of our Indian people and he started crying. Saying, "Is this what you're showing me? Is this what will happen to our Indian people?" And then all of the sudden, one Indian stood up, shook himself, looked around, and then he reached his hand down for the next one. And each one after that lifted each other up. And he basically said, he said that what the black cloud was telling him is in our nation is alcohol, it is destroying us, and if we don't reach down and help each other, then we are going to destroy ourselves. So we need to help each other. And so after that conference, I came back and I told the guy, "Ok, I'll go ahead and try." And I became a counselor there for two years and learned a lot and loved working with Indians. And then there was a position for the county that became open for an Indian liaison to work there for alcohol Bureau and the people that they sent out, we heard rumors that they were gonna hire and they needed more people to apply.

24:00

L: The people that they sent out, we heard rumors they weren't going to hire and they needed more people to apply. And I was working there and I loved my job at the Four Winds working with Indian People and they talked me into putting in my application because they needed numbers, they needed people applying and I interviewed for the job. And, they offered me the job. I went to work for the county and I worked in the field of alcohol and drugs for thirty-three years until I retired and went back home because there was a house that was available brand new that I could get and if I didn't take it, I would have to be on the waitlist for the next phase, and I waited eleven years for that house. So, I retired from the county and went back home to the reservation I have been there for five years now. So, it's almost like a full circle than anything else and I am grateful in my life that I've seen so much and been blessed about, with friends and people that I have met along the way, and yeah. Going back to home on the reservation is totally, totally different um, I've been-I call it behavior modification Reservation style. They call me too bossy because I like to get things done and I don't like to wait around I like to plan and do this. So, I am learning there is a different timeline on the reservation. It's just "It will happen when it happens" and so um, I feel after almost forty years of leaving family and going back home with it is a blessing and a curse at the same time. You know being back home on the Rez because pretty much all of us are related and so I still love it back home and love learning and I am trying to bring back some of the culture that I felt we've lost that they no longer do on the reservation... All they do is play sports-the young kids no longer know who they are related to or part of our culture and who we are. So, when I went home I started different projects to start it where I'm from is Wovoka, I don't know if you know who Wovoka is? He lived where I grew up with, that's where his home was even though he was buried in Schurz, 25 miles from where we at, he lived in Yerington, in Mason Valley and he is buried in Schurz because he wife was from Schurz. And so, I wanted to start and to do a culture and museum not only about Wovoka, but about our people there-of how we got there and who we are and, and it's been trying I still have my goal is to do something, but I have learned in its own time it will happen, not my time if I need to, but at least I am getting the seed going and how important. And I try to tell people I say "A lot of people outside here know who Wovoka is", but they don't talk about it anymore there and you know it's a different thing because on the reservation we're not supposed to talk about people who have passed. Unless you get permission,

but Wovoka is a public figure so to me that should be told as our story and his story, and what happened to him in our valley where he went. And how it started - and do that -so that's been my, one of my goals, I brought back hand game tournaments are um, we didn't have hand game in our area Yerington for twenty to forty years so when I went back home I started doing that. We started teaching our youth and now we have youth hand game tournaments where we never had that before- before I came home and so I am doing different projects. I have a traditional dinner I give around Thanksgiving because to me it is a combination of not only Thanksgiving with people, but also our traditional dinner together to eat and share and do that. So I do different projects at home that I am busy with and get that going. **(28:52)**

J: Wow. I am going to ask about the traditional dinner probably just because I am fascinated by food and we have one of the students working in the project is actually trying to understand, I mean she is going to develop a curriculum for kids about modern Indian cuisine. So, what is that traditional dinner to you and how did you keep that going here when you were in San Jose? Or were you able to? **(29:19)**

L: Well. I'm one of the founders of the American Indian Alliance and when I was here in San Jose our community was more fragmented than anything else and I took a survey when I worked for the county and I found out that we have over one hundred different tribes here in Santa Clara County, which is a huge county over a million- millions of people all the way from Palo Alto to Gilroy is part of Santa Clara County here. And we never had, the only thing that we had was the Indian Center and it went under, and then we had the health center left. And I always felt that more than anything else, as Indian people we needed a place uh to meet more than anything else. It's almost like communications by phone here in the city and we would call each other and meet places. So to me, that is what I called our Hubs, is wherever we are meeting that was our hub and our community more than anything else and I says "Can you imagine if we had a hub here?" And it's something really important and we needed to get that information out to different places uh because out of one hundred different tribes here they lived on over one hundred and six towns and reservations throughout here, Canada and all over so if we had information to spark(?) from our little hub, we would phone call and tell everyone what was going on and that word would get out in half an hour. So you know it's amazing the communication that we have here from all different tribes and teaching each other their ways and our ways; and working together to me was always really important because family and community was important. **(31:25)** And at that time when we were forming the American Indian Alliance Andrea Sneider worked for a non-profit company, she got a 5 year grant that uh was trying to show different innovative ways to do different things and there was I think, there was four things that she wanted to pull together, is one, try to work with the Indian Community to form a community. One was employment, one was working with lawyers and the other one was business. So there was four things she was working on and when she came to me to ask me, I told her uh, no I didn't want to do that because the timing wasn't right here in our community because there were alot of fractions going on here and it's funny because every time anybody asks me.

(32:18) And, and it's funny, on the third one I finally said yes ok, I will give you a try. And so she said, this is what we need me to do and then that's when she goes "who else do we need in this to help us make it work?". I told her all the important people at that time which was Hank Labeau, Al Cross, um who else? Robert Miegs, Nick Faye, and I think Ross Grits were the (?) of the community leaders at that time. She goes "What we need to do is get them all together to talk to them about this new project and each one of them invite two or three from who they feel would be strong and let's set up a meeting". And one of the persons working for her at that time was uh Stanford and I forgot her name, I can see her face. So she invited her Stanford people to this meeting and our first meeting that we had together there was thirty-three of us in this. And we talked and shared our hopes and dreams and what was wrong and what was working what was not, and out of this meeting she had her staff there talk about and put it into sequences so we started talking about what was important and then we came up with what we call a reality statement. What was our reality? What do we want in this community? And that was our first mission, was our reality statement and uh it's basically saying that we as Indian people want to work together and unite **(34:13)** and heal, teach our youngs to continue on our traditions and culture and uh, as we work as a whole. Well, I think Renita has the Reality Statement. And so that was from the first meeting and after that ah she helped us set up different meetings in different places where we didn't have offices and everything else and so we, that's how the basically the Alliance started is from that first meeting with thirty-three people which included Stanford people. And people all the way from Gilroy, so um that was a strong, it felt good. From there people started feeling that we needed to work together and like anything else

there's ebbs and flow of wanting to do things and sabotages that went on and how do we take on, how do we take care of that. And so I continued on and Al Cross set up a, and we both worked as two, you know cause he had his followers and I had my friends and so we just kept it together and pretty soon Al left our group when the community partnership that for Andrea was in charge of, her grant ran out and then he went one way, but I continued with the Alliance meeting because I thought it was so important **(35:42)**. And people were saying "I'm not gonna be there because this person is there or not" and I says, I pointed out the Reality Statement and so I says " We are here as a whole, we hafta accept, learn to forgive and move on". And if we are going to do anything we have to do it together and you gotta start learning to forgive and be part of this whole. I says "there's ten to fifteen people that are going to be the ones that are going to be negative no matter where you go, and they're gonna be the loudest ones, and that's who people listen to. But as a whole if we stick together and continue on no matter what toward our goal, what we want, then uh we'll stay together and it will continue. And that was our, that was my philosophy.**36:33**

J: So when the Indian Center went away and the Indian Health Center was kind of de facto became the meeting place, were there any other meeting places? And what was the role, what was your connection to the Indian Health Center?

36:56

L: Well, with the Indian Health Center I think when it broke away from the Indian Center, 'cause it was under the umbrella of the Indian Center, I was on the board in 1977 to 80 I think. I got pregnant at that time so I left but before I left we had this five-year plan about how we were going to break away and grow as a unit and I think that there was only about five or ten employees at that time and we wanted to expand three times as this is our vision and it's grown way beyond that. And Al Cross was a really important part of that, he is just a wonderful man and leadership and he's **(37:48)** he's always been for the community and thinking of others so, yeah, I just yeah. He is just a wonderful man. But yeah, with Al it was pretty steady and moved forward so. Um, I guess the Health Center continued to grow under the different leaderships that came in so, yeah that's all I can say- think about for right now for the health center.

38:21

J: Ah, I am kind of picking up on some of the other things that you mentioned. Um, what was your work for the county and how did you work with Indian People in the County-when you were working for the county? You were a liaison?

38:34

L: I was an Indian liaison at that time when I first started out. So I was doing outreach, it was an alcoholism program. So I would work closely with Four Winds and I work with the County and all the Detox and different things and helping our people through the system. An uh, I did that a lot in, and it was a lot of fun and then budget cuts came. And I was the last hired, and the county is last hired first fired, right? And it was funny, it was devastation time because they were laying off a lot of people and I was the--the Union told me, I didn't have a chance. But I kept going to meetings anyway. And they go "Laverne, why are you here, you know you aren't going to be saved" . I go, "I know but there's other people that need the job so I am supporting them". And so when it finally came down to the board of commissioning voting and everything else word got out that they were going to fire me. And so I had about thirty Indian people come in and sit through the board supervisor meetings. They all sat in one or two sections here you know, above. And that meeting we didn't say anything, they just sat there with me, and I didn't get up and to talk because I knew my job was gone and I told them but they were all pissed and they were sitting there with there arms crossed. you know, staring at the commissioners. An uh we stayed there, and everybody stayed there; I couldn't believe it, until two or three o'clock in the morning.. up to two thirty. And all the Indians and everybody else was pretty much gone by, all of us were sitting there and staring at it, and my job was saved (laugh). And so, so the community saved my job then and I had to stop being a liason. Then I had to go be a community worker/ counselor and so on it went **(40:51)** but yeah, because of them, I continued with the county and for some reason, when the cuts came again my bosses somehow slid me through for some reason- or changed jobs or yah, I was very-they were good to me. They were really good to me.**(41:10)**

J: So when was that first big cut?

L: I started working for the county in 1977. July 7, 1977 Remember that. It had to be a year from there, so '78? So over the years because I was with the girl from Alcoholism to Alcohol and Drugs.
41:44

L:...when they changed the names and new people came on. And everybody in the county new me and my love for the community so my bosses would allow to continue to work with the community as long as I did my job for the county and did that. And so they were really lenient with me so I never left the community and in every which way I could is to help them, what I could. That's one of the reasons I could do both jobs. I went to, I was working full time trying to get the Alliance into non-profit status, I was going to school for full time, the University of San Francisco, and doing all three things, got a divorce at the same time you know, so things were just happening, I don't know how I did it but yeah. I would sometimes stay up until midnight doing a lot of the work that I needed to do but.

J: You mentioned being pregnant, do you have children?

L: I have two sons, Brian and Michael Morrissey. I married an Irish man.

J: So he wasn't an Indian person?

L: No, uh uh. He was into commercial construction, he used to work for Rudolph in Stockton, and now they broke off and they now own a business called Level 10 Commercial Construction. They do all the big buildings around here. I don't know if you know about the construction. He is, he was one of the key superintendent's, I guess he still is. My son is a superintendent for the company. My younger one is, still finding his way, but...

J: Do your kids think of themselves as Indian?

L: They both know, because I use to go home to the reservation 2 or three times a year, so they know their family and their real proud of being Indian. But at the same time, this is their life and this is what they do and grew up. My husband never came to a lot of the Indian functions, I did it by myself, but I would go to all of his functions that he had, to bet there with him and support him in his job.

*phone ringing

L: Yeah, and I have four grandsons, no girls just grandsons. Three from my youngest son Brian.
45:00 and then one from my youngest son Michael.

J: And do they all live in San Jose still?

L: Uh, no. My oldest son, his son Ryan lives with him, but my other grandsons live in Sacramento with their Mom. That is Shawn and Brandon. Now, I think Shawn is going to college. I think he wanted to be an engineer. So he's, I think he is probably about 23 now and Brandon is about 21, and Brian's younger son Ryan is about eight now. and My son Michael's son's name is Chance, but he lives with his Mom, I don't remember which town. 45:59 It's up north.

J: But still in California?

L: Still in California, umm hmm.

J: Did the grandsons have any sense of being Indian? Did they connect to their heritage?

L: That I don't know, 'cause I don't really see them alot.

J: So they don't go with you, they don't go visit you back in Nevada or anything like that?

L: No, I haven't seen them. When I first moved back there they came. They went fishing and there's a lot of stuff to do; mostly man things, hunting and fishing and things, in Nevada. So. They have been back there, but I haven't seen them in a couple years, so they're probably busy.

J: So one of the things in the reality statement was you, know staying together, a couple of the things, staying together as a community, healing. Healing themselves, healing the community and teaching the young. So what parts of that do you feel that you connected most with?

L: I thought that we hit it on all three, more than anything else. And the Alliance is still going on. Vernon Medicine Cloud is now the, what do we call each other? He's not a director cause we don't have a director. President I think. Um, and so I am grateful that they are still together and Sherry, Renita are still there. Hank is still there and carrying on and I am grateful that it just didn't go on the wayside and we are still carrying on all the things that we did.**[48:00]** each year. I feel grateful that they are doing that and carrying on the name and caring for the community.

J: So in the group that sort of started when you still had the grant and that seemed to be something that was kind of pulling people together for a while was having that grant and working with Stanford. Is that what produced the pow-wows? Because people talk about the Stanford Pow wows as being part of what happens in the community, but what's the connection?

L: Uh, what do you mean? Well, back then..

Jan: Back then

L: As Indian people,remember, we didn't have places to go and and we needed to connect more than anything else. Stanford is part of the community we would always support the Stanford pow wow when they first started because it was started by students in whatever way we could do that we did. And one of the things that Stanford did, started was no alcohol and drugs. Because back then there was nothing but alcohol. And in the pow wows and everything people would be drinking and it was the norm back then. They wanted to, to change and so they were one if the first um, this is my assumption. I could be wrong, but from my memories they made a stand and no more, no alcohol. They would hire security guards, which means us from the community. I would be one, Leon Chief Elk would be another. And Sherry and Hank would be part of the security **[49:42]** we would not allow anyone there with alcohol. Within that circle. And it was really hard the first five years because they, it was just the norm with drinking. It's not now, where you can go in and you can feel safe it's alcohol and drug free. Because it took that long, all the way from the seventies until now to make it a norm. And it is now a norm throughout the country.**[50:07]** It's how things start, to me, that's why I call it "hubs", we're a hub here, and then when we go back home we bring some of the things we learn in to that place as we move on. That's what's so great about it, is was there 67% of Indian Population are now in Urban Settings because of the Relocation program. **[50:38]** and Renya Ramirez, one of the ones that was part of our original 33 people, she was going to Stanford.

J: OK, that's, I guess I was trying to figure out the connection with Stanford.

L: Yeah, uh, anyway she wrote her thesis on, part of her thesis, was the, forming the American Indian Alliance. And then from there, one of the things that she did was interview me, she came over to my house, I lived in Los Altos then. And talked and she asked about my philosophy, and I told her about my vision of hubs. Because it's virtual, it's almost like a virtual reality type of thing, is a meeting and branching out and doing things is not just a place, but it's who you're with...is the hub. And she wrote that book.

Jan: Yeah, I love that book.

L: Yeah so, it was part of why she was, she was part of the original 33, I call it the "Original 33" people for the community partnership with Andrea Schneider at the head at that time before we became a non-profit

organization.

J: Are there any photos of that group? The original 33? I wonder where they would be?

L: I don't remember if we, we, I know I am, I've got a lot of information. I save it. I haven't gone through and looked at it, but I can always check and see. I got the names of the people, the original 33 that I have.

J: That would be great. yeah.

L: I can try to get that and gather that for you so you can, it's part of the forming the Alliance here, and moving on. To me I attribute it to **[52:37]** there's two people, Andrea Schneider, ah at the community partnership-and my co-worker Eimi Okano. I always felt they were the founders of the Alliance because they were the ones. Eimi talked me into going with Andrea and it's E-i-m-i O-k-a-n-o. Yeah, she was one of my good friends that talked me into going with Andrea and then connecting and moving forward on that so...

[53:21]

J: So, um, I think the idea of hubs is super important, so I want to ask you a few questions about that. And to make sure that I understand it all the way. I've read her book! It sounds like hubs means two things. It means the hubs of people? And places that can be hubs. So, what are some of the places that were hubs for people in San Jose? Remember I said we didn't have places to meet or anything so we would go to community centers or different things and meet and call people to let them know it's going on. To me it was- if you can picture- a hub, like a hub here. Remember I was talking about communication?

J: Yeah

L: If there was a 100 of us different tribes and we had information, and we spread that word out so the hubs go into and throughout the United States, you can see like spokes going, and from there they form their groups there to get things done and moving and different things. So to me, hub can be a place or even at pow wows that people get together and talk and start doing things because of an idea came up. To me it's not just physical it's ...

J:um hmm, yeah, it's the connections.

L: ... and this computer is even more so now because you can get word out even faster through that, not only visual but talking. So in my mind, that's how I visualize what a hub was, and the spokes that went out to different places and...

J: Um hmm, now, when you first, I'm going to, I know I am jumping around here, but to just kind of fill out the picture a little but...when you first came here, were there other Paiute people around? Were there other people from Nevada, let alone in your part of Nevada, but even Nevada?

L: Ah, when I first came here, I found out one other Paiute, but he was from Bishop and so to me

J: Where I was born...

L: to me he was from Southern Paiute and I was a Northern Paiute, but I Knew him because of family connections so it was good to see him. When we went to the BIA, that's why we would sit around outside and talk and we got to know each other and like I said, the women lived on 15th St. and the men 11th St. And, and so since we didn't have a place to go back then, the norm was drinking. We would go to bars and that's how we would communicate and talk and do that because we didn't have a certain place; and it was norm to drink then.**[56:27]** That's what I've said over the years is change from drinking, all the way to being in sobriety.

J: yeah, when we talked to Al, and actually almost everyone has mentioned the bars and the, living on

15th and 11th and then getting together at places like Cinebar and other bars. But after the norm started changing, what were some of the other community centers? Were there, there was, because I noticed like St. Phillips for example seems to be because Hank and Sherry are involved there, that's a community, a place where community can form around.

L: right, mm hmm

J: What are some of the other non-drinking, sober community gathering places?

L: For later on?

J: umm, hmm

L: It's just basically the pow wows that we have, or community events

J: umm hmm

L: Is our form of communication and staying in touch more than anything else.

J: um hmm

J: Yeah, one of the things I did at the first dinner that we had with, and I met Renita and Ron, she was selling calendars that have a relocation theme and there are a lot of community events on those calendars. Are those the kind of things that people would go to and gather?

L: Yeah, um, I wanted to share the story with you. Betty Cooper. Have you heard of Betty.

J: People have mentioned her.

L: Amazing lady. She is my role model. But, she worked for the recovery home in Oakland and so she was a pow wow person. She used to Jingle Dress, later. And she's from Eagle Butte, Montana and that's where she went back home to, but while she was here she was really instrumental in the recovery home, and so she started the pow wow calendar up there in Oakland. And so when she retired and wanted to go back home to Eagle Butte, to her own community, she started giving away different projects to the different communities. Like, she kept the "Running is My High", which I think, to me, Hank was the one that was instrumental in starting that. Uh, she left that in Oakland and she left certain projects that she was involved with to other places. And one of the projects that she came down and gave the Alliance, or you know, to me, the pow wow calendar. She put it in our hands to continue on the tradition so that people know where the pow wows are and communicate through that all year to find out what's going on. An so when she handed the, over to the Alliance, we had a meeting and we accepted it officially and had an invitation to people to let them know that we did it and we started, what is this...when I left I did the calendar for 17 years so it was probably twenty three years ago.[59:59] I made sure that I wrote up that in the calendar every year that it was given to us by her, and honor her first. And I would always, what would ever happen that year, I would put in the calendar so people would know what was important that year. So, it was almost like a history type of thing. And then I started putting in history things for Indian people. And then the pow wows and also put in there about the Alliance. And in the back, I would give a resource directory of all the Indian resources in the Bay Area and beyond. As long as they gave it to me, and I would make sure that every year that it was updated because things change all the time in the Indian Community. And so, I carried that on for seventeen years before I retired and went back home and Renita continued it. I don't think she did it this past year but, I'm glad that's still going.

J: Mm, very much so

L: But I give all of the credit to Betty Cooper for giving it to our community here in San Jose.

J: Oh, wonderful. I have a feeling that there are a lot of little things if I knew to ask about them. (laughter)

L: Yeah because you don't remember. There was so many years, you're trying to do an overall type of thing and yeah, there is a lot happened here in the community, and like I said I am grateful that I did come on relocation, um, but I am also grateful that I have the chance to go home and be home with family and it's, to me, I always wanted to be a writer, and I wanted to write my journey home about, you know, how I see things, and how it went. And I want to leave that for my sons so that they know as a mom, you know, how my world has changed and where I went, and being affected by different people that come into my life. it's almost like, you know, I always look at it, when people come into your life, the Creator is sending you a message; listen and to find out where that leads, you know, because that's the next journey on. It's really important.

J: Everybody has talked about home, and home seems to have a couple of meanings. I think for the people that have stayed in San Jose, there are like two homes. There's the home here, and the back home. How do you feel about those two homes, especially now that you've moved back to Nevada?

1:02:30

L: Well to me, I've always thought of my home as the reservation. That's where I grew up and that's where I lived for nineteen years of my life. You know, and that's, to me the home base for who I am. But, I'm finding out for the people that, the young ones, my sons included-their home is here (SJ), because this is where they grew up and where they were born. Even though they know the connection of where their tribe is, who they are, and they have another family back home-- they want to be buried back home. That's funny, even though they grew up here. That's always- to them, I guess that's part of their home too, but not as home as here. Does that explain to you what it...? It depends on their generation - who you're talking to.

J: So, now that you have gone back to Nevada, um, you mentioned that people think that you're bossy, and you're getting things organized, do you see some differences between the people- are there other people who have gone on relocation? Back...

L: On my Rez? Ah, I want to say no, but I think there's probably one or two that went on relocation, but they went back home real early. I was just one of the ones that stayed longer than--I did because of my family. Ah, of marrying a non-Indian and living in his world for a lot of years and learning a lot, but still working with my ties to the community. I'm always grateful that I was part of that and never let that go because, to me that's where you're - part of your soul is, you know, with your community, with Indian people and our connections here.

J: Do they, do they identify you as someone who's gone through relocation, is that something that comes up when you're back home?

1:04:38

L: Yeah, that does every once in a while, Um, they'll say, "there she goes talkin' about San Jose again" you know...well you try to make - you don't want to make comparisons, but you know you want to introduce new things, and when your world is a certain way all the time it's hard to have somebody to come in there and say, "Hey, let's try this". It's new, different, and it's almost like, you know when you're at work and they come in with a different structure, and you don't like the structure because you're used to what you normally do. And it's almost like I was reminded of bees that get angry and call and talk at each other, and get all this-and finally when you get used to it, you settle down and continue doing your work. You know, it's just that type of thing is just...changes...people don't like a lot of changes really quick. If you do it gradually, some their way, some your way. To me it works better that way, so the time frame of what I was talking about before, about Wovoka, and everything else [1:05:49] has, I said ok, I'm in their time so I'll continue doing it, but I'm not giving up on it type of thing, and that's trying to figure out a way when the timing is good. You know, sometimes you feel when the timing is there and you know when to act, and sometimes you kind of- it's too soon to not. So, you just try different things.

J: Now, is there anything I haven't asked you about that you'd like to share about the relocation experience?

L: I think, you know, one of the... I look at it and it was just like, you know when Al Cross talked about the relocation program, he basically said that the relocation program- this is what I remember, he probably might say, it's may or may not true, but the Relocation was started by the same man in the government that started the Japanese relocation, internship (internment) programs and those internship programs are on reservations. Did you know that?

J: Mm hm.

L: OK, and that's where the relocation basically started, because they wanted to basically take our land back and hand over and not be responsible if you want to talk be responsible for Indian people more than anything else. In a way it worked, in a way it didn't. Because we, ah, the older folks that are you know, like my age... their home has always been the reservation. So that's where we go back to. The younger ones growing up in the city, their starting a whole new life and a whole new way of doing things. Good or bad? I don't know that, that future, but it's almost like they're getting their wish at the same time and others- it's a lot of the Indian people that are going out and getting education now. Where before wasn't the norm to do- is- we're grateful for because we have to learn to live in two worlds and to share that and to come back to our people to make it a better place for our people. And I hope that the Indian people who are doing- I think- I hope and pray that they're still strong of giving back. Giving back to our people, thinking of our people first instead of just me, me, me! And you know that's being taught...you're in here-the world-for yourself, nobody else and in the Indian world it's not that, you're here for our people. You think of our people to do things together, more than anything else so those are- it's like when I heard in one of the conferences of- about a man talking about the wampum, wampum belts from back East. I guess he was from back East and he, he was talking about them being part of their money exchange and also a part of their history. And so, on these different designs on the wampum belt he came across two sticks, one tall and one small. And he says "This represents the changing of ways is from the big ocean overcame the no-Indians, and ours is a small canoe next to it. He says the ones that are having trouble in this world are the ones with both feet in both worlds and they don't know which one to go to so they fall in the water. It's the same thing you have to make a choice what world do you live in, can it be, can you combine both of them? Build a bridge between them and walk both and forth or choose one or the other? And those are the choices like they say, now is the time when in this world here we have two choices, one greed or one spirituality. And you gotta pick one for the future.

[1:10:07]

J: That was wonderful. I hardly want to follow up it, but I think you've talked about spirituality a number of times. What does that mean for you and what do you think that means for the urban Indian community?

L: Yeah, I didn't even realize I was saying it all the time (laughter). I think as Indian people we believe in the Creator, so people say What is the Creator? And I say well the Creator is basically, you look at the Bible, it's God, he created Earth. You know... it's part of being grateful each day for the day coming up and the day going down and always saying a thank you or a prayer about it and you know, a lot of people now don't even think about it, they just do because they're so busy. Time passes by so fast and sometimes they forget to be grateful for what they have. They always- I think part of the being Indian is always having- being grateful, and saying a prayer and being spiritual is like, you know they--some tribes will say is that the non-Indians believe that we're, we have a physical body with a spirit within and Indians believe that we are spiritual beings with a physical frame. So, two different philosophies. Does that explain it?

J: Yes, it does.

L: ok

J: Well those were all my questions.

L: ok

J: Unless you have anything else to add that I've neglected to ask about.

L: I think I pretty much covered everything, so. (laughter)

J: Wonderful! That was just a wonderful interview. Oh, man. Thank you so much.

L: oh, you're so...

J: That was, that was amazing. I wish the students could have been here.

1:12:10 End