

Adam Estes and Mitchell Granger (editors)

*Hollywood "Pret[end]Indian":
Iron Eyes Cody on and off the Silver Screen (1971)*

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The Lawrence de Graaf Center for Oral and Public History (COPH).

Project: Indigenous.

O.H. 0554.

Oral Interview with Iron Eyes Cody, conducted by Georgia J. Brown,
April 6, 1971, Los Angeles, California.

Introduction

The oral history transcribed below belongs to a collection held in CSUF's Lawrence de Graaf Center for Oral and Public History (COPH) titled "Indigenous." The interview with Iron Eyes Cody was conducted by Georgia J. Brown on April 6, 1971, in Los Angeles, California. It is 1 hour, 17 minutes, and 41 seconds long, and it is archived as a digital recording/audio file at COPH (see "Copyright Advisory" below). The verbatim transcript edited here was prepared in the fall of 2023 by Adam Estes and Mitchell Granger.

Iron Eyes Cody was born on April 3, 1904, in Kaplan, Louisiana. A Hollywood actor known for portraying various Native American figures from the 1920s through the 1990s, he dedicated most of his life to Native American characters and traditions. His birth name, Espera Oscar de Corti, was given to him by his parents, Antonio de Corti and Francesca Salpietra, immigrants from Sicily. Film historian Angela Aleiss uncovered Cody's previously unknown Italian heritage in an article, "Native Son," published by the *New Orleans Times-Picayune* on May 26, 1996. Despite changing his name to Iron Eyes Cody and assuming a Cherokee and Cree identity, he was, in fact, not of Native American heritage. However, he saw success not only in portraying Native characters in more than two hundred films, television shows, and advertisements, but also in supporting Indigenous cultural traditions and the well-being of Indigenous peoples. At the age of 94, Iron Eyes Cody died on January 4, 1999, in Los Angeles.

In the 1920s, Cody moved to California and began working in Hollywood as a technical advisor and actor, adopting a new Indigenous identity. From shooting a bow and arrow in stunt scenes to playing a variety of Native American chiefs and medicine men, Iron Eyes Cody took on the persona of a Cherokee Indian. In this interview, he recalls working with Disney and as an advisor for the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), and starring in movies such as *A Man Called Horse* (1970) — a personal favorite that he deemed very authentic in its portrayal of Native Americans. Working alongside Hollywood actors such as Gary Cooper, Richard Harris, and Buffy Sainte-Marie, Cody became a mainstay in twentieth-century

Western films. His influence in Hollywood carried on, as he sought to help young Indigenous actors find their way to the big screen. Cody's success in Hollywood encouraged him to become personally invested in Native American culture, particularly in the greater Los Angeles region.

In 1936, Cody married Bertha "Birdie" Parker, an archaeologist of Abenaki and Seneca descent who worked at the Southwest Museum of the American Indian in Los Angeles and is believed to be the first Native American woman to become an archaeologist. The couple later adopted two sons, Robert and Arthur, who were of Native American descent. Both Robert and Arthur participated in Native American culture, attending powwows and entering dance competitions. Cody involved himself in Native American politics, working with the BIA, serving as director of his local Indian Center, and raising money for Indigenous communities. He offers unique insights into both Native American cultural production and Indigenous politics in the twentieth century. In this interview, he discusses the Red Power movement, the occupation of Alcatraz by Native American activists, and the preservation of culture and tradition. He also talks about Native American education and housing, as well as the treatment of alcoholism in Native American communities. Iron Eyes Cody engaged with many political and social issues, becoming more than just a Hollywood actor during his lifetime.

Cody's interview offers insights into the film industry in Hollywood while also highlighting the concerns of Indigenous communities in the greater Los Angeles region during this time period. While his adopted identity raises important concerns about authenticity, cultural appropriation, and representation, Iron Eyes Cody undoubtedly had a significant impact on both the American film industry and Native American communities throughout the nation. This interview describes Cody's efforts to actively help the people he portrayed on the big screen, including sponsoring and emceeding powwows, raising and donating money for toy and food drives, and helping to reunite a young Sioux woman with her dying mother. His discussion centers around the BIA and other government entities, Indigenous representation both locally and nationally, museums and the preservation of Native American artifacts, and countercultural movements of the 1960s and 1970s, all of which contributed to Cody's understanding of Indigenous culture. Iron Eyes Cody's interview is important for researchers interested in twentieth-century Native American history and culture. This interview is especially relevant for those studying representations of Native Americans in film, as well as researchers interested in Indigenous politics in the United States and the preservation of Native American traditions and culture.

Only identifiable individuals, locations, and technical terms have been referenced in the footnotes, usually when they first appear.

ABOUT THE EDITOR: *Adam Estes of Fullerton, California, earned his A.A. in History (2021) at Fullerton College and his B.A. in History (2024) at California State University, Fullerton (CSUF), where he is a member of the Theta-Pi Chapter of Phi Alpha Theta (History Honor Society).*

ABOUT THE EDITOR: *Mitchell Granger of Pine City, Minnesota, earned his B.A. in History (2022) at the University of Wisconsin-Superior. He is currently pursuing an M.A. in History at California State University, Fullerton (CSUF), where he is a member of the Theta-Pi Chapter of Phi Alpha Theta (History Honor Society). He also served as an editor for volume 51 (2024) of "The Welebaethan: A Journal of History."*

The primary-source edition published below originated in the "History and Editing" course offered by CSUF's History Department.

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Verbatim Transcript (O.H. 0554)

LAWRENCE DE GRAAF CENTER FOR ORAL AND PUBLIC HISTORY

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, FULLERTON

NARRATOR: Iron Eyes Cody [IC]

INTERVIEWER: Georgia J. Brown [GB]

DATE: April 6, 1971

LOCATION: Los Angeles, California

PROJECT: Indigenous

TRANSCRIBERS: Adam Estes and Mitchell Granger

GB: (pages being shuffled) This is an interview with Mr. Iron Eyes Cody, interviewee, and Georgia J. Brown, interviewer. The date is April 6, 1971, and we are at Mr. Cody's home, 2013 Griffith Park Avenue, Los Angeles. Uh, thank you, Mr. Cody, for letting me talk to you today. Now, could you tell me a little bit about yourself?

IC: First place, let me, uh, tell you what I (pauses) do, uh. My name is Iron Eyes Cody. I am a Cherokee Indian.¹ I'm married to a Seneca girl.² She's daughter of one of the, (pauses) greatest Indians (pauses) in America at one time. Her uncle was the great – the great, great, great, great uncle was – uh, General Ely Parker³ (pauses) the chief of the Iroquois⁴ at that time and then

¹ Indigenous peoples of the Southeastern United States, originating in present-day North Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, South Carolina, Georgia and Alabama.

² Indigenous group of the Northeastern United States and Southeastern Canada.

³ Ely S. Parker (1828–1895), Army officer, engineer, and tribal diplomat.

⁴ Larger Indigenous group in the Northeastern United States, a.k.a. the Six Nations.

the Civil War.⁵ He was an educated Indian, he studied law, but, but he didn't have a chance to practice his law, and then he became an engineer. Now, that's on my wife's side. So, there's big leaders in, among my wife's people, among the women, big leaders, the Iroquois they were that way. And, uh, General Ely Parker became (pauses) a sec—secretary general to General Grant.⁶ After the Civil War, Grant (pauses) made him Commissioner of Indian Affairs.⁷ He was the first Indian to become, become the Commissioner of Indian Affairs. Since then, we had, uh, Mr. Bennett, Robert Bennett,⁸ very (pauses) nice fellow and a good commissioner. He was, uh, of the same Iroquois, he was an Oneida.⁹ Now we have a guy named Bruce.¹⁰ He's, uh, Sioux¹¹ and Mohawk,¹² and he's done very well. Surprising what these Indian people can do (pauses) tied up in politics (chuckles). Well, I'm not tied up in politics, I'm here in the movies. I started in the movies as a technical advisor, a bow-and-arrow expert shooting arrows into actors and what have you. In '47, DeMille¹³ made an actor out of me in a picture called *Unconquered*,¹⁴ where I faced Boris Karloff¹⁵ and Gary Cooper¹⁶ for the show—

GB: —(inaudible)—

IC: —I mean, uh, Gary Cooper and, uh, Paulette Goddard.¹⁷ I was Boris Karloff's right-hand man. I was his second chief in that (dishes clatter). Since then, I've become a pretty big actor, and I co-starred in the last three pictures, last three pictures, uh, and they are showing now in the theaters. And, uh, one I like very much—it's very authentic—*A Man Called Horse*.¹⁸ We used about a hundred Sioux between men, women, and children. We went to Mexico, and we used all them Indian (dishes clatter), Panamanian

⁵ Military conflict between the Northern and Southern states (1861–1865).

⁶ Ulysses S. Grant (1822–1885), leader of the Union Army and 18th U.S. president (1869–1877).

⁷ Director of the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

⁸ Robert L. Bennet (1912–2002), member of the Oneida Indigenous group and the second Indian to serve as Commissioner of Indian Affairs.

⁹ Indigenous peoples originating in Verona, New York.

¹⁰ Louis R. Bruce (1906–1989), Commissioner of Indian Affairs (1969–1973).

¹¹ Indigenous peoples originating in present-day Minnesota and Wisconsin. Two linguistic divisions separate the Dakota and Lakota peoples within the group.

¹² Indigenous group originating in southeastern Canada and northern New York State.

¹³ Cecil B. DeMille (1881–1959), American filmmaker.

¹⁴ Adventure film, depicting struggles between American colonists and Native Americans.

¹⁵ William Henry Pratt (1887–1969), a.k.a. Boris Karloff, English actor.

¹⁶ Gary Cooper (1901–1961), American actor.

¹⁷ Paulette Goddard (1910–1990), American actress.

¹⁸ 1970 Western film, depicting an English aristocrat captured by the Sioux peoples.

Indian,¹⁹ Otomi Indian,²⁰ and, and, uh, Sakowin Indians²¹ up there. So, when you made them up, they look just like the rest of us. Well, I played the Medicine Man²² in there, where I treated Richard Harris,²³ the main star – pretty rough through the picture – then he wants to go through the Sun Vow.²⁴ Now, that Sun Vow is very authentic (dishes clatter). And it's, and, uh, Mandan²⁵ Sun Vow, not a Sioux Sun Vow. And I know the songs, so the song that I sang in there are Sioux songs, as they use today in the Sun Dance (imitates singing). Funny thing in *A Man Called Horse* is at the end of the picture.

GB: Uh-huh.

IC: We *still* sing that. I go up to the Sun Dance every once in a while. Last year I participated in the Sun Dance, my son (pauses) sang in the Sun Dance, I was the altar man, the pipe receiver and giver. And, uh, Robert Cody,²⁶ my oldest son, he, he was one of the singers. So, I had to join the singers between certain things, and we sang the song that you hear in *A Man Called Horse* in these Sun Dances, so it's an authentic song. The idea of the movies with me, I don't think the Indians are portrayed right. I have refused new roles on account of that, I have. I have refused to go to Spain, Rome,²⁷ and all those countries, because they, they portray the Indian wrong, because they don't understand. Same with a lot of producers here, they don't understand. But when I was a technical advisor, I straightened these people out. I was under contract at, uh, Disney²⁸ for three and half years, verbal left for a year as, uh, an advisor on Indian affairs, songs, languages and everything, dances, and an actor. Walt wanted everything authentic (coughing). Because he saw me on TV with Tim McCoy,²⁹ we had a show (pauses) from, uh, '49, '50, '51, and '52, a live show.³⁰ Everything we did on that show with Tim McCoy and Iron Eyes, we had a bunch of women on there, we had children, we had, uh, men dancers. We portrayed the different chiefs of all over the America – I have portrayed them – in this TV show, on these live shows –

¹⁹ Collective of Indigenous groups belonging to the Panama region of Central America.

²⁰ Indigenous peoples originating in the central Mexico Plateau region.

²¹ Term referring to the whole Sioux Indigenous group.

²² Traditional healer and spiritual leader of Indigenous groups of the Americas.

²³ Richard St John Francis Harris (1930–2022), Irish actor.

²⁴ Ceremony practiced by Indigenous peoples, a.k.a. the Sun Dance.

²⁵ Indigenous group originating in present-day North Dakota.

²⁶ Robert "Tree" Cody (1951–2023), Native American flute player.

²⁷ Capital city of Italy.

²⁸ American entertainment company, founded in 1923 by Walt Disney.

²⁹ Timothy John Fitzgerald McCoy (1891–1978), American actor.

³⁰ Presumably *The Tim McCoy Show*, historical American TV series directed toward children.

GB: –I saw that. –

IC: –for more than four years. The women with the ceremonial dances, they were authentic; we rehearsed, and we researched. And my wife³¹ was with the Southwest Museum.³² Before that, as an assistant archaeologist, and she knew all about the Indians that she wrote of at the Southwest. So when Tim McCoy and I got stuck about the Southwest ceremonials and everything, she was the one that wrote it down for us.

GB: Uh-huh.

IC: We memorized it, so it was a memory show, an adlib show, you know? Well, I got interested, and I went to the Southwest, uh, many years for the Snake Dance,³³ and the, uh, and the, uh, the Coming-Out Dance,³⁴ the Kachina Dance, and the, uh, Plume Dance,³⁵ and those dances. And I go every year. So, what I write about today –and I wrote a column for a newspaper in San Diego for a year –I wrote ceremonials. They said it was too drab and not enough light. See, the people don't understand the Indian way. Something they don't appreciate –these ceremonial things –what takes so long you know, it drags and drags –anyway sign up for these things at the reservation same with the Sun Dance. They pray at the pole for fifteen minutes, that medicine man. Uh, an old medicine man named Andrew Fools Crow.³⁶ He adopted me into the Yuwipi tribe in 1948, I'm a Yuwipian.³⁷ I go to these medicine ceremonies there (dishes clatter). I understand what he's saying at that pole for fifteen minutes, I know what he's talking about –why, what the reason and everything –because I've helped cut that tree, put it up and everything, the way they did in the old days (pauses). And my son and I, we know these things. A lot of people don't understand these things. This is why they say, write a book. And make a lot of, uh, blood and thunder in it (dishes clatter). I don't. I wrote a book in France –published in France in nine languages –called *American Indian Stories and Religions* (dishes clatter).³⁸ You know why I couldn't get that book published in this country? It's too dry.

GB: Uh-huh.

³¹ Bertha "Birdie" Pallan Thurston Cody (1907–1978), archaeologist at the Southwest Museum.

³² Museum, opened in Los Angeles in 1914, primarily handling Native American artifacts.

³³ Ceremony of the Hopi Indigenous people in Arizona, a.k.a. one of the Kachina Dances.

³⁴ Referring to the Hopi Coming-Out Song.

³⁵ Referring to feathers used during Indigenous ceremonies and dances.

³⁶ Andrew "Frank" Fools Crow (1890?–1989), Medicine Man and spokesperson for the Oglala-Lakota Indigenous tribe. See [online](#).

³⁷ Presumably referring to the traditional healing ceremony of the Lakota people.

³⁸ Unknown book.

- IC: Matter of fact I was even gonna to give it to the Boy Scouts of America³⁹ like the first sign talk book that I wrote in '48 called, *Sign Talk in Pictures*.⁴⁰ I wrote that for the Boy Scouts of America because I've been eighteen years or more with the Boy Scouts of America, teaching them all the Indian law and everything. My two boys grew up in scouting and everything (birds chirping). Well, finally I got a book published here that did very well. Uh, the second book I wrote about an Indian, a man that married an Indian woman, a great artist, who painted these pictures, Sioux woman (pauses) called The *Little White Chieftain*.⁴¹ I knew all the people he knew, I went over and visited these people, all these Sioux, North Dakota Sioux, South Dakota Sioux. I learned a lot of my stuff when I was a young man. Now when it comes up to, um, telling you about religion. We have as much tradition and religion right here in Los Angeles, greater Los Angeles, than they have in many, many reservations. I'll tell you why. Many old timers like myself, we raised our children from little babies to dance, do all type of dancing, songs. My oldest son he's a champion dancer, he won the championship in South Dakota, he won it in Oklahoma, he won it around here, he's a champion dancer. My youngest son is, is a good dancer. He's never won any championship, but he has won first around here and second and things like that.
- GB: What are their names? Your sons' names?
- IC: Huh?
- GB: What are your sons' names?
- GB: My oldest son is Robert Cody. Matter of fact, uh, he went to Bacone Indian School,⁴² uh, college. Uh, up there in Muskogee, Oklahoma,⁴³ where I was born. And, uh, he finished his junior college there. And while he was there he taught Indian singing and Indian dancing. Then he got a scholarship. When he finished there, he went to Fort Lewis College,⁴⁴ and he's going to Fort Lewis College now as a basketball player; he's six foot nine.
- GB: Oh gracious.
- IC: While he's there – it's near the Navajo⁴⁵ reservation⁴⁶ – and he's, he's been going with a (pauses) Pueblo⁴⁷ girl from Laguna⁴⁸ (pauses) for a long time.

³⁹ American youth organization, founded in 1910.

⁴⁰ Iron Eyes Cody and Mary Ellen Pickles, *How: Sign Talk in Pictures* (1952).

⁴¹ Clarence A. Ellsworth and Iron Eyes Cody, *Little White Chieftain* (1963).

⁴² Private college in Muskogee, Oklahoma.

⁴³ City on the Arkansas River.

⁴⁴ College in Durango, Colorado.

⁴⁵ Indigenous community originating in Arizona, Utah and New Mexico.

⁴⁶ Presumably the Southern Ute Reservation in southwestern Colorado.

⁴⁷ Several Indigenous groups originating in present-day New Mexico, Arizona and Texas.

⁴⁸ Laguna Pueblo in western New Mexico near Albuquerque.

And she's very traditional—they're very traditional people—and they realized Robert is the same way. So, he is doing the same thing at Fort Lewis, (pauses) and he's taken up PE, and he's taken up anthropology. At the present moment, the BIA⁴⁹ picked out, I think, uh, three or four children—boys and girls, not children—from this college and sent them to England. Now that's the BIA. A lot of people say the BIA doesn't do this (squeaking) and that. I know that we Indians know that the BIA hasn't helped a hundred percent. Because they are allowed so much money to do things like that, and this is what we don't understand. So, they have to hold their jobs, they won't cut corners and get themselves in trouble, you know? But they run the BIA. Because all governments, uh, presidents, don't allow too much money, and we have a lot of money in Washington⁵⁰ that belongs to the Indians. Millions and millions of dollars but still it's not what's allotted to these people, very small. The Sioux Indians on the reservation up there—my Yuwipi brother Andrew Fools Crow—he has horses, and he lets people lease his land there at ten dollars a head for cattle and horses. Do you think he gets this money? No, it goes to the agency. He loads it off to this man. And he's up—in his seventy-five or seventy-six years old. This isn't fair; I don't think it's fair. And I blame the BIA for this.

[00:10:35]

IC: BIA relocates people (pauses) and a lot of them, uh, relocated here but they don't know what it's all about. They get in this big city, and they get lost. The BIA put them on the job, and then they, they train them here a little bit, and they train them on the reservation a little bit—not as much as they should on these reservations—they train them all before they come to the big city. That's why they involve us Indians. So anyway, the BIA, here for me, has been very good. They've made a few mistakes; we all make mistakes. Mr. Mahony is a hard-working man here. I'm not saying that because the BIA gave my son, uh, uh, his trip paid for thirty-two days to go to England and meet the queen and the princess and dance for them and all this and that. These kids—I'm telling it from my heart—what I think. A lot of Indians says, well, the BIA is alright. But I'm gonna say it, no it's not alright. We live in cheap houses and all that. Some of them live in very good places. And the BIA explained one thing to me—why some of these Indians are living in smaller, cheaper places—they are paid so much to live in apartments. And one occasion where there was an Indian girl was relocated here—a Sioux girl—and her mother was dying of cancer, and they called me up from the reservation to get in touch with her, to get that girl over there within a week her mother's gonna to die. My wife called the BIA—I

⁴⁹ Bureau of Indian Affairs, U.S. Federal Agency, founded in 1824.

⁵⁰ Presumably referring to Washington D.C., capital of the United States.

was making a movie over at Universal⁵¹—I was costarring on a movie called⁵²—*A Man Named Charley*—with Dan Blocker⁵³ and I didn't have much time to talk to the BIA. My wife, Birdie, she talked to the BIA. They says, We don't know where she is, uh, she was relocated here. Evidently she changed and went in with some other girls into an apartment. She—they do this to save money, these Indian people. Now, this is what the BIA told me, and I didn't believe them. They did lie. This girl was hard to chase down. We got in touch with some Indian people through our powwow⁵⁴—The Little Bighorn Indian Association⁵⁵ which I'm vice president of—said, Yes we know where this girl is. She's someway up north. Either San Francisco⁵⁶ or San Jose.⁵⁷ Now, I called up there in San Francisco, and they said they didn't know anything about her. To our Indian Center here, which I'm board of director of, they didn't know anything about her. You see, the Indian Center and the BIA just didn't work together like they should. They should know as many Indians—the Indian Center what's going on and the BIA should know as many Indians that's going to the Indian Center for help—whether taking help from them or drop the, the BIA—and you're supposed to let them know where you are so they can send a check to you. Because if you lose a job (cough) two or three times that's the BIA gonna be able to dis—discuss it with you. But they are gonna try to keep you going, and they're doing it, in many ways. Uh, as I say, the Indians here are not satisfied, the biggest majority of Indians they are not satisfied, but why? Because we have more than sixty thousand Indians in greater Los Angeles. But they have been relocated here close to forty-five thousand. If you talk to some relocated Indians the biggest majority of them have homes here, they've gone through their four-year period, going to college and everything, nice homes, (inaudible) homes. You can't say anything against the BIA.

GB: Are these Indians—that you say are relocated—are they all relocated by the BIA or are they self-relocated?

IC: Oh, they're all relocated by the BIA. Now the Indian Center and the BIA are having a little feud (pauses) about certain things. I don't know too much about it and, uh, we were, we had a man here by the name of Ernie

⁵¹ American film studio, founded in 1912.

⁵² Presumably *The Cockeyed Cowboys of Calico County*, 1970 American Western film.

⁵³ Bobby Dan Davis Blocker (1928–1972), American actor.

⁵⁴ Traditional Indigenous celebration consisting of dancing and socializing.

⁵⁵ Unknown association.

⁵⁶ City in Northern California's Bay Area.

⁵⁷ City in Silicon Valley, California.

Stevens.⁵⁸ And Ernie—to me is a good man—he was our director of our Indian Center. I wasn't a board of director at that time, I was just one of the representatives raising money for the Indigenous center through the motion pictures people. So, all these big actors that I work with, you know, donate money, or take the talking lead and things like that. But you have to work together. You don't pull together—like Mr. Mahony says to me—tell the BIA when they have people, uh, they don't have enough jobs for them at the Indian Center, we have Indians here that need jobs. So if we have too many jobs, call the BIA and we will exchange. But they didn't do this at the Indian Center. I brought this up in front of the consult, listen, this doesn't work. This is wrong. This is absolutely wrong—

GB: —Who's the head of the Indian Center now? Is it Mr. Vasquez?⁵⁹—

IC: Huh?

GB: Who's the head of the center of the Indian? Is it Mr. Vasquez?

IC: Uh. Joe Vasquez.

GB: Uh-huh.

IC: It's not his fault (pauses) really. It's about certain people that resents the BIA. Now, that's on the board, not too many of them. And they says, uh, Well, let the BIA run their own business. Now, they're back as friends again. They all talk well, the BIA is doing this now, doing that. Because we getting these grants—it's all coming out of the BIA—this money (pauses) that's coming to the Los Angeles Indian Center. To Washington, Ernie Stevens is in Washington. He's in Arizona—representing the Indians up there, northern California—and I say, "He's the director of our Indian Center, you know." And then they took him from there and put him in Washington. Well, he's getting in a little hot water up there where he wants to resign. But the biggest majority of Indians don't want him to resign. We all don't want him to resign. We think he's a good man, well-educated Oneida Indian. But he's, he's getting disgusted with a lot of things, and he, he wants to resign. But I heard at the last meeting we had at the Indian Center there he hadn't resigned yet. But he wants to resign. So there's some pressure for him not to resign. And there's pressure for him to resign. But so far we hope that he doesn't resign. He said some things about it. He said, "I don't know. You, when you get into politics you hurt people, you know that." So we have here a good majority of Indians—that belongs to the BIA—that's got homes here, that bought their own homes through the work, that they learned their trades here. Of course now a lot of Indians are out of work but

⁵⁸ Ernie E. Stevens Sr. (1926–2017), Native American rights activist, executive of the Los Angeles Indian Center. See [online](#).

⁵⁹ Joseph C. "Lone Eagle" Vasquez (1917–1995), president of the Los Angeles Indian Center.

- a lot of other people are out of work. So, I know (pauses) Little Big Horn has their powwow first Saturday of every month at Eagle Rock⁶⁰ –
- GB: – Uh-huh. –
- IC: – the big round (dishes clatter) building there. We just had one on the third. Big crowd up there. What do we do at these powwows? We keep up tradition. From the little children to old folks up there – make their outfits – they’re there to learn singing and dancing. We have, uh, Oklahoma drummers and Plains Indians⁶¹ or Sioux drummers or Plains Indians drummers. Could be any tribe – Blackfoot,⁶² Crow,⁶³ Cheyenne,⁶⁴ Sioux – all mixed up we call them the northern drummers, you know. Now, the other night, Jacob White Bear’s son was in Vietnam⁶⁵ – finished his term in Vietnam – came down here in a car, got into an accident, he was killed. We gave a ceremonial thing the other night. Special song for him we called up the drummer with the Black (pauses) Claw.⁶⁶ Playing with the drum – Black Claw thing, with the drum, uh, Black Claw drum – played a special song for him. Make everybody rise. Indians know when they have a flag song, they arise. White people, we have to tell them. I’m the emcee at the ceremony with the Little Big Horn – I said, “Everybody rise, remove your hats please.” When that was done, the lead dancer, all of them take the people around (pauses) in honor of the mother and father that’s there. Jacob White Bear was there and Mrs. White Bear was there. We had a Blanket Dance (pauses) for this boy that was killed. Because the family had to take him back to North Dakota to bury him, and that’s a very big expense. So all these powwows – when somebody is in trouble or somebody needs something – we just have a big Blanket Dance. Now, the Indian Center, they have groceries there. They have clothing there. People donate. Uh, not all the time. About, uh, before Christmas, Joe Vasquez and Jim White Cloud – the vice president of the Indian Center – went to Washington. They left me in charge of the Indian Center. I went on TV, radio, and asked people to send clothing and toys, we need them. For these children. So, a man popped up and says, What about some money? Well, I’ll tell him, well, send a dollar bill in an envelope to the Indian Center, and we will be glad to receive it, you know. We can buy toys with it or buy groceries with it. Now, I went on the radio, the same thing. At least two or three times on radio, and the same TV, two or three times, uh, and just say, We wanna talk. Send whatever you

⁶⁰ Presumably the eponymous neighborhood in Northeast Los Angeles.

⁶¹ Collective term referencing Indigenous communities in the Interior Plains of North America.

⁶² Indigenous group originally living in present-day Alberta, Canada, and Montana.

⁶³ Indigenous group originating in Montana and a part of the Plains Indians.

⁶⁴ Indigenous peoples in Minnesota, North Dakota, and South Dakota.

⁶⁵ Vietnam War (1955–1975).

⁶⁶ Presumably the Bear Claw Singers, a Native American dance and song artist group.

can give us, you know. It poured in, you should be surprised. We usually have our big Indian Center, uh, Christmas party at, uh, Eighth and Grand at that big, uh, hall up there. We didn't have enough money to go in there and pay; we had about a hundred and fifty dollars. So, we had our Christmas (squeaking) thing right there at the Indian Center. We received so many toys—there was a lady that became the chairman, uh, this is, uh, this is, uh, Mrs. — Ted Bowls' wife, Mary Bowls—that we gave two parties, uh, Christmas parties. The toys came into the Indian Center, uh, Marie and all of these people from the Walker House⁶⁷ came over and hauled these toys over there. Took 'em down to Topanga Park⁶⁸ three or four days before the Indian Center party and had a lot of people there and gave them toys about—maybe close to a thousand. Good folk—

GB: —Uh-huh.—

IC: —people donate you know.

[00:20:14]

IC: So on the twenty fourth the same thing happened at the Indian Center. There were so many toys we packed some. Just keep coming in even after the Walker house brought all those toys and gave them over to the other place. Toys just kept coming in and food just kept coming in. We had sixteen hundred and twenty children receive toys at the Indian Center on the twenty fourth. Four hundred and eighty some baskets of food and turkeys and hams gave to these Indians that are unemployed. Or you don't have to be unemployed that's what the Indian Center is there for (pauses) to help all the Indians. The Indian Center is really, is, it's for the Indians. So now, uh, they're gone to Washington to get this big grant. So, this grant has to come through the BIA. So, you can't fight the BIA. If you wanna be successful with the Indian people here, you're gonna have to work with them. But there's a UIDA⁶⁹ corporation here that organizes—to teach Indians trade—so far, they've had, I think, eight people they put in business, UIDA. I think Joe Vasquez, uh, originated this UIDA. But, uh, there's a fellow named, uh, Little Beaver, he's the president of UIDA. They, they went to Washington and we see so much funds to help relocated people now. Besides the, uh, BIA here. I don't know whether the BIA liked this or not by splitting it, you know. And, uh, it's working well. We are all hoping to get this, but we have to move in a big building. Where they're gonna have offices—whether it be different clubs that represent themselves there, you know, have an office there—have a gym, you know, for the, place there for the kids with books and things like that. Our Indian Center isn't

⁶⁷ Perhaps the historic San Dimas Hotel, built in 1887, purchased by James W. Walker in 1889.

⁶⁸ California state park in the Santa Monica Mountains.

⁶⁹ United Indian Development Association, founded in 1969.

that big yet, so we have to move. So, all we've been talking about at all our meetings lately is this grant. So, a lot of Indians are—according to what I hear at these meetings—are fighting this grant. They say, Why can't we get it? Why should the Indian Center get it? The Indian Center has been here since 1935. It's the oldest Indian Center in existence in America. I didn't know that until they went to Washington before Christmas and come back with that in black and white.

GB: Uh-huh.

IC: But I was there when they organized the Indian Center and opened up the Indian Center up there on Beverly Boulevard, I was there. It was the Quakers.⁷⁰ The Quakers are the, have that building. So, it's been running very small with little donations, you know. It's all the Indians have been running, by donations. Joe Vasquez has put in many years. When the Indian Center went broke, he took the Indian Center and put it in his garage, in his home, and ran it with a phone and paid these bills and everything. Joe Vasquez. A lot of people knock Joe Vasquez. He's done very, very well for a lot of people here. And a lot of people like him, a lot of people don't like him. But they don't know what he went through. A few of them know this, you know. Now, they all go to all these powwows. Different tribes, they get together (pauses) with more social and culture and tradition at all these powwows than you can imagine.

GB: —Uh-huh.—

IC: They're not there just for—they say, Let's go Indian dance—it means a lot, these powwows. Many fail the second week, the American Indian tribal banter the third week, the, uh, gun right chiefs, uh—

GB: Uh-huh.

IC: —moved into Orange County,⁷¹ you know. These are all traditional things (cough). And we work it by tradition. So, as I say, I can help my people because now I am considered a big actor. I get big money. I costar and this. Now if I go to Europe and make movies, I straighten them out in Europe. Because when I went on my first picture—I refused for te—ten years to go over there—I refused, you ought to keep my work here in America or we were gonna ruin our motion picture industry, you know. I said to the producer, (pauses) I will go—if you send me on a boat, I don't like to fly—but I wanna be technical advisor on that picture besides playing this third lead in that picture of Santana,⁷² that Apache.⁷³ Got this language all translated up, learned it, and, uh, there is an Apache Indian in Europe that I can get, hire him and standby if I make a mistake. There was a time,

⁷⁰ Christian denomination, founded in seventeenth-century England.

⁷¹ Presumably the Acjachemen Indigenous group in California.

⁷² Iron Eye's role in the 1970 American Western film *El Condor*.

⁷³ Indigenous group in parts of Arizona, New Mexico, Texas, and Colorado.

Alright that's good, we are glad to do that. But this is an American company going to Europe to make a picture. *National Jungle*,⁷⁴ a big movie, ten dol—ten-million-dollar movie that built big sets that would have cost a half a million dollars. Well, we didn't use (engine noises) too many Indians. We have about three Indians in Europe that we use. Kyle (inaudible) (coughing) that played my sub-chief. There's, uh, an (squeak) Apache woman that, uh, played a woman in there, very good. She can't speak Apache though, but she's married to an Italian guy in Rome. There's, uh, an Apache man that speaks Apache, married to a Moroccan woman up in, uh, Tangiers, Morocco,⁷⁵ because I had to go all the way to Tangiers, Morocco to get this man. I was glad to go, take the boat and go see Morocco. And, uh, there is a half Brazilian living in Melilla, North Africa,⁷⁶ which you have to go to Melilla, North Africa, uh, to get to Morocco (inaudible). So, I'd say about six Indians, Indians in pictures (inaudible). They're dark, they look like Indians—

GB: —Uh-huh.—

IC: —and they say, We're Indians, we're just like you are. Maybe so, you know. But I says, uh, We should use more American Indians, why would we go to Europe? And, and, uh, they cut the budget down and—but we need an authentic picture. We come back here, (pauses) we made *Man Called Horse* and all that. We used many Indians in that. We used all these singers—the northern singers, the Sioux singers, and that drum—did you see the picture?

GB: No.

IC: Oh, it's a beautiful picture; it's good. Beat looking horse with our head—

GB: —I know the story.—

IC: —tough time he's going back to the reservation, Howard and all those fellows. Made the recording here. But we made all the picture in Mexico you know. But you have Indians there. They call themselves Mexican Indian.⁷⁷ Which is true. They can't even speak Mexican⁷⁸ (engine noises). Those, uh, Huichol can't even speak Mexican. They don't associate with Mexicans. Because I've gone out six times to Mexico and made pictures we used in Huichol. And they don't hardly speak to you because they can't speak Mexican (inaudible) (engine noises). And, uh, here, you have a chance to go—pretty well authentic here—if you can produ—uh, would be true to the producer—you gotta (squeaking) convince him you know. He would say that's too drab that's too slow. Producers like in *A Man Called*

⁷⁴ Unknown movie.

⁷⁵ Moroccan port on the Strait of Gibraltar.

⁷⁶ Autonomous city of Spain on the North African coast, bordering Morocco.

⁷⁷ Indigenous peoples of Mexico.

⁷⁸ Presumably referring to the Spanish language.

Horse. They wanted me to go (imitates noise), you know. I didn't do that. When I put them eagle claws in Richard Harris's chest, I did it very, uh, proud like a medicine man would. Put the bone, took the eagle claws out, put the bone, and hang him up, have his visions, sang this song, and everything. Patrol these Indians and things like that. This is what – the true way of doing it. But the average TV, they get these white people that have played medicine man and they go (imitates singing) and all that pigeon and, and it's (coughing), it's really silly, you know. So we have honored young Indians here that's coming up, that is taking up acting.

GB: I was going to ask you what about – is it Buffy Sainte-Marie⁷⁹ that refused to make the picture unless all the Indians, the extras –

IC: – Yeah it was, uh, uh, a TV thing (pauses) in Virginia. And Buffy is very sincere, very, very sincere girl. And she got as many as she could. But you see there's a union here, a deal. And you can't use all Indians, it, it's discrimination (engine noises). So, but she got the biggest majority of the I'll tell you that –

GB: – do you think this is a good way to do it? The way she did it?

IC: That's the way I'm doing it, I'm fighting it. The last two pictures I went on, the last, uh, *Bonanza*,⁸⁰ I did. I did. All the Indians are gonna ride with me. It was only the Indians that was riding as Winnemucca⁸¹ – I'm playing this chief of Winnemucca of Nevada⁸² you know (inaudible) and I riding together, I want only Indians, and they better, just like she did, and this is a little (inaudible). Or to Tucson⁸³ I made one (background noises), only Indians, so they used – I'll put the Indians here and then (inaudible) I'll put those over there. You have to fight for it, (pauses) and if you stick to your guns like she did, you can do it. Now, I made another one with, uh, Buffy Sainte-Marie of Bronson. Going up into Colorado. And Buffy Sainte-Marie sang beautiful songs in it and she (coughing) just – or the Indian actors in it. But they put a Hawaiian in there as an Indian actor, and he resented that. He resented it very much. There was a young Indian, had his first part – playing in there – and his name is Naranga, part Blackfoot Indian, part Spanish. Very good. Today he's gonna be a great young Indian actor coming up. He is one, but he's had some very good roles in TV. He's gonna be your next man. And we need more, as I say, we have a lotta Indians training here now. They go to Columbia Studio,⁸⁴ they go to different acting schools. And they have this experience. Only thing now is, we gotta get 'em

⁷⁹ Buffy Sainte-Marie (1941–), American musician, actress, and social activist.

⁸⁰ American Western TV series (1959–1973).

⁸¹ Winnemucca (c. 1820–1882), Paiute leader and war chief.

⁸² City in Humboldt County, Nevada.

⁸³ City in Pima County, Arizona.

⁸⁴ Columbia Pictures, American film production and distribution company, founded in 1924.

in. Gotta get 'em in the guild.⁸⁵ If you can't get 'em in the guild, that's just too bad. So, I have—I've had four so far, I've talked up to get in the guild. Two fellas from Arizona that's down here. Uh, one Oklahoma Indian, little Indian who came down here from Oklahoma.

[00:30:00]

IC: And, uh, and an old lady. And this old lady actor is a technical advisor which we need, we need these things. So, this is the only way we can make authentic pictures, we Indians have to stick together. And not just for the motion pictures. We Indians have to stick together, period or we will never get anywhere. Too much jealousy among Indians.

GB: Uh, can we go back to the BIA for a minute. You mentioned that you did some work up there. Did you work with the BIA or—

IC: —No. As a representative of the Indian Center—

GB: —Oh, I see.—

IC: —serve is what I did up there and meet with the BIA—

GB: —I see.—

IC: —they walked us—

GB: —Uh huh.—

IC: —they won't let us know their problem. They wanna know our problems you know. But we have, uh, several people that went up there to really have an argument with them. I had a, a foot to stand on when I brought up about this woman. Now, as Mr. Mahony and the Indian lady and the Indian men that work at the BIA—listen, we try our best—but when they get away from us—they move away from us—we lose the rat race, we can't place them down. That's why they couldn't trace this Indian girl down. Finally, uh, there's a white man named Bill Nagana. Probably you've seen him in powwows. You take pictures of Indians—and Bill Nagana is not his real name—Bill Nagana in Navajo means "white man." So, the Navajo gave him that name because he went up to the Navajo country, you know, and talked to the Navajo and things like that. He was sitting here that night and I had to call the Los Angeles Police Department. Someone gave me an inkling (pauses) that that girl is up in, uh, Bakersfield.⁸⁶ But she's under the, the law. She did something the law has—is holding her. But if someone could call and get her and send her back to the reservation then we will release her. So, I called there (squeaking). The police department says, "Yes, we have a young lady here, who's a very nice person, but we don't know what to do with her. We can't turn her loose on the streets, you know." She doesn't talk too much about herself. Now she was relocated here.

GB: Uh-huh.

⁸⁵ Screen Actors Guild, founded in 1933.

⁸⁶ City located on the Kern River, north of Los Angeles, California.

- IC: She, this girl probably, uh, didn't like relocation. But there's two sides to the story you know. So, I says, "Well, could you send her here?" No, someone had to come and pick her up. So, I figured, well, my little club— Little Big Horn— we're gonna raise some money and send for her. But this man, Bill Nagana, this white man, said, he said, "Wait." He says, uh— "You won't have a powwow for another week. You gotta have the money now. I will go and pick this girl up in my car and give her money and send her back to the Kacola. Now this is how this woman got back, got back to see her mother before she died. Now if she would've had a chance to come here to the BIA because she relocated, they probably would have given her that money.
- GB: Uh-huh.
- IC: But they don't like to do this. They want you to stay here and accept this job that they give you because it's a lot of money to re—you know (inaudible) bring people down here you know. So Bill Nagana was very nice about it. The girl went back there. So, there's a couple of other cases that, uh, we brought up. They, they have a, a few points where I was wrong. I was mad at the BIA because they couldn't trace—I was thinking of that poor old woman I knew back there you know dying of cancer—they couldn't trace this girl down. But they were right. They didn't know where she was because she moved away where she was—
- GB: —Uh-huh.—
- IC: —(engine noises) so, you got two sides to the story. The BIA is trying their best, (pauses) everybody makes mistakes no doubt. A lot of Indians will talk against the BIA and probably the BIA would be disgusted with them, you know. Drama, I don't know.
- GB: (coughing). Do the, um, Indians themselves have much control over who the officials are in the BIA?
- IC: Today they, they're having the control. They're changing. You'd be surprised. They're putting a lot of Indians in the BIA department. Matter of fact, before long—and I hope to God to see it—but the leaders up there running the BIA. An idea they're gonna do this, you know?
- GB: Are these Indians well qualified that they're putting in?
- IC: You bet your lives some of them are. We have a lot of educated Indians (engine noises)—
- GB: —I know.—
- IC: —taking up law, anthropology. Oh yes, that's right. School teachers, things like that. Office clerk work.
- GB: Uh-huh.
- IC: A lot of them here now today are out of work. These people I'm talking about.

- GB: Well, um, I was thinking, um, (pauses) what was I going—(laughs)? Uh, (pauses) has the improvement come since the—under the Nixon Administration⁸⁷ or did it start before then? Do you think he—
- IC: —Uh, it was, it was good during the Kennedy Administration,⁸⁸ they did a lot of homes. People on these reservations call them Kennedy homes—
- GB: —Yep.—
- IC: —up there on the Hopi reservation⁸⁹ where I go up in (inaudible). This nice big, uh, brick, uh, cement houses—Kennedy homes—the Hopi houses, the Kennedy homes. The homes up there in Pine Ridge⁹⁰ in North and South Dakota, they are all Kennedy homes. And then, uh, Johnson⁹¹ kept up the same thing. Now, you have a body of men, (squeaking) uh, senators (pauses) that said “no” and “yes.” So, you have to fight—the president can’t do everything—
- GB: —I know.—
- IC: —they have to put the pressure on Mr. Nixon. They did that, the Indians have to go forward. We have Indians that call themselves Red Power.⁹² That’s one of the few things I don’t agree on, but I think when they come and take a place over that’s been unoccupied for three years—that’s an old treaty—they can do it, you know. But they can’t be radical about it.
- GB: Well, what do you—
- IC: A few of them would have—a couple of free radicals running in America.
- GB: I can see actors, but what do you think say about the South—
- IC: —Alcatraz, I’ll tell you I hope they hold Alcatraz.⁹³—
- GB: —what about the Southwest Museum there?
- IC: The Southwest Museum is, is a big mistake. It’s a big mistake. I’ll even tell you a little about that. Now we have what’s called Red Power. Canada has a very small Red Power. I went back to Milwaukee,⁹⁴ and Red Power wanted to rip up our parade. Because they got in with the, the, the, the Black Panther⁹⁵ or something with Black Power,⁹⁶ you know. And, uh, we older Indians tried to convince them. We know what you’re trying to do, we’re gonna help you, but don’t destroy. And so far, they haven’t destroyed, thank God. And I don’t think we Indians will ever destroy. Because, uh,

⁸⁷ Referring to the government of Richard Nixon, the 37th U.S. president (1969–1974).

⁸⁸ Referring to the government of John F. Kennedy, the 35th U.S. president (1961–1963).

⁸⁹ Land reservation for the Hopi and Arizona Tewa people in northeastern Arizona.

⁹⁰ Oglala Lakota Indian Reservation in South Dakota.

⁹¹ Lyndon B. Johnson (1908–1973), the 36th U.S. president (1963–1969).

⁹² Social movement led by Native American youth in the 1960s and 1970s.

⁹³ Referring to the Native American “occupation” of Alcatraz (November 1969–June 1971).

⁹⁴ City located on Lake Michigan’s western shore in Wisconsin.

⁹⁵ Black Panther Party, American Marxist-Leninist political organization, founded in 1966.

⁹⁶ Revolutionary movement in racial pride during the 1960s and 1970s counterculture.

we've been beaten down for many years and, uh, we – you know, the white man has just held us down (engine noises) and held us down. But we are gonna go forward by education. These young kids that's showing their muscles today like at Alcatraz and these different places, they're doing the right thing. But as they say, you may have a couple of radicals in there, you know. That hurts it for the others. Now you got a bunch of young fellas here (pauses) that go to UCLA.⁹⁷ Well educated boys, studying law and anthropology. They went up to the Southwest Museum. That's, that's (inaudible) possible. They've done it back east. They've made one museum back east that I know of – take a scalp out – uh, uh, some bones out, the medicine, uh, bundle out. They did it up there. They put the pressure on them. Well, they wanna do that in all of the cities. Now, I agree with the – these boys, and I wanted a trustee of the Southwest Museum. But just recently I made trustee. Since this all started I just became a trustee. I don't know where these bones are, but there is a little burial there. A lotta Indians resent these things. A medicine man resents looking at a bone or any other thing, you know. I've heard these people say, Well, they oughta be buried, you know. But, this is so old – it's over three thousand years old – you can't, you can't prove what tribe it is. You don't know whether it's an Indian. It might be, uh, the other, uh, people you know. What do you, what do you call it? The, uh, caveman people. But as – the archaeologists say it goes back to three thousand or two thousand something – as a basket-making Indian when we start digging up these graves. The museum doesn't dig graves up. They have to be over a thousand years old. They go to these sites, and it's in every museum. They have Indian museum, Indian money museum back up in the, uh, Northwest coast. They got all these things there. Soon all these young Indians are gonna see these bones and they're gonna demand and I'm with them. Take it out or make some fake ones and put it in there. Not these bones, though. Now as far as the medicine bundle, I don't think – because a lot of them medicine bundles have been opened and shown around – a scalp. I do, I agree, taken the scalp out of there.

GB: Well the medicine man was just welcomed to – I heard Wampum⁹⁸ referred –

IC: – No Wampum is a Wampum belt. They are back east. My wife's people, (pauses) they used the Wampum. A lot of the Iroquois use the Wampum to, to give messages. Have a Wampum belt, they have Wampum beads that tell about, uh – when you deliver to a person, they know what these beads meant – could be a death, could be a meeting, a funeral, could be, uh, ceremonial. And then these Wampum belts are peace belts among their own Indians. They're given these belts that says this is our belts, you know?

⁹⁷ The University of California, Los Angeles, established in 1881.

⁹⁸ Shell bead of the Eastern Woodland Indigenous tribes used as decoration or money.

- This one means this and it's not war belts, it's peace belts. If they have a war belt that means war. So they have war Wampum belts, you know.
- GB: – Are you telling me that it was part of their religion, the Wampum.
- IC: – It is, among all the Woodland Indians –
- GB: This is why he resented a thing –
- IC: – it is. Uh, the, I have a little Wampum here, but I never show it. Because it's in the string, it was meant for a funeral. Her father gave it to me (inaudible). It's in a little box, and I have a little museum down below that (squeaking) I open up, uh, called Moosehead Museum.⁹⁹ I got a little of every tribe down there. These things are in boxes, nobody can see them. Boy scouts come here, girl scouts come here, youth group movements come here, uh, Indian guides come here. I don't show 'em these things.

[00:39:39]

- IC: Matter of fact I got a little part of a scalp somewhere that was given to me by Tim McCoy. I wouldn't even know where it is because I wrapped it up and put it somewhere, you know?
- GB: Uh-huh.
- IC: This is the way I feel about these things, being an Indian, this is the way I feel. So, these boys according to the Indian—I mean—according to the Southwest Museum, Dr. Dentzel¹⁰⁰ said that they were there, and they chained themselves—whatever they did there, uh, you know—and you, uh, this is not right. Sure, it's not right at all, according to the museum. But these kids probably had somebody say, stay in there, you know. Because they got themselves in a jam. Now, since that, they went there a couple of times and talked to Carl Dentzel, Dr. Carl Dentzel, uh, of the Southwest Museum, and he's a very sincere man, this man. He knows the Indian way. He always loved the Indians because (pauses) for years we had Indian dances at the Southwest Museum on a Sunday. The Indians come up there and lecture—they've seen all these things—none of them complain about it. Evidently we've never gone down to see this little burial, you know, but they would have complained about it. Carl Dentzel, well, he took over from Dr. Hodge¹⁰¹—the great Dr. Hodge—he's same way. He believes the same way, the tradition of the Indian. Dr. Dentzel's that way. His wife, she studies the Aztec Indians,¹⁰² she knows all about the Aztec Indians and she—her heart is in the Indians—all Indian. Dr. Dentzel's wife. These kids didn't know that. So he said, Alright, I will remove these things. So he made that, he covered it up, the, the, the bones. The little burial bones that is. He went and

⁹⁹ Personal museum of Iron Eyes Cody in his home in Atwater, California. See [online](#).

¹⁰⁰ Carl Schaefer Dentzel (1913–1980), director of the Southwest Museum (1956–1981).

¹⁰¹ Frederick Webb Hodge (1864–1956), American editor, anthropologist, and historian.

¹⁰² Mesoamerican culture in central Mexico (c. 1300–1521).

- covered up the, uh, the medicine bundle (cough). Now since I've become a trustee up there—before I became a trustee—he removed the medicine bundle. He removed the scalp and put it down in that dungeon down somewhere where they keep a lot of the stuff (engine noises). It will never be shown to anybody anymore—
- GB: —Why is—
- IC: —and he's keeping his word. That's the man's work. Now, uh, I—we had a meeting—with these people. All these kids came up to the Southwest Mu—Museum. We had a meeting with them. Several Indians were there from the reservation. Several Indians from town, they disagree with these Indians, these kids. I didn't. One boy read something up there, (pauses) it was great. And even Carl Dentzel, the director, admitted, even the, the president of the trustees said, It was a great thing, my friend, stick to it. That's—he wrote something wonderful. He read it out. Now when they left there with the understanding is they were—I wasn't here—they were arrested. And the police came there, naturally. The museum didn't call the police. This is what I learned right there at this meeting (squeaking). They said, These boys called the police for the publicity. The trustees told me the same thing. Sure, that's where you're gonna get it. You got to get the papers behind if these kinds wanna get anywhere, you know. And they're gonna get it—
- GB: —Do think there's—
- IC: —they're gonna scratch them up a little—
- GB: —publicity is helping them or hurting since people now are so against demonstrations more or less. Do you think this type—
- IC: —Well.—
- GB: —of publicity is gonna—
- IC: Uh, the majority of people are against demonstrations. But this isn't a big demonstration they did there, and they're not gonna do it any worse than that. They just wanna show that they're Indians, and they want it to be tradition, you know. Now I, I disagree, uh, with a lot of these demonstrations, you bet I do. But I want it right in the demonstrations that are done right, you know. A lot of them get outta hand.
- GB: Uh-huh.
- IC: We hope our Indians don't get outta hand. I don't think so because I have a young boy that's a little anti-social. My other son, and, uh, he believes what he hears. My other, other son, (birds chirp) he's like me. He's a liberal, or he (birds chirp) takes it in and study it, you know, figure it out (birds chirp). Now, as I say, they were arrested. They were willing to drop the charges over there. But the police didn't know. They were arrested: We're gonna take them out because they demonstrated, see. So, I don't know what happened, I wasn't here. But they had this meeting. After this meeting, as I say, some of these old Indians here didn't believe it. They got up and said,

- Leave the stuff in the museum. And matter of fact I even said the same thing. But when I heard that man—that young man—talk, well, he read, I changed my mind (birds chirp). Get them bones outta there.
- GB: I heard that it was, it was offensive. I mean it wasn't so much that it might be not, be a religious objection—
- IC: —But it's an old thing.—
- GB: —Yes.—
- IC: —You can't prove what (inaudible)—
- GB: —But it still—
- IC: —if you could prove a tribe. It's like up there in Nevada, Utah. They know they have some Pimas¹⁰³ and Paiutes¹⁰⁴ in there and Shoshones¹⁰⁵ and them old Aztec Indians and stuff in the museum. But it says so. But this is way back, (pauses) the prehistoric man see. But, still, it's bones, so we buried them. So, (pauses) they left it at that. That they'd have to go to court, well, I couldn't go to court because I was on a movie. Uh, I went to a trustee meeting (pauses) before the, uh, court trial—if they had a court trial, I don't know, I haven't heard—I haven't been to the museum because I just got back from Arizona. But I went to the trustee meeting (pauses) on the third—second floor of some building where they had the trustee meeting. Biggest majority of the trustees (pauses) gave that boy credit for what he said. They were willing to drop the case, but you can't drop the case, the case has already been, uh, uh, registered and everything, you know. I mean, not all of them, (pauses) the biggest majority. Now, so—they agreed with me to remove them bones (pauses) all together and as one man said, I believe what Iron Eyes said. You wanna make some fake bones out of plaster and put 'em there, you know. He said this is a copy of so on and so like they do it back east—
- GB: —Uh-huh.—
- IC: —you see. So, they removed them—they got these artificial bones, you see—plastic bones. And, uh, we were at this meeting, took it up with this. I said, I think they oughta show these kids (moves object). I'd like to, I'd like to tell you something about the young Indians, and I explained it right at this trustee meeting. I said, I go up to the grand council North American Indians (background noise) up back east. I go up north—I go up to all the different reservations—and I know how the Indians feel. These boys are not trying to be radical to a point where they're gonna burn our houses down—throw bricks in the windows and everything—but they gonna get into a place and demand their rights (inaudible). Because they're flexing their muscles, and they're doing it right there at Alcatraz and there's a whole—

¹⁰³ North American Indians originating in the region of the Gila and Salt rivers in Arizona

¹⁰⁴ Referring to the three non-contiguous groups of Indigenous peoples of the Great Basin.

¹⁰⁵ Indigenous group originating in Wyoming, Idaho, Utah, and Nevada.

- and, uh, I first thing I got up to Alcatraz – I was in Spain, El Murillo, Spain, I picked up a Spanish paper. And it says Indians in Alcatraz – and I speak very little Spanish, but I know a lot of that corrupt Spanish that I’ve learned around here but that, uh, Castilian Spanish¹⁰⁶ – so I had a man read it for me. Alright, (inaudible) some Indians have taken over Alcatraz because it’s been, uh – unoccupied all these years, they have a right to go.
- GB: Do you think their plan for Alcatraz is feasible? Building a university there and a museum there?
- IC: Well, San Francisco is gonna make a recreation park out of it.
- GB: Uh-huh.
- IC: Why couldn’t they make a big culture thing for the Indians? We’re all getting these grants now, the Indians oughta fight for their grants. Then they were gonna have auction and sell this land. They can’t do that. Because that land has been unoccupied for years, the Indians are sitting there according to their treaty, you know? But, they can come in there and put something up, (pauses) the state or the city, because they got the money.
- GB: I was thinking –
- IC: – We don’t have the money to do this. –
- GB: – The climate, for instance, it’s, it’s so fog bound so much of the time and it, I heard –
- IC: – I think it would be an ideal place, um, big buildings there, have a center there, and a culture space there, they’re gonna have a recreation park then. That’s the last thing. And if they can do that, why couldn’t they have a culture place?
- GB: Why do you think of this, uh, Indian Chicana university they’re talking about at U Davis?
- IC: Uh, (pauses) you see, the thing that (squeaking), our school is a big leader of the Mexican Indians (inaudible) is of the Iroquois. As I say, my wife’s great-great-great uncle, he helped write the League of Nation¹⁰⁷ for the Iroquois, in the early days, a fellow by the name of – white man by the name of Marvin. But (squeaking) the League of Nation was organized way before back, the Indian way. Just like the League of, uh, what do they call it here? The League of the Iroquois, they’re like the League of Nation today. They adopted everything. So they rewrote a lot of it, and Ely Parker and this man they wrote a book on it. But way back, the Indians had this way of doing it. So, they’re using these two names to build a university. Now, I can’t see our American Indians, (pauses) uh, the Mexican Indians call themselves Indians and get a grant from the government. We should get this. We should put this college up (engine noise) you know? But they call them Chicanos or whatever they call them –

¹⁰⁶ Variety of Peninsular Spanish spoken in northern and central Spain.

¹⁰⁷ Presumably the Six Nations Indigenous group.

GB: – Chicanos. –

IC: – they're getting together with the Indians. Certain groups. They took this big basin. It might be a good thing because, uh, they're gonna have paid teachers of both nationalities – they're both, you know, races, that they can get this grant. And I was reading in our, um, paper – our Indian paper – that, uh, they hadn't got the grant yet. They're hoping to get it. But, uh, I think, uh, now that we have a university as you know – a Navajo university¹⁰⁸ – we have an Indian college (engine noises). All run by the Navajo Indians. Started during the, uh, Kennedy-Johnson Administration. They're gonna to get a big building, they're getting this grant. They're building it way up there and, uh, they're having all teachers Indians if they can.

[00:50:03]

IC: No matter how illiterate you are you're gonna go to this and they won't throw you out, you're gonna learn something. This is great, you know? Because the, these colleges here don't understand our Indian ways. They don't. The schools don't understand it anyway. If we are raised in a city like my two boys, they're used to this. All these Indians that have been here for years, they're used to it, but not the reservation Indians when they're down here – relocated here – and they're sent to these colleges and all that, there's, there's a thing that they don't understand. They don't understand the white man's way too much. You can't push them. you just –

GB: – you don't –

IC: – can't –

GB: – think –

IC: – push –

GB: – that Stanford's¹⁰⁹ going and taking out all those on the reservation and bringing them up there, uh –

IC: – To Stanford?

GB: – to, to Stanford and then having them special advisors and counselors. You don't think that's a good thing?

IC: What the Navajo, uh, what advisors and specialists, things like that –

GB: – Yes. –

IC: – Oh that's wonderful.

GB: You think this is –

IC: – That's what they should do here. All these schools and colleges all over America. Because a lot of Indians teaches them. It's wonderful, it's a great thing.

¹⁰⁸ Presumably Navajo Technical University in Crownpoint, New Mexico.

¹⁰⁹ Private research university, established in 1885 in Stanford, California.

- GB: – Well, you don't think the EOP,¹¹⁰ is, is a good substitute for this then? That they're not (squeaking) –
- IC: – Well, uh, they, the ones that given the grants – the EOP, EYO and all that you know –
- GB: – Uh-huh. –
- IC: – they, they can just do so much, but you have to do the rest. Now that's a good idea – this Stanford thing – but we should back that Navajo college a hundred percent. The Navajos even go to Stanford and learn to be a, a, uh, a teacher or a big advisor, anything like that, so they'll get their knowledge there and – boom. They don't hire any white people at all in that Navajo college. Let the Indian – because the Navajo people are very clannish people – the Navajos are not stopping – they're gonna let anybody come to this college. Negroes, Mexican immigrant but they have to pay a little bit –
- GB: – Uh-huh. –
- IC: – you have to, you know? The Indians they don't have to pay (pauses). So it's a, it's a good thing, a very good thing.
- GB: Uh, with your work at the, uh, Indian Center, (pauses) the, the Indian Center coming from the reservation has certain special problems that the urban Indians that – or the Indians that have been here for years – don't have such a – the alcohol problem or school problems –
- IC: Yeah well, we have, uh, an alcohol problem (squeaking). In all of the cities.
- GB: Uh-huh.
- IC: We, (pauses) uh, put in for our grant for our alcoholic problem, (pauses) uh, I wasn't here when they put in the grant, I was in Europe. But when I got back, they had ten thousand dollars to give to a man by the name of, uh, Harvey Wells.¹¹¹ Uh, he's an ex-convict. Uh, I met this man – very intelligent man – we, we gave a Indian powwow at Chino¹¹² about three years ago. For the Indians that's in Chino, you know? And Harvey Wells was the head of the Indian Circle they call that. A lot of them didn't like him, a lot of them liked him. Because he's one of these guys that'll go far. And, uh, I met him there. So, he was going for the Indians, and he asked me for one of my books to put in the library over there I sent a book from my library. I didn't autograph it to Harvey Wells because a lot of them wrote me says, uh, We would like a book in our library but don't put it in Harvey Wells' name. But who asked for the book? Harvey Well[s]. So I sent it to the library, in Chino. Now, (squeaking) there's a lot of Indians we sent Harvey Wells, being in, in this, uh, program. Uh, I have met, uh, three or four times with the board recently. Harvey Wells was there once. The first time I heard of, that he was – they would turn it over to him – that he's gonna get that

¹¹⁰ Educational Opportunity Program for historically underserved students in California.

¹¹¹ Led groups of Native Americans to Alcatraz Island during the Alcatraz Occupation.

¹¹² City in San Bernardino County, California.

ten thousand dollars. But that's through EYOE – whatever you call it – they're gonna send money to the, have to pay these bills. He doesn't handle the money, but he will get a salary no doubt. He wouldn't work for nothing though. But in the meantime, since that has happened, there's some Indians that resented him. Some Indians claim they had the, uh, the grant already put in. Why didn't they get it? I don't know. There's, uh, there's, uh, church here headed by a man by the name of, uh –

GB: – Stone King.¹¹³ –

IC: – What? –

GB: – Stone King. –

IC: – Stone King –

GB: – I talked to him. –

IC: – a fighter. Oh, he's a fighter. I – first time I got knowledge of this that he had a chance to get – and he had, uh, an Indian bank – then I got to thinking what's going on, you know? You get two sides of the story there, you know? But they got into arguments in this church, and this is no place for our people to get into arguments. I felt so ashamed of some of my people, the way they were talking like that. So, I resented everything that was said up there – I just don't care for what was said up there – I just took it out of my mind and blocked it. Because it was, it was an unusual thing for me to see Indians start fighting. And we used to do that thirty-five, twenty (coughing) years ago here, you know? I went through it, I know. Here it is, boiling up here. But it's too late. They have already procured this money to Mr. Harvey Wells through the Indian Center. About ten thousand I think. Now, they have already appropriated some more money through the Indian Center to the halfway house for alcoholics. For me it's a very nice manner, maybe not to the board of directors meeting at the center, uh, that's gonna run this. But his hands are tied. He hasn't received the money yet. He wants to move into a big house. They got the house. There's a couple of Indians resent him running this thing because, uh, somebody else wanted to do it. You see, this is where we can stick together we Indians. Remove jealo – jealousy. Thank God, I taught my two boys not to be jealous and don't knock anybody. I taught them because I went through this, uh, I said, "Robert, Arthur, don't knock anybody, especially your own people. I know you believe that you're a Cherokee-Seneca, you're better than this one and this one – your own people told you this – your uncle said this one time, "We are Cherokee," (imitates laughing), you know."

GB: – That's why –

IC: – To anybody else you're no better. But we get this little thing and here's a man at the last board, uh, meeting he said, (pauses) I have the names who's gonna be in this thing. We gonna get on – we have money but we gotta

¹¹³ Arthur Stoneking, founder of the Indian Revival Center in Bell Gardens, California.

- move in a big place. Say, what about the Indian Center? They got the money, but they gotta move in a big place. So, they resent the, uh, the, uh, alcoholic thing. They resent the prison—the convict—the one that Harvey Wells got, it, it's not really alcoholic, it's for the ex-cons, uh, people like that, you see—
- GB: —Rehabilitation.—
- IC: —but he's an ex-con. The board unanimously voted him, because he's an ex-con—at the Indian Center—who received this, they thought. So the board runs it you know.
- GB: But what would be their method of treating the alcoholism? I mean—
- IC: —Uh, the method here would be have a halfway house. When they get put in jail for drunk—or they see them on the streets drunk—or some new Indians come in, they don't know where to go, and they're drinking Indians. These people have things. Look up. They're gonna have two, three people working in this halfway house. Look 'em up. It's their job to find them and say we have a place for you to come. And we'll have medicine for you. To cure you. Put you in AA¹¹⁴ or anything you believe in or your Indian way, you know? A place, room to sleep there, take care of these people. They have to be watched, some of them are pretty bad there that they have to be a point where they have to be treated, you see. So thank God they're gonna do this. This will be one of the good things like we got a great thing running now that I'm a hundred percent for and donated money—my club has donated money to it—the Indian Center donated money—American Indian free clinic. That's a great thing.
- GB: This is in Compton?¹¹⁵
- IC: In Compton. It's one of the best things that ever hit Los Angeles. And, uh, the Indians are behind that in many ways.
- GB: I talked to, uh, a lady who was on the—one of the founders of the—Mrs. Miller—
- IC: Mrs. Cerasino?
- GB: No Mrs. Miller. Marie Miller
- IC: Who?
- GB: Wayne Miller's—she's a—
- IC: —Oh yes.—
- GB: —she's on the board—
- IC: —Uh-huh, yeah.—
- GB: —but what do you think is the cause for the alcoholism? The problem with alcoholism among the Indians?
- IC: Uh, I think (squeaking) the cause—and I've seen it with my own brother, one brother—I've seen it with one of my uncles. They couldn't go in a bar

¹¹⁴ Alcoholics Anonymous, peer-led mutual aid fellowship, founded in 1935.

¹¹⁵ City in southern Los Angeles County, California.

one time, as you know. You couldn't have liquor on the reservation. That was against the law. The white people can go in a bar and drink, and the Indians come into town, and they come to the bar, and they hang around. Then someone will give them a, a bottle of whiskey, cheap. He'll start drinking. Next thing you know he wants to get in that bar, but he can't get in that bar. So, he goes in the back end, like the Negroes had at one time (squeaking). They hang around town. They've discussed with the reservation in many ways, because reservations are very poor at one time, and they didn't like the reservations. They didn't want the reservations—and I talk about the old days up to the turn of the century—because the reservations to them at that time was like a prison.

[01:00:00]

IC: They just put in and say this is where you're gonna be. But later on, they made their homes, built their homes, you can't get them off the reservation today. Old people don't wanna leave the reservation, so you know they're gonna (inaudible) the reservation. I don't care what the government says. If I'd have (inaudible). So you have these young Indians (pauses) they go to war—World War I¹¹⁶—they come back, they don't wanna go back over there. They move to cities. They're not allowed in the bar. I—my wife and I—we went, we'd go out to bars, and, uh, this is—sorry? I was in a movie in the late thirties. My wife came up there and drove up to Big Bear.¹¹⁷ And there was four or five of us Indian boys there, and all of these guys working on the movie were drinkin' beer. It was a hot day, and, gee, I wanted to get (inaudible) I didn't get. Well, I'm going back. So, one of the Indians spoke up, guy named Nighthawk. He says, What do you think we are pigs? We oughta throw a glass right through this mirror—had a big sign up there, "No Indians allowed drinking," (inaudible) all kinds of signs (engine noises). No, Nighthawk, no. Movie we had five, six weeks, you know. My wife drove up and, uh, she says, uh, let's have a beer. I say, "You know what? I'll have a beer." You know I'm an actor, and I pay taxes. I got a home, (coughing) and I pay taxes, and, sorry, (inaudible). He says, Anybody over a quarter or an eighth Indian (inaudible). Only on the reservations, you're not allowed to have a bar within fifteen miles.

GB: Is this still for today?

IC: Still today, in some places. Uh, now they got a place, uh, in Pine Ridge, (pauses) uh, it's not good. I, uh, I, I disagree with it. It's called, um, uh, Newtown¹¹⁸—three miles off the Pine reservation—it's in the back. Three miles from the Pine Ridge reservation. I know the name is (inaudible)

¹¹⁶ First global conflict (1914–1918), a.k.a. the Great War.

¹¹⁷ Big Bear Lake, city in southern California known for its lake and mountain trails.

¹¹⁸ Unknown establishment.

(engine noises). Beer joints. Wine. All our Indians go over there to have drink. They get into trouble. They get in jail. They come up to the Sun Dance. They read the cue, the tradition. Uh, no mic. We resent this. So, our council people will have policemen on the reservation, put 'em in jail. We have our big powwows over there and Sun Dances that I go to and everything. I hate to see this. Our own Indian policemen. They have to do it.

GB: Uh-huh.

IC: Boy, (imitates police siren) you'll see them. We all feel sorry, but what can you do? I was over there, uh, help building the sweat lodge and everything, and, uh, I asked this, uh, one policeman, I says "Could you give me some of your men that's working with you over here. No doubt that they're, they're good people. On behavior, they can go home." He said, "No, they're in jail." I said, "Well could you give me some of them to go cut some trees down or wanna build a sweat lodge?" The best guys in the world (inaudible). They didn't put aside nothing, but when they did what are you gonna do?

GB: Yeah

IC: "A sweat lodge, what for?" you know?

GB: Yeah.

IC: "What's this person gonna do?" Uh, your friend out there cutting people, and we're over there praying a, the pipe when he's cutting himself –

GB: – Think of the –

IC: – and pulling the –

GB: – feeling of frustration –

IC: – Huh. –

GB – a feeling of frustration they have when everything that they know (audio cuts)

GB: I was asking you if you thought that maybe they were frustrated when they drink that they feel –

IC: Yeah, uh, sometimes they get so frustrated that they knock the white man and I mean they knock him. They come back and says the white man started all of this to kill all our people, which is true. A lot of them did, you know. Uh, invade their land, which is true, a lot of them did. Uh, scalping – the white man started the scalping – the Indians didn't start the scalping, the white man started the scalping. The Mexicans took it up and, uh, they were paid, uh, a hundred dollars for a man's scalp, fifty dollars for a woman's scalp, twenty-five for a child's scalp. So, the Indians figured, well, if you can do that, we can do it too, you know. But before that the Indians fought among each other, killed each other, uh, in battles, you know, for different things. And they didn't take any scalps. They may have cut their little part of coup, a little braid thing or something like that, you know, and put it on a coup stick, you know. This tribe, this tribe fighting this tribe, you know.

But when the big scalping came in, the, uh, it came in this country so strong in the fifties and before the fifties. But around the fifties, all the battles, you know, the white people and all that. These Indians, uh, were, had little, uh—done with the white man—they were told to do these things. Some of them probably were paid, you know. Give ‘em guns and things like that, you know. A lot of criminal people in government too, you know.

GB: Yes.

IC: A lot of them are doing it. You get that gold and that land and all that stuff. Like they drove all our Cherokee people out of North Carolina into Indian territory because the Georgia Militia¹¹⁹ wanted that gold up in there. So, this was the wrong thing. We went through the Trail of Tears¹²⁰—we lost thousands of our people—but a lot of Indians ran away and stayed in Tennessee, in Georgia, in Alabama, Arkansas, Tennessee and Louisiana, and all them places. Stayed there, they didn’t go to the territory. But the biggest majority went to the territory, but a lot of them died on the trail. Now they lived back—they went back to North Carolina and all those places up there—they got their own homes and everything. They became very peaceful people. They, they, the white men beat them down so much that they just went the white man way. They lost their tradition in many ways. Just the last ten, fifteen years that the Cherokee has gone back with their tradition. Teaching their kids their language and stuff like that. Not as much as they should, but they’re going into it very strong. Even the, uh, alphabet language, the Sequoyah alphabet language.¹²¹ (squeaking) I taught my children when they were little to start talking Cherokee. Give them twenty-five words a week. I’d print them. I want you to get on that table and eat. I’d say, “Learn these words because after—before we eat and after we eat—I’m gonna ask you of that board. How many words you learned?”

GB: Would you say something for me in Cherokee? I’ve never heard the language.

IC: Well for instance, uh, (pauses) I, my son, remember his name in Cherokee, “Usdi Uwohali” means Little Eagle. (inaudible) means Iron Eyes. Now, uh, “selu gadu” means cornbread. They have cornbread. “Tsalagi” means Cherokee. Tsa—Tsalagi. You have to put in a little guttural in there. Now many of these Indians in this Los Angeles area are teaching. The tradition is really strong here for their languages. It’s strong. And their clothing, what they’re supposed to wear. You don’t see these mixed up pockets so much anymore. You see some beautiful things when you come to these big movie (inaudible). (squeaking) Now your drinking envy. They went to World

¹¹⁹ Armed civilian force (1733–1879).

¹²⁰ Forced displacement and ethnic cleansing of Native Americans (1830–1850).

¹²¹ The first written Cherokee Syllabary, created by Sequoyah in 1821.

- War I. They came back. They had these hospitals and everything. They're all cripple. Some of them went back to the reservation – there's no work or nothing – boom. World War II,¹²² the same way. This Korean War,¹²³ the same way. This one here is the worst yet. When they get over there – they get a chance to take dope – now many Indians copy this. They get a chance to buy a liquor cheap. Beer is given to them. So, they drink, and they drink, and they don't care whether they get killed or not. They make it? They make it. So, they come back here or go back home, and there's nothing to do, there's no work. Everybody's out of work – there's so much work out of everybody now – you know. So, they come to the big city – they get tired of the reservation; there's nothing over there. Come to the big city. They meet the wrong Indians here. So, they go to these bars, remember –
- GB: – Uh-huh. –
- IC: – crazy bars around here, you know. This is the only solution they have, you know? Some of them drink and know how to drink, and some of them don't. And they get into arguments – boy, they'll say to the white man, get out of here or I'll kill you – you know. It's there's a lotta (inaudible), frustration, you know.
- GB: One last, uh, subject I'd like to cover is there's been so much – last three years approximately – that go to publicity – a, a positive track of publicity – to go to the Indians, such as television specials and movies. And do you think this has come about because of the efforts of the Indians or just a gradual awakening of the general white society? (sneeze)
- IC: We have demanded.
- GB: Uh-huh.
- IC: The white society are making money off of it. Don't think they're not. They made it with the Negroes (pauses). Then, uh, the Negroes went forward. The Mexicans are going forward. So the Indians are gonna go forward. So, we are demanding these things. Uh, I made a thing just recently called "Make America Beautiful."¹²⁴ I didn't wanna do it because I'm not a great swimmer, and you're supposed to be in these big oceans and these lakes and these rapids and, uh, row a canoe. And I'm an expert canoe man. And I told my agent when I went down and ask him, uh, I, I can't take the job because I got a buckskin outfit on. They want an Indian paddling (squeaking) alone and saying what's going on around here and the dirty – all the muck that's in the, uh, channels you know – stuff like that. So, the man back east interviewed Indians but he wanted a certain type of an Indian, that could row a canoe and swim and still look like an Indian, what they think an Indian should look like. And they phoned my agent and said,

¹²² Second global conflict, a.k.a. the Second World War (1939–1945).

¹²³ Conflict between North and South Korea (1950–1953).

¹²⁴ "Keep America Beautiful," advertisement campaign, a.k.a. the "Crying Indian."

We'd like to have Iron Eyes Cody. We've seen him in the movies. He's got a typical Indian face (creaking). He does everything so Indian. So, I told my agent, "Alright, uh, I'll try it again, but I'll tell these people I can't swim." So, they have an office up at Columbia Studio. I went over, and I saw this man. Well, first they sent only two people, the guys photograph. He says, I'll have to be about forty-five years old.

[01:10:00]

IC: Photograph. They sent it back east—polaroid camera—they were crazy about it. I only wore my hat, I didn't wear no Indian clothes or anything. And, uh, they came back, and they asked me to come down, and they had about four other Indians. And I told my agent, I says, "I'm not gonna take it. Because if they wanna talk to me and say that they have a safety thing and helicopter going up to the roof—hanging down on a camera rig—I will do it." But you see this is too big of an expense.

GB: Uh-huh.

IC: So, I went down there. They let me come late because they looked over these people and they said they weren't the types. They wasn't tall; they wasn't skinny; they were all too fat. Can't row a canoe, all that stuff. They can't swim. So, the director says to me, "Iron Eyes, what would convince you to be this Indian and go with us to New York?" I says, "Do you have to fly? Number one, I don't fly, I go over super cheap. I'll tell you what will convince me. Get a good canoe that don't leak (pauses). Number one. Get a helicopter to fly." Well, he said, "What about the sound?" I says, "You can always dub that later." He says, "That's too big of an expense. Aw, Iron Eyes come on." He says, "Uh, we won't get too far from the land." I said, "What about the rapids?" He said, "That, that's up there in the Klamath River¹²⁵ on the, uh, Klamath Indian reservation.¹²⁶" "Alright," I says. "I, I can run those rapids. Because, uh, you can throw a rope and catch me the next time. What about the ocean? Are we gonna go up between all them ships and go up to Alcatraz, and we're gonna go all around that—those bays—and all that." He says, "Well, you won't go out too far. We will see enough to throw a rope for you." "Alright. But I won't fly. I'm gonna to drive my car." I bought a brand new Cadillac¹²⁷ so I drive to these locations I don't fly to Mexico; I drive to Mexico. When I was with Buffy Saint-Marie in Colorado, I drove there. So, I always keep this big car, you know, or another one. I got a new one. So, he says, "Oh, we can't let you drive up there. We wouldn't know where to find you." I said, "Just tell me the hotel you guys wanna stay in, and I'll drive up there." Well, they talked me out

¹²⁵ River running through Oregon and Northern California.

¹²⁶ Reservation located in Southern Oregon.

¹²⁷ Luxury car manufacturer in the United States.

of driving. I said, "Alright, I'll take the train because I won't fly." They said, Well—the production manager all that together—oh we got to have it. So the deal was made. We get up there in Klamath, and everything is fine. Raining, just raining all over the place, you know. Put in your canoe and everything. Clean water on the reservation in the streams—fish in the streams—we go to another place up, uh, to San Francisco where it's a park, open park. And it's the dirtiest park I've ever been in. Papers all over, of course, it's the rainy season. There's filthy black water around the drains, you know. We go up to this little river there, and they got a lot of brush and everything and, uh, stops the water, and we go (inaudible). Then we go to San Francisco. We go into a bay. The man says, "Get way out." Because the water was calm, I got way out. The canoe started to leak.

GB: Oh no.

IC: So, I yelled out. I said, "I'm coming in!" They don't like you to tell them though. I said, "I'm coming in. Gotta catch the camera or else, I'm coming in." When I came in the guy says, "That's fine, but we didn't get the first part because the camera wasn't ready. Could you go back again—

GB: —(laughs)—

IC: —and come in." We did it four times. The canoe had that much water in it. I was all wringing wet with my buckskin outfit. It was drizzling a little rain. So, they said, Alright, that's fine. Now we're gonna go into a lagoon where all these birds are in it and the oil, you know, the stuff, you know. Alright, we went into the lagoon, and it wasn't bad. Now we're gonna go tomorrow, uh, another place, near Alcatraz, and we're gonna shoot some stuff there, and we're gonna go move stuff around and pick it up with the paddle. I says, "Why? Why don't you get crews (inaudible) hired?" Well, he says, maybe it's not bad. We just bring it along (inaudible). We were supposed to go there (inaudible).

GB: Yeah.

IC: (inaudible) So we were there three days. Then he says, Now we're gonna go into the ocean where all of these ships come in with all this oil. We want you to get between these ships. So, they had a lens on that camera that long. Then the cameraman was changed, and he says, "Get way back." I said, "Well, did you see this canoe." "Yeah, we see the canoe." I got way back between these two ships, and I had some people up on a boat up there with some ropes to throw at (inaudible) and all this oil. I'll push into this lumber and all this junk around. "Just do it again," and we did it again and did it again and did it again. So a big rain started, and we go on the freeway and catch all the muck where I come up with my canoe. Pull the canoe up and go on the freeway, and you see all this stuff on the freeway, you know. (inaudible) They found it. Then, of course, they make a close up for cars going by (inaudible).

GB: Yeah.

IC: A lot of people (inaudible). Now this is done with an Indian. Plus, they were gonna use three different people. It's the Indian problem to go on the reservation and see that this is a nice place, you know, so this and that, you know. White man is gonna like to come up there because he will say to the Indian, uh, "Why?" They wanna ask crazy questions. You just go what questions, and, you know, they don't like that. And I said no I have to say that you can come up to an Indian right away and then, uh, I don't know. They don't need nothing. I don't know. You go up on the reservation and talk to them. Uh, a lot of people are not from the reservation and (inaudible) can come in they just go in. They have to annoy you, and they go in and preach. They really do. They have wonderful friends. So, um, yeah, the Indians of America, uh, the Indian Centers are all about the same. The, uh, up there in Seattle, Washington,¹²⁸ they make a big thing about the Indians—the Sioux Indians are gonna make a thing—and it's money appropriated to them. It's gonna be all Indians you know. Oklahoma is gonna do the same thing. It's because the other people demand it, they're gonna demand it.

GB: Uh-huh.

IC: They are gonna go, so we may not see ourselves go forward today for another ten years. Another ten years, the Indians' population is coming up. Anyway, we have, uh, truth be told, we have over a million Indians. Not on the whole, but they probably have eight hundred thousand or six hundred and seventy thousand, something like that. The population is increasing because (inaudible). So, it'll come forward. My children will see it. And they'll probably be mixed up in it, like I'm mixed up in the struggle today here, you know? This is why I go back east. I don't charge those people nothing. They have all the Indians go over there, and they charge them to be an emcee who can run it. I don't. All you do is pay my way on the train. I'll take as few as I can. And I don't wanna live in a hotel, I wanna live in your home. So I have a lot of friends, I live in their homes. It don't cost the association to put up—

GB: —Uh-huh.—

IC: —this thing. (inaudible) We have to work like this. Yeah, all of our people.

GB: Well, I want to thank you very much for the interview. I certainly—

IC: Well, you wanna go out to the museum and see what I got (audio cuts)

[01:17:41]

END OF INTERVIEW

¹²⁸ City on the Puget Sound in the Pacific Northwest.