

Joining the Lakota Community - Josie Bald Eagle - OSEU #2

I came here... and I came into the Indian world. And then on the Indian reservation, I had no idea at all of what I was getting myself into. To me it was only the guy. I didn't care about his age. I never even thought about the age...and about America... I had no idea. So when I came here, most of my growing up has been here on the reservation. So, for me, what the people are going through here, is actually what I experienced with them. This is my first new pressure, my first thing... whatever happens on the outside...I had no idea till our kids grew up and I went... started to go and visit them. Then I learned about where to go in the United States... what's an office... a courthouse. I had no idea. Nothing. Nothing about nothing.

So, it's just like being reborn somewhere and...I'm open to that. I'm a good player, so. The hardest thing for me is still today, I have...if I had to leave and I know how they feel. Like if I had to leave this kind of a safety... but not really safe...but a safety of knowing where I'm...the territory and go out there. It still kind of scares me sometimes. I don't know out there very much. I'm always surprised when the kids come over...and they can do all these things and where to go and what to say. Even here, you speak differently. There's always a sense of humor when you...when you talk with people and it goes off. But when you go out there and you say something funny, people go, "Huh?"

Did she speak in English?" "Oh, I'm sorry. I'm speaking French. . ." I get away with it. And that goes both ways because when I make a boo boo, I get away with a lot of stuff. Okay... I work for the Department of Health, the community health representatives here on the Reservation. There's 19 community workers; I'm the only white person.

So, I'm catching heck all the time. "Josie did this. Josie do that. Josie, why are you doing this? Don't do this. Or we have to do it too." And when there's a boo boo, sure I done it. It's okay. When I make a boo boo too, I get away with it... where they don't. So that has both sides, you know? Sure. Yes, but the only sad thing I think here in the United States... as an outsider coming from Europe... and living here now for 40 years... why don't you all call yourself Americans and still go and say, "What ethnic group are you coming from?" You're never gonna integrate your society if you keep talking that way. You still wanna be German... you still wanna be this... you still wanna be that. Me... living here... that's what I still see. Then automatically, they do the same thing. They would still say, "Oh you...you just don't understand me." They're gonna keep on doing that too because it's still there and it's still works both ways.

It's a scapegoat, I think. And to me that's sad... because this country is not gonna go forward like it should be if you're gonna keep on saying, "Where do you come from." You know, just say, "Okay, your accent... your accent is different." That's all right. You know... can I reeducate the people?

Because we're all people... and that's... that's the only thing I think is sad in this country. If there's something I don't like about the United States, that's what I don't

like. Okay...I'm sorry I'm saying that, but this is spoken for because I care about anybody. We're all people and we all need a place to live... healthy, safe... especially safe. So it doesn't matter. It doesn't matter. But we need to understand each other. And I think that was the strength in the United States... that we have all these different ethnic groups and people come from all over the world and somehow live together. But it's scary too because when you think about Russia, that's what they did. They took all these Bosnian and... and Polish and... people from one part of Russia and put them in... separated families... and they put 'em all over Russia. So what happened when the wall fell down? They fought each other all to go back home to where they belong.

See... they really had nothing against the neighbor all these time for generations...but all of a sudden, why did the Polish have to go back home where they already had generations there. So, this is where you still have a lot of fights because they want their territories back. Now we could talk hours about this issue here. This is something different because we are the outsiders. But still..America... America... this is what I think would make the strength of the country because we are showing the world. But when you overseas and you're talking about, oh, America, what do they talk about? Football players, cowboys, and Indians.

But look what happens to these people. You know, I'm not gonna be making politics here or... advocate for them. But there's a lot to be said... and I think that's the only thing I want to say. Now understand...otherwise we will go on forever. Thanks.