

**INTERVIEW #1: PATTY TIMBIMBOO-MADSEN TIMBIMBOO-MADSEN,
NORTHWESTERN BAND OF THE SHOSHONE NATION, CULTURAL
RESOURCE DIRECTOR (Interviewed at the American West Heritage Center)**

NANCY GREEN:

Patty, it seems like you've got a mighty big challenge trying to keep the culture alive. Talk a little bit about the challenges you face being the cultural manager for your tribe.

PATTY TIMBIMBOO-MADSEN

Golly, it depends on which direction I'm going to go. Language is very important because of the limited language speakers that we do have. Our problem has always been money, finding possibility the right way to do it—and what is the right way? My mother a language speaker, she was taught at infancy and grew up with it and then later learned English - what approach do you use to teach the people of our tribe language? I look at adults and certainly having English as their first language is difficult to try to go back. My mom says, "The older you get, the heavier your tongue is. And it's gonna be more difficult for you." So she thinks that getting the children as young as they can. We've looked at concepts of somebody within that family structure of the twenty-five people is good total immersion. And that would be difficult now, with everybody living in different households. Now if we all lived under the same roof, it would be so much easier but it's not that way. So it makes it a little difficult. We thought of ideas of taping them and providing CDs for them, but I think more of a DVD, that way they can see the lips, they can see the tongue, they can hear it, but see that person speaking it. That might be a better option. The language isn't written so what do you do?

Also, other challenges are the preservation of plants - plant knowledge. We also have the arts and the crafts if that's what you wanna call it. I think understanding especially the younger generation, of who they are, storytelling; being able to tell the stories. I think certainly making them proud of who they are and understanding who they are I think is probably more important because they are children or tribal members that are federally recognized by the government. What does that mean? So I think that's important. Right now it all kind of intertwines together but I think those are some of the major ones that we do have.

NANCY GREEN

What does it mean to be federally recognized, what does it mean to you to be a Northwestern Shoshone tribe member? What does it mean to be Northwestern Shoshone?

PATTY TIMBIMBOO-MADSEN:

I think about so long ago when Columbus came and what did he call the Indians? He thought he was in India and called us Indians; not really knowing where he

was, the label he put on us and it stuck. I think about when the trappers came into the area and they came with an Indian guide probably. And they asked, what, "Who are these people?" We call them Shoshones. Well then, it's another label given to you by somebody else. So then if you ask me who I am, I would say I'm *Newe*; *Newe* meaning "the people," the people of this area. I think you have a lot of Native American people who are going that way the Ute, *Nuche*. You have Denai, the Papago people, Tohono O'odham, are going back to the traditional names. And I think that certainly for us, is our identity, not somebody else identity that was given to us. So, to recapture that, it's almost like we talk about the circle. We're coming back to where we were. And I think a lot of the stuff that we are doing to try to enrich our children's lives is what we need to do to make them whole too.

NANCY GREEN

Do you feel like you are defined by everybody else? That the *Newe*, the people, have been defined by the surrounding culture?

PATTY TIMBIMBOO-MADSEN:

I certainly think at times that they have, they have stereotyped us and it's been done by TV -- you think about Buffalo Bill. Buffalo Bill started the powwow, it wasn't the Indians. It was him. Because of what he created and at times, you saw the savage part of it, and there was also at times, the romantic part of it. But I think that in any culture there's always good and there's always bad. And that's the same way with the Indian people. But how did you deal with it? You don't blame a whole group of people for what one person did. You deal with that one person and that's the way the Indian people would deal with, with things. There was a lady who came into our encampment here last week and she says, "My word, you speak good English." And I thought, "How am I supposed to speak?" Certainly in our household, my mom and dad both spoke Shoshone and I always thought it was a language for them. They didn't want us to hear what they were saying. So it wasn't really anything. As I got older, I realized that my mother was spanked during her school years for speaking Shoshone. And in my mind I thought, maybe that's why we were never taught. Because she didn't want us to go through what she did. I really didn't think about the way I spoke as anything different than anybody else. Only till I got to school, when I went to Utah State, that was probably back in about 1972, and the Indian students, the other Native American students, came and says, "You don't act like an Indian." And that was the first time I ever hurt, I ever felt prejudice, was that my own, I thought were my own people telling me, "You're not an Indian because you don't speak like one, you don't act like one." But it didn't, for me it really didn't matter because I felt that if they don't like me it's ok, and just move on. And after about a year I got to know more of 'em and it was ok. But I could still feel that, a little uneasiness in my life.

NANCY GREEN

Do you think that's because the Northwestern Shoshone, and correct me if I'm wrong, have lived more of an assimilated lifestyle?

PATTY TIMBIMBOO-MADSEN:

Umm-hmm.

NANCY GREEN

Explain to me that assimilation, and the way that affects you.

PATTY TIMBIMBOO-MADSEN:

I think for those of the Northwestern band, the assimilation came, it was both good and it was both bad, because you had to give up something for the other. But it was a way to survive, too. I think after the massacre they felt that it could happen again and maybe next time there will be none of us left anymore. I think they had to try and if the leaders of the tribe said, "This is the way we need to go to survive; this is what we're going to do." They embraced the Mormon Church. One of our elders, Kenneth Neaman, said that it, the religion was so much like our own religion. We believe in life after death, we believe in one great being or spirit or god. Maybe the difference is how you pray to it, to them or to him or whatever but it's the same. I think the idea of family also touched them because you know, without that family structure for Native American people, you can't survive. You need all those helping hands. You need to pass on your skills to the next generation. So that unity was important.

NANCY GREEN

Is there a cost to that assimilation? Is there a cost to the living with both worlds?

PATTY TIMBIMBOO-MADSEN:

I think the cost for the assimilation for us has been the, the loss of some of the living skills of our ancestors. Certainly, and the skills that they had then, how useful are they now? But I know and my husband has certainly said, we can survive if anything ever happens. We can put meat on our table. We can clothe our family. And we can probably survive in the elements. And those skills, so many people don't have and take it for granted that the store is always gonna be there. Look, is there gonna be gas there tomorrow? But trying to recapture it, it makes it so much more important because it was lost. It means more. I think as far as living in the communities, I would say, education was important to the people our tribe. But not everybody was fortunate enough to take advantage of that. But some of 'em were, and some of 'em did go far with their education. There's a lady up in Fort Hall, and we would go up there and they would say, yes you guys are our relatives and you were the people that wash a lot. Or you were the, we wanna come down and visit you people because you people put up fruit. But that's what they learned from the Mormon people, was that part that people looked at us and said, "Those are those Indians, those Mormon Indians." It helped because the people of the communities knew us. I think back around 1860's, seventies and eighties, when the communities were still trying to settle in.

There was a lot of dissension. I think land ownership was important to the non-native people that came in to here. And so it caused some problems. Somebody asked me about being a beggar. Well, I read in Brigham Madsen's book that you're people were beggars. And I said, "You know, you weren't born that way. You were made that way." I said, "So when the fences went up, our stores closed and where did our people have to go?" And Brigham Young did have the Indian have a little piece of paper and on that paper it said, "Give these Indians food." So the Indians would take this paper and go to the homes of the pioneer people and ask for food. And I think they would take food too. And they would take cattle. You were on their land and even today I still feel that this is our land. You guys are just here. You might own the property but this will always be my home. Generations and generations and generations of our people have lived here and it'll always be our home.

NANCY GREEN

So obviously this is still an emotional issue for you. I mean we're talking about something that happened so long ago, and yet you're crying. Why does this touch you so deeply? Where does the emotion come from?

PATTY TIMBIMBOO-MADSEN:

I think my emotion is, someone told me that tears aren't weakness, tears will give you strength. And I felt that if I ever quit crying, then it's time for me to move on because then I have no love for what I'm doing. When I talk about them people from way back then, it's like you talk in honor of them and what can I do for them because they went through so much? And I have it easy, and all I have to do is tell their story. So sometimes it's like they're with me. I know they're with me. And I hope I do them justice-- my passion for them, my love for them, to honor them.

NANCY GREEN

The title of the show we're doing is called "We Shall Remain" and I think that's important. Does that resonate with you, that, we shall remain? Do you feel that way with the Northwestern Shoshone, that in spite of everything you've been through, you're still here?

PATTY TIMBIMBOO-MADSEN:

I almost look at it like we're supposed to go some place. And we never went anywhere; we were always here. We stayed here. Maybe we just assimilated or blended in too easy where people would say we didn't know there were Indians here. So, we shall remain, I know we're not going anywhere. [chuckles] We're here, we're in our home. There's nowhere to go but home.

NANCY GREEN

Earlier, we were talking about the Bear River Massacre, and the repercussions of that. And one of the things you've mentioned was that after that there was a sense of, "don't trust white people, they'll kill you." Your Mom even said

something to me when we were talking about how she grew up not trusting. Explain that to me. Explain what the repercussions were from the Bear River Massacre.

PATTY TIMBIMBOO-MADSEN:

I think those people that survived and the stories that were told was one generation that experienced that. And then the next generation came and the generation that was involved in that were now warning the next generation: "Be afraid, run and hide, you're gonna get killed or they're gonna kidnap you." So that's what my mother grew up with. So as a little girl she'd run around the cabin and peek out, you know, because they said, "Strangers are coming, they're gonna kill you." And so when we were growing up, I heard the same thing from my mother, you know, "Be weary. Don't be so trusting." I'm, I guess to a fault, too trusting. I mean if you wanna take my stuff, maybe you need it more than I do. And maybe I didn't treasure it enough to keep it safe. I don't know it changes as it's not traumatic as if I was there, I can move away from it. Because I see myself, people say, "How come you're not angry? How come you don't hate somebody?" Who am I gonna hate? Am I gonna hate you? You didn't do anything to me. Ugh. It's senseless. We live now, we have to get along. What history are we going to leave our children with the lives that we have lived [sniffles]? You remember those back then and you honor them because of the sacrifice they made, but what are we doing now, you know? To me it's important enough to take what they had been through, to remember that, try to revitalize some of the, their lifestyle, to understand who they were because I am them. Whether it be good or whether it be bad. That's what makes us whole. It's difficult sometimes but I think age gives you wisdom [laughs]. I believe that. Well, I look at myself and I think "Boy, you're sure beginning to act like your mother." [Laughs] You never thought you would. But I look at my mother and I realize she's here for a reason and her work isn't done. And I think that's to make sure that we know who we are and then to be able to touch your great-grandchildren's lives because they all certainly are part of her life. And I hope they remember her.

NANCY GREEN

How is it difficult to keep the traditions alive?

PATTY TIMBIMBOO-MADSEN:

Well you know, I look at the devastation of those individuals that went through the massacre and the difficulties of the next generation, like my mother's generation. That generation of people who were taken away and put into boarding schools. Those that were told they couldn't speak their language any more. So that was a change for them. Then I look at the next generation and the difficulties that our generation went through. Wounded Knee happened, we can now stand up and fight for our rights, where I think if you did that before, you were certainly killed for it. And the next generation will be more educated and stronger, where they're gonna stand up to the courts and say, "No more." You

know, we've had how many years of treaties that you still are not living up to. But the government has that control; sometimes you feel like you're a servant to that establishment. I've got a number; I've got a card that tells me who I am. Yeah. I look at that and I think about that and I think "Wow, that's just put it on my forehead and that's who you think I am." But that, sometimes I feel that's the way, what the government has done, you know, branded you. They talk about generations that the governments says it ends at one eighth for us and anybody that has exceeded that, can't be Northwestern. And maybe that is a way to where the Native Americans will disappear. But to me it doesn't end there, because to me that blood will always flow. And if you keep passing your traditions on, those are the ones that are gonna tell your stories. And either that or they have no relatives. But they do, and as long as you teach them their bloodline or their ancestors, they'll tell those stories because that's what makes who they are.

NANCY GREEN

And you're passing down stories to your granddaughter, Brooklyn. Tell me about the joy of being able to pass along your teaching, your knowledge.

PATTY TIMBIMBOO-MADSEN: When I went to school, the Utah history books had a couple of paragraphs on the Northwestern Shoshone and all I read about was Chief Washakie who was from the Eastern Shoshone tribe, a great Shoshone chief. Yes, he was but there was so much more and my hope is that, my mom says "One day, maybe we will be in the history books." But now I have a chance to one on one pass my knowledge. And I don't think of it as knowledge, I think of it more of a gift because it was a gift that was given to me by my mother to share and to give it to her. Ah. I remember as a little girl, my grandma's having been on my father's side and gave me a piece of buckskin and a needle of thread and some beads showed me a stitch and I thought, "This is the way I'm gonna teach my granddaughter." And so I sat her down and I gave her a needle and thread and buckskin and drew a flower and had her sew. And later I realized, I bet those were the exact same stitches that I sewed because one would go this way and one would go that way. It took several years to perfect that stitch and know which way to put the needle in order for it to go in the right direction. And one day she will follow. Both my sister and I, we both sew. My sister is more artistic. I know I guess the concept. I can sew but my mom says "Your styles are both different, but they're both beautiful." I was never much of a sewer or homemaker like that so I just felt, I can do what I can do and I think my sewing's ok [laughs].

NANCY GREEN

As a Northwestern Shoshone, what do you hope for Brooklyn, for her future?

PATTY TIMBIMBOO-MADSEN:

I would hope that she would continue to stand proud to be who she is. I think there's a lot of adversity out there. For her to be able to not let that adversity

affect her negatively that my mom said, "Hate is an awful word to use, so if you're gonna use that word, use it that you mean to use it." And I would hate for her to experience that. People hopefully one day people will not stereotype people and that we will come together and realize that yes, there are differences but we can all live together. I think looking down on another person because of the color of their skin or the way that they believe is counterproductive and doesn't get you anywhere. I would hope for her to be a strong woman when she grows up. And to pass on what she has learned to her children. Find herself a good man, like her dad [chuckles]. That's it.

NANCY GREEN

Is there anything else you think we should talk about in terms of understanding the culture and the world of the Northwestern Shoshone?

PATTY TIMBIMBOO-MADSEN:

To me, our band is still in its infancy. So many of the other tribes got started way back when their reservations were created and our constitution was established in 1988. So we're still learning the ropes. But I think we've done pretty good. I think we have seen our ups and downs; we've had struggles within the tribe. I think it's just like any other political arenas, sometimes it's horrible, but then other times it's good. It's just where do the people that are running the tribe wanna see it go, and can they take it there? And is it really what the people need? Education, health, housing, culture, is important. And I think being able to provide for the tribe economically and I think our tribe is on the right track in getting that accomplished. And to me, I can patiently wait. I certainly feel that you know when the Northwestern band and the rest of the Shoshone tribes got their settlement, so people waited and so many people died and never got to see any of that. But I did and if it wasn't for them, we never would've seen that. So I certainly feel that I can wait. I can wait and hope that if it happens that it happens in my son's lifetime or in my granddaughter's lifetime. But if I don't see it, at least I know that we made the attempt to make it happen for them. They just have to finish it. You know, we only live on this earth for so long and you can only do so much. And to me if you lay those seeds down, you know, maybe something will come of it. And that's my hope.

NANCY GREEN

What's the settlement?

PATTY TIMBIMBOO-MADSEN:

The settlement was the judgment money given to the Indian's for their treaties and they signed the treaty January, was it, no, July twentieth, 1863 and they finally got their settlement probably around 1972 and they paid them at the rate the land was worth back in 1863. It had to be divided amongst all the Shoshone people, the Eastern, the Western, the Northwestern, uh, and the Goshute people.

