

Interview with Shanan Martineau
Musician, Dancer, Cultural Educator/ Shivwits Band of Paiutes
Paiute Indian Tribe of Utah
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Shanan Martineau

Well because it's dying out (dance and song) and that's our cultural identity. Without dance and song we are not really and Indian I guess because we have not history of... we have the history but we're not doing it, so to me it's important to teach my kids because... before it's lost, and I know it's getting to that point. We're on the brink of losing a lot of stuff so it's important to hold onto it and pass it onto my kids, like the circle dancing. They don't really do it anymore. They'll have circle dance songs and contests, but there used to be big gatherings where all of the bands would come together just to socialize. They'd meet their wives, husbands and it was just a social gathering.

Interviewer

Why aren't the gatherings happening anymore?

Shanan Martineau

That's hard to say because back in the '50s, '60s they didn't have money, yet everybody found a way to get here. If they had it at Old Sham they've have bear dancing and now you have to hire some people to bring in the singers and you have to have the food. It costs a lot of money to get food, and so it's just all of the little things add up to cost, and so it's dying down a lot because of cost, and everybody has to have a vehicle, and the gas prices have gone up, so I think it has to do with the expense of living, but when they do have pow wows they have fundraisers to raise the money, like the Cedar City restoration. They have fundraisers for that so we could probably bring it back here. Like bear dancing I wouldn't mind doing. My sister Carmen and I always say we're going to bring back circle dancing and have it maybe valentines day like couples dance and get people to know each other and bring back the songs. The songs I notice for a while, a lot of the kids didn't know it and didn't want to sing it, and they were shy, but they have contests every year now where people ask all their grandmas, grandpas, "Well you have to teach me a song so I can enter that contest" so it's coming back slowly, which is good, it's just a lot of the dances haven't, and we do a lot of dances but it's not Paiute dances. We have... I dance jingle, which isn't even Paiute. It's Ojibway (Ojibwe), and fancy shawl dancing I used to dance. That's kind of pretty much an inter-tribal dance. A lot of different tribes do that, but we're trying to bring it back--it's just funding. My sister and I have soooo many ideas on how to bring back the bear dance circle dance and all these... quail dance. I want to make mountain sheep horn dress

for my son so he can do that for shows and there's quail dancing and coyote dancing and there's just all a big variety and my dad preserved all that he knew about the dances so we have pretty much enough information to bring it back, and I have old recordings that he'd done back in the '60s of all these old people that have passed away now that had sung songs, quail dance songs and mountain sheep horn songs that I have on recordings, so we can relearn it and bring it back. It's not dead yet. I know a lot of songs, but I didn't even enter the contests this year because I'm just too shy. My dad taught me... there were two Paiute songs he taught me on the flute, one was a pine-nut grinding song and I don't know what the other song was called, but I knew it on flute and for years I never knew the words to it and I had to ask him one day, "What are those words to that song that I know on the flute?" and I learned it, but I was just thinking of it the other day and I thought I've never sang that song in public. I've sang other songs that my sister and I have won in contest, but I like to sing duet. I've never done solo because my voice is still... I'm not a good singer. My sister and I would both sing together ya, so you can't... she drowns out my voice, so...

Interviewer

Will you sing a quail song?

Shanan Martineau

You know I don't know any quail songs, and I know the mountain sheep song but I don't know the words and I don't know... right now I couldn't bring it up and tell you it off the top of my head because it's on a recording.

Interviewer

When you were at the restoration gathering you said some great things, but it was loud and there was a lot going on. You were saying that a lot of people here don't even know what this event is about... a lot of the kids, so can if you were speaking to those kids, can you tell them now what that event is about for the Paiute people? What does that mean for the tribe--termination/restoration?

Shanan Martineau

Termination/restoration um... I moved away when I was young so I was never here through any of that, but if I was to teach my kids today what the restoration was it would be to hang onto your culture because it's like a... it takes all year to prepare for that restoration gathering and so my kids will get excited and people that don't travel... I can travel. I make money to travel by dancing, but these kids that live on the reservation here, it's a yearly thing so they would be excited and say, "mom make me an outfit, I want to go to the restoration" and so to have that excitement in the young kids to know oh there's a big event coming and it's exciting. It's just like it's a part of their heritage, not the fact that they don't know what termination was, but it's just kind of a cultural thing where all of the bands come together and they have the feast and just all of the little games,

so it's just more of a cultural identity because it's an annual event where they want to look nice for it or they want to know their culture. They maybe want to learn some songs, and so to me it's just an event that brings the kids... the excitement of who they are, and it brings pride to them because a lot of kids if they don't have, like the dancing, they don't have nothing. They got to town. Their excitement is movies or maybe a dance from the school, but to have that Paiute restoration pow wow, they want to look nice for it so they ask their grandparents or they even learn to do it themselves, to bead, and so to me it's just a cultural awareness even though they don't know too much about that termination.

Interviewer

You seem very connected to the culture and the traditions in the tribe, and I love how you're young and you're passing that onto many people around you in the tribe. Do you feel that kind of connection to the land? Do you feel that kind of connection to Southern Utah and Washington County? What is your personal relationship with this land?

Shanan Martineau

I wasn't even... I didn't even grow up here, but every year we'd come here and we'd visit our mom, our relatives, aunties, and it just felt like home, and we've hiked everywhere. My dad used to take us everywhere, and we hiked every hill. He used to take pictures of the petro glyphs and the different sites and the camps they had, and so we've been all over and so it's just... I don't know how to explain. It's just my home. It's my homeland and I know a lot of the history on a lot of the places that are out here and so I always knew I'd move back. It was just a matter of time when it would be done so...

Interviewer

How do you feel about the development and the sprawl?

Shanan Martineau

I hate it. It's getting worse and worse, and I have a website that my dad... it's based on my dad's work because he took pictures of petro glyphs and he recorded the sites for years and years and there would be... the chairperson would call me and say, "Oh they're tearing down these petro glyphs, they're tearing down this site." It's happening still today. It makes me so mad because we can't do anything about it. There are houses that are being built over all of these rock. They're being destroyed, and it's sad to see that everywhere you look, and I can stand that the whole place is being developed.

Interviewer

Do you know where there is rock art right now that is being destroyed by development?

Shanan Martineau

Ya. My dad mapped every single site that he knew of. It's all mapped. I have every single "X" on all of the drawings he did. Airport Hill--they just destroyed some two years ago there, and then we heard that there was some people that were... had the caterpillars that were just clearing the land. They said they found skeletal bones, and then their bosses told them to just keep going because they couldn't stop.

Interviewer

Talk about what you can talk about with the cry ceremony and other ceremonies.

Shanan Martineau

The cry is a ceremonial dance that's done to sing the person who passes away onto the next stages of their life and they won't allow recordings. Well you can record it, but that's just for personal use, but it's not supposed to be for like the picture taking or anything because it is a sorrowful time for the family and it's just... a ceremony that's not talked too much about to the outside world, but I'm proud of that because it's not even originally Paiute, but that's something that our band, our tribe has held onto, and even it was brought to us by the Chippewa and they don't even do it now that I've heard.

Interviewer

Where are the sacred mountains here?

Shanan Martineau

The only one I know about is... it's just in Washington City, it's (pronounced Sununwakaiv) that's Coyote Mountain, and they say in the Paiute stories about coyote brought all of our people over in a sack across the waters and he stopped on his way south because he started in the north and he heard people singing in the sack and so he kept stopping along the way and people would jump out, and he ended up over at Coyote Hill over there and he opened the sack and I guess the Paiutes were the last people in there that had come out and so that's a sacred hill. I also heard that that's where we came out of was that hill, Coyote Hill, like from the underworld or from wherever we had come from, so that's the only sacred site I know of, and it has been in papers and it's just ceremonial, and we were singing for the Gods, or I'm not sure what they call it, but it is a sacred site. It's Coyote Hill. I think they call it (pronounced Shinav/Kaiab) or something like that. It's just in Washington City.

Interviewer

Tell us about the kids who are having problems with alcohol and the suicides. Talk about that.

Shanan Martineau

I've never really heard too much of it here in Shivwits because there has been a lot of deaths, but a lot of it just from sugar diabetes and drinking, car accidents, but I'm not sure if... not too many commit suicide that I know of, ya. But there is an alcohol and drug problem here among our band, and we do have meetings on it to discuss how we can... to get rid of the drinking that happens on weekends here, and because we are linked to Ivins they do have a city curfew that they've put up and they have neighborhood watch now where you have to give your name to call the people who are drinking to try to stop it. It hasn't really worked yet. I think we need a few more meetings to try and make this a dry reservation where it's not allowed at all, but then they'll just... the reason they don't really want it to stop completely here is because they'll go to Mesquite which is 30 minutes away and I've had cousins that have come back drinking and driving and have died, so that's what they're afraid of is they're going to drink and drive and die whereas why can't they just go and drink in their house? It's better. So there is a problem, but I don't really know too much about it other than it's around. My niece was involved in the meth that was going around and it really messed up her life, so... it's bad.

Interviewer

Do you believe the residents in this county know the Paiutes were here first?

Shanan Martineau

I don't think they really know because I'm always going into town and everybody always talks Mexican to me or they say, or they automatically assume I'm a Mexican so nobody knows. When I say I'm from Shivwits they say, "Where's that?" or "Who's that?" I say Paiute and everybody... if they know your Indian they think Navajo so we're even in town not really known, unless it's from the people that lived here, business people that I've known and have grown up with the Shivwits, so they know, and we're not really known in town, no.

Interviewer

What would you say to this growing community who don't know you or have knowledge about the reservation out here?

Shanan Martineau

I don't know what I'd really say, um I guess if they have an interest in it they would want to know, but it's just their lack of interest that I think keeps them from wanting to know who we are, and I'm trying to think of ways too to get us more recognized. They were going to put a museum up that didn't go through and a lot of my dad's work was going to be put on there and so, there's websites and stuff that we could do to get us more well known... just haven't got

around to it yet since I've only been here eight years. There's a lot of things I want to do.

Interviewer

Do you plan on being here for a long time?

Shanan Martineau

Ya. I want my kids to be raised here and their kids, and so we'll be around.

Interviewer

Will your boys be bused to school then? How will they get to school?

Shanan Martineau

Ya, my kid just started kindergarten and I drive him to school since it's only a half day, but he takes the bus home, ya.

Interviewer

The title of this series, We Shall Remain--Doug's got a great shot of you in the parade with that sign you had made, We Shall Remain. That was very cool. What does that mean to you, We Shall Remain?

Shanan Martineau

It's sad when I hear it, but there's so much potential and possibility in that title because if I look at a lot of other people my age's kids, they don't really know a lot, and it is dying and because we are surrounded by Mexicans and people from Mexico that they've intermarried with that a lot of their names are Mexican and that they're learning their language and learning their things/culture, so ours is dying out and it's sad to see, but I think that our generation needs to instill in their kids who Paiute is and to make them proud of it. I think they're just not proud of it when they hear it--Paiute, and... because they don't know a lot of the dances and so I hope that we remain and I'm going to do my best to make sure my kids know everything they need to know about it, so, I don't know. It's a sad phrase I think, but I think we shall remain. We're survivors. We're... our band, my band has been through a lot. We weren't warriors. We weren't... we were just mild mannered people that wanted to live by ourselves and be left alone and to know... to wander around with the seasons and so we've been through a lot and we're still here to this day, and so I'm proud of that and the culture that we do have. We are remaining in a lot of our culture, and so we've been through slavery and the Mormons accusing us of a lot of stuff, and a lot of our ancestors have died and our lands were taken away from us, but we're survivors, and I'll think that we'll be here a long time.

Interviewer

You sound less hopeful than most people I've interviewed. You say, "I'm said. I'm not sure." Others say "We're here and we're going to be here a long time, damn it!" But I don't know what is more realistic or the details of the problems with the tribe. Intermarriage--the culture is being watered down, but when I look at between 1980 and now, about 28 years, your tribe has grown over 350 members, so...

Shanan Martineau

It's grown, but when you look at a lot of who the dads are. They're so intermarrying with a lot of the Mexicans so it is growing but I'm only... my kids are only 1/4 Paiute and a lot of the kids around here are maybe a fourth Paiute, but maybe half Mexican and so it's dying and we are really thinning out and so... I don't like to be so negative like with our education and all of these things that... because I didn't really have an education. I do want my kids to graduate, and I want them to have a good life, but I think the way I was raised that I think that... my dad had written books on prophesy and they say now when your kids stop listening to you and that the modern world is getting closer and closer that... I think I have that negativity because I think of the prophecies of what if the world will change? It's not going to end, but it's going to change the way we know it, and so I think I'm negative because I don't know what our future holds for us, just like the rest of America.

Interviewer

Maybe it's ok to be negative because to you negative seems more realistic.

Shanan Martineau

Ya. And I want to say that. I want to say, "Ya, we'll be here forever and you're not going to take our traditions away," but you got to be realistic about that, and I see a lot of the kids... they don't know anything in Paiute. I don't know too much in Paiute. My dad spoke it fluently, but he didn't teach us. My mom was shy to speak it, and so we are losing it and my kids aren't going to know anything about it. They don't ask. I'll try and teach them if they want to learn, but I don't really know too much so my sisters and I, we want to start a lot of classes and do a lot of things to bring back a lot of the stuff that was lost, like the plants. We want to bring classes on what plants to eat. They do have classes. This lady did come and she taught classes on that, so there's a lot of things that we want to do, my sisters and I. There are three of us that live here on Shivwits that want to do a lot of classes to bring back a lot of that--sign language, the language itself, genealogy. My sister did classes on genealogy so there's just so much we want to do. It's just like I have this huge list, this Santa Claus list. I just want to do all of this stuff and it takes money, and it takes time and my kids are kind of young, but they're getting to the age now where they can come and help me and we will get a lot of that done.

Interviewer

One last question. I never know how to properly introduce this. The Mormons come... the Paiutes die of diseases, overgrazing destroys their land, and that whole migration of settlers... and the Paiutes become destitute and desperate and then the Mormons baptize them. This is something I don't understand. How do active Mormon Paiutes reconcile how the Mormons treated them in the past?

Shanan Martineau

My dad was a Mormon. He was really strong in that religion, and he studies religion, and he said out of all the religions that Mormons seemed to be the most mildest and it didn't really take away from your culture of being an Indian, and so he told us... he wouldn't let us step into a church until we were old enough to know what religion was, and he said, "When you got old enough you can decide what religion you want it to be." He didn't force anything on us and I'm going to do the same to my kids. If they get old enough to know that maybe they'd like to become a Mormon then that's fine with me if they want to do that, but that's the same with my sisters. It seems like there was a lot of negativity around my age being a Mormon. They all wanted to be something other than Mormon, so they went to Christianity or something. I don't know if that was just to try to be different because everybody around here was Mormon, and there is that negativity even though they don't want to admit it, and so if missionaries come around I'll talk to them nicely and I'll say, "I'll probably won't ever be with your church, but I'll listen to what you have to say." So there is, to me, a negativity, just being surrounded by Mormons. My nephew is a good example. He's 13 and in school he gets that all o the time from kids. I guess their parents talk about Indians in a bad way, and so he's always being put down, and he had been in a few fights over it because of that prejudice and he just... his mom and I say, "You just stand up for your rights. You're an Indian and be proud. Don't ever let any of those Mormons put you down for it." And so, ya, I may be prejudice but I can't help it because of what we've been through. Maybe my kids one day will want to be a Mormon. Who is to say?

Interviewer

Who is the Creator or what is the Creator to you?

Shanan Martineau

Everybody has a... like if I was a Mormon I would still believe in the Creator, which is God and Jesus. We have names for them and we've had stories that were put into, so that kids would understand who God was. God was Shinangwav and the Coyote was Jesus, which is let's see... Tauwats (Tabut) is wolf, Shinangway is coyote and so they'd put them into tales that represented the person who created the world and created us, and so we believe in the Creator. Doesn't mean we have to go to church to listen to somebody tell us

what to believe in. Everybody... the whole tribe believe in the Creator and that's just somebody who created you and they believe in God. No matter what religion you are, I think deep down inside they know that being Paiute there's always only going to be one Creator regardless of what preacher teaches it to you. And I believe in God and I tell my kids to pray to God and they know. It's just... they know they were created by somebody, and you don't have to belong to a religion to know that.