

IAN ZABARTE

b. 1964

Las Vegas, Nevada

An Interview by

Danielle Endres

12 April 2008

Nuclear Technology in the American West Oral History Project

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THE FOLLOWING IS AND INTERVIEW WITH IAN ZABARTE ON APRIL 12, 2008. WE ARE CONDUCTING THE INTERVIEW IN LAS VEGAS, NV AT THE UNIVERSITY OF LAS VEGAS, NEVADA LIBRARY. THE INTERVIEWER IS DANIELLE ENDRES. THIS IS THE FIRST AND ONLY INTERVIEW WITH ZABARTE.

NOTE: UPON INTERVIEWEE'S REQUEST A WORDS/PHRASES HAVE BEEN DELETED FROM THE TRANSCRIPT AND THE AUDIO. THESE ARE NOTED IN THE TEXT WITH: [deleted material].

DE: This is Danielle Endres and I'm doing an interview with Ian Zabarte and it's April 12th, 2008 at 10:00 AM in the University of Las Vegas...University of Nevada Las Vegas library. So Ian could you give me your current full name with your spelling.

IZ: My name is Ian [deleted material] Zabarte that's I-A-N [deleted material] Zabarte, Z as in zebra, A, B as in boy, A-R-T-E. Please don't use my middle name; I don't like that information...as much information going out about me these days.

DE: And your current residence?

IZ: I just moved to Las Vegas [Nevada] three weeks ago, I'm staying at a friend's apartment and I have to pay rent now. Prior to that I was living at Indian Springs [Nevada] and I haven't seen the stars for three weeks now and miss the birds and the animals and the water tastes ...bad. I don't miss the Air Force bombing and those kinds of things but I miss the more pleasant associations...closer association with the land.

DE: Where is Indian Springs?

IZ: It's about fifty miles northwest of Las Vegas.

DE: And so you've been here you said about three months?

IZ: Three weeks.

DE: Or, three weeks, and then how long were you in Indian Springs?

IZ: Oh, maybe twelve years or so, on and off in the last few years but I was there during the period that I was going to the university here in Las Vegas. And you know I've had some concerns about my personal security and one of the reporters, Keith Rogers, of the *Las Vegas Review Journal* had mentioned something to me when we had lunch last week that I am the closest resident to the front gate of the Nevada Test Site as well as closest to the runway of Creech Air Force Base, formerly Indian Springs Auxiliary Field, where it is the home of the Predator¹ and now the home of the new unmanned aerial vehicle, the Reaper.²

DE: Oh.

IZ: It was just released yesterday to the public. And so I still have some concerns about my personal safety.

DE: Okay and then your occupation.

IZ: I am a...I don't have a paycheck but my work is as an organizer/grant writer/program planner on nuclear issues. I just organized an event here in Las Vegas on nuclear issues³ as well as a risk-assessment researcher interviewer. And [I am a] diplomat for the Western Shoshone National Council and the principle man for foreign affairs and so I don't have the...you might call it the luxury or right to limit my own time and activities to my own personal wants, needs and desires. So I'm single and I intend to remain that way. And most of my work is on behalf of the Western Shoshone people, the Western Shoshone nation, specifically dealing with nuclear issues.

¹ The Predator system is a Department of Defense intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance information system. For more information, see: <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/facility/indian-springs.htm>.

² The Reaper is an unmanned-aerial-vehicle. For more information, see : <http://www.nellis.af.mil/news/story.asp?id=123032283>,

³ Native American Forum on Nuclear Issues, April 9-11, 2008, Las Vegas, Nevada. The interviewer attended and presented on the Nuclear Technology in the American West Oral History Project at this conference. Prior to the conference, Endres and Zabarte arranged to conduct an interview.

DE: Okay, and you mentioned as being part of the Western Shoshone National Council. Are there other organizations that you are a part of?

IZ: I was formerly on the board of directors of Citizen Alert⁴; I don't believe that's active now. I was on that board for about ten years—I was...twelve, thirteen years I believe. And then I was also on the board of directors of the Nevada Desert Experience⁵, that was from 1992 until 2005, so again thirteen years. I'm also a commissioner for the Western Shoshone Wildlife and Planning Resource Commission and a member of the Western Shoshone National Council⁶ Environmental Protection Committee. [deleted material] We have some good evidence that we found to defend and advocate on behalf of our rights and so I expect those positions to have an increasing role in the future. Also, I'm on the board of directors for the Native Committee Action Council⁷ Nuclear Risk Management for Native Communities project⁸, doing things board members do but there's where I do grant writing and most of...

All of the work that I do in these organizations are volunteer. [deleted material]

It's really the only opportunity I have for a relationship, it's with the land, you know. If

⁴ Citizen Alert is Nevada grassroots organization that provides education, advocacy, and empowerment to citizens in matters of environmental justice and environmental harms. Citizen Alert, P. O. Box 17173, Las Vegas, NV, 89114-7173, www.citizenalert.org.

⁵ The Nevada Desert Experience (NDE) is a non-profit organization based in Las Vegas Nevada. The mission of NDE is to stop nuclear weapons testing. For more information, see their website: <http://www.nevadadesertexperience.org/index.htm>.

⁶ The Western Shoshone National Council is a traditional governing body for the Western Shoshone Nation. For more information, see their website: <http://www.newesogobia.com/>.

⁷ Native Community Action Council includes representatives from Western Shoshone, Paiute, and Goshute tribes and is focused on addressing nuclear issues facing tribes in the Great Basin (i.e., nuclear testing effects, nuclear waste disposal). There is no website for this organization.

⁸ The Nuclear Risk Management for Native Communities project is affiliated with the Native Community Action Council. Created in 1994, the project educates Western Shoshone and Southern Paiute people about the health affects from nuclear radiation from nuclear testing at the Nevada Test Site, 1951-1992. This project involves collaboration between Western Shoshone and Southern Paiutes and academic researchers. See the Nuclear Technology in the American West Oral History Project interview with Kim Townsend for more information on this project.

you can't find love in a blade of grass...I don't know who said it, you can't find love in another person.

DE: So I'm going to shift to some background information on you. It's not necessarily about nuclear waste and your relationship to nuclear waste but background on your own life. So what's your birthplace and birthday?

IZ: [deleted material] And I don't want that information included. You can have my...say northern California, the Bay Area would be helpful...be more helpful. Try to minimize...nobody can steal my identity, if they did they would be probably be worse off than they think. But I went to elementary school in the Bay Area, went to high school also in the Bay Area, and got my GED in California and moved back to the reservation in about 1980 or '82—I think about 1980, just turned eighteen or nineteen, and all during the period of growing up we returned to the reservation every summer so I knew where my homeland was. And that's one thing that is important. The difference between native and non-native peoples is that we know where our house is, we know where our home is, and we know where our homeland is. And I think that is very very important and distinguishes us from most other people because when you say 'where is home?' they say 'oh it's California or back east or wherever' especially in Las Vegas. And you ask them where their homeland is, they don't really have a concept for...Europeans do, people that have some, you know, something like that...another state...Americans question, you know with the question say 'the United States,' if they even go that far. So that's part of my growing up. And I moved back to the reservation, Duckwater Indian Reservation.⁹ I was about eighteen and that's when I became aware of the lies that the government had

⁹ Duckwater Indian Reservation is home to the federally recognized tribe: Duckwater Shoshone Tribe of the Duckwater Reservation, Nevada. The Duckwater Indian Reservation is located in Nye County Nevada, close to Ely.

perpetrated on me. Through schools, through learning, you know, and I became ashamed to be an American. But growing up I was ashamed to be an Indian because of the treatment I got by non-native society...the way they treated Indians, you know, in the media, in schools, and education.

DE: So do you have any siblings?

IZ: Yeah, I have four other brothers, two sisters. [deleted material] and that's it for family, you know there's extended tribal family.

What they say about Western Shoshone, what we say about our people is that all Western Shoshone are related and traditionally even if we know they're a tenth cousin there's a taboo that we don't get involved with our relatives. [deleted material] But then it's getting really...among native people it's still pretty close-knit. For example, Grace Thorpe passed away April 2nd of this year 2008 and I just found out that her granddaughter—she's in Oklahoma and she was with NECONA¹⁰ a group of natives against nuclear waste on reservations. And I just found out after she passed that her granddaughter is related to [A Shoshone in Duckwater] [deleted material] Indian Reservation just down the road from me. And so I'm not exactly sure how far away [he] [deleted material] is related to me. [deleted material] But it's just really amazing, you know, if I was in Oklahoma, we have Shoshone reunion every year and I was in Oklahoma a couple of years ago. And Comanche are Shoshone and, you know, this fall we're going to be in Fort Washakie, Wyoming and that's going to be relatives, Fort Hall, Idaho, there's going to be relatives there and it...I think it really is important that our elders played roles in, you know, matching children, or at least acknowledging and

¹⁰ NECONA was formed by the late Grace Thorpe to "stop the nuclear industry that is dividing and contaminating us." For more information on NECONA, see their website: <http://www.alphacdc.com/necona/>.

indentifying who is part of a family and who, you know, what is acceptable, you know, and that's still I think important today. I need to know those things and need to stay with our traditions. I've always been sent out to go find information, to go understand things in the non-Shoshone world, you know, so I haven't been available in tribal gatherings in a way that made myself available. I was always spending time with, you know, the leaders and the elders and not there socializing, you know, as much as other Shoshone.

And I'm half Shoshone, if you want to get down to it seven-eighths Shoshone, but there is no scientific basis for determining the inherent quality of ethnic identity based on blood quantum. Blood quantum is a foreign process employed by the United States to assimilate us and to diminish our identity and now the United...It's been employed through the federally recognized tribes, the Indian Reorganization Act¹¹ tribes that are U.S. protectorates. So this is where the policies are carried out and these policies...We're now being told the United States doesn't have a requirement and now it's our tribes that make up the...make the decisions about who is and isn't an Indian. Well, it's still discrimination. It's still employed by entities created by the United States even if the United States says they're ours and that we do them. The United States still controls the funding to those organizations which limit the amount of people that those communities or tribal organizations can serve. So if you have 150 community members your ongoing budget is based on numbers which require that you limit your services and that limit is usually associated with the one quarter blood degree. So my son isn't Indian according to those policies and the United States says that. It's my tribe's policy, but they [the United States] created and federally chartered the Duckwater Shoshone Indian Reservation.

¹¹ The Indian Reorganization Act was passed by Congress in 1934. The act encouraged American Indian nations to adopt a (new) constitution and bylaws. The Indian Reorganization Act is the subject of some controversy in American Indian history/studies as to whether it helped or hurt American Indians.

DE: So you said you're seven-eighths Shoshone, what's the...what's your other portion...

IZ: I mean seven-sixteenths...

DE: or half?

IZ: Seven-sixteenths

DE: Seven-sixteenths? What's your other background?

DE: [deleted material] don't include that. It's personal family history. [deleted material] And I try to look at people based on their deeds and actions and not on their skin color. I have both pigments, you know. I just started getting brown this year because I spent some time out in the sun but it gets pretty white especially in the winter time.

DE: So is there anything that you want to share about yourself that you think is relevant to your experiences with nuclear waste from growing up or from any part of your life?

IZ: Well the early part I think is, that I shared, is being connected with the land all the way growing up. Knowing where I'm from and knowing who my family is, knowing who the people are. And because of that, my people... Well some of them had some aversion because, you know, I'm not a full blood. Others knew I'm one of the, you know, one of the tribe. And so there was that going on.

And part of that dynamic is that when the boarding school system was set up, my mother's generation and my grandmother's generation bore the burden of racism. So they were taken and put into these boarding schools and they were abused, they were violated, the people as a whole were violated and abused. And when in boarding school they were treated badly as Indians, Indian children, half-breeds, whatever. When they went back they were treated as if they were better because... worse because you were full blood,

better because you were a half breed. So when they came back to the reservation and they had a little bit of knowledge, they started being—discriminating against the people on the reservation. So if you were a half blood you were better than a full blood, you know, you were treated better and so that racism was internalized and they deployed that on the reservation, hence the issue with the blood quantum. So I felt the very tail end of that as a half...half blood, so to speak. When I went back to the reservation it was the full bloods who resented me but I didn't understand that at the time, you know, and being innocent as I was. It took a while for people to realize that it's not me who created the problem and I'm just a victim as they have been victimized, you know. Things are better today, it just takes time being with the people. So I think that's really important.

I did have the opportunity to know some of the traditional spiritual people, the Saggie Williams and his wife...I forget his wife's name. Eunice Silva who was Corbin Harney¹², our most recent spiritual leader who passed away this past year... His people who worked with him and trained him in his gifts and healing as well as the Glen Holly's our hardcore traditional leaders, Glen Wasson [spelling?], those kinds of people and Raymond Yowell.¹³ My grandfather was on the Indian Claims Commission¹⁴ which is part of the controversy involved in, or at least the argument part of the controversy that the Department of Energy is using to say that they already dealt with the ownership issue

¹² Corbin Harney was the spiritual leader of the Western Shoshone people.

¹³ Raymond Yowell is the former chairperson of the Western Shoshone National Council.

¹⁴ The Indian Claims Commission [ICC] was created by the United States Congress in 1946. The purpose of the ICC was for American Indians tribes to make land claims against the United States. The result for many tribes was monetary compensation for land that the US took away from tribes. The Western Shoshone filed an ICC petition, but the Western Shoshone refuse to accept the decision and the monetary compensation. For more information on the Western Shoshone claim, see: Steven Newcomb, *Failure of the United States Indian Claims Commission to File a Report with Congress in the Western Shoshone Case (Docket 326-K), Pursuant to Sections 21 and 22(a) of the Indian Claims Commission Act: A Report Prepared on Behalf of the Western Shoshone National Council* (Eugene, OR: Indigenous Law Institute, January 2003), <http://www.nativeweb.org/pages/legal/shoshone/ili-report.html>.

on the land.¹⁵ We can talk a little bit more about that, but that's kind of the personal history that leads me to having an understanding and knowledge that this is my property. I know where I come from and when I see the United States government abusing my land, abusing my people, it's just completely unacceptable. It's my property, it's my people, and I have to do something to take responsibility for their protection because the United States government is indifferent, the U.S. law provides too little protection.

DE: What are some of your ethical influences?

IZ: Ethical influences? It has to be those traditional elders and spiritual people. [deleted material] I've never been diagnosed with any problem and I think I feel well balanced. Sometimes I do get thoughts and ideas in my head which in a way, like an epiphany, keeps me thinking about subjects and issues and there will be, on occasion, nights when I can't sleep, you know, and I go a couple of days without, without sleep. That happens maybe a couple times a year. But not without cause or information or something that is troubling me or unresolved or I find something that fits into something that I'm dealing with. I wake up early and as soon as I get a thought in my head I can't go to sleep, I can't go back to sleep, and that I think keeps me, keeps me focused in some ways.

And the elders instilled in me a belief and value of where the land is, where the people are, and what we're supposed to be doing here and as the world continues to age, I will say age. The improvements that my people made in food, in maintaining water

¹⁵ In the controversy over the Yucca Mountain High-Level Nuclear Waste repository, the Western Shoshone claim that the site is on their land and violates the 1862 Treaty of Ruby Valley. The Department of Energy and other U.S. government agencies and officials claim that the Western Shoshone lost their title to the land through gradual encroachment and that they received compensation through the Indian Claims Commission [ICC]. The Western Shoshone have not accepted the ICC compensation and argue that the ICC ruling is invalid because Congress never filed a finality clause. For more information, see Steven Newcomb, *Failure of the United States Indian Claims Commission to File a Report with Congress in the Western Shoshone Case (Docket 326-K), Pursuant to Sections 21 and 22(a) of the Indian Claims Commission Act: A Report Prepared on Behalf of the Western Shoshone National Council* (Eugene, OR: Indigenous Law Institute, January 2003), <http://www.nativeweb.org/pages/legal/shoshone/ili-report.html>.

quality, in understanding of the land, are being undermined or destroyed by the developed, the...developed is the wrong word, by the non-native society's demands on very limited resources, and the way that they deploy technology as we heard from Dave Hassenzahl.¹⁶ I think those are really, you know, important words that we don't know the effects both short and long term effects of large scale technology development and deployment upon our environment. You can say the same thing about chemicals. We can say the same...chemicals in our foods, in our medicines, chemicals in our houses. We don't know what the aggregate effect of these things are. It's very complex and technology brings with it these types of complexity.

So my people always, you know, instilled in me the philosophy at least the understanding that less is more. And as I said I've been having difficulty the past couple of years, I mean, eating more rabbit, eating more wild game and foods which keeps me closer to the people on the res [reservation] when I'm not on the reservation. But I see the tradeoffs. For all the nuclear energy, you know, the energy, and we're being told, you know, we benefit from nuclear energy, I can't see the stars here in Las Vegas. I can't see the stars. I don't hear the birds. You know, these things are the things that trouble me, you know, but I've been told how much, how good nuclear energy is, you know, and my people, I think they would be saying they like seeing the stars. I like seeing the stars and I have a vision, I'm having vision and perception. When I look at the stars I can actually see them...my eyes are getting worse as I get older but I can see them as clouds now. My vision...maybe it's my imagination working but when I look at the milky way it begins to

¹⁶ This is a reference to Dr. David M. Hassenzahl's presentation at the Native American Forum on Nuclear Issues Conference, April 9-11, 2008, Las Vegas, Nevada. Both the interviewer and interviewee were at this conference. Dr. Hassenzahl is an Associate Professor and Chair of the Environmental Studies Program at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

look as we see them in some of these photos as cloud bursts of stars...you know, it could be, you know, in my head but it's a vision that I see and I start to enjoy more.

DE: And how about role models?

IZ: War chiefs and peace chiefs, the warriors and the peacemakers, essentially. The people who are...it really is a...the dynamics between war and peace that even in peace you have to restrain acts that would...be violations of the peace. For example, we signed a treaty of peace and friendship with the United States.¹⁷ Even though the United States violates the treaty, our people are restraining ourselves from acts that violate the treaty and that is a demonstration of our strength, of our tolerance for the abuses that result from those violations. And America...Americans tend to feel that their, not all of them, but generally as a policy that they're entitled to commit abuses and violations of our basic human rights because we're unable to engage in a direct aggressive response to those violations. We're not going to use nuclear weapons against the United States. We have none and it's really because of our understanding that it is fruitless to engage in that kind of armed conflict that we don't. And America needs to learn peace too. American moral ascendancy is ended, it's on the decline in a very big way and it's because of the way that America treats foreign governments, namely the Shoshone. And we are foreign. The United States didn't have to enter into a treaty of peace and friendship with the Western Shoshone but it entered into relations with the Western Shoshone people, the most formal relations and recognition of one government by another to secure peace and to provide legitimacy and credibility that it could obtain gold across Shoshone territory to finance its war against the South during the Civil War. We allied ourselves with the Union to

¹⁷ Ruby Valley Treaty of Peace and Friendship, 1863.

achieve [deleted material] [victory over the South].¹⁸ So, you know, Ulysses S. Grant is one of my heroes, you know, he ratified the Treaty of Ruby Valley in 1869. He also was a general in the Union army and he was from Ohio and he's one hero or person that shaped my view.

Another one that I did meet was Olzhaus Suliemenov who was a member of the Supreme Soviet and he was to read poetry on television in Kazakhstan and rather than read his poetry he went on television and told the workers in the worker city of Nevoyazemleov, I believe, not to go to work and to stop producing nuclear weapons. And 50,000 workers did not go to work and that's how this... The Cold War ended and the moratorium [HR 3636] went into place and the United States didn't initiate that. It was initiated in the Soviet Union by this man. And then another hero that I did meet Vladimir Chernachenko who was the Russian physicist that Gorbachev sent into Chernobyl on top of the reactor to assess the damage and he got a lethal deadly dose. And so those are the kind of real people... Corbin Harney, he smoked a peace pipe with Suliemenov in 1990 or 1991 out at Mercury, out at the test site [Nevada Test Site]. That is our role, that is our role, you know, to provide our credibility to the need to end this arms race and, you know, that had big meaning to those people over there, to the Soviet... to the Soviet people, you know, outside of the United States. And I think it's the same kind of credibility that we could lend to issues dealing with the Middle East, you know, with the Iranians. They need to know that the people are good people and that there are other options and alternatives and reasons beyond George Bush and his folly, this so-called war on terror, you know, you can't nuke a terrorist, you can nuke a country, but you can't nuke a terrorist and to suggest that, you know, the United States needs more nuclear

¹⁸ Added by narrator.

bombs so they can fight a war on terror, that's just another way that they kill my people. And when foreign governments hear this, on one hand it proves our credibility, our moral ascendancy and integrity and it diminishes the United States. So I don't like talking about these things in a way which undermines the United States' credibility abroad but it's the truth and I'm looking for ways to not do that and the United States just has not been responsive.

DE: So I'm going to switch into...from background to talk about nuclear waste issues and your relationship to those issues. So what nuclear waste issues are you or have you been involved with?

IZ: Well as I mentioned about nuclear weapons testing, that's how I got...when I went back to the reservation my uncle passed away from throat cancer. And my grandfather passed away from a heart attack, which I believe was the result of stress placed on his body by illnesses—which...auto immune deficiency—which he had a month before his heart attack disease ravaged his body. It was like a rash, all of his skin all over his body just went bad; it was an immune system problem. Immune system, lymph nodes, you know, as I came to learn later, but initially I saw it potentially as an effect of, an impact, an adverse impact that may been a result of his exposure somewhere out on the land—Duckwater being downwind of the Nevada Test Site. And as I learned the way the government was treating my people and I learned that it was my land, I just found it unacceptable and nuclear waste issues were of the same character as nuclear weapons. We do not tolerate the things that they were doing and viewed them as violations of our...of our people's beliefs, values, and well being.

I was initially involved in the Department of Energy's cultural resource studies. And because of the hardcore traditionalists that I was in relation to or that I knew early on, by the time I started going to these cultural resource studies, with my elders as well, they were being told by the researcher Richard Stoffle¹⁹ from the Institute for Social Research at the University of Michigan²⁰ who was under contract with the Department of Energy to be doing cultural resource studies at Yucca Mountain that 'you Indians have to do something, they're going to destroy your burials,' you know, my elders are sitting there crying. And I'm telling, 'we don't do that.'...Corbin Harney, Pauline Estevez, Maurice Frank, and other elders from Moapa and other communities and they're saying, 'well what are we going to do?' Corbin saying, 'what are we going to do? We've got to do something.' I said 'but we don't do that, that's not our way. We can't do that.' So maybe I was being a little more hard but I just found it unconscionable that our people should be dug up from our own land so that they can build a road or they can put in a building or something, you know. They weren't trying...what they were doing was...and my elders, you know, were emotionally distraught, crying at that time, and it was abuse, it was abuse then and it was done under duress and they didn't have...they didn't want these things to happen but had to do something is the way that they saw it and did what they did under duress, okay. And that's why I...they need to be interviewed, you know, Pauline Estevez down in Death Valley [California], Maurice Frank [spelling?] in Duckwater, asked about, you know, why they did what they did and why they participated. And just as we heard a

¹⁹ Dr. Richard Stoffle is currently a Professor of Anthropology at the University of Arizona.

²⁰ The University of Michigan Institute for Social Research social scientific research in the public interest. For more information, see their website: <http://www.isr.umich.edu/home/>.

couple of days ago about NEPA²¹ process, it's procedural. I've come to learn that so was the activity of the Department of Energy in doing these cultural resource studies. I've learned since. It's procedural and they're going to do what they're going to do anyway. And that's basically what I understood at that time I just didn't have a really good and clear understanding. And now the gold mines use the same protocol that was produced by the Department of Energy study. Just to finish up with the DOE's [Department of Energy] cultural resource studies, we were told that it was the Nevada Test Site that we were going to be involved in. At least that was my understanding in Duckwater with the people in Duckwater. It turned out that we were actually participating in the Yucca Mountain study. We were lied to by the researchers at the Institute of Social Research. They...after the Yucca Mountain study was done, then they went on to do the Nevada Test Site, and we were still confused. Then after the Nevada Test Site, the researcher went on to do the Nellis Air Force Bombing and Gunnery Range. And for him it was about completing contracts, getting money, making a name for himself, and engaging in an activity which met the goals of the Department of Energy. That part I did understand. I just didn't realize exactly how bad it was and since that time I've seen his study and work show up at...being used by the gold mines and the Bureau of Land Management, accepting that as meeting their policy goals of allowing gold mines to take Shoshone gold out of our land.

Now, I also found that the cultural resource studies used the Las Vegas Indian Center [a social welfare organization] as a historic Indian tribe. They [made and used the

²¹ The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires federal agencies to integrate environmental values into their decision making processes by considering the environmental impacts of their proposed actions and reasonable alternatives to those actions. For more information, see <http://www.epa.gov/compliance/nepa/index.html>.

Pahrump]²² Paiute tribe as a historic Indian tribe and they're not federally recognized. And the other members of the Consolidated Group of Tribes and Organizations was CGTO, was federally recognized tribes. Essentially those protectorates that the United States government created, colonies in Nevada—that's the only state that has Indian colonies. And I think that says clearly what the intent and use of those Indian peoples and lands were for, colonies. The Western Shoshone National Council, which is the traditional and original government of the West Shoshone nation that can trace its lineage back to the signers of the treaty of Ruby Valley and before, was excluded from the project. Even though I brought it to and attended some of these meetings on behalf of the council, I was essentially ostracized and left out of those meetings because the researchers didn't like the fact that I was vocally in opposition to them and I think if you go back and find records of those meetings you might find some hint of my participation and you might want to ask other, other people that you interview about my participation in those, and then how that went. They might say...well, whatever they say is what they say. I was there, I saw what I saw and one of the problems that I had with that Consolidated Group of Tribes and Organization also was that the Department of Energy created the organization, funded them, manipulated the outcomes through the researchers by providing them additional contracts, by providing the outcomes that helped meet the Department of Energy's goals. The representative from the Las Vegas Indian Center, one of the historic tribes, and the Indian Center is a social welfare organization, not federally recognized, represents only three percent Shoshone, five percent Paiute, eleven percent Sioux, twenty-five percent Navajo, and, you know, thirty percent other tribes, these numbers are so low in representing Shoshone and Southern Paiute so as not to be

²² Added by narrator.

credible. Yet the director of the Indian center was Southern Paiute and he was the key person in writing and rubber stamping the activities of the Consolidated Group of Tribes and Organization. He later became a Department of Energy employee and he was also the so-called chairman of the [Pahrump] Paiute tribe, the non-Federally recognized organization that the Department of Energy used in their resource...cultural resource study as a historic Indian tribe. And I later came to find out that he had been working as a consultant for this same researcher that produced the study protocol of cultural triage in 1990. He had been, at least for ten years, 1980, a consultant on other projects that he was engaged in. And currently today Richard Arnold, former director of the Las Vegas Indian Center, is a Department of Energy employee. I saw him three weeks ago at the National Nuclear Security Administration's [NNSA] meeting. He was at the San Antonio meeting of the TEC group which is the Transportation and External Coordination group of the Department of Energy and he's no longer with the Las Vegas Indian Center but he's going to these meetings and he is actually a Department of Energy employee. So those are my...probably the most serious violations, because in my opinion the cultural resource study being conducted by the department...being funded by the Department of Energy and used as a process for meeting their institutional goals is one process that violates that basic human rights of the Western Shoshone and used by the United States in the Department of Energy or by the Bureau of Land Management to allow these...entities that come to the United States, whether it be the nuclear industry or the gold mining industry. The United States is acting as a broker and is engaged in activities which effect genocide because the United States is allowing these things to

happen for the profit and benefit of these industries upon a vulnerable people with a living culture. It doesn't mean anything to the United States but it's everything to me.

You know, I'm nothing without my land and my people. And, you know, it affects me very deeply, affects my people very deeply and we're very few resources and opportunity and the United States is doing this in part deliberately and its indifference is deliberate, it's deliberately keeping us in poverty so that we can not address these issues. Poor people are more easily controlled than people with resources and it is a cultural genocide at the very least and I believe the intent is manifest by the deliberate indifference.

DE: So how many years have you been involved with these nuclear waste issues? Was it at the start of...

IZ: '85 '86 was the beginning when I was participating in these cultural resources studies and it was in the early part of 1986, the mid part of '86 or '87 that there was the meeting at the Las Vegas Indian Colony where my elders were sitting around the table crying and I said 'I can't...we can't...we don't do this,' you know, and that was how I know they were under duress. I was there and that's when the researchers said, you know, 'well you got to do something.' Essentially the researchers ostracized me and told me that the others are doing something. And the researchers themselves provided the options to the people that were there: 'well what do you want to do? Do you want to pour cement over them, you want to, you know, have them be destroyed? You want to put them in a museum? You know, do you want to do any number of these options?' And [they] offered the system of rating which is more important. That wasn't something we produced and it's represented in the Department of Energy's documentation in the

research study protocol as something that *we* created. That is not what happened. They provided the options. They said this is what they've done with other people and that's what we should do. And later on after I was gone apparently that was what the results of the meetings were. They say that my people made those decisions. That is not what happened. It was the researchers' unethical and immoral approach to creating a solution that met their needs with the Department of Energy.

DE: Okay. Moving kind of to current controversy over nuclear waste, high-level nuclear waste, how would you describe your role in the current debate or controversy over nuclear waste?

IZ: Well I think that my role hasn't really changed much. It is advocacy on behalf of the land and people, Western Shoshone people and Southern Paiute. Our voices are not adequately provided for inclusion or technical analysis of documents so I must do those things at whatever cost. People ask 'how do I accomplish so much with so little?'

Actually I accomplish so much with nothing because I don't hold anything back. I'm completely committed to addressing these issues and I've been involved so long it's getting much easier to make things happen but, you know, it's still difficult. You know, I could be more effective if I had funding. You know, so I'm trying to get to these...cut these issues into manageable chunks and focus on getting the most important things done.

DE: So what is the problem with nuclear waste from your perspective?

IZ: Environmental racism, racism. It's unjust, we bear a disproportionate burden of risk, we bear...we're expected to bear all of the responsibility for all of the waste from every site in our country and there is not an acknowledgment that we have suffered adverse impacts from weapons testing. And this is a new threat, additional burden that isn't being

characterized within the context of our past and ongoing current exposure. You know, it's just...there's a cumulative impact here that's not being acknowledged and we're not being included in opportunities to defend ourselves or to seek benefits and have those benefits meaningfully help our communities.

DE: So are you mostly involved with the Yucca Mountain high-level nuclear waste site or are you involved with other nuclear waste proposals?

IZ: Well just with the...I'm not even involved with the Yucca Mountain site. There's no invitation for Western Shoshone, at least the Western Shoshone National Council, to be involved. We create our own opportunities, we do our own research on radiation health effects, and we defend our own lands as well as we can. I think probably...one of the greatest risks that we have is ending up in a U.S. prison—aside from dying from the fallout. You know, ending in up in a U.S. prison because if we, you know, made every effort to defend our lands aggressively we would be in a U.S. prison or dead. So we make a deliberate effort to try to address these in the most open and peaceful diplomatic way that we can, whether it's the gold mines or just about anything. And we're talking to you because my effort here is trying to get penetration of our points of view out among other people that have some knowledge and opportunity to find creative solutions and educate people to what the real issues are.

DE: So you outline some problems that you saw with nuclear waste. What do you think are the potential solutions to those problems, or more generally to the problem of nuclear waste?

IZ: I think that we all employ intuition in risk assessment all the time and this is what I've learned through my education here at the university. Whether we're walking down

the street we do risk assessment on how clean the roads are, you know, depending on where we're at, if there's a rattlesnake on the ground, you know, how close we are to the hazards in the area. When we walk into a building we use our own intuition and we do a risk assessment. Everybody does a risk assessment and we do the same thing when we get close to nuclear reactors or, you know, highways. I think most people would feel comfortable not rushing to a wrong decision and this is where having a centralized underground storage facility in place, no matter where it is, is the wrong...wrong thing to do at this time. We need to give our future generations the opportunity to look at other options and alternatives and give them the necessary skills and education to find better solutions. A hundred, two hundred years, let the waste cool on site and we can also look at the technology. As I mentioned earlier, there's a problem with the deployment of large scale technologies whether it's oil, coal, nuclear, where we cannot see the end of the road and this is one thing Kai Erikson from Yale University department chair there had brought out in his recent book on new species of trouble. It's like looking at the Burma Road with a flashlight, you can only see as far as your light shines and you have a thousand mile road there, and that's the kind of situation we're looking at with nuclear waste. We can barely see where the waste energy will take us and meet our needs today and tomorrow and a few years out. But the waste, we're talking tens, hundreds of thousands of years. That is the real moral issue here, and it's the same thing with nuclear weapons.

The enduring purpose of nuclear technology is the creation of weapons of mass destruction and the associated proliferation. That is probably my biggest concern with nuclear technology and we demonize, we I mean America, demonizes other governments

for wanting the technology, whether that's right or wrong, but does not present a good argument why it should have it since this government used nuclear weapons on...on people, and this government, in using nuclear technology, allows people to be destroyed. My people are suffering the violation. I am in Las Vegas now with all of these people. Out at Indian Springs every morning the test site workers, thousands going to work, bothers me, wakes me up. Every morning I know what it is. At night they go back the other way. My only revenge, if you can call it that, is to put a nice big mesquite grill barbeque on the fire and have that smell go across the highway so that know that they're away from home, you know, and that I'm living there and, you know, that's all I can do. But the thought is ever present with me, even here with all of these people, and all of these distractions with the lights and the machines, you know, the gambling machines and all the cars, the distraction is always...the anxiety and stress is always with me that we're just a push button away from incineration and my people live under the threat and the cloud, and they know it, of being exposed by radiation. And in a matter of time the U.S. is going to make another push to detonate another bomb. And so much concern is, and I'm struggling with this these days is, at what point does the deterrent effect of mutual assured destruction, the policy of the Cold War, begin anxiety and the stress? And I think that I live with the deterrent effect on a daily basis. The stress is always there, it's omnipresent, and that shortens my life. That shortens my life because there's a direct relationship between poverty, stress, and quality of life, and so I'm suffering.

DE: And so on a related note, who will be affected by nuclear waste disposal at Yucca Mountain?

IZ: Well I don't believe that it will be going to Yucca Mountain so maybe that isn't a good question to be asking me with a specific location, you know.

Just to get on to site specifics, you know, one of the things about the research that was done, the cultural resource study was that our people would ask a question, 'is Yucca Mountain at risk of destruction from nuclear waste disposal?' The research scientists would take our original question, which is holistic, and take that question, reassemble it in a way that science can answer. Is a plant or an animal or a funerary site or object at risk from destruction from activities at Yucca Mountain? And then they apply their scientific method, higher, lower, one through ten, and say yes or no. And it didn't really matter anyway because they're going to do what they do. It's just procedural that they say they do the best they could and we're going to destroy you, your Indian life ways anyway. The problem...another problem if it was just that institutional compliance issue, is that our perspective is holistic and foreign perspective is site specific. But they represent their answer as our...as the appropriate answer to our original question and that's just wrong. So that's an example of the type of slight of hand and misrepresentation of our way of thinking and transposing that with the scientists or the foreign United States government. What was that question again? What are the...

DE: Yeah, who will be affected by nuclear waste disposal?

IZ: Well we are already being affected, as I said, the Western Shoshone and Paiute people are being...basic human rights are being violated; Americans are being affected because their moral...their government's moral ascendancy is stopped and it's going backwards. I'm trying to minimize that impact and asking for help in the [most] respectful way I can to say that there's genocide going on and Americans...you know

when I hear people say 'oh we just want to make a buck,' or 'we're here to make money,' or you know, 'this is Nye county and we're bearing the nation's burden, have only been here a couple of generations if that,' you know, 'they just want their money, pay off Nevada,' you know, so when I hear those kinds of statements it makes me say that I have no choice but to address the issue of our basic human rights violations and genocide to a broader audience and that impacts America's credibility abroad. I think the whole world has a stake in nuclear issues, nuclear waste issues, and the United States continues to press for proliferation, I mean we're looking at like India, Pakistan, the bombs are everywhere. And just the way the world is today, proliferation is the issue of nuclear waste, of nuclear power generation. These governments wouldn't have that technology if it wasn't for the United States leading the way and here we're continuing to lead the way in offering options. The genie is out of the bottle. The question is should we be doing...should we be doing this? You know, and I think we all have to take responsibility in doing our own part to stop it. I'm not anti-nuclear, I'm anti-stupidity. And this is just foolish.

DE: So who would you say is responsible for the nuclear waste situation?

IZ: I think all of us, but again you know we run into so many people that are limited by their own lack of vision. They don't want to engage fairly or openly and listen to other perspectives. They want to engage in argument and debate, which is used to take up resources and energy and obscure a fair and open debate, you know...look at what possibilities are out there. Let's use some resources efficiently. I don't find it. I don't have any problem with educating children, with putting money to education, universities, to find additional options and alternatives. That's where the money should be going.

That's where it should be going. And let's not engage in fear tactics, energy crisis issues, you know, we know where those things are. We heard the Nuclear Energy Institute two days ago telling us, or yesterday²³, how efficient nuclear energy is compared to, you know, solar and wind, and how much cheaper it is to produce nuclear energy, which is a fallacy at the very least because they were not factoring in waste disposal, health, adverse health impacts, or the issue of America's credibility, you know? How do you quantify something like that in terms of the abuses that my people suffered? You want to look at the cost they spent already, let's look at another cost. The United States spent eight billion dollars in search of a waste solution that they're proposing and want to construct at Yucca Mountain, on my property. The way I see it they just lost eight billion dollars because this has to be started over again. They're not factoring in that cost.

DE: So my final question before closing the interview is: what are the ethical concerns or considerations with nuclear waste disposal?

IZ: The ethical concerns. I think there is an attempt to find ways to state that there are moral and ethical issues but without a defined threshold of what constitutes a violation of ethics and morals. I think that for the Shoshone people, we have accepted more than our fair share of the burden and abuse and the only reason that we've borne that burden is not because it's acceptable, but because we've had no choice. We've had to put our bodies and use our bodies and the fact that we are still living, are survivors, the ethical and moral values are being written by our survival as victims of the U.S. nuclear weapons testing program and as victims of these cultural resource studies. So we really don't have any options except to document what is and is not morally and ethically acceptable in these

²³ This is a reference to the Nuclear Energy Institute's presentation at the Native American Forum on Nuclear Issues Conference, April 9-11, 2008, Las Vegas, Nevada.

scientific processes. Not much different than the way Jews or the Tuskegee airmen or other radiation...human radiation experiments, or the atomic veterans experienced with their bodies and they have to be advocates and take responsibility for what happened to them as we have done with ourselves. It isn't the United States government that's going to save us.

DE: Okay, before we close the interview is there anything else that you would like to add, any issues that I didn't cover...or anything?

IZ: [laughs] [deleted material] No, don't put that in there. How else can we...how can I help you in your work? After this I think it's important...I want to suggest that again you try and keep your interviews focused on nuclear waste as much as practically possible and try not to get into health stories from weapons testing, even though that is important and valuable. I think that you will find that people are more reluctant to want to have those things...more personal stories and information included in something that might go out to a broader public. And it just might be more helpful in order to allow you to achieve the goals of getting these interviews out to a broader public so that it can be used...or even to those communities and as I suggested before, making this information available to the superintendant of documents and government publications by sending some copies to the superintendent of documents in Washington is a good way to get it listed in the catalogs of government publications and sending copies to the depositories here in Las Vegas and in Salt Lake and Reno so that scholars and researchers will have access to that, and letting the people that you're interviewing know that that really is your goal. Trying to achieve that and demonstrate that will make some people...encourage some people to work with you as it does encourage me, and like I said, the other side of that is a lot of

personal stuff. Just as I didn't want it to be included because I think it's a...could be misappropriated or used to make money or steal my identity, whatever the case may be. Other people similarly don't want some of their personal health histories and experiences that are...who in their family has passed away or, you know, was abused, don't want some of that information to go out to a broader public so those are just suggestions.

DE: Great, and then can you recommend other people with whom I should talk?

IZ: You should talk to Maurice Frank in Duckwater. He was and is involved in the Consolidated Group of Tribes and Organization and I've been trying for years to educate him about some of these...reasons why the cultural resource study isn't helpful. And I haven't had the best results, you know, because the Department of Energy spends a lot of time courting these people, keeping them involved and paying them to do different things and I think that somewhere he...deep inside he knows there's an inconsistency I haven't been able to put words to it. Also, Pauline Estevez in Timbisha in Death Valley, which is the affected Indian tribe. She was also at the Consolidated Group of Tribes and Organization. Lalovie Miller who you met this past weekend. She was also part of that group I believe...and you may not want to use my name with some of these people [laugh] because, you know, there have been hard feeling in the past...or maybe. But those people yeah you can. Let me think who else was there, Kenny Anderson I believe was there and those are the primary ones I think on nuclear waste and the cultural resource studies you want to talk to. Yeah those are just the main ones you might want to talk to. Boyd Graham [spelling?] in Duckwater, you might want to talk to...who else do I have on my laptop? Those are the best right now...Virginia Sanchez in Duckwater.

DE: Okay. Well, thank you very much for taking part in the interview.

IZ: Good, what time is it?

DE: It's...