It is July 24 and this is grandpa Ralph Cameron, talking to my future grandchildren on up to great, great, great grandchildren. I hope many of you will listen to this tape and know the ways that the Maricopa Indians have lived and how I was raised up. I was born June 2, Nineteen Hundred-Fifteen at Maricopa Colony which is located about three miles west of Levine, Arizona. And I don't know what part of the day or night I was born, but I do know the exact time because the Bureau of Indian Affairs keeps track of our birth dates. And from that day on, the day I was born, I was just a baby and I did not know the language, I could not speak, I did not understand. But when I got to the age I would say about four or five around there, I started to talk the Maricopa Indian language. Which was mostly spoken in the home, everyday, we did not have the English way of speaking, but I knew all the words of the Maricopa tribe Indian language. And I've learned this from my parents, both father and mother, they were both my parents. And they raised me up the best way they can, under the loving care of my grandfather on my father's side. And his name, Indian name is Ohneshime which means Road Dreamer. He probably was in his seventies when I first start listening to him. In the evenings I would go to him when I start to learn the language and the stories and the legends that were told to all Indian children on that day, during those days. And these stories and songs were given like as a guideline for the future that all children will learn this and that they will walk and overcoming life as the bad things come your way you will know which is bad and you will go around them and live the best you can. And this was the way it was with me, I asked him to sing songs for me and sometimes he would say, I'm lazy, I'm tired tonight he says because he's been out walking, visiting relatives all day and he would come in. But at the end, he would say, alright, alright, I will tell you what you want to hear because he knew that was the obligation that was the work that the old people of the home, if the grandparent is not alive the grandmother takes his place and she tells them the Maricopa way of life. And then I would go to him like mostly during the winter months, long winter nights rather, I would go to him and he would tell me these stories. And when I first start listening to him, I was just a young child, too myself and going to
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school, day school I was, I was tired also so I would fall asleep right away. So that's what he used to tell us, you always fall asleep on me. When I tell you these stories but as I grew older, I created a real good interest, in our way of life our songs, and our and our stories that is told time after time for thousands of years back and this has been the way of the Maricopa tribe have managed to keep their tribal ways up. And this goes to show that they had a good culture, a good tradition, that they never waver away from it or stray from it but they kept that by, by mouth I would say that is told and passed on to the next generation because we didn't have no written language and so that was the best they could do. But that was like I said told every night, and a young person that is interested in this stories and songs will listen. And he would follow that way of life and life an overcoming life, and life an overcoming life where he will be a good parent, a good mother, a good grandfather, and that he would know his responsibilities of when he gets to marriage age, that he would get married, have children and he would be an industrious person, he will go out and work in his fields and raise crops, raise crops that the whole family will store away for later use and eat that plus the surplus of that is leftover. They take it over to into town and they would sell that, that was what it was all about, to make the father and the mother know their responsibilities and these stories that tells you all about it. And also in the songs, and I will also say that this songs that they sing, they are still singing it today although we have lost a lot of it because the white man have taken that away, tried to take it completely away, but yet there is a little left that is still going on and we can build on this and this is the reason why I'm trying to help out to revive our Indian songs and legends the best I can, and so that's the way I was taught and I like those songs and after awhile when I got to an older age, like six, seven years old, eight years old then I know those songs and then I would go to my grandfather and I would say, grandpa, tell me these certain story, because all these stories have titles to it too, and so I would ask him that. And I also the songs that he has taught me, I have learned them. And because like I said, I had a great interest in it, and I guess this is the reason why I had a great interest in it and learned them, kept some of it, that I will be able to pass them on to my grandchildren. And so, I learned those songs so well, that when I got to about seven, eight, nine, years old I could sing right along with him, word for word. But sometimes I would miss but then he would correct me and also the stories that the Indian, the Indian
stories that he told me that I could quote that word for word right along him but again like I say, I make little mistake here and there and I was corrected. So it was a very interesting ending of the day for me to go to sleep under that loving atmosphere. My mother and father were there, they heard, my father probably heard my grandfather these same stories and songs when he was a child, but yet he did not complain about it. He did not say, I know those songs already, I know those stories already, I'm tired of it, I don't want to hear it. No, he didn't say that, that was a good that was the way he was strengthened at the end of the day, when he went out and worked out all day, and like I said, all this was done under the love of the old man, the grandfather, as he sits there and he brings us all out to us to the whole household and my, my older sisters have heard this before me. And when I was born, I got into it and we all heard it, clear through. And so, I, I'm proud to say that I was born under a loving father and mother and grandfather that cared for me. I did not see my grandmother on my father's side because she had longed passed on and I never saw her. And but I saw my grandmother on my mother's side, she lived until I was about, about 35 years old, I knew her really well. She too has come and told me a lot of encouraging, strengthening words that I still keep which I treasure and it's in the depth of my heart, never to be taken away, because I know like what I said about my grandfather's teaching. I have went through life, I went to the day school, this was where I found out that everything was not as good as it is like at home. I went to school there at the day school, the year of nineteen hundred and twenty one, September 1921, and there I was supposed to have learned to speak English and that was all that we were supposed to speak was English, but I didn't know word of it. And when they, I could not talk to any of my school mates there so we sneak around and we talk Indian, our own language and if we get caught, we got whipped for it, we got punished for it, and so that's when the hard life started there. The teachers were not kind to us cause that was the system of the federal government is to keep the Indian down, and keep you down so you will never amount to nothing, that you will be just a slave to them, that they can use you, and work you, to do the labor work. But now days, in this modern age, nineteen hundred and ninety five, all things are open, its open to my grandchildren right now, they could make use of it, there is money available to send them to school. I did not have that privilege, I did not, I walked to work in the cold and in the heat but yet I was there and I
tried the best I could and I stayed there until I finished the third grade at the day school and then in nineteen hundred twenty six, the Indian police of the community came and told my parents that I was supposed to be attending school at the Phoenix Indian school which is now closed, and so when, when that time came, I went over there with my father. I remember that we rode in the, there was no cars around then, hardly, very hardly any cars so we used our buggy and horses drawn by horses. And it goes at a good pace we reached Phoenix and there we got on the street car, the street car fare was only two cents to ride three miles to the end of the line where the Phoenix Indian School was and it was the year nineteen hundred twenty six when I registered at the Indian school and started school there. And there life was made more harder for me cause I did not understand a lot of those things in those days. I did not understand or can read well yet, and at the Indian school they put rules and regulations. I guess there was about thirty, forty of them. And I could not read half of them, I could not understand them. I broke the rule, I broke the rule, the rules so, but that was no excuse. They did not excuse me because I did not understand, I was punished. Like Saturday off days and Sunday off day privileges were taken away from me and I had to be punished, to walk around in circles, during those times, sometimes we were made to work, to scrub the floor or many other ways that they punished us. And that was not very good, good school. I always wondered afterward, how can a child learn with fear in his heart, but today you don't have that. You go to school in an open way you can make something out of yourself or either you can make a failure out of yourself. School is very, very, very important in your life because you are getting out among the white people where the competition is great. You have to enter into that competition, but when you enter that competition don't try to overcome everybody or overdo anybody but just be satisfied with how much you have accomplished. Because there is a certain line where you will be satisfied, if you go over that satisfaction line you are starting to cheat and you are starting to lie. And that is that kind of life is not good, its going to drag you down health wise so that is a bad thing to do out there. But that is one of the great things that the Indian race has been given. To our tribe, the Maricopa tribe, the God that has made us, we did not know him as the God of today. But in those days it was a known God to them but they know there was power some where, where they say, if you turn to that, the power will have pity upon your soul,
and it will turn your way and you will become someone and find happiness, peace, joy
and satisfaction. You can not find it no other way but through these four things that I
have named that is the only way you can find happiness, that is the only way you can
bring up your children in the future, bring them up to the way of happiness like I have
said, I have been brought up in that atmosphere, night after night and day after day. And I
and as I went through a lot of these hardships at the school, I can stand under it, I can
stand it because of one of the great teachings my grandfather have told me. I still believe
them to these day that every time I created an interest and went to him and asked him to
sing or tell stories. Every time I gave him my full attention, he was standing me in a on a
solid foundation, just like he's pouring cement on there, making it more immovable so
that the things of the world that tried to tear me out, to disrupt my life to make me
nothing, that I would be just nothing like a bum on the street. That, those stories, those
songs have helped me up in the love that I was brought under in the future you will need
this the wrongs has always been with us, the good has always been with us because his
Creator that has taught us these things from the very beginning. And if you
respect, mind,
and obey what the Creator has taught us from the very beginning, you will have a
successful life, a happy life. Not only for yourself like I said also for your children, on
down after generation after generation, so that was the greatest thing that he gave me.
And also like I said when I went to the school, it was hard too. I find more, found it more
harder there than at the day school because like I said that there was so many things that I
was supposed to do, but I broke them and they punished us. In those days, when they
punished the children, they would tie them up, they would tie their wrists together and tie
to the ceiling, and let their bodies hand down, just barely, their toes barely touching the
floor and their at their will they would flip you upside down the top to the bottom and up
again as much as they want and this was supposed to put you in line. But we know today
that is not the answer, all it does was to create a hate that was what happened to me. One
time I disobeyed the work rules I knew I was supposed to be there but I went off and
played hookey with another boy we got caught the next day. We were whipped for that in
the shoe shop but I was the younger one so I didn't get too many whippings but the other
boy was supposed to know more because he was older than I am and he had more
whippings. And I know it was my fault anyway, I didn't believe that he had to whip me to
make me understand that I did wrong, all they had to do was sit me down and talk to me, council to me in the wise ways like my own people, our grandfathers and our grandmothers used to do. They would correct you and they would not slap you around, whip you and chase away from the home, no they would sit you down and face you, face to face. And out from the inner most part of their heart and they would pour out their love and then council to you, and that took a great, greater effect and it worked. So like the hard times at the Indian school, that I hated to go to school, it's not school that I hated, it was the system, the federal system that was applying all this unnecessary things that would create fear and unhappiness in our lives. I used to run away, I used to run away and finally I got caught then I was sent to another BIA school, called Sherman Institute which was about four hundred miles away from Phoenix. And there that's where they sent me, and I went to school there in the year of nineteen hundred and thirty one, and thirty two and when I got over there I found out the school was a better school than Phoenix. And I liked this school, that's the reason why I stayed there for three years I did not run off Cause everything was done to us, talk to us, in a way that I feel that it would be done. I never got no whippings or nothing over there, there was hardly much whippings like it was at Phoenix. So I stayed there two years, and then I remembered, remembered that somehow I remembered as I was walking on the campus early one morning after all the students were in the classrooms and at work and I had worked that night all that night and I had the whole day off for myself. As I was walking the parade grounds, walking from the easterly direction, all of a sudden something told me that education was very important. So I started to advance more in the educational ways. I liked sports and I tried out for the varsity football Sherman team, but I was too young and I was a little too small yet the greater, bigger boys uh, won over and they were picked out to be on the varsity team. But I played, I had a chance because all government schools were in the system they were using um, they were using um shop teams to compete with one another so like I was working on the farm and they had a team there called the Aggie team. I went on there and I made the team on there. And we played Sunday afternoons, we did not have any football uniforms, not even a pair of football shoes but we just played on the bare ground, hard ground, no grass nothing but I loved the sport and I liked to get the hard knockings then because this was becoming my future life that I know I'm not going to
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live an easy life, like I've been told when I was a child, that the future is rough, that you must learn to stand it, so that was part of the training to learn and so that's, that's what I did over there and then at the same time, I heard that the old military systems in all the government schools were being lifted so I wrote back to my former school, the Phoenix Indian school, in the year of nineteen hundred and thirty two. And I told the superintendent there that I wanted to return home to my old school and in his reply he said your welcome, come back here, so all my all my transcripts were returned to Phoenix and it was already there when September came. I registered at the Phoenix Indian school and I met a new superintendent there, the old superintendent was gone named John B. Brown whom believed in corporal punishment and this was the reason why we were, we were treated so bad and he was gone. And in it was a young man by the name of Dr. Carl H. Skinner who loved young people. He was kind of to us, and he was seen always on the athletic field because his way of bringing interest to the child and bringing him up physically was through physical testings, so he, his belief was that uh, a team for every boy and the boy on every team was his slogan for that school. So they had the smallest boy on like the marble teams, all kinds of teams that they had there and that was what I liked. And when I went to school there before I saw those former football players sporting a great big letter P on their chest and that's what I wanted to win one of those so I was not a very intelligent boy, my average in school was only a c not a c+ but a c rating and so I had to try really hard to catch up with my studies and that the requirements to earn that athletic sweater you have to pass all of your grades, every one of them, not only them but shop places where we work we have to pass and they also had a demerit system and you had to keep your points above ninety points I believe it was if you fell below that you were not eligible to represent the team or any kind of activity that the school was offered that was the reason why I trained so hard and the only place where I could study was in the boy's living room. Where there was about almost a hundred boys, cutting up and making all kinds of noise, but yet I had to find a way to study and do my homework and turn it in. And because I wanted that award so great that that's what I did, this went on and the school was good, I loved the school, I loved to go to school, nothing in those days would keep me out of school, when I got to when I first when to the Indian school I wanted to work, because I already learned to work at home, helping my
parents, I already knew how to handle the rake, the hoe, the shovel, all those basic tools that you start to learn to use as a young boy or young girl so when I went to school, I saw the bigger boys go to work they were given what they call outing cards and they went to made money for their own spending money. I was not old enough yet to be at the age of eighteen before your eligible to receive that, so I went up away from the school among where the white people lived and I walked back and forth, I was too shy to backward to go up and ask if they that if they had a job that needed to be done that I would want to work, I didn't say it. But they knew what I wanted I guess, one place, one woman asked me if I wanted to work, and I said yes, I want to