

## A TEI Project

# Interview of Angela Brown

### Table of contents

1. Transcript
  - 1.1. SESSION ONE JUNE 22, 2011

## 1. Transcript

### **1.1. SESSION ONE JUNE 22, 2011**

*BROWN*

I had a really rough life ever since I was—my parents passed away when I was, like—when I came first, second year after I came back on BIA [Bureau of Indian Affairs]—no, wait a minute, no. So my parents passed away when I was young, about twenty.

*BAYHYLLE*

You were twenty when both of them passed away?

*BROWN*

In one year.

*BAYHYLLE*

Oh, my gosh. Let me get this set up here. This is Ruth Bayhülle. The date today is June 22 [2011]. I am in Bell, California, speaking with Angela Brown. Angela, when and where were you born?

*BROWN*

I was born in a Ganado Hospital.

*BAYHYLLE*

Ganado, Arizona?

*BROWN*

Arizona.

*BAYHYLLE*

And what's your date of birth then?

*BROWN*

5/26/1945.

*BAYHYLLE*

Tell me about your family, your mother and father and brothers and sisters. How many did you have?

*BROWN*

Well, only two. I lost my sister last year. It's been two years.

*BAYHYLLE*

Was she your older sister?

*BROWN*

Yeah, she is my older sister.

*BAYHYLLE*

So it's just the two of you, then?

*BROWN*

Uh-huh. I had a brother, but he passed away when he was young. He was eleven years old when he passed away. And then I had another two after me, but one miscarriage. One was a stillbirth.

*BAYHYLLE*

So your mother had several children, but only two—

*BROWN*

Two survived.

*BAYHYLLE*

—survived to adulthood. Tell me what your life was like. Did you live only in Ganado, or did you live anywhere else?

*BROWN*

I lived only in Ganado. I've been sent to boarding school.

*BAYHYLLE*

Where did you go in the first boarding school?

*BROWN*

Phoenix.

*BAYHYLLE*

Phoenix Indian School? How old were you?

*BROWN*

I started really late. I started, like, about when I was nine years old because my dad don't want me to go to school. He wants me to take care of sheep and horses and all that stuff that he has, and look after them. I said, "I want to go to school." And my mom, well, my mom, she was educated. She went to Klagetoh for a while, Boarding School. Then she went to a Christian school, Catholic school in St. Michael.

*BAYHYLLE*

Near Gallup, right?

*BROWN*

No, that's between Window Rock—

*BAYHYLLE*

Window Rock, right.

*BROWN*

Yeah, she went to school. She's complete eighth grade from there and then she went on to Santa Fe to finish her high school, but didn't happen. The school closed, so she's been sent back and she

only live with her mom and stepfather. But stepfather, it's not worth being around him, she said, so she was just kind of bouncing around between a cousin and sisters and all. I think she had two brothers and three sisters. They all pass on and the brother, too, so she was just by herself. And then my grandma was remarried to another man. On that side, I had one aunt and five brothers, but she wasn't really close to them. She wasn't close to them, so she's just left by herself. But one day, my uncle was married to my dad's niece, and my dad decided to marry my mom. She was young and he was old. He was old, like sixty-two years old, and my mom is only twenty-two years old.

*BAYHYLLE*

My goodness. That's a big age difference.

*BROWN*

Yes, they make arrangement marriage. That's what they used to do back a while. And that makes it really hard on her because my dad, he had twelve kids. He had twelve kids.

*BAYHYLLE*

Already when he married your mother?

*BROWN*

Already. So she, like, was right in the middle of a lot of kids and she doesn't even know how to start trying to [unclear] up, raising kids.

*BAYHYLLE*

To be a parent already.

*BROWN*

To be a parent. So I don't remember, twelve. I think it was about five girls and six—

*BAYHYLLE*

Oh, my goodness.

*BROWN*

I know. That's a lot of family.

*BAYHYLLE*

That's a lot of responsibility.

*BROWN*

Yeah. She didn't like it at all, but she has no choice. And after she left my grandma, then she just stayed on my dad's side. He was from Sunrise, Arizona. So she just stayed over there and then she don't want to go back because her stepfather, she don't like her stepfather at all, so she'd rather be with my dad than be not there.

*BAYHYLLE*

Let me ask you, what tribes are you?

*BROWN*

Navajo.

*BAYHYLLE*

Navajo. You're full?

*BROWN*

Full-blooded Navajo.

*BAYHYLLE*

So she didn't really have much choice. It was sort of the lesser of two set of circumstances.

*BROWN*

Uh-huh.

*BAYHYLLE*

But she stayed with your father and then had several children of her own.

*BROWN*

Yeah, I had a brother, the oldest brother, and then my sister that passed away last year, or two years, and me, and two after me.

*BAYHYLLE*

So you were born at Ganado. What was it like growing up out on— what was the name of your village? Ganado was the name of your—

*BROWN*

Klagetoh. It was small. It was like a school. Not anymore. It's not school anymore.

*BAYHYLLE*

What was there at Klagetoh when you were living there?

*BROWN*

When I was there, it was a big town. [laughter]

*BAYHYLLE*

What was there for you?

*BROWN*

It was school, a boarding school, and it was a little trading post, and then—what was it was there? And that's about it, just mostly school was in that big city, yeah.

*BAYHYLLE*

Were there a lot of people coming in and out of town, though, going back and forth to the trading post?

*BROWN*

Yes.

*BAYHYLLE*

Because there were a lot of people that used that trading post, didn't they?

*BROWN*

A lot.

*BAYHYLLE*

Coming off the reservation and brought their things and trading.

*BROWN*

The reservation with the wagon and a long ways. It was the only groceries right there, grocery store.

*BAYHYLLE*

And water? Did they have to get their water there, too, or was there a well somewhere else?

*BROWN*

Yeah, there's other places, but there's some right there. The reason why they closed that school because there wasn't enough water anymore.

*BAYHYLLE*

Oh, my gosh.

*BROWN*

So they closed the school.

*BAYHYLLE*

So what was your life like living there in Ganado then, your first nine years or so that you lived there?

*BROWN*

Klagetoh, I was grown-up. I don't even remember part of it.

*BAYHYLLE*

What did your father do and your mother do?

*BROWN*

They never worked. My dad work in the railroad for a while. That was it.

*BAYHYLLE*

Did he have his own farm or his own ranch then?

*BROWN*

Just a ranch, yeah, just a ranch.

*BAYHYLLE*

What kind of animals did you have?

*BROWN*

We had lots, about three hundred sheep and then horses, like, about, oh, I'd say about fifteen, and then he don't have any cattles, though.

*BAYHYLLE*

So did the boys help him as well on the ranch?

*BROWN*

Yes, they were helping, but he raised a lot of corn and he raised a lot of, like, vegetables, potatoes, squash, beans, and watermelon, all different kind. He had I don't know how many acres of cornfield. He has two separate fields, one for vegetables or corn, the other side's just corn, and he was always busy with that.

*BAYHYLLE*

I'll bet. I'll bet. Taking care of the fields.

*BROWN*

Around this time in June, he butchered two sheeps and bring the different people to help plant.

*BAYHYLLE*

What kind of field? The cornfield?

*BROWN*

Uh-huh.

*BAYHYLLE*

Clear it out first.

*BROWN*

Yeah.

*BAYHYLLE*

That's a lot of work. That's heavy work. Did you help also with the chores then?

*BROWN*

With the chores, yeah. We used to help and, like, help my mom to cook and stuff like that, and we'd go out in the field. But when the corns are coming and start growing, and then my dad said, "Don't go. Don't go in the field." He said, "The corns are real tall, and you guys are short. Don't play around and don't go to sleep under the corn." What did he say? He used to—I guess—I don't know if he scare us or not. He said, "And the crows going to come around, take your eyes out." [laughs]

*BAYHYLLE*

Well, they're pretty bold sometimes. They could really harass you.

*BROWN*

So he tried to keep us away from the field.

*BAYHYLLE*

From the stalks, yes. What kind of work did your mother do then in the home?

*BROWN*

She was just like a secretary. People used to come to her, write letters for them.

*BAYHYLLE*

Really? So she could read and write. You said your grandmother was educated.

*BROWN*

No, my mom was educated.

*BAYHYLLE*

Your mom was educated. What kind of forms would they bring to her then and ask her to—

*BROWN*

Write letters to their different—like their daughters and son do when out of school and in school, I guess, and then—

*BAYHYLLE*

They needed help sending letters.

*BROWN*

Yeah, letters.

*BAYHYLLE*

So she did some secretarial work for the community, right, to help people?

*BROWN*

Yeah. That's about all she did. She weave a lot and she was training us to do, but I never pick it up.

*BAYHYLLE*

Weaving?

*BROWN*

Yeah. I know how to carve. I know how to spin. That's about all. Otherwise, weaving, how to start it, I never did.

*BAYHYLLE*

So she would weave the rugs and the blankets then. What would she do with them?

*BROWN*

Sell them. Take it to the trading post.

*BAYHYLLE*

How long would she work on a rug or a blanket?

*BROWN*

She'd work on it I don't know how long. She starts one all different size. She finish the small one right away, but she makes a big one, it takes a while.

*BAYHYLLE*

Takes a while, several months sometimes, doesn't it, between your own schedule.

*BROWN*

Yeah. Sometimes she would be helping my dad do things, so she don't really have time to sit down and finish it.

*BAYHYLLE*

Did you have a car?

*BROWN*

Oh, no, we traveled by wagon, always a wagon.

*BAYHYLLE*

Wagon and the horses then, right?

*BROWN*

And horses, yeah. My dad didn't really want us to hang around because my grandma lived close to the trading post, about twenty miles away from the trading post. He didn't like my mom's stepfather, too, so he didn't want us to go over there. He don't want

us to go there and visit. They can come and visit, but we don't go there and visit.

*BAYHYLLE*

So that was your life until you were about nine?

*BROWN*

Nine, right.

*BAYHYLLE*

Then what happened?

*BROWN*

At the boarding school from Klagetoh, they come after me all the time and my ma said, "She's ready to go." My dad said, "No." My dad used to go hide me so they won't see me. [laughs]

*BAYHYLLE*

Why didn't he want you to go?

*BROWN*

Because he wasn't educated. He think that for him, being there all his life doing the livestock, he think I'm going to do the same thing, too. So my mom said, "No." My ma, she'd seen the future later on and she don't expect that we're going to have a lot of sheep, a lot of horses. And he said, "No." They always had disagreed on that, you know, because I'm the youngest and most of his kids didn't go to school. They put them in school, but they kept running off, especially the boys.

*BAYHYLLE*

What about your older sister? Did they try to send your older sister to school as well?

*BROWN*

Uh-huh, she started [unclear].

*BAYHYLLE*

So she went to a regular—

*BROWN*

She went to the Klagehoh Boarding School and then into Phoenix Indian School.

*BAYHYLLE*

So for some reason your father didn't want you to go, right?

*BROWN*

I'm the youngest of the whole tribe, so he wants me to hang around there and help and he says, "I'm getting old, so you need to help your mom."

*BAYHYLLE*

He was probably getting pretty old by that time, wasn't he?

*BROWN*

Yeah.

*BAYHYLLE*

In his seventies.

*BROWN*

Seventies.

*BAYHYLLE*

But your mother prevailed and said, "The school's coming to get her and she's going."

*BROWN*

"She's going." But one day she just sent me off. She said, "She's going to school. She's going to school."

*BAYHYLLE*

Did you want to go?

*BROWN*

I wanted to go when I was younger. I wanted to learn a lot, but I never did. And then when I started doing boarding school, there's a lot of older kids I went to school with, late, late.

*BAYHYLLE*

That's what I understand. For your community, children started school very late.

*BROWN*

Very late.

*BAYHYLLE*

Sometimes they were ten, nine.

*BROWN*

Some are ten, twelve, thirteen. Some of them, they changed their name. They were older. They make it look younger.

*BAYHYLLE*

And gave them another name to create a record for them.

*BROWN*

Yeah. So I noticed that when I was going to school. I start seeing that when I start going to school, but then I'd ask my mom, "Did you do that to my name, too, my year?" He said, "No, you had birth certificate. Don't worry about your age." [laughs] But still they found out that a lot of kids are a lot older than me. They put us forward instead of learn from the beginning.

*BAYHYLLE*

Put you in the proper grade according to your age then, right?

*BROWN*

Uh-huh.

*BAYHYLLE*

That must have been hard.

*BROWN*

It was hard. We couldn't keep it up, and I left because my mom was getting sick, being diabetic for so long. So my stepsister would come and tell me, "Why don't you go home and help your mom?" Because she was in the hospital. And I said, "I just really started school. Why are you telling me to go home?" I said, "Why don't you tell May?" My sister was Maybelle. Her name's Maybelle. I said, "Why don't you ask May?" "Oh, she has to finish her school." I said, "I have to finish my school, too." I said, "I started late and I want to stay in school. I want to stay in school." But finally, I start going to school and I quit. I left and never returned back to school. That's when she came and picked me up and brought me—

*BAYHYLLE*

How old were you then? How long did you stay at the boarding school at—was it Klagetoh Boarding School?

*BROWN*

No, Phoenix.

*BAYHYLLE*

How long did you stay?

*BROWN*

I went about five years.

*BAYHYLLE*

Oh, my gosh. Let's talk a little bit about that. What was it like going to Phoenix Indian School? Did you like it?

*BROWN*

Well, depends. Couple time we almost ran away, me and my cousins. But I don't know. We're just like, I guess, homesick.

*BAYHYLLE*

So you had cousins there, too, then? At least you knew some people there at the school.

*BROWN*

Yeah, my cousin. I had three of my cousin are going to school there, girls and boys, and they want me to—"When you get lonely, we're going to run away."

*BAYHYLLE*

Come back home or just run away?

*BROWN*

Go back home. Then we talk about, "No, we'll get eaten by coyotes." [laughs] "We better not try this." I stayed in school, but when I came back for the summer, I didn't go back. I didn't go back.

*BAYHYLLE*

After the fifth year?

*BROWN*

Uh-huh.

*BAYHYLLE*

After the fifth year or so, you didn't go back.

*BROWN*

I didn't go back.

*BAYHYLLE*

Was school—was it hard for you, the classes?

*BROWN*

I came right here. I said, "I want to go back to school at Englewood," and they said I needed twenty more credits to finish high school.

*BAYHYLLE*

That's like six classes, huh?

*BROWN*

Yeah. I went to night school for a while, and what happened, I met my husband and we got married. I got pregnant and I didn't do it anymore, because he was going to Western State College. He get his degree after he's done that and he wants to move away to Santa Monica.

*BAYHYLLE*

Oh, okay, so he got busy and you got busy with family, right?

*BROWN*

Uh-huh. So I thought, I want to go back to school when I didn't finish with my old daughters. I want to go back to school again, which I never did. I just, like, start another one, another one, another one. Just like her ma, she wants to go back to school.

*BAYHYLLE*

You can go back together.

*BROWN*

Yeah.

*BAYHYLLE*

So you were at Phoenix Indian School for about five years and then you went home for the summer and just never went back.

*BROWN*

Never went back.

*BAYHYLLE*

What did you do then?

*BROWN*

I just helped my mom because she wasn't able to do a lot of things that she used to do, yeah, and I started writing letters for the

people, take it over. She was telling me, she said, "I can't write letters anymore, dear." She said, "I gave it to somebody else that able to do it." So she stopped writing letters, but she was really sad about it.

*BAYHYLLE*

Was her eyesight giving out, or her hands, or just not feeling well?

*BROWN*

Eyesight, eyesight.

*BAYHYLLE*

How long did you stay there then before you went back to school?

*BROWN*

I think about a year, a year and a half.

*BAYHYLLE*

Then where did you go?

*BROWN*

First I went to babysit for one of my cousin.

*BAYHYLLE*

Where did she live?

*BROWN*

She lives in—it was a him.

*BAYHYLLE*

Him, okay. Where did he and his family live?

*BROWN*

He live [unclear].

*BAYHYLLE*

Arizona?

*BROWN*

Arizona.

*BAYHYLLE*

How long did you stay there?

*BROWN*

I stayed a year and a half with him, a year, and babysit. I raised kids like this, and they were all crying after me when I left, when I was leaving.

*BAYHYLLE*

Oh, they were going to miss you.

*BROWN*

Yeah, they're all crying, "No, no, don't leave us."

*BAYHYLLE*

So then where did you go?

*BROWN*

That's when I came out here.

*BAYHYLLE*

What was that like? Why did you come out here and what was that like?

*BROWN*

I came out here, it was during the summertime. They were on vacation. It was, like, in September. It was hottest day that they came.

*BAYHYLLE*

How old were you?

*BROWN*

I was going into nineteen.

*BAYHYLLE*

Why did you come out here then that first time?

*BROWN*

Because, remember, I told you, I had to babysit.

*BAYHYLLE*

You babysit. That's right. For your sister?

*BROWN*

My sister.

*BAYHYLLE*

She was living in Venice?

*BROWN*

Venice.

*BAYHYLLE*

In Venice, you said. So you came out and babysat for her, and then what happened? Tell me again what you did, what you were talking about.

*BROWN*

Then I move out. What happened, I couldn't get along with my brother-in-law and I move out with my friend. Then I stayed there, like—I got pregnant, and my husband—I cried. I said, "When I left, my daddy didn't want me to leave." He was saying that, "If you go into a big city like your sister did, I don't want to see you coming home with that baby in your arms saying that you don't even know who the father is." He told me that, and when I left from there, I thought about that all the time. I don't want to get involved with anybody, but I did and I had the baby. We move into Santa Monica again.

*BAYHYLLE*

How did you meet your husband?

*BROWN*

I was going to school at night, me and my friend.

*BAYHYLLE*

Where were you going?

*BROWN*

At Englewood High School.

*BAYHYLLE*

Trying to get your high school credits going.

*BROWN*

Yeah.

*BAYHYLLE*

And you met him at school?

*BROWN*

No, he was going to college.

*BAYHYLLE*

Oh, he was in college.

*BROWN*

This is the school, and he was right here. It was Western State College, and then farther down, that's where we lived. We walk home every night. We catch the bus to school, but me and my friend, we were both going to school.

*BAYHYLLE*

Was he Navajo too?

*BROWN*

She was a Navajo, yeah.

*BAYHYLLE*

And your husband, Navajo too?

*BROWN*

Uh-huh.

*BAYHYLLE*

So there were quite a few Navajos in the area, it sounds like, in that part of town.

*BROWN*

Especially around the university or whatever, college, where they going to school, there was quite a few Navajo, and different tribe are going to school. We never noticed it.

*BAYHYLLE*

It was called Western College?

*BROWN*

Western State College.

*BAYHYLLE*

So you meet your husband while you were both going to school and got married, and started a family right away, it sounds like, right?

*BROWN*

Yeah.

*BAYHYLLE*

And then what happened? Did you go back home after that or did you stay out there?

*BROWN*

No, I stayed around. We stayed around. My husband, he got a job in Santa Monica as an electronic something. He started working there, so he told me that I should just stay home and watch the baby. I said, "No, I want to go to work too." So I was working in the

factory. We were making, like, baby stuff, like that age, nipples and stuff like that, bottles. My sister was working there, so I started working with her. We stayed there for a while, and then he got really bad. I couldn't handle him. Then they told us to move because he couldn't keep it up with the rent money, because I had another baby.

*BAYHYLLE*

So you had two children by that time.

*BROWN*

I had two girls, yeah, my oldest daughter—

*BAYHYLLE*

He was starting to have problems?

*BROWN*

Yeah, have problem drinking. So I couldn't do it on my own with the babies and with the job, so I started babysitting for my sister again, and she has two, going on three. So that happened. I couldn't get started. We moved to Carver—not Carver City. Yeah, we moved to Carver City, and then he couldn't handle a job anymore, so I had to get on the welfare. He couldn't handle job. He couldn't handle a job anymore. And I told his dad, I said, "Come and get him. Take him home. I just don't want to deal with him anymore. He just drink too much, and I can't do it. I want to do things. I want to go on with my life. Come get your son, because all he does is drink. He goes to work and then sometime, instead of going to work, he started going drinking." So that's how bad he was. One day he came with a trailer and he pack all this stuff. I told him to stay. Then he said he's not going. I said, "No, you go. You go with your daddy." I said, "I can't handle you. You don't know how to work." I said, "You just turn to a bottle and you go out from here outside and then—."

*BAYHYLLE*

You're gone.

*BROWN*

"You're gone to a bottle." I said, "I can't deal with you." I said, "Move, move, move. We living like that, live with your dad," because I noticed that, after I married him, all his aunt, his uncles are like that, drinking. And he started taking me over there, like, to their house. They used to live in Engle—not Englewood. They live out this way. Oh, gosh.

*BAYHYLLE*

He had family out here then, didn't he?

*BROWN*

Yeah.

*BAYHYLLE*

But you only had your sister, right?

*BROWN*

I have my sister. Even my sister told me, she said, "No, no, Angie, no. Just leave him. Look at the whole family have having drinking problems every weekend." But I just couldn't let him go. I mean, I let him go, but he just don't want to go. He wants to stick around. But he knows I'm working hard. I'm doing my best to make a living, but he's not helping.

*BAYHYLLE*

Take care of the family. It must have been hard for him, too, on some level. Very hard all the way around. Hard on everybody.

*BROWN*

I know he love his kids and everything, but drinking at all—even I call some AA [Alcoholics Anonymous] thing. And he called me, started going for classes, and then they start asking all kinds of question. I said, "Well, it's for my husband. I didn't say it's for me. Don't ask me all these question. I don't know. I don't know what he needs." They say, "You've got to be in there with him too." I said,

"Not me." I had to take care of the kids and work, and that's my job. I said, "Him, he just want to go drinking." And his family moved back, his aunt and his grandma.

*BAYHYLLE*

Back to the reservation?

*BROWN*

To the reservation, to Window Rock, because they were working for BIA, uncle and aunt.

*BAYHYLLE*

So then what happened? Did you finally move away, or did you just continue on trying to do the best you could?

*BROWN*

Me?

*BAYHYLLE*

Yes.

*BROWN*

I say he came over. He pack all their stuff, and we put half of our stuff in the storage and we took whatever we can. And I really hate it. I really don't want to go back over there because I know there's nothing for me. I mean, maybe I wouldn't mind if my mom was there and my dad.

*BAYHYLLE*

What year was this?

*BROWN*

My mom died in 19—they both died in 1968.

*BAYHYLLE*

So when did you go back, then, to the reservation with your young children and your husband when they packed you up?

*BROWN*

In '69, I think. In '69.

*BAYHYLLE*

And you hated to go back there then because the opportunity there wasn't—

*BROWN*

Nothing, no.

*BAYHYLLE*

Where did you move back to? Window Rock?

*BROWN*

Well, they're from Tohatchi.

*BAYHYLLE*

Tohatchi, which is north of Window Rock, isn't it? Toward Shiprock?

*BROWN*

Yeah, going to Shiprock, yeah. But his father, my father-in-law, just dump us off at my half sister's, my stepsister's, my oldest stepsister's.

*BAYHYLLE*

Oh, my goodness.

*BROWN*

And I couldn't stand her husband too. I just don't like her husband. I don't like him at all because he drinks too. The two of them were drinking when they got together. "Forget it," I just said. Then I kept begging him. I said, "You go to your dad and find us a place or find a job. Take us away from here. I don't want to be here." I said, "I told you that I don't want to come back and I don't want to be here." Everybody wants land because when my mom passed away, they told them, all the councilmen, they came to the final night of

my dad—yeah, my dad. I told them, I said, “The younger kids, everything belong, what’s here, belong to them, to these two.”

*BAYHYLLE*

Second family, to the younger children, you and your sisters and brothers?

*BROWN*

Uh-huh, and the mother. “Don’t say that that’s yours. Leave them alone because you’re starting your own family.”

*BAYHYLLE*

They were already much older, weren’t they.

*BROWN*

Yeah. “So don’t touch them.” But still, the youngest as we are, they want the land. They want piece of my dad’s stuff. So finally my mom just got rid of everything, “Here, take this. Take it. That’s yours. Don’t bother me no more.” And just keep two horses. That’s it. [interruption]

*BAYHYLLE*

So you moved back to north of Window Rock there, and that didn’t go very well for you then. You were unhappy, and no work and nothing, unhappy with your family. How long did you live back there then?

*BROWN*

A year. I had another baby there. My daughter. My first daughter, she’s not married, and that’s my second daughter with two boys.

*BAYHYLLE*

They’re good-looking fellows, nice and tall.

*BROWN*

Anyway, their mom, the third one, their mom, and then that, she's the youngest. Their mom is the youngest by a different father. The three oldest are by my first husband.

*BAYHYLLE*

So you moved back there and had another baby and wasn't very happy. What happened then?

*BROWN*

I was working.

*BAYHYLLE*

Oh, you got a job? You were working?

*BROWN*

I started working at Window Rock, New Mexico. Not Window Rock. Gallup, New Mexico. I started working with one of the furniture places. I was so happy when I got a job, and every day I didn't like it when I was with my stepsister. I had to get a job. We can't be sitting here, and my kids already going to school, and they're small. My youngest daughter was—I mean my first daughter was, like, about three. The other one was like her. And then he came and he went to his dad, and then they came and got us. We lost everything.

*BAYHYLLE*

All your things?

*BROWN*

[unclear] our furnitures.

*BAYHYLLE*

Oh, my gosh.

*BROWN*

Take our car.

*BAYHYLLE*

You had a really rough time. That was a bad transition.

*BROWN*

Really bad during my younger days. I got a job and I was glad I had a job.

*BAYHYLLE*

In Gallup?

*BROWN*

Uh-huh, Gallup, and then we move with his dad. And then he said, "Maybe it will be closer for you to get a job in Gallup or somewhere else." I said, "You're educated. I'm not. And I told you, if I marry you—" I said, "Go find somebody else who has an education like you. I don't want to pull you down, and I want to go to school, and I don't want to be starting a family when I'm young." So I said, "You go on with your life. Go find somebody else, not me." But, no, he stuck to me like glue. And he find a job, but he don't last long on the job over there. He find a job in Gallup and sometime he don't come home. I said, "Well, you might as well watch the kids. I'll go find a job." So I did. I started working in a furniture store, but it was hard for me. I got a car, and it was hard for me still during the wintertime.

*BAYHYLLE*

Oh, right. The weather is bad there, isn't it? Roads are icy.

*BROWN*

Get snowed in.

*BAYHYLLE*

Get snowed in.

*BROWN*

Snowed in. Can't go to work.

*BAYHYLLE*

Or can't get home.

*BROWN*

Can't get home, and sometime I take my kids and live with somebody in Gallup. In case I don't go home, I go to my kids and pick them up. So while he was out drinking, he can't even handle watching the kids. I was so sad when I got pregnant again because I don't want no more kids until I straighten out with my life. But I got pregnant again.

*BAYHYLLE*

Is this your third or your fourth?

*BROWN*

That's my third.

*BAYHYLLE*

Your third.

*BROWN*

So I had the baby in Gallup. Thank god that my cousin and his wife were, like, taking care of me because they live at a school. He was a janitor over there. He'd call after work. He'd come check on me, see I'm okay. I worked till my last one week, I think.

*BAYHYLLE*

Before you had the baby?

*BROWN*

Uh-huh.

*BAYHYLLE*

That must have been hard.

*BROWN*

Yeah, really hard. I even had to leave her a message at the trading post, to take a message to her house and tell, "I'm in labor. I'm going to have a baby here. Hurry, come and get me."

*BAYHYLLE*

Oh, my goodness.

*BROWN*

She came way later. She says, "I'm sorry." She said, "I was so busy doing something else and I got your letter in the mail." I said, "Oh, my god." And she took me. I almost had a baby on the railroad.  
[laughs]

*BAYHYLLE*

Oh, my goodness.

*BROWN*

I told her, "Go to emergency," and she got in the front. She ran inside the hospital and, "She's going to have a baby." As soon as I drove into the delivery room, the baby came out.

*BAYHYLLE*

Oh, my goodness.

*BROWN*

I don't even know where he was, and thank god that my cousin was there for me.

*BAYHYLLE*

So you had this beautiful baby girl, right? Your third one was a girl?

*BROWN*

Uh-huh.

*BAYHYLLE*

And then what happened?

*BROWN*

And then we went home, and I told my sister over here, I said, "I want to go back. I want to go back. I don't want to be here." His aunt came. We went and visit, and then he wants to come—  
[interruption]

*BAYHYLLE*

So you were just ready to leave and go back to California.

*BROWN*

Yeah. Then she said, "I'll buy you a bus ticket. Just get on the bus." I said, "What about my stuff?" I said, "I have all my stuff." Now I had a few more stuff to take care of.

*BAYHYLLE*

You had the children's things.

*BROWN*

Yeah. We got a trailer way up in Mexican Spring. I told her, "You've got to find a home for us because I cannot do it from your dad's house," and they got into a fight. His brother was like that, too. He's, like, staying home, watch his son. He had only one son, and his wife was the only one that's working. And the lady, she was weird and she don't teach her kids the right thing. He's a boy and he come get in a fight with my little girl and scratch up all her face. I said, "I can't handle this. I can't handle this." So one day he went out, I guess. I don't know where he went, but he found a place. There was a trailer. I guess it was [unclear] court before, and they close it and they left all the trailer there.

*BAYHYLLE*

For housing.

*BROWN*

Housing. And then I guess he talked to his friend, and so we move over there. We stayed there for one year, I think, a little over a year, and then—

*BAYHYLLE*

Was that a little better then—

*BROWN*

It was better.

*BAYHYLLE*

—just to have your own place?

*BROWN*

Uh-huh, I felt better. And getting to work, sometime it was hard during the winter, but I'm okay there. I'm happy right there, yeah, but they told us to move because they're going to put a house in there. They're going to evacuate all that stuff, old stuff.

*BAYHYLLE*

Take the trailers away.

*BROWN*

Yeah. I said, "Why don't you just rent it to us," because we were living there free. I said, "Why don't we just buy it or rent it?" He said, "No." I guess it would have been better if we buy it, but no.

*BAYHYLLE*

You weren't able to.

*BROWN*

Uh-huh.

*BAYHYLLE*

So what did you do then?

*BROWN*

We fix everything inside and everything, but then we just moved back to my mom's house. We just took everything.

*BAYHYLLE*

To Klagetoh.

*BROWN*

Uh-huh, Klagetoh. And there I last about—my youngest daughter is, like, still a baby, so I just couldn't handle it and had no job, and sometimes we had no food to eat because he can't bring any food, and if he does take the car, he don't bring it back. It's just too much, and I said, "I want to go home. I want to go home." I wanted to come back over here. [laughs] So one day I told my kids, and then he went and talked to his uncle and his aunt. They were both working still at BIA, so instead of him leave behind, he decided to come with us again.

*BAYHYLLE*

So what happened? He went to the BIA, and what happened? What did he do?

*BROWN*

He enrolled to come back. He fill out some papers, and so we had to go back and then—

*BAYHYLLE*

He enrolled in relocation?

*BROWN*

Uh-huh.

*BAYHYLLE*

So they offered him relocation then.

*BROWN*

Well, his uncle offered him because he was working. He said he's going to pay for everything, make arrangement for everything, and then he said all you had to do is just go to the train and have everything ready for you.

*BAYHYLLE*

So the uncle was ready to pay for him to ship out, too, as well then?

*BROWN*

Yeah, so we didn't have too much problem when we did it, just one or two papers to fill it up and then we're ready to come back. So we just left everything in my mom's house, everything, whatever we bought, whatever—

*BAYHYLLE*

The car?

*BROWN*

The car. The car, we just left it with the sister. So we just came back on a train and we got dumped off somewhere in downtown, and they came, pick us up.

*BAYHYLLE*

Who picked you up?

*BROWN*

Some guy I don't know. Who was it? I guess he's the one that deliver people to different locations.

*BAYHYLLE*

Was he from the BIA?

*BROWN*

He's from BIA, uh-huh.

*BAYHYLLE*

So it was you and your husband and the three children?

*BROWN*

Uh-huh.

*BAYHYLLE*

So you left the train, and someone from BIA picked you up. Describe that. Tell me what happened. What time did you get into town?

*BROWN*

We got into town like about seven, seven-thirty in the morning. We were on the train, and I lost my purse on the train and I had all the money in there. I said, "Oh, my god. Now what's next?" I've been so [unclear], like, all these year, I thought, but lucky that I went back to the restroom. That's where I changed the baby. I guess I left it right there, and it was still there.

*BAYHYLLE*

Oh, my goodness. So you had some luck.

*BROWN*

Uh-huh, some luck, some bad luck, more bad luck. [laughs]

*BAYHYLLE*

You arrived at the town and you were at the train station with the other children, and what happened then?

*BROWN*

Then they got us in the van. They got whatever we brought and then they told us that they're going to bring us here.

*BAYHYLLE*

To where?

*BROWN*

This apartment.

*BAYHYLLE*

This one here?

*BROWN*

This one, yeah.

*BAYHYLLE*

On Chansler Street?

*BROWN*

Yeah, on Chansler Street, yeah.

*BAYHYLLE*

On Chansler Street [unclear].

*BROWN*

That square, they leave people until they find a place to live or until they find a job.

*BAYHYLLE*

Right, and they go on for themselves.

*BROWN*

Yeah, and then they take you over there and they find you a house. First they brought us early in the morning, like about nine o'clock, or ten, and they took us down to apartment three, downstairs.

*BAYHYLLE*

In this building?

*BROWN*

In this building.

*BAYHYLLE*

Oh, my goodness.

*BROWN*

[unclear] walking around, and then I thought, okay. Then the guy, he talking to my husband, he said, "This is where we leave people until they find a place that they be on their own. We'll pay for the rent, first rent, and then get you guys started."

*BAYHYLLE*

So did they give you money to get started on?

*BROWN*

They drive you around the next day and they drive us around to find a place where we want to live. Then they pay for the places, and then you find a job and they leave you there, but we never moved.

*BAYHYLLE*

So the next day they put you in a car and they drove you around. Where did they drive you? Here in the same city, or did they take you somewhere else?

*BROWN*

All over the place. We went, like, here and then we went all the way across to El Segundo.

*BAYHYLLE*

Oh, all the way down south.

*BROWN*

Yeah, and then we came back, and he drive us around, like, for about three hours. This one place we went, apartments, the manager, she has, like, got bitten by something and she was showing us around, and it's, like, three-bedroom apartment. Open the cabinet, all these roaches are falling down.

*BAYHYLLE*

Oh, my goodness.

*BROWN*

I said, "Oh, god." [laughs]

*BAYHYLLE*

I can't imagine living there, huh?

*BROWN*

And then she had a dog in her hand and she put the dog on the floor, and it peed on the floor. I said, "Oh, my, this is disgusting." I said, "Take us." And the guy look around, the guy that was driving around with us, and he was looking around, he just shook his head. I said, "Okay, we'll come back." [laughs] Then we went two more places, but I didn't really care for it. When we came here, I liked this place. This was about the best one, so we talk about it, and he talked to him. He said, "Yeah, we do find a job around here. Well, you stay here."

*BAYHYLLE*

A good place for you.

*BROWN*

Yeah.

*BAYHYLLE*

You can stay here.

*BROWN*

"You can stay here."

*BAYHYLLE*

So how did that go for him? Tell me a little bit about his work, looking for work. How did that work? Did he have to go to BIA office a lot?

*BROWN*

Yeah, he has contact with them, and then they send him out, and then he goes in different place. But you try to get nearby where you can catch the bus, go back and forth, because we don't have a car. And then he goes out same time he does the drinking, so—

*BAYHYLLE*

He started that up again?

*BROWN*

Yeah, and so he goes out, but if I should believe what he tells me. And I wanted to go back to BIA office and talk to them, but I couldn't because I got three kids in my hand and I don't know how to catch the bus.

*BAYHYLLE*

What were you going to talk to them about?

*BROWN*

Just like he's like that.

*BAYHYLLE*

Explain to them what was happening?

*BROWN*

Yeah, I can't live with him like that, can't handle a job, and that can't be here if he's not going to support us. But still he found a job, so—

*BAYHYLLE*

How long did it take him to find a job?

*BROWN*

It took him not that long, about three weeks, I think. He got a good job. He got a good job by General Hospital and then he said he'll catch the bus and come back. [interruption]

*BAYHYLLE*

So it took him just a little while, and he found a job. How did that work then? Was that good then when he started working?

*BROWN*

It was good, but he's not bringing money to pay for the rent and to pay the food.

*BAYHYLLE*

Oh, my gosh.

*BROWN*

We stayed down there, and I got to know the owner of this apartment. His name is Chris. And then the manager that live in number one, she was moving back to South Dakota, so he picked me. He asked me if I could be the manager for the apartment.

*BAYHYLLE*

That was good.

*BROWN*

And he moved up to number six, upstairs. First he came, "I saw you going up there. We move up there. It would have been really good if he keep it up with his job. And the guy's really nice. He said, "This is what you have to do and you don't have to pay anything for the rent."

*BAYHYLLE*

Oh, that helped.

*BROWN*

Yeah, that really helped. And then I didn't mind because whatever he wants to do, I'll just be the manager. I'm going to get a night job. So I started working in a convalescent as a nurse assistant.

*BAYHYLLE*

Oh, my gosh. Who took care of the children at night then?

*BROWN*

My friend.

*BAYHYLLE*

Your friend came to stay and watch the children?

*BROWN*

Yeah, I became a friend with her because she's another Navajo that came from Shiprock, so she babysit for me.

*BAYHYLLE*

Oh, that was good. So you were able to get your own job then, finally.

*BROWN*

Yeah, but him, he said he's working, but I don't know.

*BAYHYLLE*

So then finally did relocation stop then? They stopped paying your rent?

*BROWN*

Stop, everything stop. They don't talk to us.

*BAYHYLLE*

You didn't have any more contact?

*BROWN*

No, we don't contact with them anymore, so we're on our own. Once he got a job, supposed to be working and supporting us, but, no, he wasn't. So I start looking for a job and I start working.

*BAYHYLLE*

How was that? Was that hard work, I would imagine, working in a convalescent home, hospital? That's hard work.

*BROWN*

It's hard work. It's a hard work, but it's good. The first day I got job there, I started in the morning, and my friend was working there, so I met quite a few Indian friends. She was a Paiute, so she was showing me around because she already worked. She has the same problem with her husband like that too. She had four kids and she used to live in number eight upstairs. So we started working together, and the first day I worked, I thought I kill a patient.

*BAYHYLLE*

Oh, my goodness.

*BROWN*

I guess she was already dying. I tried to feed her and all this, and she just turned white on me. I says, crying, running down the hall, "Oh, no. Something happened to the patient." And they kept saying, "No, don't worry about it. She was already dying anyway." "She won't eat and she won't do this." The nurse assistant come running. They said, "Don't worry about it." I said, "Oh, my god." I said, "I thought I killed that patient."

*BAYHYLLE*

Oh, my gosh. How old were you when you went to work there?

*BROWN*

I was, like—let's see. I had my baby at twenty-seven, so I must have been, like, twenty-eight, I think.

*BAYHYLLE*

That's still very young to have all that responsibility.

*BROWN*

Yeah. My youngest daughter was only two, going on three, when we came back.

*BAYHYLLE*

So you worked at a convalescent home. How long did you work there?

*BROWN*

I worked there until he passed on.

*BAYHYLLE*

Who passed away?

*BROWN*

My husband.

*BAYHYLLE*

Your husband. So how many years was that, then, do you think?

*BROWN*

He passed away in 1975.

*BAYHYLLE*

So you worked there at least, what, ten years?

*BROWN*

I worked there for a while. Then I went to another convalescent. So the bus runs [unclear] come back.

*BAYHYLLE*

Oh, okay, so it's easy to get there and easy—

*BROWN*

To get there and come back. So I worked there for at least five years or four years, I worked there.

*BAYHYLLE*

So that worked out pretty well for you then.

*BROWN*

Uh-huh.

*BAYHYLLE*

And continued to be the manager here as long as you could?

*BROWN*

Yeah. Yeah, as long as I could, but not have to pay the rent. And I started saving money and so whatever I bring, I save some on the side. What he did one day—I was putting under the mattress. He was cleaning. He was— [interruption]

*BAYHYLLE*

So just a little bit more then. It sounds like you had opportunity, but you had so many other situations, problems, young family and your husband was having such a hard time. What kinds of things did you do just for fun if you wanted to have a good time with your friends? Where would you go or what would you do?

*BROWN*

Nothing. I don't have no fun because I had three kids in the house.

*BAYHYLLE*

So you had three young ones and you work nights, and then job here and sleep.

*BROWN*

I work nights. I sleep a little bit, and then just clean the yard and clean an apartment if somebody move out.

*BAYHYLLE*

Oh, that's right.

*BROWN*

I paint and I clean and clean the stove and do everything, and then try to cut the grass out in the yard, and then I sleep a little bit until the kids—I take them to school and bring them back until they start walking on their own, so they're old enough to walk back so I don't have to watch them.

*BAYHYLLE*

Sounds like you had a lot of other Indian people, though, didn't you? You have a lot of families living here, Indian people.

*BROWN*

Uh-huh.

*BAYHYLLE*

And you had a friend at work.

*BROWN*

Yeah, but they moved. This Diane Holmes, she was American Apache and she stayed there for a while, and another one down below us, Evelyn. They have quite a few problem drinkers and they got me started for a while when I lost my husband, and I stayed home. They come out and drink, "Come on, Angela, let's go out and drink. Let's go to the bar." I said, "That's not my deal. My husband was like that, and I don't want to be like him anymore." I said, "I don't want to be like him. I don't want to be like him." Kept telling myself. Pretty soon they dragged me in. I had a car, got into accident and it was awful. I don't want to talk about that part.

*BAYHYLLE*

Yes, that's tough, I know. Were you able to at least spend some time with your sister? She was still living out here?

*BROWN*

She would always come.

*BAYHYLLE*

So she was still living here, too, then?

*BROWN*

Yeah, yeah. She'd take the kids sometime and we'd go to her house.

*BAYHYLLE*

She was your only relative out here, right?

*BROWN*

Yeah.

*BAYHYLLE*

I met you at the church, the First American Indian Church. How long have you been going to that church?

*BROWN*

I've been going there since 1972, since I came out here. I came in 1972 and I go. I want him to go. Half of the time we don't have a car, but first time we went was with him, and the church was full.

*BAYHYLLE*

Really? Full of Indian people?

*BROWN*

It was full, uh-huh, all the way up to the step.

*BAYHYLLE*

The same place?

*BROWN*

The same place. I sat by the door, because you enter from the Fellowship Hall. I sat right there. We sat right there with the kids, and it was full.

*BAYHYLLE*

Because it was so full you couldn't get up to—my goodness.

*BROWN*

That's how full it was and then it's shrinking every year.

*BAYHYLLE*

How did you find out about the church?

*BROWN*

I talked to some people that were going to church there and then I started going.

*BAYHYLLE*

And they invited you to come?

*BROWN*

Yeah, they invited me to come. I kind of liked it because they're nothing but Native going there. So I started going over there and I

try to talk him in, "Well, maybe if we go to church together, maybe you'll be okay. It might help." But the only person that I met is Lester, Lester Lamio and Earline, and I talked to him and tried to talk to him. He did talk to him when he was in the hospital. They talked to him. They come over sometime. They talked to him, but still it didn't get through to him. I guess not.

*BAYHYLLE*

He still had his problems, didn't he?

*BROWN*

Uh-huh. I guess once they get the hang of you drinking, it's so hard to get rid of it. I see it like that's a lot of [unclear] there.

*BAYHYLLE*

There was the BIA here. I don't know how active that office was, but there were a lot of Indian organizations, sounds like, this was the late sixties and early seventies that had started these substance-abuse programs, trying to help other Indian men and women deal with their problems with alcohol and other addictions. Did your husband ever try to go to any of those detox centers or their support groups?

*BROWN*

I guess I really wasn't involved with a lot of Indians.

*BAYHYLLE*

To know that those things were available. These were probably just getting started then too. It was the early seventies.

*BROWN*

Maybe, uh-huh. I talked to some people about him, about alcoholism, but they weren't Native. They were—

*BAYHYLLE*

Other programs.

*BROWN*

Yeah.

*BAYHYLLE*

So you basically came out in relocation with your husband, then, as a part of his experience.

*BROWN*

Yeah, he died here, and we just ship him back with his sister, just pay his way back to bury him over there.

*BAYHYLLE*

And so you continued to stay here, live here in this neighborhood and this apartment?

*BROWN*

Yeah, I got to know Chris, the owner. He said, "I'll let you stay here."

*BAYHYLLE*

Well, that was good. That was good. You were finally able to start building a life just for yourself and your children and your family, and you've done very well, it looks like. You've got a beautiful family.

*BROWN*

Thank you.

*BAYHYLLE*

They're just very nice-looking people, and this is still a very nice neighborhood.

*BROWN*

It is. It was really bad for a while when I was the manager. Oh, god, I used to fight with a lot of teenagers on the street because they—

*BAYHYLLE*

Is there a junior high or high school around here somewhere?

*BROWN*

Bell High School. That's where all my girls graduate, and they started from down the street. That's where my granddaughter's going to school right now.

*BAYHYLLE*

The one who's going to graduate, right.

*BROWN*

I said, "This is where your aunts and your mom start school right here." She said, "Oh, no." [laughs]

*BAYHYLLE*

Kids are funny, aren't they?

*BROWN*

I said, "All the teacher probably old now, but you're going to be starting here and you go to junior high. You can go back to high school." "Ah, well, my ma said we're going to move." "Yeah. When?" [laughs]

*BAYHYLLE*

Looking back on it, do you think that relocation was a good thing for you and your family?

*BROWN*

To get back over here, yeah, that was a good thing.

*BAYHYLLE*

It was an opportunity for you to leave the reservation.

*BROWN*

Uh-huh, the reservation again.

*BAYHYLLE*

Because you were able to start your own education, you said, right? You went back to night school. You kept trying to get your credits.

*BROWN*

I keep saying that and started having kids, and I said, "Well, okay, when I stop having kids, I'll go back to school." Now here come my grandkids I have to raise. [laughs] This is the one. These three right here are the one that I have to really watch them because I never watched the others. The mom took them. My daughter lives in Lakewood with the two boys and they're over there. They bought a home. I couldn't even buy a home and that's why I'm stuck here, because every time I try to buy a home, they say, "You're not making enough money and you've got kids and you don't have no husband, so you can't buy a home." I said, "Okay." My husband, oh, we didn't got married because I told him, I said, "I don't want to get married no more. You might live with me, common law, but I don't want to marry no more."

*BAYHYLLE*

So this was another relationship after your husband died then, right?

*BROWN*

Yeah, yes. He was from Shonto. He's another Navajo.

*BAYHYLLE*

From Shonto.

*BROWN*

Yeah, so I told him, I said, "I don't want to get married no more." I said, "You had that problem with you, you go your way, I'll go my way so it's no problem."

*BAYHYLLE*

Did he also have problems drinking?

*BROWN*

No, he never did. He never did until about three or four years before he passed on again. He got diabetes. That took his life. He was good guy. He help and then he helped raise the kids. He buy clothes for them, so he was a nice man.

*BAYHYLLE*

I couldn't help but notice at the church that I realize it was a small congregation the times that I've been there. A couple of times I've been there, it seemed to be primarily Navajo people attending the church. Did you socialize with a lot of other Navajo people while you were out here, though? Do you have other Navajo clubs or dance clubs or language clubs or social clubs or cultural clubs? I think you said you didn't have much time for anything, did you? You were working and the children. That doesn't leave much.

*BROWN*

People tell me about it. There's a dance going on, western [unclear]. I don't know. It's not me. It's not me. Every time I go, what did I do? I got in trouble, wrecked my car. [laughs]

*BAYHYLLE*

You don't want to do that again.

*BROWN*

I don't want to do that again. It's bad. They take you there, take you there to the bar and got drunk and wrecked my car and that's it. No.

*BAYHYLLE*

That was enough experience for you, huh?

*BROWN*

Yes.

*BAYHYLLE*

Do you still speak your language, still speak Navajo?

*BROWN*

Yes.

*BAYHYLLE*

Did you teach your children how to speak Navajo?

*BROWN*

They understand, but they won't speak. Right now, me and my grandson—he's the youngest one, Maddie, his name is Maddie, and his mom, we're going to this over here. There's a Navajo City of Congress right here.

*BAYHYLLE*

Across the bridge.

*BROWN*

TANF [Temporary Assistance for Needy Families].

*BAYHYLLE*

TANF. The offices on Washington.

*BROWN*

We started going over there for a Navajo class.

*BAYHYLLE*

How's that going?

*BROWN*

We only attend three classes, so—

*BAYHYLLE*

Did he like it?

*BROWN*

He really want to get into it. He's the only kid that really wanted—

*BAYHYLLE*

That showed an interest so far?

*BROWN*

Uh-huh.

*BAYHYLLE*

That's good. Are you going to continue with him then?

*BROWN*

Yeah, I want to go with him. And we have our own Navajo Bible class, but we haven't been doing it for a while because we always has different things to do, me and my friend, my cousin. I had another cousin live here, and a friend, Ellie May. She's the one that learned how to talk Navajo, read Navajo, so she was teaching us, and I can't get it. And my cousin, she did a little bit. [End of interview]

Parent Institution | TEI | Search | Feedback

*Date: 2013-12-06*