

# A TEI Project

## Interview of Julia Bogany

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### 1. Transcript

#### 1.1. SESSION ONE

May 29, 2013

COATES

My name is Julia Coates, and today is May 29, 2013. We are in El Monte, at the Gabrielino Tongva Cultural Center, and I am speaking with Julia Bogany.

BOGANY

I'm Julia Bogany, and I'm the cultural affairs for the Gabrielino Tongva of San Gabriel Mission. Anyway, so I was born in Santa Monica at St. John's Hospital in 1948, so I'll be sixty-five in a couple months.

COATES

Very good.

BOGANY

My grandma is the person that I hold dearest to me. She died when I was two years old, but she's very important to me. Her name was Julia, and we resemble a lot. My uncle always says we would laugh a lot, the same, and we sound alike. My grandma was Julia Velarde, and my mom was Josephine Gaitan and she was Gabrielino and Hachimen [phonetic]. My grandma was full-blooded Tongva and she was Julia Lasos and came from a large family, and then her mom was Pastora, and she's kind of like the great leader of all the Tongva women. Those are my biological family.

The women, my heroes in the Tongva life for me are Taiperina, Juana Maria, my grandma, of course, Julia, and Victoria Reed, and those are the women, and Azusa, and those are the women who have kind of kept me going through life, in empowerment of my ancestors. My mom gave me my BIA papers when I was thirteen. I guess she felt I could take care of them and I did, I never lost them, and so I have my original papers. When my Uncle Julius, when registration started for the tribes, he registered me. In 1933, he was the first person who registered, and then it went down to my grandmas and, of course, we've added several last names to ourselves through the years. [laughs]

COATES

Okay, let me ask, so you were registered with the BIA—

BOGANY

Well, not me, myself, but—

COATES

You, about 1960, '61, something like that, or—

BOGANY

No, it was 1951.

COATES

So you were about three years old then. So the BIA was registering people from your tribe as Indian people.

BOGANY

Right.

COATES

As far back as the thirties or even before that?

BOGANY

Before that, because I think 1933 was the oldest one I have, and there's people older than that. But actually, the BIA didn't stop registering California un-federally recognized tribes until last year. That's when they stopped. So we've always had—we were the little red mark, they said, on the map, because we weren't federally recognized.

COATES

How can the BIA recognize you and register you, and yet you're not—

BOGANY

Saying we're not here. [laughs]

COATES

—federally recognized. What's the reasoning for that?

BOGANY

They kept records. I think they kept records of who the Indians were, they just didn't admit to who we were. So it's a political thing.

COATES

So it's not a matter of having been recognized and then having been terminated by them.

BOGANY

Well, we were recognized at one time. So when they came to count, after the Spanish era, and the people from Washington came to count the people at the missions, they said they didn't see no Indians, they only saw Mexican people there, because we had assimilated into their language to survive in Los Angeles, you know. When Indians could not go downtown L.A., they only had like a pass where they could go downtown for three days, and there you got a job, went to jail, or were killed. So we were smart enough to assimilate and learn their language. Even though we

couldn't speak ours, we could learn theirs. And that's how we survived. So they counted and said that we ceased to exist, when they came to count.

COATES

Even as they were registering you for—

BOGANY

So that's how we lost—yes, even though they kept record. So they kept record, but they still said we just didn't exist no more. We had left town.

COATES

So you were born in Santa Monica Hospital. Is that where you lived?

BOGANY

At St. John's Hospital. I lived in Santa Monica up to age ten. So we lived across the street from Venice Beach, and I remember going in the evenings, every evening, walking, taking that stroll down the beach and the little black bugs, going to the library. Indian Health was down in Long Beach, and I remember going down there and going to the Indian Health when we were kids.

COATES

So there was an Indian Health facility in Long Beach in the 1940s and fifties, and lots of people were going to it—

BOGANY

Yes.

COATES

But—

BOGANY

There's none no more.

COATES

—those same people were not regarded as Indians officially, federally.

BOGANY

Well, no. And there's no Indian Health out here now.

COATES

And Indian Health pulled out at some point, huh?

BOGANY

Yes, yes. So there's no Indian Health out here. You have to live in San Bernardino, because you can't even just be Indian to go. You have to have proof. And so I don't know why they stopped giving our numbers out, because I think—all my children were born before 1972, so I have four children, and so all of them have their own number. And then I have fourteen grandchildren and about six great-grands now, and those on the way. So it's a lot of—

COATES

Had your family always lived in that area then, in Venice Beach and Santa Monica area?

BOGANY

Yes, my auntie moved. My auntie and my mom were next-door neighbors because my parents got divorced when I was six, but they continued to be neighbors, my aunt and my mom, until, like, early 2000. Then my auntie moved to La Puente. And my mom died at fifty-two. But I remember as a child that everybody went to my auntie's house, and I used to always think that Tennessee Ernie Ford was my father. [laughs]

COATES

Why is that?

BOGANY

He looked like my dad, and my dad always worked two jobs so I hardly ever saw him, so I would run home, because I'd tell all the kids, "I have to go home and see my dad," because, you know, Tennessee Ernie Ford program was coming on and I liked to go see him because that was my dad. That was my way of seeing my dad. [laughter] So I remember going home, and all of us lived—we always lived, like, four or five houses together. All through my teenage life we were always pretty close in wherever we lived. We still were living right by the beach.

COATES

And these were all your mother's relatives that were living together?

BOGANY

Yes, yes, but everybody had their own house, but everybody met for after-school snacks and went together.

At one time I remember one of my aunties lived in San Bernardino and there was a drive-in close that I always remember. It's one of those special moments, right, where we climbed the mountains and we laid under the trees and watched the movies. We couldn't hear them, but we would lay under the trees. I say today you couldn't catch me in the forest at night. But I remember that experience and I think that was really something fantastic.

COATES

So how did you get back and forth between Santa Monica and San Bernardino?

BOGANY

Oh, in my ages we had cars. We had cars. There was a lot of alleys in those days, too, so everybody was close, and we drove our bikes down the alley and it was pretty safe.

COATES

I just wondered, because I know they used to have those electric trolleys that went to some places and I wondered if they went out there.

BOGANY

No, I think that was the big thing, for men to have—I remember having an old Buick that I sat in as a little kid. We had one of those old Buicks, like '55.

COATES

So your family, your mother's mother and her sisters and grandmother and all of that were all together in—

BOGANY

In the same neighborhood.

COATES

In the same neighborhood. Had they been that way for, like, in your mother's generation and your grandmother's?

BOGANY

Yes.

COATES

All the way back they had been there?

BOGANY

Yes, always. I remember my fifth-grade grandma, going to her house as a little girl. I loved her hair and all my life I've been waiting for my hair to be white, to turn grey. My children, I think, got grey hair before I did. [laughs] But I've just kind of been of waiting for that moment. She had those long braids and her hair was so long and it was all white and she was like—you know, fifth-grade gran, and just lived to be 136 and I just waited. All my life I thought about, how cool.

But I do come from the age of the iceman, you know, when we used to have the iceman come around, and had iceboxes and not refrigerators, because there's some kids in my age group that didn't have iceboxes, had refrigerators, so I said, well, we must have been on the poor side. But, still, those are great experiences.

COATES

So you've given me this map of Tongva villages, and was there one there that—

BOGANY

For Venice?

COATES

Yes, which is why they had all been there for so many generations in that place.

BOGANY

Yes. And I also read the book *Ancient L.A.*, and as I come to L.A. in today's date, I always think, well, it's so tedious to be on that freeway, and I didn't start driving the freeway till five years ago. I always used to do the streets, but they put up all the streetlights, cameras, so I decided I'd better start driving the freeway. Then I come to L.A. a lot because I'm in cultural affairs, and so I do a lot of things in L.A. I read that book, and when I read that book, it was so awesome that each freeway, 101, the 504, you know, all of them, was started at a village.

COATES

Wow.

BOGANY

That made my trips more exciting because now I think, boy, a long time ago my ancestors were walking these streets. What were they talking about? What was their conversations? So it kind of

makes my ride easier because it's kind of like I spend that time with my ancestors, thinking about what would they have been doing.

COATES

So at the time when you were born and a child and were living there, were there other families? I mean, was there still a sense of a village that was there, even though it was part of the city?

BOGANY

I don't think we considered it a village. I think we just considered that families were close. It was a closeness of families, yes.

COATES

So there were others around?

BOGANY

Yes. And even today in San Gabriel there's still a lot of families that still live walking distance from each other, you know, two, three doors down, because it's that sense of family. So if I put that to today, I think that even though we're not federally recognized, we have that great power that we can get to each other, versus tribes that have to go to a reservation and have to leave home and take that vacation time to go see home, where we can get to each other. So no matter how far we live, we can have that communication.

COATES

When you were growing up, you knew that these other families were also Tongva and you had interactions with them.

BOGANY

Yes.

COATES

What kinds of interactions did you all have?

BOGANY

Just regular spending the day together, picnics, and, you know, just partying together. My dad was off on Wednesday and Thursday, so everybody came to our house, then next week you'd go to the other person's house, and we just kind of spent a lot of time together.

COATES

Was your dad Tongva also?

BOGANY

No, my dad is Azteca. So I always say our people married the enemy, right? My grandma was from Spain.

COATES

Was his family around as well?

BOGANY

Yes, his mom and dad, but they had him older, and he was the only boy, he had sisters. But they still lived close to us, because his sisters would live like—it would be our house, then there

would be a relative from my mom's side, and then a relative from my dad's side would be the third house, right? So it was like everybody was still close.

COATES

So did your dad's extended family and your mother's extended family, did they have interactions with each other?

BOGANY

We all hung out, yes. So, like, at the springs, let's say at the springs, my auntie, which is not Tongva, married my uncle that's Tongva, and then my dad, who's not Tongva, married my mother that was my uncle's brother's sister. But they all went to high school together. So my uncle had all these stories when I saw him again later in age. I saw him and he talked about my dad's first bike, all the stories we had heard about the first bike. It was an old bike that he took care of. He said, "Your dad used to polish that bike every day." And when they went motorcycle riding together. So it was neat to listen to those stories that your parents tell you and then now other relatives tell you those stories.

COATES

So what was the neighborhood like then? How would you describe—were the people mostly of color?

BOGANY

You know, I [unclear] class because I always say that we never noticed the Dick and Jane books, that we weren't the same. And I don't think we really paid attention to that, and I think it's part of what being a true Native is, that we don't pay attention to other faces, you know. We just become like the dolls with no face. We're just about everybody's everybody.

COATES

I know that's the case for children. When you look back on it, though, do you recognize that—

BOGANY

No, I didn't have no troubles, but I never even saw it like that. The only time, I think, when I was a teenager and we lived in San Fernando Valley, my dad—I guess that was the first house he bought, and I was thirteen, and I walked in the house and the Avon lady was there, and she said, "I haven't seen any black kids except for that little girl that just walked in your house."

And he said, "That's my daughter, and she's not black." [laughs] My hair was just all kinky for some reason all of a sudden. It just turned curly overnight. But that was the only time anybody ever mentioned being different than anyone else. And I think that's part of our strength as being a Native American, that we see people as people and not as differences.

COATES

So you didn't regard it as a mixed neighborhood and you still don't regard it that way, huh?

BOGANY

No, I couldn't even tell you. I don't know.

COATES

When you were going to school—well, I'm jumping ahead quite a bit, I guess. What was the appearance of the neighborhood? What were the houses like?

BOGANY

I think my dad was particular about us having nice houses, so we always had—I mean, I'm pretty sure, like, he would always say, "Well, now teenage girls have carpet in their bedroom." Not that I knew one way or the other, because you didn't spend the nights over at other people's houses. And a record player and stuff like that. It's like, okay, whatever. So I think they were just common little houses, you know.

I remember as a little, little girl, that we lived in a trailer, one of those old silver trailers, that kind of funny-looking silver. As I'm making this scrapbook now, I'm picking out those pictures, you know, the trailer and the milkman and the Helms man, the Fuller Brush man, and putting them in there. All those people I remember as being part of my childhood.

COATES

So it was kind of a middle-class neighborhood.

BOGANY

Yes.

COATES

Are those houses still there? Is that neighborhood still there in that way, in that form?

BOGANY

I think so. I think when I go to the springs in Culver City, because that's where my grandparents lived, I think today when I go to Culver City that I have that sense of feeling that I know I've been there. I remember the area. I can remember what was there before the buildings that are there today. I think that kind of just stays with you.

COATES

So those buildings have kind of grown up around it, but they haven't—

BOGANY

Yes, more fancier, but there's still some old ones there.

COATES

They haven't necessarily destroyed what was there before, huh?

BOGANY

Right. There's still the hot dog stand on the corner and that big donut. Remember that big donut?

COATES

Oh, yes.

BOGANY

That's all still there.

COATES

I know the big donut, yes. [laughter]

BOGANY

So those are old memories of childhood, of seeing that.

COATES

What kind of work did your parents do?

BOGANY

My mom was a stay-at-home mom, and my dad, he worked for Pepe's Restaurant down in Rodeo Drive, and he did gardening during the day.

COATES

What did he do at Pepe's Restaurant?

BOGANY

He was a cook.

COATES

So he worked at night doing that?

BOGANY

Yes, and in the daytime, he did gardening.

COATES

And he did gardening.

BOGANY

So he was always at work.

COATES

When did he sleep?

BOGANY

So anyway, so I remember him working a lot, and I think that's probably the reason why I've always had, like, several jobs. If I had a job—I don't do nine-to-five no more, but I still have jobs here and there and everywhere, you know, things that I do with my hands, things that I sell or whatever. So that's part of what you see.

So I think that the biggest thing for me as far as my grandma and my mother is my grandma died when I was two and she was only forty-eight, and then my mom died at fifty-two. I'll be sixty-five in two weeks, and I used to always drive that freeway and say, "God, I know my mother wasn't doing this." But I thought, you know what? God is just giving me that opportunity to do this, to change the world, to let people know that the Tongva are here. He has given me that power for my grandma to do there, and so I always think my grandma's just smiling, you know, because she sees the work that's being done. And I think that's great as we skip generations, you know, because my mom didn't really talk a lot about the tribe. She just gave me my papers. I knew we were Indian, but I didn't really know a whole lot.

And my grandma, I was only two years old when she passed, but I always remember how people talked—kids weren't around adults that much like it is today. But I remember people saying how my grandma wanted me, and I was named after her. So it was like I owe it to her, so everything I do, I always do it in her recognition, that it's about my grandma and the things that she had to suffer that I didn't have to suffer, but that I could bring our history back into existence.

COATES

Do you have any actual memories of her?

BOGANY

No.

COATES

That's pretty young.

BOGANY

Yes. The first time my auntie saw me, like at H\_\_\_\_\_ at Redbox [phonetic], one of my aunties said, "You look like Julia."

And I said, "I am Julia." [laughs]

She said, "No, Julia's dead."

I said, "No, I'm her granddaughter." And I have pictures of her and I always say we look exactly alike. I wish we'd have done more hairdos, because we look exactly alike, except that she's more Dolly Parton. [laughs] But anyway, so it's pretty neat, though.

COATES

Why did they pass so early? Do you know what was it?

BOGANY

My mom had cancer, and my grandma, I don't know. She was a big woman and I'm sure health issues and, you know, but nobody ever said. But I know she was very big. But I know my mom died of cancer.

COATES

And how old were you when that happened?

BOGANY

When my mother passed, it's only been like maybe twenty-five years.

COATES

So you were an adult by that time, then.

BOGANY

Yes.

COATES

She was pretty young when you were born.

BOGANY

Yes, so I think my mother was seventeen.

COATES

And how many brothers and sisters do you have?

BOGANY

I have one brother, one sister.

COATES

Are you the oldest?

BOGANY

I'm the oldest. You know, the oldest catches the flak.

COATES

Yes, I do know.

BOGANY

I always say, you know, you're the reason we're doing this. But it's okay, but the oldest always tries to make them proud.

COATES

How far apart are you in age?

BOGANY

Four. Four years.

COATES

Between you and the next one?

BOGANY

Yes, and then they are eleven months apart, where my first two were eleven months apart, and then the next ones are four.

COATES

So you were sort of the only child, then, through—

BOGANY

For four years.

COATES

—those very early years.

BOGANY

Yes. I heard my mom got polio right after I was born.

COATES

Oh, dear.

BOGANY

But then it probably was a minor case, but she couldn't walk for a long time, so I think that's the reason there was a long period of time before kids.

COATES

So were your aunts caring for you a lot of time when you were very, very small then?

BOGANY

Yes.

COATES

Because she was—

BOGANY

Well, everybody was so close, you know, so, yes. I remember my auntie, when my brother was born, she would make me diapers out of Levis and flannel to change him. And I tell her that story all the time. “I remember when you used to make me those diapers and I was, like, five.”

COATES

And they had children also that were your cousins?

BOGANY

Yes, yes, a lot of cousins, same ages. Well, see, like Anthony, myself, and Jacob and—there’s, like, five, six of us all the same age, but my kids are like that too. There was, like, six of us all pregnant at the same time. You know, where cousins always grow up together, there’s always that bunch.

COATES

So they were probably kind of like your brothers and sisters in a way?

BOGANY

Yes.

COATES

You were always playing with them?

BOGANY

Yes, making mud pies. I don’t think we have that smell of dirt no more, you know, when you water the lawn in the spring and you can smell that dirt. I said people don’t understand that, that there was a difference in the smell of our dirt. I don’t think we would allow our children to eat it today.

COATES

It was a much more rural area, wasn’t it?

BOGANY

Yes, and it was cleaner. We didn’t have all the smog and stuff, so you could eat the dirt, but today it doesn’t even smell good. It’s just dirt. But I remember the smell of dirt, you know, so it’s, like, great. You know, those things that I love.

COATES

So how old were you when you started going to school?

BOGANY

I was five when I went to kindergarten, and I remember my favorite part about kindergarten was making ice cream.

COATES

Making ice cream?

BOGANY

Yes, so we had ice cream under a tree. And going to Long Beach to the tuna factory, because I had a lot of aunties that worked there when there was a tuna factory down in Long Beach. I don't even know if it's still there.

COATES

What do they do in a tuna factory? They're just processing it?

BOGANY

Processing it, you know, in the cans, yes. But that was the big field trip for kindergarten.

COATES

Bet that smelled good. [laughter]

BOGANY

But, you know, it was fun. I remember that, because when you walk through there, you know everybody, right? And I think that's what we're missing, those closenesses.

COATES

So were things like fishing part of the cultural tradition?

BOGANY

Yes, it was all part of [unclear] fish. I remember going to, as a little girl, for years we went every Friday—because, you know, there wasn't fast food. But we went to Long Beach every Friday and I had rabbit. I had the children's plate, rabbit plate. And I remember when I left home, trying to fix a rabbit and it didn't come out. It was too tough. But I remember eating rabbit as a kid. Every Friday, that was my favorite dish.

COATES

So did the men do things like this, they hunted rabbit, they fished, all of those kinds of things and then you would eat that as part of your regular meals?

BOGANY

Yes. And, you know, it's really funny, because I think that the rabbit is really a dark meat, and I really don't like dark meat from a chicken or something, but I love rabbit. Does that make sense?

COATES

That's a good memory.

BOGANY

Yes.

COATES

Did you have chickens and things like that too?

BOGANY

Yes.

COATES

You did? But you just didn't like that?

BOGANY

At my grandma's house, they were just like all over the yard, and we had big gardens and stuff.

COATES

So there were never really any shortages of things, of food or anything like that? You were always pretty able to grow your own or catch your own or whatever?

BOGANY

We never knew we were poor till we left home. [laughs] You have a house to stay in. You eat good. We had big breakfasts. We didn't know we were poor till we left home. And then you know why your father's working all the time. You just take for granted that that's the way life is. You know you're eating and you're doing what you're supposed to do.

COATES

Was your father pretty young, too, when you were born, like your mother?

BOGANY

Yes, he had just came back from World War II. He's twenty years older than me.

COATES

So your mom was seventeen and he was—

BOGANY

Twenty.

COATES

Twenty. He was a little bit older than her.

BOGANY

Yes.

COATES

What did he do during the war?

BOGANY

He was an engineer for planes, like a mechanic or something like that.

COATES

So he stayed here stateside then, or was he stationed someplace as a—

BOGANY

No, he went to Korea and then when he came back, that's what he looked for, but he couldn't get it. He used to always tell us the story that only the guy with the blue eyes got the job. So he kind of gave up, and I think that's why women are more out there, because we don't give up. We want the job, we're getting it, more than a man does. A man will settle for the next best thing, whatever supports his family, where women will say, "I'll do this now, but I'm going to get this job. I'm going to move up higher." And men don't think like that.

COATES

So he was a cook at the restaurant, but when he was doing the gardening, did he work on his own doing that?

BOGANY

Yes, it was his own business.

COATES

He didn't work with other people or anything?

BOGANY

No.

COATES

So he had his own business in that regard. Did he get a lot of clients?

BOGANY

Yes. I remember as a teenager, he tried to get a job in Anaheim, but he underbided and so it's kind of, you know, if you really don't know about what people expect, they felt he didn't get it because he underbid.

COATES

Because he underbid?

BOGANY

Yes, and they didn't think he could do the job.

COATES

For what he bid.

BOGANY

For the money, yes. So it's kind of hard to figure that out.

COATES

It's kind of a perfect point.

BOGANY

Yes, when you're bidding.

COATES

So when you were going to school, was that something enjoyable for you, for the most part?

BOGANY

Well, I went. There wasn't nothing particularly I was working toward, like I have my great-grandparents that work today toward being doctors or whatever. I just went to school, which is what you're supposed to do. But later on then I went back to college, because I left school at fifteen. I went and got my GED when I was thirty, and then I went to college and taught school for thirty-five years.

COATES

Your parents, had they graduated?

BOGANY

My father got a GED. He did it all by reading the dictionary. He always told us that. He read the dictionary. His parents were old and they couldn't help him. They didn't know the language that good, so he read the dictionary and got his GED and went into the Marines.

COATES

So Spanish was his first language?

BOGANY

Yes.

COATES

And his parents, your grandparents only—

BOGANY

They only spoke Spanish.

COATES

But he acquired a lot of English vocabulary by reading the dictionary.

BOGANY

Yes, and he always thought that we would only speak Spanish at home. He didn't allow us to speak anything else, so when my brother came along about the same time my daughter did, he learned English through the TV, where we didn't have that luxury right—we only went up to thirteen. But it was different, you know.

COATES

So you grew up speaking Spanish in the home yourself.

BOGANY

In the home, yes.

COATES

But you spoke English—

BOGANY

When my parents were married, there was only English, and then when my father remarried, because he spoke English, but when he remarried—and my mother, of course, didn't speak English. She might have spoken Tongva, but she spoke English, and she didn't speak Spanish. So when he remarried, I moved to Baja California to Tijuana for three years, from ten to thirteen, and I learned Spanish there.

COATES

Okay. Go through this with me again. I'm confused.

BOGANY

Okay. My parents got divorced when I was six.

COATES

Oh, okay. That's the missing piece.

BOGANY

And so he married somebody from Mexico. And then we moved to get her kids emigrated to Baja, and then I went to school there first through third and learned Spanish, then came back to United States.

COATES

Now, when your parents divorced, you lived with your mother?

BOGANY

I lived with my grandparents.

COATES

You lived with your grandparents. Your father's—

BOGANY

My father's parents.

COATES

Okay. I see. Why was that? Why was that decision made that that's where you would go?

BOGANY

Because Mom left us on a corner, I'll have to bring in next time I come, next week, whenever I see you, I'll bring you my life.

COATES

Okay.

BOGANY

And you can take whatever you want out of there.

COATES

Okay. But you prefer not to—

BOGANY

Well, it's a long story, but it's only a fourteen-minute tape, so it's a DVD and I've been passing it out here.

COATES

All right. Let me pause this for a second. [interruption]

BOGANY

—I guess a quest how I decide which culture to follow, because I grew up in a Spanish environment but knew I was Native. So at the age of two, when I had to go move with my grandma, my grandparents, right before the divorce, at age two, my grandfather molested me and he went to jail for six months. Children were not important in those years; they didn't do very much. But then when my parents got divorced, I was six and I had to go live in their house. So he would say—neighbors knew that he had been in jail for molesting me. So he would say, "Stay in the truck." And the truck was those old Helms trucks, but they didn't have windows, and I would

jump out of the truck all the time and I would get scarred up because jumping out of the truck. But I wanted people to see me.

And we lived in this little shed, and in that shed was just myself and my brother. My sister was the godchild. She had beautiful black hair. She was really light. She got to stay in the house with the grandparents.

So at age six, almost seven, one of my cousin's was having a birthday, and so we went to go buy a gift, and a car hit my sister and I, and it was a drunk driver, so they never caught him. But my sister was thrown six blocks away, and it cut her leg in three pieces, and till today, she still has a hole in her leg where—you know, surgery wasn't that prominent as it is today, years ago.

But I got a scratch on my arm, and I was sitting at St. John's Hospital, where I was born, and I thought I heard a nun say, "God has something for that girl." And I thought, who is this god? Who is god? But I remembered that. So through my life, I kept looking for him.

So when we went to stay in Tijuana and I learned Spanish by going to school there, I moved in with stepmother. My dad came once a month, maybe sometimes every other month. But there was a lot of people in Baja. There was her kids, my stepmother's brothers, and so everybody was touchy-feely. I had a teacher that was a man teacher, and the kids would make fun of me, because, of course, I was older than them. You only went to school there if you had money. And I was already starting to develop, so the teacher was always touching.

And so then we left there and we came back to California, and we went to San Fernando Valley. There I was too old for—so they put me in sixth grade, and I really didn't know a whole lot, so school was really pretty tough for me. So I remember going to the catechism because we were Catholics. I loved the—I would steal the Blue Chip stamps to get those little pictures of Jesus, because I was looking for god. I always say god always forgave me for that because he knew I was looking for him.

But then I was in junior high. I was, like, about fourteen, and my dad came in my room and my older stepbrother, and he told me, "I'm going to tell all your friends." You know, you're almost fifteen and you're thinking, "He's going to tell all my friends that my dad came in my room if I don't have sex with him." And I was so hurt. So I left home with him, and that's when I was fifteen. And I had my first baby a year later, and then I got pregnant again. And then he started beating me because I got pregnant.

COATES

This is your stepbrother?

BOGANY

Yes. So we lived—you know, what do you do? So I call his mom, which is my stepmother, and she said, "Well, what did you do to him?" So I knew that's not the people you call. So there was still nobody to call. So I'm still looking for god.

So then I finally left and I got a job. First I was just, you know, ironing for 10 cents apiece and babysitting for 10 cents an hour just to survive with two kids. And then the beatings got worse, so I decided, "That's it. I have to do this on my own. I don't want to go on welfare. I don't want to lose my kids. I'm not even twenty-one. I don't want to lose my kids."

So then we do go back together. So I have another one, my third one. And then after that, he dies a month after she's born. He dies in the hospital. So then from there I started drinking, I think

because I was twenty-one and I was old enough to, not because I needed to not remember the past, because I believed the past made me stronger, but I believed I started drinking because I was old enough. So I drank, got up to like a fifth of vodka a day. And then one morning, I said, "God, I still don't know who you are, but I want to stop drinking." And I stopped, just like that.

Then I started partying. I was working nights and then I started partying. In Palmdale they had this thing that if you had four kids, you could get a house. Well, I got the kid, but I didn't get a house. So I said, "It's okay." But I did find god. When I went to Simi Valley, I moved out there and I found god. And then I decided, "Okay. So now I want to know who he is."

So it's like people ask me, "Why did you stop being a Catholic?"

I said, "Because I didn't want somebody telling me what to do. I wanted to walk side by side with him."

So then the father of my fourth one, he came back, like, sixteen years later, because I didn't want to marry him because I didn't want to give my children a stepfather. I knew how my father felt about his stepchildren and I never wanted to give my kids that stepfather, and he felt the same way about my kids. So when he came back, the kids were all grown and our daughter was sixteen, and so we got married.

But he was a cocaine addict and a diabetic. So one day I'm sitting at the edge of the bed at four in the morning, wondering, "Why am I cleaning up this stuff every day? Why am I going through this?"

And I heard god in a loud voice say, "You jumped ahead of me." And I thought, oh. So I didn't complain no more.

And then he left, went back to Arkansas. He had had an amputation and it got worse and so he went back home, and he died at home.

So I kind of think that as I started working with my tribe and the first time I met my people, I went to La Casa, they were having a tribal meeting, and I walked in and all the alarms went off, [unclear] said, "I don't know who you are, lady, but you made a grand entrance."

So I gave him my papers and he said, "Oh, we're cousins." So I went from having my children and myself to having over three hundred cousins in one day, and it was so awesome to me, that I really put myself into being—and then I think it took like a year and then I was elected as culture affairs. Then really I started blooming, and, like, I love history. I had taught preschoolers for thirty-five years, and then all of a sudden I just wanted to learn everything there was about us. That's why I say I have the largest library of us, and I started doing presentations on our history. That's all I did was history.

Then all of a sudden, I started learning about plants and I started learning about toys and games and everything, so now I do a whole lot of stuff. But it was an empowerment for me to know that as a Tongva woman, and because of my grandma that stayed with me, even as a preschool teacher I tried to do like apples for Open House or corn. The teacher, I remember the teacher telling me, my professor said, "Why are you doing apples in the fall?"

I said, "Because I thought the kids would like it."

No, it was in the spring, because Open House is in the spring. And she got on me because apples come in the fall, and I didn't know that, right? So I cried and I thought, "I'm never going back to

college again.” And then I went—and I had her six more times. I said I’d never take her again, but I took her six more times.

Then I became a director and opened a couple of my own schools. And then I just decided one day, you know, “I don’t want to just work as a preschool teacher all my life. I want to do something. If I have to work, I want to do something for the community,” and I started working with the homeless and people coming out of prison. I did that for a year. I did AmeriCorps, worked in after-school programs with teenagers. I had never worked with teenagers because I always thought they’re like, you know, totally in spring all the time. I learned that’s where they were. [laughs]

Now, for five years I’ve been working at the college with college students, and that’s where life bloomed for me, as I found out. Not only did I find god, but after my second husband died, I kind of shut myself up in just one room for a year. And then I decided—I went to the service and I heard this man speaking on the Three Wise Men. One went to see the baby god, one went to see the savior, and one went to see the king, and I thought, oh, I know him as god, I know him as my savior, but I haven’t served him as my king. So then my life became serving him as my king, and that everything I do is for his glory. So my tribe is the most important thing to me, as a Tongva, to do it in honor of our ancestors, those people who had kept me going to serve him. So that’s the short version of my story.

COATES

Thank you for sharing it and thank you for—can we fill it out a little bit? Can I ask you some questions about it?

BOGANY

Sure.

COATES

The molestations are your grandfather, your teacher, your father, your stepbrother, is that right?

BOGANY

Yes.

COATES

Is this your father’s father?

BOGANY

Yes.

COATES

So it’s running through the family, isn’t it?

BOGANY

For me at the tribe—so when I went to my people, I was excited, but at the same time I was scared, and then it came to me, it wasn’t my people hurting me; it was the other side of the family that was sick. And so it wasn’t the Indians. And today I always say the men all call me, and I have no problem with them, because they all call me as the person of knowledge of the tribe, and I’m comfortable with them.

COATES

Did you ever discover if your father, your stepbrother had also been molested as molesters themselves? Because it's just—when it runs through a family like that it's—

BOGANY

I know. I didn't discover it. I know my psychiatrist, when I was really going through—and I saw him after I lost my husband, my second husband. He said that I really wanted to be married but I didn't think I could find that perfect person I wanted, but what would I tell my father? And I said I wouldn't tell him anything. I'm a strong believer that as parents we don't come with instructions. We learn what we're shown and it's up to us to change it.

COATES

And nobody changed it here, did they, until you?

BOGANY

Yes. Even like my grandma dying early and my mom dying early, it's been like twenty-some years, they found this lump in my breast. It was like the size of a golf ball, and they were going to do surgery and they were going to cut. That morning I went to a friend that was really close to me, and I said, "Let's pray one more time before I go over there." And they put my breast to sleep and I said, "You know what? Wait. Let's take one more look." And it was gone. Because, you know, I'm pretty bold. I have these conversations with god. I told god, "You know, it has to stop with me." I have four—three girls and a son. So it has to stop with me. I'm going to trust that the buck stops here, no more cancer. And I know it's all around in all our families. All my aunties on both sides have died of cancer. That's not going to be what takes me, and it's not going to be what takes my daughters. And I refused to keep it, and it worked.

I mean, because every year they would tell me, "You have to come back. You have to come back." And then finally this lump got bigger and bigger and I thought, "Oh, no. It's stopping now." And I think it's just a strong faith that god has given me to trust him for what I need. I'm not too good on my legs, though. Haven't asked him enough, I guess. [laughs]

COATES

That's the next thing to work on.

BOGANY

Have to have a little something, I think.

COATES

So at two years old, your grandmother died and that's when you moved to—

BOGANY

To live with my grandparents. Well, we visited there on weekends, I guess, because it was just two years later that my parents got divorced. And who knows if that was the cause? But I know that my mom left us on that corner and said if she wanted to have more children, she'd have them. So it was kind of like [unclear]. So it's kind of like hard to even understand where she was coming from.

COATES

So all of this neighborhood that you're talking about, you actually—

BOGANY

The memories all as a young child.

COATES

Yes, so all of those memories are starting at what age then?

BOGANY

They're all, like, going to school, like first grade.

COATES

But were you in that neighborhood when you were—

BOGANY

Molested? No, no.

COATES

So you don't come back into that neighborhood until you're about five or six years old, huh?

BOGANY

Yes.

COATES

When your parents split up?

BOGANY

Yes. But then the neighborhood starts changing, right? So we become more distanced as they get divorced because we get away from everybody, all the Native people in the family, right? They separate all of a sudden.

COATES

So the cluster of houses that your aunts are all living in and so forth, you're not actually a part of that when you're a very small child?

BOGANY

As a very small child I am, and then up to age ten.

COATES

Up to age ten you were?

BOGANY

Yes.

COATES

I'm still trying to put together the timeline of all of this.

BOGANY

Because at age two we were spending the weekend with my grandparents when my grandfather molested me, and so I think that's the biggest trigger. Because I work with the University of Oklahoma on sexual abuse, and I said, "Why do you make children go through counseling?" Because it's never gone. There's so many triggers that triggers it, and I always remember exactly what happened. I don't think it was because I remembered it, as much as people talk about it and

it stays in your mind. So you remember the event because you hear adults talking about it and that event stays in your mind and it never leaves as you get older. So if they would have never talked about it, I probably would have forgot it, you know, because I was only two. But because they continued to talk about it, it stayed there.

COATES

But you continued to live in your parents' home, though, until you're about—

BOGANY

Ten.

COATES

Until you're ten.

BOGANY

Yes. At six, we go to my grandma's.

COATES

But they divorced when you were six.

BOGANY

Yes, they divorced, and then we go back with my dad, stay at my grandma's. From six to probably eight years old I stay with my grandma.

COATES

Your father's mother.

BOGANY

Yes, and then he moves in with his wife until I'm ten, and then we moved to Baja, and then we moved to San Fernando Valley.

COATES

So you stop living with your mother when you're six.

BOGANY

Yes, with my real mother.

COATES

And you go with your father and your step—no, you go with your father's grandparents from six to eight, and then from eight to about ten you're with your father and stepmother.

BOGANY

Yes.

COATES

And then at ten you come back to into—

BOGANY

Then I live with my stepmother in Baja California till I'm thirteen.

COATES

She and your father are still married.

BOGANY

Yes.

COATES

But he's not necessarily there that much.

BOGANY

No, because he's working out here.

COATES

He's here and you're in Baja with her.

BOGANY

Yes, and then from thirteen to fifteen I stay at home with them.

COATES

So you come back here when you're thirteen and stay—

BOGANY

Two years.

COATES

—two years with your father and stepmother in their home.

BOGANY

Yes, and then I leave home.

COATES

And then at fifteen, you're out on your own. Okay. I think I got it. [laughter] So after six years old, then, do you have much interaction with your mother's family? Your mother is gone at that point, but—

BOGANY

No. So she comes to visit me in Baja when I'm thirteen, and she gives me, right before we're coming back, she gives me my Indian papers, my papers from the BIA. That's when she gives me my family tree and everything.

COATES

But you didn't see her between the age of six and the age of thirteen—

BOGANY

No.

COATES

And then she shows up and gives you this information, and then disappears again?

BOGANY

Yes.

COATES

Until when?

BOGANY

I saw her—well, it's not long, because I saw her when I was sixteen, pregnant with my son. And we see each other a little. And then my daughter, I had her at age twenty, so I see her that year, and then that's the last time I see her.

COATES

You didn't see her again after you were twenty years old.

BOGANY

No.

COATES

Wow. Why do you think she popped in to tell you that you were Indian? [laughs]

BOGANY

We were getting checks then. So she brought me a watch with my check. I think we got, like, \$1,500 and I got a watch and my papers. But that's when we got the big check, and then the last check I got was, like, in '78.

COATES

Did the check go to you or did it—

BOGANY

It went to her because she—yes, somebody signed my name, so she got the check.

COATES

Why did she need to see you?

BOGANY

I guess she needed to bring me a—

COATES

A present?

BOGANY

To make her feel better? Who knows? So she brought me a watch. So the watch I don't have, but I did keep my papers. And I always say it's amazing even at thirteen that you wouldn't lose something that important.

COATES

Do you remember what she told you when she gave you the papers?

BOGANY

She said, "These are yours and they're very important." And I just kept them. I always kept them in my wallet.

COATES

She didn't tell you why they were important?

BOGANY

No. But I know that in '78 when the last checks we got as a tribe from the government, it took them till—they were issued in '78, but I didn't get mine till like early nineties when they caught up with me. You know how the government has—they find you, and they gave it to me then, because I was still registered.

COATES

So when you were in your grandparents' house and then your father and your stepmother, that was all still in roughly the same area, though.

BOGANY

Yes, because my parents lived in Culver City.

COATES

And then your stepmother takes you down to Baja. What was that like? To go back to the language, you don't speak Spanish at that point.

BOGANY

I don't speak, no.

COATES

But you learned it.

BOGANY

I ate bologna for a whole year.

COATES

Because you knew how to say that?

BOGANY

Yes, I knew how to say "bologna." So bologna they could understand.

But I went to school. It was really tough because I didn't speak the language, but it's kind of like having total immersion, right? Slowly, and then I started in first grade, even though I was ten. So I learned Spanish. I learned their history and so I read and write it. I taught through the years—how we say it in my movie, I always say it's really important because I learned to teach. About ten years ago I taught in the Spanish community for five years, child development, and how to get your license and all that in Spanish, in the Spanish community. So I do know how to read and write.

COATES

So you came out of those three years reasonably fluent.

BOGANY

It's all empower to me, that no matter what we go through, it's about being empowered by those experiences and not letting them get us down, but becoming empowered. That there's a reason, right? Who knows?

COATES

Your father knew that your mother was Tongva, I presume, right?

BOGANY

Yes.

COATES

How did he—

BOGANY

Well, I always heard the bad stuff, you know, about being Indian, from my stepmother. She would always say—I didn't know exactly what tribe I was from, but I knew that we were Gabrielino, but I didn't know that the thing was that—she would say my mom was from Arizona and she had a big nose because she was from Arizona, and, you know, stories people talk about Indians, if you're not Indian.

COATES

That your mom was from Arizona?

BOGANY

Yes.

COATES

That's not even true, is it?

BOGANY

Because she didn't even know. No. But that's what she said, because you know how people who don't know Indians talk about all the negative stuff?

COATES

Oh, yes.

BOGANY

Yes, so it's like—so you didn't really know. So that's why when I met my people it was like really an impact for me.

COATES

Was your father's family that way, had that feeling about Indians also?

BOGANY

They didn't really talk about it.

COATES

Did you ever get any sense that there was some kind of shame in him having married an Indian or anything like that?

BOGANY

No. I think maybe because my grandfather was Azteca or whatever.

COATES

That's right, so that was really just your stepmother's sense about it.

BOGANY

Yes, stepmother's idea. But she was from Mexico City, difference in Mexicans. So that's how they feel.

COATES

So why did she go live in Baja?

BOGANY

To emigrate her children. She had four children.

COATES

So she just basically sort of wanted to get just a little bit over the line.

BOGANY

A Green Card. Yes, get a Green Card. So that as her kids were getting their Green Cards, yes.

COATES

And that took about three years, and then she came back.

BOGANY

Yes.

COATES

So she had been undocumented before that time?

BOGANY

No, she was documented.

COATES

She was documented, but the kids weren't.

BOGANY

She was born in Chicago, yes. But her kids weren't.

COATES

So you come back at thirteen years old, something like that, and now you know that you're Tongva.

BOGANY

Yes.

COATES

But you also speak Spanish as you come back into this neighborhood.

BOGANY

Yes, and I still don't know a whole lot about my people, except what I've learned here and there and what I picked up, but really don't get really interested until I hear that lady at the conference say, "You owe it to your grandmother. Find your people." And I set out to find my people, and that's what I did.

COATES

And you're about thirteen when you're at that conference?

BOGANY

Yes.

COATES

And what was the conference?

BOGANY

It was a women's conference, a Native women's conference.

COATES

How were you at that kind of a conference at thirteen years old? How did that happen?

BOGANY

Interest of who I was.

COATES

You just as a thirteen-year-old girl decided to go to this?

BOGANY

Yes.

COATES

Wow.

BOGANY

And see who I am.

COATES

How did you hear about it, do you remember?

BOGANY

No, I don't remember how I heard about it, but I just thought I need to go find out, you know. So it was important. So it's been a journey.

COATES

Were there others your age that were there or was it mostly older?

BOGANY

There was a lot of teenagers, probably, at the conference—well, because they had activities for youth. It was neat. So I kept thinking when they were handing me all those plants, "These are weeds. What do I do with these?" [laughs]

COATES

The message that came to you out of this conference then was that you owe this to your grandmother, you owe this to your people and so forth. And then what were the first steps that you took as a thirteen-year-old?

BOGANY

Finding my people. Finding my people.

COATES

And what does that mean? How did you do that?

BOGANY

I just started looking for them everywhere, trying to find numbers or contacts with family. So my auntie was the first contact, and then just finding my uncles.

COATES

How did you go about doing that?

BOGANY

Just calling numbers, just calling—you know, there was several groups at that time also.

COATES

Just looking in the phone book?

BOGANY

Yes, finding my people. And they were close, and they showed their love and they told me all my stories as being little, baby—

COATES

And you hadn't seen them for—

BOGANY

Yes, for years.

COATES

—seven years or something like that, or more. And they obviously remembered you, though. They knew who you were.

BOGANY

Yes. So that was neat. And I, always, you know, “I have my papers. This is me.”

COATES

But this is sort of going on at the same time when all of this is also happening with your stepbrother, right?

BOGANY

Yes.

COATES

I mean, it's all part of the same moment for you.

BOGANY

Yes.

COATES

So what did you think about that? I mean, how were those things—

BOGANY

I just thought, “Well, it’s not safe here. So I might as well go with this one,” you know, and get away. But then I didn’t know I was going to get into a domestic violence thing. All his brothers moved in and it became a total—and then I didn’t know how to survive that. It’s like, okay, how do you go from being unsafe to somebody beating you up all the time?

COATES

But wasn’t your stepbrother sort of threatening you that he would reveal things if you didn’t have sex with him?

BOGANY

Yes.

COATES

And yet that still felt safe, safer to be with him?

BOGANY

Yes.

COATES

Than to stay in the family, the house where your father was.

BOGANY

Because I think you’re thinking—and because I know I was on a lot of parenthood things, and I said girls don’t get pregnant just because. It’s because sometimes you’re running for that safety. You’re running thinking, “Okay, if I go with him I could have a family and I’ll be fine.”

COATES

So you weren’t necessarily seeing your mother’s family as an option here yet, huh?

BOGANY

No. So it was like, you know, how do I get out of this? How do I leave home? I have to have something to go to.

COATES

So you’ve got these very practical, pragmatic concerns about security on one hand.

BOGANY

Yes.

COATES

And then you’re learning about your Indian part of you on the other hand, but you don’t feel like you know very much about it?

BOGANY

Well, how do I know if they’re safe? At that age, how do I really know if they’re safe? If life has been unsafe the entire time, who is safe? Well, let’s try family. Let’s try making my own family and then it’ll be safe. But then I found out that wasn’t safe either. So it’s choices we make, trying to decide which choice is the right choice. And even like with the women I work today with, you know, I say, “I’m not going to give you a decision. I’m going to explain it to you the best I can, but you still have to make the choice, because the choice is still always ours to make.”

COATES

As you're in this situation now with your stepbrother and beginning to have children and make your own family, as you say, but you're also reconnecting with your mother's family in the same moment, right? What are their—or do they have reactions to the situation that you're in?

BOGANY

I don't think they know.

COATES

They don't know about it?

BOGANY

Because once I get that first phone call and I say, "This is happening," and she says, "What did you do?" it's like nobody's going to be there, right?

COATES

So it's your mother's family who has that reaction, "What did you do?"

BOGANY

No, his mother. So then you don't really want to go to nobody else, because you figure their reaction's going to be the same.

COATES

But your Tongva family members do not know—

BOGANY

No, anything that's going on.

COATES

—anything that's going on, but they know that you're with him and all of that, right?

BOGANY

Right.

COATES

They don't have any particular reactions to that?

BOGANY

No. I think a lot of women got married young, left home young for different reasons.

COATES

And he's not a blood relative of yours, after all, so they don't have any—

BOGANY

Yes.

COATES

What are his reactions to you beginning to try and find out about yourself, about your Tongva self?

BOGANY

I don't think I ever told him. I think I had a real good friend that lived next to me that knew everything about me, and still does. She's the only person I can call and she can cuss me out good, and I'll cry and then I'm fine. Because she was twenty-two having her first, and I was fifteen having my first, and we became close friends through the years, and it's like she's always empowered me about what my life has been and become, and she said, "I knew you could do it."

COATES

So when you met her was when you were about fifteen and in this—okay.

BOGANY

Yes. So it was like that was the closest thing I had to a friend, and so we're still friends today and we have kids all the same ages.

COATES

So you did find one person that you could rely on.

BOGANY

Yes, and I think there was a time when it took five people to encourage—I always tell people there was a time it takes five people to encourage you to make it in life, but today's world, it only takes one. And then we got to that point where it took three. Now it's just like if you have one person.

COATES

I still think it's one.

BOGANY

Yes, one person will do it for you.

COATES

Can make a whole difference, yes.

BOGANY

Yes, that makes a difference for you in which way you go.

COATES

So was she Tongva also?

BOGANY

No, she was just a friend. She's from Colorado, and actually she's godmother to two of my children. She wouldn't let me be godmother to hers because I had an unstable life. You know, part of belief.

COATES

But she knew that you were exploring this part of yourself and everything and she encouraged that?

BOGANY

Yes. She thought it was great, yes, she did. And she's encouraged me throughout life, and when I feel like I'm getting down, she'll say, "Look at all you've done."

COATES

Because here's somebody who knows you for all these years.

BOGANY

Yes, that knows me. And very few friends, I think we only have one, that knows everything about us and is still your friend.

COATES

So what were the first interactions with your mother's family like after you had reconnected with them?

BOGANY

Activities. We did a lot of field trips, you know, learning about the tribe and stuff like that, family.

COATES

What kinds of things in particular?

BOGANY

Just like culture, like songs and participating, and just being together as a family.

COATES

So when you're speaking about beginning to learn all of these cultural things, this cultural knowledge and so forth, I mean, you mentioned the songs, for instance. Do you remember being at events or occasions or something, things like that, where people were singing?

BOGANY

Just visiting parks and things, and spending that time eating together and talking and reminiscing with family.

COATES

So it's just very natural social events.

BOGANY

Yes, natural social—because it was just me and my kids. So it becomes totally exiting for me to have family and not be fearful, but to know that I'm finally okay.

COATES

So as part of just a natural family event, for instance, they would sing Tongva songs or something like that?

BOGANY

Yes, and have food.

COATES

Tongva foods and so forth?

BOGANY

And learning, you know, just learning from each other.

COATES

And they'd tell stories and share stories?

BOGANY

Yes, of when my father was little and my mom, and them dating and dancing and stuff.

COATES

So was it more family stories rather than—

BOGANY

Yes, family stories.

COATES

—what you would call tribal stories, I guess?

BOGANY

Yes, more family stories, yes.

COATES

What were some of the things that you remember in terms of—and this is pulling away from the family a little bit, but were you aware at that time of any kind of tribal organizations or tribal government or tribal—

BOGANY

No, not until I got into the tribe and saw a tribal government. I knew other tribes, but I hadn't been to their government yet. I think I was in my twenties when I started getting involved with several tribes, you know, just participating and attending. So, like when my second husband died, I would go sit at San Manuel and you sit in the doctor's office just because it was comfortable there for me, because people just knew me and they would say hi. And I would just read a book. You know, that was just my comfort zone, because I couldn't drive out here. I could be somewhere near tribal people. I didn't really do the pow-wow scene. I did more of the being where people were at.

COATES

So your identification with Tongva, when you are first coming to it, is really with your family. That's what makes you Tongva?

BOGANY

Yes.

COATES

Just being part of a family that is—

BOGANY

Yes, and I think that's what it is, that we're family. Even with the other tribes, like with the Serrano where I do my medical, it's like we're the cousins, right? Just the Luiseños, the Pechanga and Soboba, we're all cousins, so it's all about family. I think that when they got to California they just separated us and that we were always together because those are the people we shared with, the people we communicated with. You know, we didn't just stay in the family;

we had to go out with—we didn't marry within the family. We had to go out with those other tribes, and so that we were one big family.

When the government separated us, then all of a sudden we stopped visiting, right? So I think one of the ladies from the Serrano Tribe wrote a book and she talks about us a lot, and she says that the Gabrielino—and so I explain it that the [unclear] and Gabrielino are no longer here. So when McCauley writes in his book, the Angelino book, that the Gabrielino are no longer here, he's saying we ceased to exist, in the early 1900s. When she's saying we're no longer here as a Serrano, she's saying we no longer a fellowship as a Native person. Native person uses the same word, but she's meaning that we no longer have time to visit. We no longer borrow that sugar across the fence, go to parties together, visit, communicate, watch TV together. We barely watch it with the whole family.

COATES

Community like what used to be or something.

BOGANY

Yes, and that's all important.

COATES

So when you're living with your husband—because you and your stepbrother are married?

BOGANY

Yes. Well, I was too young to get married, but we lived together for like a long time, six years.

COATES

You lived together, yes, so de facto, it's a marriage.

BOGANY

Yes.

COATES

Where did you live?

BOGANY

In Van Nuys.

COATES

Is that San Fernando Valley?

BOGANY

Yes.

COATES

And he was working?

BOGANY

Yes, he was a handyman for a motel.

COATES

And were you working or were you a stay-at-home worker and mom? [laughs]

BOGANY

No, I worked at the trophy place in Van Nuys for a little bit after my son—before that, after my daughter was born, I worked for Olga Company. I used to model their lingerie.

COATES

Oh, really?

BOGANY

I wear size 3. That's the only time I wore size 3. But I modeled for Olga Company.

COATES

Oh, my goodness.

BOGANY

You know the strap on the back of your bra?

COATES

Yes.

BOGANY

They dyed the material there and I ironed the backs for them to—

## **1.2. SESSION TWO**

**May 29, 2013**

BOGANY

—for the seamstress to make the bras. So I worked for Olga Company.

COATES

And you had two children with him.

BOGANY

Yes.

COATES

And then it became a situation of domestic violence, and when does that begin to—

BOGANY

We separated and then we got back together and I had another one. And then I finally just said, "Okay, this is it. I'm almost twenty-one." Then that was the last of us. And then he died of bronchopneumonia at General Hospital.

COATES

He died young of that?

BOGANY

He was thirty-five.

COATES

So you were already—

BOGANY

Yes.

COATES

That was sometime—

BOGANY

I was twenty. I was almost twenty-one. He died in January, and I turned twenty-one that July.

COATES

So he was quite a bit older than you, actually.

BOGANY

Twelve years.

COATES

And what do you do when that marriage ends, or that relationship ends?

BOGANY

I just work. Then I worked for ITT [unclear] in Van Nuys for, like, ten years, and have another baby, of course, in between there.

COATES

You didn't do that by yourself. There was another relationship, huh?

BOGANY

Yes, there was another relationship, friends of friends, a party, you know, friends of friends. And then we moved to Simi Valley for a year. Then I moved out to San Bernardino, and I've been in San Bernardino since, since my daughter was two, and she's forty-one now.

COATES

And you went back to college during those years?

BOGANY

I went to college in San Bernardino, got my GED, got my GED first and then I went to college and became a preschool teacher. Then I became a director.

COATES

And when do you get your GED, first of all? How old are you?

BOGANY

At age thirty.

COATES

So you're working in Van Nuys during those years, supporting yourself.

BOGANY

Yes, and I worked at the Hilton in Anaheim. I lived in Anaheim a year, but that was kind of expensive. But there I just worked in, like, assembly lines, stuff like that. So I moved to San Bernardino and I work at the Hilton, but the Hilton, working at five o'clock and I'm making beds

and I think, “You know, I push my kids to go to school. What is my problem?” So I decide to go to school, and that’s why I get my GED and then I go to college.

COATES

And you started college right after you got your GED?

BOGANY

Yes.

COATES

So you were in your early thirties when you started. And where did you go to school?

BOGANY

At Valley College.

COATES

Where’s that?

BOGANY

In San Bernardino.

COATES

So you moved there to go to school, or had you lived there already?

BOGANY

I had just moved. I moved there—Mary’s forty-one. She was two years old. And then I go to school there. I start working. I’m already working as a preschool teacher right after I got my GED, but I go to school to get a degree for child development. Then I open two schools, and then I decide that’s not what I want to do forever, work with little kids. So then I decided to work with the homeless and people coming out of prison, and I thought that was a rewarding job, and volunteer for Salvation Army for, like, fifteen years. And now I’m just working with the colleges, museums.

COATES

You’ve reconnected with your family in your teens. When do you start reconnecting with the Tongva Tribe?

BOGANY

I think I was, like, thirty-five, so it’s been thirty years, and being cultural affairs for, like, twelve years. So I’m a tribal chairperson as the culture person.

COATES

But you told me you started to be aware of tribal organization and tribal government and so forth while you were in your twenties?

BOGANY

Yes, but I started doing a lot of—I worked with several tribes. The first job I worked with was Fontana Native American Indian Center and I was their culture person, and so I worked with tribes all over. I attended meetings with my tribe, but then I started, when I became cultural affairs, then I started doing more for my tribe.

COATES

So you were actually kind of starting to reconnect with other groups even before your own?

BOGANY

Yes, I connected with other groups. So I'm still connected with other groups.

COATES

So what was the impetus to do that, to start getting connected even with other tribes?

BOGANY

I kind of felt that that was more—it was part of just being more family to me. I do a lot of negotiations with the federal tribes. Even though I'm not federal, I get to go to those and I do a lot of conferences. I'm an advocate for ICWA and so I took a lot of social service classes.

COATES

But you weren't doing all of that right off the bat, right?

BOGANY

No. I just started going, I think, as just visiting the tribes and learning their cultures.

COATES

How did you do that? How did you visit them and learn their cultures? What was that process like?

BOGANY

By attending their—it was hard, because there was a lot of trust issue, right? But I've been working with them so long now, they call me. But at first, it took at least five years to get into the groups because it's just a trust issue. Even for my own tribe, it's all about trust and who are you. Where are you coming from? So I enjoyed it.

COATES

So what kinds of things did you do to overcome that issue?

BOGANY

Just attend and be there, be friendly, not say nothing, you know. Then people start asking, you know, knowing you and seeing you around, seeing that you care and you really don't want nothing from them. You just want to be there. So I have friends within other tribes, and my tribe knows that I'm kind of everywhere.

COATES

So how are you making yourself visible? What kinds of things are you going to and just hanging out?

BOGANY

Just like culture events, basket-weaving. I became a vice president for the basket weavers, learning to do baskets, attending conferences, events that they have.

COATES

And this was in the 1960s you start doing this?

BOGANY

Yes. So when I came to my tribe, yes, I knew a lot about all the other tribes. So then I had to taper it down, so like right now, I'm, okay, what do I want to keep? What connects us? But then when I did an ICWA program for Fontana Native, I also went to the court and said, "Okay, instead of having these parenting classes, I'll do parenting classes for people who want to adopt into the tribe." But in a tribe people don't want that child, you know, want to let it go to another Native, then I'll teach about that tribe to that parent, and so I did that for a while. That's how it is an opening to help, and it's about helping. So now I teach fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, and I have the CAERS grant, so I do recovery support. I have the two women's circles, you know, [unclear].

COATES

What were some of your first interests in your twenties and just beginning to go to conferences and things like this? What were the things that first caught your attention?

BOGANY

Learning history, who the tribes were. So I did AmeriCorps, right? So when I did AmeriCorps, I took all my Indian Studies at UCR. I had enough money to take seven classes. So I took seven classes. I took literature and history, a class on shamans to see what that was about, because people had all this craziness about, you know, it was evil, and I wanted to know for myself. And for me, it's always easier to go do the hands-on. So that was important to me, and knowing the differences and the likenesses of each tribe. So it makes it easy as I work [unclear] college to work with several tribes, because I know a little bit about all of them and where they're coming from, and I can talk about languages within the tribes, what's it like with mine and theirs.

COATES

So when you're doing this at UCR, is this before you had gone to college yourself?

BOGANY

No, I had already gone to college.

COATES

So that's later, in your thirties or something like that, that you start doing this?

BOGANY

Yes, my thirties. Just making friends. And a lot of people come from other places, right? They're not necessarily here. They're here, but they're from other tribes a lot, so it's fun. Then I have a friend at [unclear] so she started inviting me to—when they asked for a California Native in Oklahoma, she would always send me. So I got to go across country and meet more tribes and attend. So when I go to Oklahoma, I have a lot of friends, places I can stay.

COATES

What kind of work are you doing through all of these—as you're kind of building this? I'm talking about in your twenties and thirties as you're building this base of Indian-ness, I guess you could say, that you're going to operate from for the next several decades.

BOGANY

Mostly history at the beginning. It was a lot of history. I learned a lot of history.

COATES

But what kind of work are you doing to support yourself? Because are these paying jobs that—

BOGANY

No. I'm teaching preschool and doing part-time of running around, and then I start working with the homeless and I do more running around, because they can only pay me four hours. And then I start a circle called Healing Ourselves. No, it's a healing circle and we start visiting museums together as different Natives, and instead of having a circle, we actually go to museums and to different events together as a group and discuss some—I joined museum multicultural groups and we start reading books on different people and seeing our likeness to other people, not just Natives. So that's interesting to me, because I love to read. And then I started learning more of the plants and stuff, and then I start teaching, because at first for years I just taught history, and now I kind of got it. So I still learn more stuff each time, but I still—

COATES

What's your family life? Because you sound like you're very busy through those years, right? You're teaching and working.

BOGANY

All my kids are growing.

COATES

You've got kids, and then, in addition, you're doing these volunteer kinds of things and you're learning culture and beginning to start things to pass it on and so forth. So what's it like at home during those years with the family, the kids?

BOGANY

The kids, you know—well, when I started doing a whole lot of it, you know, I had my kids young, so they were in high school when I start, and so the youngest one is in kindergarten. So they're going to school. Each of them were in something different. One's in Camp Fire, one's in Girl Scouts, you know, everybody's doing something, music, and we're doing church and we're doing all this stuff, and they enjoy it and it keeps them busy. So then the grandkids come and they all go to school with my when I start teaching.

The grandkids are starting to come, because they come early too. And so they go to school with me. Then the great-grands started coming, and the great-grands gather with me, go learn the culture, participate in the tribe more, so it's been a total learning experience for them.

COATES

So you're kids really go up with, I presume—

BOGANY

More family values.

COATES

Yes, and a very strong sense of being Tongva, much more than you ever had.

BOGANY

Right, because they're in there from the beginning.

COATES

Before you knew that you were Indian, how did you identify yourself, I mean ethnically?

BOGANY

Mexican.

COATES

As Mexican?

BOGANY

Yes. Some women today that are Yaqui who are in my circle, they say, "Well, we grew up as Mexicans, but now we find out now that we're Native." And they're angry because they lost all those years.

And I said, "But if you pick it up from now, it'll all come back." You start seeing it, so it's never too late to find out who you are. And you use all that Spanish that you learn and all the things that you know to empower who you are as a Native. So it's not that it's wrong; it's just that's what you knew.

COATES

How are you doing?

BOGANY

Pretty good.

COATES

We've been going close to an hour and a half. Do you want to stop at this time?

BOGANY

Yes.

COATES

We'll go ahead and stop at this moment. [End of May 29, 2013 interview]

### **1.3. SESSION THREE**

**June 12, 2013**

COATES

Today is June 12, 2013, and my name is Julia Coates, and I am sitting with Julia Bogany, and this is the second interview that we have done. We are at the Tongva Cultural Center. Is that right?

BOGANY

Yes.

COATES

That's the right name, in El Monte, California. Today we're going to pick up and we're going to talk about the last thirty years or so, twenty-five years or so of your life. This is the time when you begin to get really involved more and more with your tribe and with the American Indian community generally in this area. I think some of your involvement begins with just some

organizations or some projects that you begin, and I'll just kind of let you go where you want to go with this. What are some of the first things that you do that sort of signify that deepening involvement on your part?

BOGANY

Well, I became cultural affairs for the tribe, as a chairperson, that I started working with museums and getting seen out there in the public eye, right, because people even that came to California don't see us as existing. So I started working with museums and I started doing presentations at schools. I still do a lot of that now, but recently in the last five years I worked at the college as the elder in residence and teach students, because after teaching in elementary schools, I kind of felt that once they're gone, they might remember, they might not, right? But if I teach it to college level, then they can continue teaching and so it stays on and the culture continues to live.

COATES

So what are some of the museums that you worked at?

BOGANY

I worked with Arcadia Museum, and also for the Arcadia School District. I changed the curriculum, where they teach now about Victoria Reid, which was the first woman chief for the Tongva. I worked with the City of Duarte for their curriculum, and then also for Pomona for—I think it's Philip Ranch. I did their curriculum for where they teach Tongva third, fourth, and fifth grade. Then I work at the Science Center in Long Beach. I taught in Long Beach geometry through basket weaving for a year, and that was interesting, knowing how to make a basket but learning how to do the geometry to making a basket.

COATES

And where did you learn all that?

BOGANY

They trained us for the geometry part. We had to learn how to make our baskets by measuring.

COATES

Who?

BOGANY

The program is called Geometry Through Basket Weaving. And so they trained seven different cultures, and, of course, the Tongva was one of them.

COATES

Long Beach does this?

BOGANY

Long Beach does that in their school district. They have a program.

COATES

Oh, interesting.

BOGANY

So that was really exciting. I became a member of the basket weavers and was on their board for a little while and so learned more and more about the plants. I started off teaching mostly history of the tribe and then I started teaching plants, and now I'm into toys and games and a little bit of everything. Soapstone is my specialty. At the aquarium every year, this is our, I believe, eighth year, we're there three days and I teach soapstone for over a thousand kids and on weekends.

COATES

In three days you have a thousand kids come through.

BOGANY

Teaching soapstone, yes. So that's really my specialty. I've done presentations for senior citizen homes and churches, and whoever calls, that's where I've been. So mostly now it's just working with college students and colleges who call me. So I work with Dominguez, Dominguez Ranch. I'm on YouTube with them. I've taught some classes. I taught this past year in January twenty students from New Jersey who were going to become new ministers and taught them about the Tongva in Los Angeles, and that was exciting and new.

COATES

So how did you learn all of these things? Are you self-taught? So do you go and do research or—

BOGANY

At first I did. At first I was learning from people that were out there teaching, and then I started to do some research on my own and started growing. I worked with the University of Oklahoma on a curriculum from zero to thirteen on sexual abuse, and I kind of felt that I knew everyone there, and we met for the first time. I was representing California. There was twenty-nine tribes, and it was so exciting. They had such gorgeous stories out there. And I came home and I said, "Where are our stories?"

My cousin said, "You're old. Make them up."

Well, to today I have forty-five of our stories. I didn't have to make them up; I found them.

COATES

Where did you find them?

BOGANY

Like Agua Mansa, they had this little tiny bookshelf that had a book that was written in 1919 for schools, and a couple years went by and finally I decided to look it up on the computer, and I got it for two dollars, and it had ten of our stories.

COATES

Oh, my goodness.

BOGANY

And so people know I'm out there looking, so I'm part of the Language Committee also. So when we meet with other tribes, they have some of our stories, so they say, "Oh, this is a Tongva story," even though, you know, it's in our language or whatever. So I found—so I have forty-five. I do have two new ones that I did ask for, for, like, special occasions, like I was teaching about the ocean turtle and had a cousin write me that story. That's new, but he's a storyteller, so I had him do that.

COATES

For you, what are the meanings of these stories?

BOGANY

It taught us how to survive and how to live. I think they're important to us. I did a study. I taught preschool for thirty-five years, so I think I was doing a study on discipline, and I really enjoyed, through White Bison, enjoyed this one discipline that was about telling your child the creation story. Every time they'd misbehave, you'd sit them on your lap and you tell them the creation story, so when that child becomes eight, right, they start telling it to you. But then we don't have no trouble with our teenagers because they know their place in life because of that creation story that they've heard over and over. And it's like that was more important to me, because it was a greater way to discipline children than to just time out or whatever. But to tell them the story—

COATES

Because they get your attention, which is probably what they're wanting anyway.

BOGANY

Yes, yes. And it's a better way of sharing.

When I was in Oklahoma, we were talking about sexual abuse, which is really heavy, but people talked about how they introduced the birds and the bees to their children, right? I thought, oh, how neat. People talked about mountains and grass growing, and I thought, oh! It was a learning experience. And grandmas not wanting to share, because the girls were wearing pants nowadays and they would have a skirt hanging by the door and I thought, that's really neat. Or the sharing part that we did a long time ago when I was a kid, as I'm thinking, that there was a puzzle table in the house, and I said we always did puzzles. So today—this was eight years ago—so I have a table in my house that's for the puzzle. But I still have a three-year-old, so I haven't put the puzzle on the table. But you never know who finishes it, but everyone who comes to visit works on it, right? So that's one of the things.

The other thing I remember, one of my aunties, she came to visit at a family reunion and she gave me this scarf that's really, like, ugly. I would never wear it nowhere. But I thought about how we shared. We shared those towels that used to come in the soap, you know, or the jars that you got from the milkman or something, and you always left with a gift. And that was part of who we were, right, and who we should be today in that sharing part. So I thought about that. That's really neat, and that's what I wanted to share with our young people today.

The other important thing I think that we have learned, that we skip generations. So my grandmother was active, my mom wasn't active, so then I became active. My daughters, they know about the Tongva, but they don't really—they find me stuff, but they're not as active with the tribe. But my granddaughter's more active and my great-grandchildren are all active, so it's not skipping generations so that we lose that. So I think the culture is stronger as telling the story from generation to generation, because we don't have to hide no more. We can say who we are. Doesn't mean that it's easier. It just means that we don't have to hide.

COATES

Have you seen that change? How long has it been since that change has come about, I mean that people feel like they don't have to sort of cover this identity or past?

BOGANY

I think about forty years. Because I thought about my—and how it's sticking. You know, we didn't discuss within families how it goes, but I notice my great-granddaughter telling her other grandma, my granddaughter was fixing food and she says, "Oh, what do you want me to serve you?"

And she's, "Oh, no, the kids eat first."

And my granddaughter, she's eleven, she said, "Oh, no, in our culture, the elders eat first." So it's sticking, right? So they know. They know how they're supposed to behave and what's appropriate.

COATES

What do you think happened forty years that starts to cause this change, forty years ago?

BOGANY

I think in not discussing the pain, that people just stopped talking about who they were and how important. Even though we continued to have meetings, the life itself was gone, right? So we say we're still regaining our culture. I don't think ever in our lifetime will we ever go back to, like, the religious part or any other part of it, but we will empower our culture to continue, and the language will start picking up. As part of the Language Committee, it's hard for me to retain the language because I'm older and we only go once a month, but I'm making games for my great-grands. I play with them and we learn the language like that, because I can repeat it more.

COATES

So forty years ago, people start talking about the pain more or they—I'm not understanding.

BOGANY

I think so. They don't talk about the pain, but they talk about renewing, and I don't think the pain is still touched. I think we see the pain from past, but I think we see the strengths more. So I think that a lot of the pain is the reason why people still go to the mission for church, is because of the pain that our ancestors suffered, not because it's the church. So for me, it's like we need to have a ceremony to bury the pain and start new because of the positive things that our ancestors left.

COATES

What's going on then that forty years ago they start to renew? What changes at that time?

BOGANY

It's okay to be Indian, I think.

COATES

So there's just a change in the overall society that—

BOGANY

Yes, but it's not really that easy because, you know, like, I taught for years, and as a Spanish person, people admired that you got an education to go teach, but as an Indian person, they didn't want to have nothing to do with you.

COATES

Other Indians didn't want to have anything to do with you?

BOGANY

No, other people.

COATES

People of other races didn't want—

BOGANY

Yes, didn't want to have nothing to do. So I felt that difference, and then that's why I decided to go help the homeless. I thought, you know, this is not where I want to be, because I know I have children say, "Well, my mom says you're a Mexican," and I told this kid, "No, I'm not. I'm an Indian, and I have a hatchet in my car to prove it." [laughs] And it's like you make these jokes to kind of just survive and get out of that mold of what people believe you are or what you represent without even knowing. But now that we've told the history, there's, like, more important—and people recognize us. Because I had a teacher one time say, "Well, if you volunteer at the school, people will respect you."

I said, "Excuse me? People respect me because of who I am, not because I'm reading." So I think that's the difference.

So for me just to be able to teach young people our history and share it, so that's outside, even though as Native people, we still don't share things, everything, but we share things that are shareable. So doing activities with other children and spending those hours just talking to the community, you know, about our plans and how we survived and all that. I know when I do the [unclear], my friends always laugh at me because on Saturday I'm doing great, on Sunday I'm, like, "I want to get out of here." Because you get the silly questions, right? People ask you, "Well, how much blood do you have?"

And I always say, "Well, I'm full of blood."

COATES

I do too.

BOGANY

And they say, "Well, your mom and your dad are?"

I say, "I got two of those." So it's like the silly questions is what gets you down, right? But we continue to tell, but we have our way of surviving is through that laughter. It's like, okay, let's make a joke out of this for them.

COATES

But I mean, they ask those ignorant questions, but you explain to them why it's an ignorant question and then maybe they understand better and they don't ask anymore.

BOGANY

Hopefully. I think working in the community, to me, is just a strong way of teaching, you know, to teach and be available. I just did Loomis Day, which, you know, Mr. Loomis built the Southwest. We had a naming ceremony the day before and next day I was there. I left my home at seven in the morning. I worked till seven that evening teaching children how to make clapper sticks. The kids like it in a community. Does it mean anything to them? Who knows? They know it's an instrument, but you get to talk to other people that's coming, adults that you're teaching,

not the children themselves. They're just making a clapper stick, right? But the adults that you get to contact and say, "Hey, you know, I'm here and we're from this land, and this is our area."

And I think the other big thing that comes out about is that there's so many of us as fractions, and I always say, "Well, how many families do you know that get along?" You know? We don't. So it's natural. But there's things that we can do together. Even though we don't do everything, doesn't mean we don't actually get along. When times are hard, people always get along.

COATES

People get along when times are hard?

BOGANY

Yes.

COATES

Why is that?

BOGANY

I think because it's just a support system that we really have built in. Even within families, right? Like I have four children and I have fourteen grandchildren and sixteen great-grands. And today's my anniversary.

COATES

Oh, happy anniversary.

BOGANY

Thank you. And it's great, but even out of those, even though you raised all these kids, you know there's those kids that are closest, and then there's the grandkids that are closest out of the group, and then the great-grands that are—you know, I said Monday my great-granddaughter, she's three—there's younger ones than her and there's some that's older, up to thirteen—she came over, she ate, she took a nap, and then it was time to go home. And it's like, that was really not a big visit, right? But it was special to her. So it doesn't take a whole lot to make children happy, and I think even within ourselves, I always say that the circles are run because I have a circle in Echo Park and one in Riverside, that the greatest thing I see is that we don't have to go to our tribal—as we might not have a reservation, but we're close enough that we can call each other. So we have cousins that call every day and cousins that call once a month. But we're still close enough. If I need you—I have a cousin in Oregon and I called her yesterday because I wanted the number to a bead shop. We're in touch, and those are the things that we used to have, being able to share and be in touch. We don't have that competition thing, "Well, why do you want my bead shop?"

COATES

Do you see that with other Tongva people also, that it's the family that's connected and stays that way?

BOGANY

Yes, and how we teach our children.

COATES

But people are still pretty dispersed in terms—because you were talking about family all—

BOGANY

Territory.

COATES

—sort of living in a neighborhood in Venice, right?

BOGANY

Yes.

COATES

But that's not really so much the case anymore. People are—

BOGANY

Very few. Like the original people of San Gabriel, there's a lot of close community in San Gabriel, but a lot of us are further out. So that's how I wind up, because I'm like five minutes from San Manuel, which are the Serrano people, and my granddaughter works there, so I get the benefits of them being there.

And I like working with all of the tribes. I started working with them before I got with my people, and I thought—I just stayed, working with several tribes and teaching [unclear], teaching kids from different tribes, so it's important to know a little bit. We had to have communicated and traded and everything, so how do we share unless we are friendly, right?

COATES

So there are different language groups around here?

BOGANY

In California. Okay, so our language—

COATES

Well, even in just the Southern California area, and yet they still had the ability to communicate with each other historically.

BOGANY

Right. Historically, like the Luiseño speak the same language as the Tongva, same words, only it's opposite meanings, like Spanish and Portuguese. And then the Serrano speak the same language as our people in Catalina. But we don't speak the Serrano, but I have their dictionary and attend their classes. I have the Mohawk language because I've done language things I was doing before I even got into the language part of ours for California when it became a big thing, right? Because it's only been nine years since the language came back to California tribes.

Our tribe didn't have that many reels left by J.B. Harrington, and it's a strong point, and we don't have no original speakers, so we had to just do everything by J.B. Harrington notes and whatever we found.

COATES

Who has worked with you on that? Have there been academics that have helped you with that?

BOGANY

Yes, Pamela Monroe [phonetic] has been working with this for nine years. So they're off in Washington right now.

COATES

For the conference.

BOGANY

For the conference, yes. I went, like, four years ago, I think, to Berkeley. I've gone twice on the archival thing, but, you know, our colleges are built on federal land, so they're on hills, so it's kind of hard for me. But I still get the benefits, the language and I attend the classes. Our classes are in San Pedro, and all groups go attend language.

COATES

I'm kind of interested in following this from forty years ago up to the present, right, when things begin to open up and there starts to be a revitalization.

BOGANY

Right.

COATES

And you say that you think it's because the society as a whole becomes more accepting of people being Indian and stating that they're Indian.

BOGANY

Right.

COATES

So over time, have you seen a change? Because you said people would insist that you were Mexican. Do they still do that? Do you still encounter that?

BOGANY

Sometimes, like if I'm doing an event, people will say, "Well, why do you make crosses after all this happened at the missions? Why would you do that?"

And I'll say, "Well, I had a choice. It wasn't forced upon me. So I'll make crosses."

If I speak Spanish, because I taught in a Spanish community, they'll say, "Why do you speak Spanish?"

Well, who took over the missions? The Spanish people. So you learn the language to survive. And a lot of our people do speak Spanish, because that was a survival skill. Didn't mean we became Mexicans; it just means we learned the language to survive.

COATES

Who says that you're Mexican?

BOGANY

I mean, just audiences—I think other people that just come across us.

COATES

So it's all other peoples. It's Caucasian people, it's like Hispanic people or Latino. It's anybody?

BOGANY

Right. Hispanic people will—like if you go to the bakery, will say to my granddaughters that are trying to sell come CDs or something, right, they'll talk to her in Spanish and I'll tell them, "She doesn't understand you."

And he says, "Well, why do you speak Spanish?"

I'll say, "Because I learned it, but do you want to speak Tongva to my granddaughter? Because I know you don't speak Tongva."

And they say, "Oh, we didn't know you were Indian." So it's like explaining it to them without saying, you know, they just don't speak it.

COATES

So it's just an assumption that they make?

BOGANY

Yes, that we might be Mexican just because—but it's like, no. I said, "If you can speak our language, then she'll speak to you." But she really doesn't know. [laughs]

COATES

But it's a good way to stop that line of questioning.

BOGANY

Yes, it's a good way to stop it, and they have an idea just because you look it, you should speak it, right?

COATES

So forty years ago, is there a tribal government? Is there that kind of structure?

BOGANY

Oh, yes, we had a tribal—they already had a government before I started. I've just been in office for a long time. But I think because I kind of travel everywhere, I belong to meetings in L.A. on different boards, so that's kind of just my thing. I like doing that.

COATES

So there's been a continuity of a government throughout all the century, probably.

BOGANY

Yes.

COATES

Has it changed much in the last forty years?

BOGANY

I don't think so.

COATES

What's the structure of it? Is there a Tribal Council?

BOGANY

We have a council. We have our head of the council and then a secretary and a treasurer, and then myself as the cultural affairs. But we all get calls to go somewhere, right? We all have to be—you know, the chief takes care of all the political stuff, I do all the culture stuff, and then there's other people that do culture classes. Out here in Los Angeles I do some, but not a whole lot because, you know, I mostly just stick to the college now. I like that.

COATES

Now, you were talking about your mother coming and giving you papers and saying, "Here's your Indian number," and all of these kinds of things, so at some point in the past, the Bureau of Indian Affairs was recognizing Tongva individuals, at least.

BOGANY

Yes. They said we were the red dot on a map. We weren't federally recognized, so we got a red dot. So, yes, they just stopped recognizing us, period, as giving us papers last year.

COATES

Only last year?

BOGANY

Last year.

COATES

So up until that time, the Tongva government was also interacting with—

BOGANY

With the BIA, yes, only for your numbers, because they have our family lineage, right, where they can do our paperwork, but they're not doing that no more. Guess they're too busy. You know how that goes.

COATES

So there has never been any reduction on the part of the government in sort of its duties in that regard or—

BOGANY

They know we're here.

COATES

—or anything like that?

BOGANY

No, I think they stopped—I don't know why they would have stopped, because it's not like we were getting anything from them besides the fact that we existed as a mark on a map. But it wasn't like we got a benefit from them or anything.

COATES

Does the tribe own land?

BOGANY

No.

COATES

Not at all?

BOGANY

We don't own any land. But who knows? The federal recognition, of course, does a whole lot for the tribe as having land and having education and insurance. Like I would say, like, if we had our own insurance, you know, as our elders are getting older and a lot of us—like I taught in a Christian school for thirty-five years. My birthday's next month, so yesterday I got a letter says, "The new law says you have to have insurance, so we're deducting \$200 out of your check from now on." I thought, who can live on \$500, right? So federal recognition would help that, right? Because I wouldn't have to pay for my insurance.

COATES

But you said you use health facilities and things at San Manuel and all of that.

BOGANY

Yes, but they don't have like a hospital. They have a clinic, probably like any other little clinic, but even they're talking about now with the health reform going out of business for California tribes.

COATES

Are you able to use that because San Manuel recognizes the state-recognized tribes—

BOGANY

It does. A few years back when something happened, they threw us out, and then they took me back in. So I get my medicines there, and they have dental and eye clinic. If you go to Soboba, you can get, like, chiropractor, whatever. But, of course, we're not the first priority, but it's something, right? But with the new law that you have to have insurance, they decided I needed to have—what is it—Medi-Cal, whatever. They just cut you a check.

COATES

That exempts only the federally recognized groups.

BOGANY

Yes, because the tribes can purchase insurance for their people.

COATES

Well, they can use the Indian Health Service, is what it is, yes.

BOGANY

Yes. And you don't see that. And they're talking about if they cut that, the federal health money, then the tribes will have to be on their own, but the tribes won't be able to take care of their people, which they're not going to take care of California. The California federal tribes will take care of their people, but they won't take care of the state people.

COATES

So is your tribe interested in pursuing federal recognition, or have they been pursuing it?

BOGANY

Well, they've been working on it, but it's just such a long process, you know.

COATES

It is a long process.

BOGANY

Through the BIA it's like a twenty-year process. So, who knows?

COATES

And it's expensive.

BOGANY

Yes, it costs a lot of money. Costs even more money if you just take them to court.

COATES

So are you in the midst of an application process?

BOGANY

Yes, we're working on an application.

COATES

Does it look hopeful? Does it look encouraging?

BOGANY

Not for my generation, I don't think, because, you know, but maybe hopefully somewhere down the line.

COATES

What kinds of economic changes have you seen for the people themselves over the last forty years?

BOGANY

I think all of us had good jobs. I think what's going to happen now is for all of us who are becoming seniors, true seniors in the word of whatever they call them, seniors, it's going to be harder, right? Because even programs that will help the tribes doesn't help the seniors within the tribe, because it can't, right? There's limits to what you can do, and there's nothing. So if you can't get help from your tribe and you can't get help anywhere else, it kind of becomes harder and harder for older people. So you have a whole generation of baby boomers that are—like there's a lot of us in my age group, right? So it's like what happens in people that are in their sixties? So, like, I have jobs on the side, but not a whole lot. Like I'm not, you know, probably work two weeks out of the summer months.

COATES

But you said when you were growing up, most of your mother's family members were employed in some way.

BOGANY

Yes.

COATES

But kind of low-level jobs a lot of times.

BOGANY

And I think a lot of us are teachers, were teachers or preschool teachers.

COATES

So over the last forty years or so, people have kind of—are most Tongvas still employed, do you think?

BOGANY

Our younger generation, I would think, like people in their thirties, because women—I drive and I'm in my sixties, but women in my age group did not drive, right? But women younger than me will drive, so it's like it becomes harder for those women to get out unless they have a spouse that can take them somewhere. So that's the first thing that happens. And then, like, how do you get a job again, or if your income continues to get cut, what happens to you, right?

COATES

So you're talking about people in their forties and fifties maybe, sixties?

BOGANY

Yes. It becomes harder for them to have full-time jobs, because we have all that stuff today of arthritis and diabetes and stuff that is hurting the people that can't get out there like they used to.

COATES

So are the people, like, fifty and younger, are they more highly educated than the older generation was?

BOGANY

No, I think we're just starting to see—I think in our thirties we have more people that are more educated, are getting college degrees and things.

COATES

So it really is more the grandchildren's level rather than the—

BOGANY

Yes.

COATES

So that's only come about within the last fifteen to twenty years, probably.

BOGANY

Yes. And because I think there's doors that are open for them. So I work with Western University. My great-granddaughter is eleven and she started last school year, and she goes once a month to Western University for a medical—it's a medical college. So when she finishes high school, she'll have her first year of university credits done. But those things would have been nice if my kids would have been young and those things would have been available. But San Manuel pays for her to attend.

COATES

Oh, really?

BOGANY

Yes, because they pay for—we have, like, ten students from [unclear] attend, and then the kids that are in a community, Native kids in the community who want to be part of it. But it's part of the Pomona School District, so the Pomona School District puts money into it and then San Manuel puts money into it for the Natives that don't have the money to go.

COATES

And no matter what tribe they are?

BOGANY

No matter what tribe. It's just about empowering Native students. So that's really great. I wouldn't even know unless I was already out there working with the colleges, right? So it's about just knowing.

COATES

So you're kind of unique in your generation for your educational level and everything. Is that a fair statement?

BOGANY

Yes. Well, I think my claim to fame is I went to college and then I did AmeriCorps for one year, and I did ten units at UCR for Native history, Native Studies, whatever, and then I decided that I didn't want a degree, so I never passed that English class, because I feel that if I get a degree—probably have enough classes—if I got a degree, it stops me from teaching the truth.

COATES

Really?

BOGANY

Yes, and if I don't have the degree—I have the classes, so I've taken like four hundred hours of social services, because I wanted to know more about EQUA [phonetic] and why social workers were thinking the way they think, right? And then I have, of course, like two hundred units of child development. Every class that's ever been offered as child development, I've taken it. And then I did AmeriCorps working with children. I have, like, mediation for courts. I have all these classes and I did all my units for different things, because for me, it's easier for me to learn to go take the class. And so I wanted to do anger management, right? But in order to do it, I took the class because I wanted to see how the teacher acted if somebody got out of hand in class.

[laughter]

COATES

It was a test.

BOGANY

Yes. But anyway, so I feel that in a college, because I've done the thesis for three students and they've all got highest honors, it's like we could give you an honorarium, or whatever they call it, you know, as a college professor, and I said no, because once I have a degree, I have to teach what the government wants me to. I teach outside on a picnic table. I took Genocide of the Missions, and I sat it on my table and I said, "This is the books I use." So one of the professors came over from my college and says, "I have that book, but I can't give it to students."

COATES

Really? College professors?

BOGANY

Can't give it to a student. He can't recommend it. He can have it on his shelf, but unless a student goes to the shelf by himself, he cannot recommend that book to read.

COATES

I don't know where he's teaching, but that's—

BOGANY

I said, "Oh, but I can." I know. But it's like, well, you know, there's certain things that ain't allowed. I said, "Well, I can." That's why I bring it, because I want them to read the truth. If they don't read the truth, when do they find out the truth? We can teach the truth. And I can understand we don't want to scare kids to death in fourth grade, but if we don't teach in high school, what is the problem with high school? If we taught the truth in high school, we'd have more powerful young people, because they'd have something to change.

COATES

Maybe that's the problem, huh? [laughs]

BOGANY

Yes. But if we teach in college, we still can't teach it in college? What's the problem? No college is teaching California history.

COATES

They are at Davis.

BOGANY

But, you know, we should teach true California history, instead of waiting—people have to learn it on their own? They get into politics and they say, "I knew these people. Where are they?" And I think that's the power of being able to teach outside. I always say I always like to each after-school programs, weekend programs, and college students outside the classroom, because then I can teach the truth. If I go as a professor, I cannot teach the truth. There's that what you can and cannot do, right? So I think that's an empowerment not to have a degree. It's like, okay, I'll just be the elder and teach.

COATES

When you do your workshops or you have the language group once a month and things like this, are there a lot of people coming back to participating in this cultural revitalization?

BOGANY

I think so. There's quite a bit of us. The dance group comes out. We have events like the [unclear] festival where all of us are there. We have, like, ten tables, everybody demonstrating something for the tribe that makes it important. We might be selling on the side, but we're also teaching something about our tribe, and it's that empowerment, more and more things that we learn, the more we can teach.

COATES

How many people are in your tribe overall?

BOGANY

In our group, I think there's over five hundred.

COATES

In your group?

BOGANY

In total, in our group. In the total tribe, I think there's about five thousand. So there's more of us than people think. [laughs]

COATES

Yes. So in the total tribe, in talking about tribes and groups, can you explain what the—

BOGANY

Well, groups because we were separated. So from the beginning of history, we were always, because L.A. Basin—

COATES

Right. The villages is sort of what you're—

BOGANY

Yes, the villages, and we go all the way to San Bernardino, right? So I'm in San Bernardino. So then you have my family, which is I always say that's more than thirty people there, you know, just with mine living in San Bernardino. But then I have a son that lives in Dallas, Texas, and a lot of us have people that live in other states, right, other parts of the state. So it's like we're everywhere. It's just getting us together. I said we've been building, like—there's a village at Santa Ana Botanic Garden and then there's Kiiys, which is our home, and different places throughout L.A., and I say we could almost have a sit-out.

COATES

A sit-out?

BOGANY

Yes, and sit in our Kiiys, just sit in our Kiiys and stay there and say, "This is it. We're taking this."

COATES

What are Kiiys?

BOGANY

Kiiys is our home.

COATES

That's the building style.

BOGANY

That's the name for the building. That's our home building. It's called a Kiiy.

COATES

How do you spell it?

BOGANY

K-i-i-y. That's the name of our home. So I said we could just go sit down in our village for the day and let people come watch us in every single village.

COATES

So when you say you've got five hundred in your group—

BOGANY

That's in this band. So we were divided by bands.

COATES

So when you have a language class or these other kinds of classes that you're talking about come together, is it usually just one group or one band or they'll come from all different ones?

BOGANY

No, it's all the bands. Representatives come from every band. So we have two, three people from each band. So we could have a class of twenty, easily.

COATES

So each group is—they know the others, they're in good communication with each other?

BOGANY

Yes, we know each other. Yes, we're just like family, right?

COATES

And then the tribal government extends over all of them. Is that right?

BOGANY

Yes.

COATES

Okay. Trying to understand the structure.

BOGANY

I know. But that's the way it's always been, but people kind of think that we're just not getting along today, but it's like who could cover all this territory? We had to live all over. And we moved around a lot, so maybe we would have been—like I'm in San Bernardino now, but it's really hot out there, so I would have come closer to the ocean, because that's where I grew up, in Venice, so I would have moved toward the ocean.

COATES

So some of the organizations and things that you've started or that you've been involved in, you talked about—gosh, I'm so spacey already. The first ones being going out to museums and to college and talking, giving cultural kinds of talks. But you do other kinds of workshops as well, right?

BOGANY

I teach fetal alcohol and I teach it at all Indian country. It's a disease that can be proven. It's about empowering our people, and our people does not mean just Tongva, but means all Native people. So I go into high schools that have, like, child development classes and teach high school students, and I teach in colleges. I teach at conferences. So that's why I travel a lot. So I just got through teaching for NICWA. I'm not teaching on Pechanga, but I'm going to Pechanga for EQUA, because I'm also an EQUA advocate. And then basket-weavings, we travel all over to do baskets to show our art of basketry.

COATES

Are you still part of CIBA?

BOGANY

Yes, I'm still part of it, but I'm not on the board no more. That traveling thing gets to you as you get older. But I still belong to CIBA, yes. So what else do I do? I taught for CRIHB, with is California Indian Rural Health, so I taught in places out in the rurals, in Sacramento, and that was pretty exciting to go to those places. It was kind of like Fresno, I think. But it was exciting to see other Native people out there in the middle of nowhere, yet so open to learn. So I teach a lot on fetal alcohol. Fetal alcohol is the biggest thing I teach out there.

I do parenting classes, and I teach—when I was working for Fontana Native American Indian Center, we had people from the court come and I would teach people. Instead of just a regular parenting class, I would teach about the tribe that the child the people were adopting so that they would be connected with the tribe. So I would contact the tribal chair and then get their newspapers, whatever that tribe had to offer for that child as it was growing up, I would teach that so that the child would still have that connection to his tribe. So that's how I do my parenting classes.

So I do CAIRS, which is I'm the recovery support. So it's about getting people active in the community, and that's from all tribes. They've already gone through cleaning up of drugs and alcohol, but getting them to just stay in recovery, and staying in recovery is staying busy, helping them find jobs. I'm kind of like the resource center.

COATES

So now CAIRS is an acronym for—is that on your card?

BOGANY

Yes, CAIRS means—yes, it's for the alcohol and drug recovery, but I don't know exactly what the acronym means. But that's my part of it, because I don't to the dental and all that, that they have for that, but I do the recovery support. So I'm like the spiritual advisor and recovery support. I said I'm the circle for mental health and clergy, because I'm also a minister, so I sit on that board with them to kind of help mental health psychiatrists and clergy understand each other.

COATES

When did you become a minister?

BOGANY

Oh, gosh, it's been at least twenty, about twenty years.

COATES

And how did you do that? What was that process?

BOGANY

Oh, not easily. First they asked me to be a missionary. So the first time they asked me to be a missionary, I said, "No, I don't want to be."

COATES

Who's "they"?

BOGANY

The church. And I've been in same church for forty-two years.

COATES

What denomination is this?

BOGANY

Living Faith Gospel. So I said, "No, I don't want people watching me." Not that I'm doing anything, but I don't want people watching me. So then I finally got the nerve and became a missionary, and that just gave me the right to preach. Then I said, "Okay, I'll take it the next step," and I became a minister. So twenty years I've been a minister. And then about five years ago they came up with the idea that you had to wear a collar, and I said, "Oops, no. I'm not wearing a collar." I'm against a collar. I'm against a five-inch cross. I'm out of the box. I turned sixty. I said, "Nope, I'm not doing that." I think people should just see my life and not wear a collar because I don't care who knows I'm a minister, and I don't want to carry a cross because it takes me back to the mission time, you know, and I don't want to do that. I'll wear a regular cross, but I'm not wearing a five-inch cross.

COATES

Did you go through a process of study and being ordained and all of that?

BOGANY

Yes. The theology, yes. So I was ordained twenty years ago. So I've been in that church for forty-two years. So it's been a long time.

COATES

What kind of duties did you have as a minister?

BOGANY

You have to preach here and there.

COATES

Do you perform marriages and things like that?

BOGANY

I've done one funeral. Yes, I can do marriages, but I've done one funeral so far. That's about it. Mostly it's preaching.

COATES

Is this a predominantly Indian church?

BOGANY

No, it's a black church. So then I decided—Dee decided that she wanted to do Bible study, so we started doing Bible study. So I teach Tongva, and then I have, like, ten Jewish ministers that come, learn Tongva and the word together. So, like, I have a story from the Bible and then I do a Tongva story that fits in there, and then we do an activity.

COATES

What did you say? You have Jewish ministers, rabbis that come and all of that?

BOGANY

Yes.

COATES

Why is that?

BOGANY

They kind of just wanted to be our friends, and I said, "Okay. Let me see. I want to try this." It's been a good—I think we've been having it for three years now. So it's been great.

COATES

So they come to these meetings every week?

BOGANY

Every month.

COATES

And they learn Tongva and engage in—

BOGANY

They learn more about us, yes. And they follow me around. They kind of go to different events I do. They're my helpers.

COATES

Are they younger people or older people?

BOGANY

In between. We have different ages.

COATES

How interesting.

BOGANY

So it's pretty neat. So we started taping the lessons according to the—because I went to a Presbyterian what they call a Winter Fest, and I went to learn—I thought I was going to go rest, and I went to take this class on healing body, mind, and soul. And I said, "Oh, boy. I get to go relax for eight days." Well, it wasn't. I learned a lot. I learned a lot. I came back really jazzed.

But I the Presbyterians didn't have Native Bible stories for their kids, so then I came back and we started taping Native—the stories I'd been doing, because I do an object lesson with them, to send to them so they would have something, but they're told by the Tongva perspective, so they

can change them. It just gives them an idea. So I like doing that. I wasn't too sure about it. So I said, "Okay, I'll do this."

COATES

So what's your family life been like since you were in your late thirties or so, where we left off, I guess?

BOGANY

Well, my first husband died when I was twenty. I left home at fifteen and he died when I was twenty. I didn't get married till I was thirty-nine, but I had a kid in between there, and she was sixteen then and I was thirty-nine. That marriage only lasted a year. He was a cocaine addict and diabetic, so it only lasted a year. He died.

Now I've been married twenty-two years today, and so I found myself really growing up with my kids and then finding my family and really just like really connecting. So my cousins and I, we go to tea. Things we didn't do as kids, we do today. We go to tea together, and in February we have like a tea for cousins and all the cousins get together, all the girl cousins, and we have tea, and we give each other gifts, you know.

COATES

And this is all your Tongva family on your mother's side?

BOGANY

Yes. We all get together and have tea and give each other gifts and dress up, you know. So it's neat because we have different generations of girls coming now, right, the little cousins and the big cousins.

COATES

Does that custom come from somewhere or does that just—

BOGANY

Well, you know, it was just my cousin and I. We belong to the Purple Hat and then we started doing tea and started doing Button Club, and I thought, well, I don't have time for all this stuff.

COATES

What's Purple Hat and Button Club?

BOGANY

Purple Hat is kind of like the Red Hat Society, but you can be any age in the Purple Hat.

COATES

I don't know what this is.

BOGANY

Yes, you wear a purple hat everywhere. You go out to all these tea places for tea. But my cousin, we were going to so many teas, I said, "Oh, god, can we just go have a hamburger?" [laughter] So now every February we go to her house for tea and all the cousins get together. We share gifts and tell stories, you know, about our childhood. So it's fun, because we reminisce, you know, being a kid, funny things and stories. So I like that.

COATES

So is that someplace where you've learned some things about Tongva community or anything?

BOGANY

No, we kind of learn about each other because we didn't grow up—

COATES

Because it's much more personal?

BOGANY

Yes, it's more personal. It's just really awesome. I was talking to my auntie. We did a play at Pomona College, and I picked her up for the day before I went to Oklahoma and spent a day with her. She was telling me the story that I just loved. She said that when she was second grade, the teacher said, "Oh, we're going to go visit a farm." And so the kids went with her to the farm, and they went on this little field trip, but they could walk to it, right? And she said, "When I got there, it was my house, and I was so embarrassed."

And one little girl said, "Isn't this your house?"

And she said, "I was never so embarrassed in my life." But she was trying to tell me how she thought of it as how poor they were. But, of course, as we get older, we think about how funny it was that that would happen, because you just didn't know we were poor. You just live in the neighborhood. You know, they had chickens and everything. The kids wanted to go see the farm and the vegetables. But that's what I remember about being a kid, that there was always those yards of vegetables and stuff growing everywhere. And when I first met my cousin, I went to her house and then she has her house in her yard, and then she has this other yard with all this garden. And I thought, it took me back to childhood, because when I walked in, there was all this garden. We don't see that too much. Now we're starting to plant our own native plants in our gardens and encouraging our people—

COATES

This is like a community garden, or it's just you and your sisters?

BOGANY

No, that's her garden. So now we're trying to plant our own gardens to kind of get our plants growing again.

So I don't know what else.

COATES

Where did you and your husband meet?

BOGANY

Church. So, yes, four years after my second husband died, we met. I had seen him at church, but I thought, "Okay, I'm going to go out." [laughs] So we went out and we were going to get married in August, but his sister passed in June, so we went to the funeral, so we had to be married, right? I said we got married to go to the funeral, because he was a real good Christian, so you've got to be married. So I said, "Okay."

COATES

You wouldn't just take your fiancée to the funeral then?

BOGANY

Well, you wouldn't be going together.

COATES

Really?

BOGANY

Old-fashioned, you know. So I said, "Okay." So we got married in June and went to the funeral.

COATES

And he is not Tongva, you said.

BOGANY

No. But it's pretty neat. He left his children when they were little, and so he's never really liked kids, but the great-grandkids, he takes them everywhere. Last Saturday, we went to the Sunday School picnic and we took all five of them. And then I went to my students' graduation and he took the five kids to breakfast. So it's neat having that experience, because I worked all my life with my kids being a little, you know, because my first job I remember crying when they—I was teaching two-year-olds. Somehow I was always working, so I didn't remember those twos. So it's like oh, no. I just cried. I said, "I'll never do this job again, because I can't work with two-year-olds and leave them." But I got over it.

COATES

So were all of your kids grown, then, when you got married?

BOGANY

This time? Yes.

COATES

So none of them were in the household with you in the beginning, even?

BOGANY

No. They've been pretty good. We stay with my son in Texas, and the girls all live close by. They're always there. So it's been good.

COATES

This city has grown a lot, and it's grown out and everything in the last forty years or so. What kinds of things have you seen among the Tongva that have been impacted by that? I mean, that's a very large question, I guess, but any way you want to take it.

BOGANY

I think for us the biggest thing has been—not just the city, but throughout L.A., is the reburial of our people. I remember going to the Arco foundry at the beginning of my time in office. Everybody was already reburied, already put in a plot, so it wasn't too hard, because my daughter—that was thirteen years ago—she was pregnant with her first baby, and it was like, okay, so we went to rebury somebody, right? But that wasn't as hard as when we went to do Hellman Ranch and I had to see the bodies in the ground to rebury them.

COATES

Now, tell me about this, because I'm not familiar with—

BOGANY

Hellman Ranch is out toward the beach, close to Playa Vista, so when we went to Hellman Ranch, you know, you pray over each group of people that's buried. I only could go halfway up. I just couldn't—it was worse than going to a funeral because you knew they were your people, but just the fact of having to rebury somebody and not knowing them but know that attachment to them, it was really hard. But then when we did Playa Vista, there was over, you know, almost five hundred people. That was really pretty bad. But we didn't see them either—we did at Hellman Ranch—because they were already put in the ground.

But when I took my students from New Jersey to Hellman Ranch, most of them were Korean and they couldn't get it. They said, "What does it matter that you rebury these people?"

I said, "Have you thought about reburying your people, what it feels like?" They couldn't get it. And they couldn't get the fact of looking outside the box, when we're in the land that—because we did have a bill that said—the original bill that was written in 1825 was if you found nine bodies, it was a cemetery, but they had to be white.

COATES

How do they know?

BOGANY

Do DNA? I don't know.

COATES

They just know from the names?

BOGANY

They must know somehow. But that's what the bill said. So we did an attachment to that, but that, of course, doesn't count till today, right? And even today, we're still—you know, I've gone to so many reburials that it's, like, really hard for us to continue to rebury those people, and we have to go to a federal tribe to help us.

So when we went to Cahuilla Lake, San Manuel stepped in for us to rebury the people. And they were awesome. They took the bodies and they just handed them over to us, and then we reburied them.

COATES

Now, why are they having to be reburied?

BOGANY

Because of buildings, building more, like in [unclear], and new housing.

COATES

They're actually being disinterred first and then—okay.

BOGANY

But the ones at Playa Vista, they were in those big—what do you call them—freight cars for years before they started deciding to rebury. The fight that was so long that you leave them there for years, and you want to leave them there longer and longer. And what is the purpose of all this? If there's this many bodies here, surely you know it was a cemetery, right?

And I always say, you know, people would not like you going to their pet cemetery and digging up bodies. They would think that was totally awesome, but when it comes to Native bodies, it's like, "So?" You know, it's a thing of the past, but it couldn't have been in the past because they were wearing clothing, and if they're wearing clothing like cotton and stuff, it was only in recent years. It wasn't a long time ago. The claim is it's ancient. [interruption]

Anyways, it's ancient, right? But it's not ancient if they're wearing cotton. And they're wearing beads. That was a trade, because we would have had shells. So it was already trade time with the beads. So I think that's been the hardest thing to do, is the reburials.

COATES

Are they being reburied in places where there's some assurance that in the future this won't happen again?

BOGANY

Yes, yes, and we try to stay, like, close by to where they were dug up from. Our minister, I think, was getting re-ordained as the minister of the church because she was a minister in the church, but she wasn't a pastor, and it was on her day. And I said, "I have to go rebury my ancestors."

And she said, "How is that important? They're already dead."

Well, wait till they get to Mississippi. What do you feel then? Because it could happen to you, you know. As the economy gets worse, they could start digging up buildings for plants or whatever somewhere else and not in California, and then it'll affect your people. So that's hard for people to understand that it would be so important to us.

I think it was just a few weeks ago when they found all those bodies in Catalina where that guy was using them for shelves, and I read that, I thought, oh, how crazy. But yet I know Kiowa people who say that their fathers still have heads, shrunken heads that they scalped way back when. I said, "Why would you have them in your house?"

COATES

It's from somebody else's tribe, not their own.

BOGANY

So I'm, like, whatever. But I thought, you know, what is the importance of having stuff like that, and why would you do that? It's just hard to believe that people either were really great, you know, were like a piece of gold or something that people have to display.

Because it's cute, my granddaughter bought the Indian Ten Commandments, and she said, "I'm putting it in my bathroom, Nana, and I'm going to put you guys' pictures up there."

And I said, "In the bathroom?"

She said, "Well, yeah, it's a Indian Ten Commandments, and I already have my own Indians, so why would I buy pictures?" [laughs]

And I said, "Okay. I got it." But you never think like that.

But then I think I heard this man say, “You don’t ever see us go out there and buy white people’s pictures and put them on our walls, but other people buy our pictures, right?” So I guess that makes sense. Okay.

COATES

As pointless as it all is, and she recognizes that.

BOGANY

Yes, why buy pictures. So I said, “Okay, I understand.”

I like to do a lot of presentations starting Halloween. I don’t do Thanksgiving. I’m always irate about doing Thanksgiving, but I do Halloween, and I did my—I [unclear] with my great-grands. They performed at the Autry. And so my granddaughter, she dressed the baby in her regalia, and then the seven-year-old went as a witch. So they went for the march and everybody’s snapping the baby away, right, because she’s Pocahontas. And then they come in, and the seven-year-old takes her witch costume off and puts on her regalia. And I said, “This is not a costume. The baby’s not Pocahontas. She’s a Tongva. And this is called regalia. It’s not a costume, but I wanted you to see Marisa in her witch outfit, because that was her costume, and now she’s wearing her regalia.” And I said, “I would tell you she has an Indian name, but only she’s allowed to share it if she wants to.”

So they asked her and she shared her Indian name with them, right? She’s Dancing Butterfly, and she shared her name. And she said, “At first the kids kept calling me, ‘Hey, Dancing Butterfly,’ but now I think they forgot it.” But she thought it was cute. But it’s like teaching—because if you teach them, it makes a bigger impact on Halloween from costume to regalia, you know, for kids, and they start understanding, okay, that’s not Pocahontas.

My granddaughter, she was so funny, because she said, “God, Nana, I never thought about—.” I don’t know how many times the kids were in their regalia, but she said, “I never thought about all the work you put into this.” And I thought, oh. It was fun, you know. But I said, actually, I think I need to move up the baby’s because it’s getting too little for her.

COATES

Now, when you say “regalia,” is this like pow-wow regalia or is it Tongva-specific?

BOGANY

Tongva-specific, yes. Yes, because I learned the difference in pow-wow that—because I saw other, like, Chumash people dancing, and I said, “That’s not the regalia.”

There was a young lady doing her thesis on regalia, pow-wow regalia. So she showed me, she says, “See, on his regalia it shows. There’s a sign on there that shows that he’s Chumash.”

And I said, “Oh, okay. Got it.”

And we just did a naming ceremony and I had one of my—the young ladies I named was—she’s Cherokee. She made her gorgeous dress, and so we had First Circle, and she wore it. And I said, “I wouldn’t have worn mine to the circle, but I knew you wanted to show your regalia.” But it’s a personal thing, so it’s not something you wear to Women’s Circle.”

So they’re new, so they’re learning and they’re proud of who they are now. These are women who have found out in their later years who they are. And so it’s okay. So now they’re going to go on the 29th and go as a group of women to go buy material to make regalia. I said, “I hope

you guys aren't wearing it to circle. Let me teach you now." So it's neat. And I think it's a big job, because I've been volunteering at Sherman [phonetic] for four years now and I work with the senior high school girls. I did a curriculum for self-esteem around the Three Sister story, you know, the corn, beans, and squash, which isn't our story, because our three sisters are rocks.

COATES

That's a story out of agricultural tribes in the East, I think.

BOGANY

Yes. So it's like teaching the women—because I have fifty women over here and about thirty-five in Riverside—it can become—my husband tells me, "Why do you do this?" It can become pretty heavy because everybody's calling you, but it's also rewarding in a way that you know you're teaching that many women the process of who they are as Native women and what they represent, you know, from a culture and showing that importance. It's hard because sometimes there are tribes that I don't know a whole lot about and I've got to—you know.

COATES

So were these kind of things, the making of regalia, the naming ceremonies, were these kinds of things taking place continuously all throughout, or are these also things that have been—

BOGANY

No, they're coming back.

COATES

—recently revitalized?

BOGANY

Yes. Just since the nineties, '95, I think we started. First we started with the dancing and then we started naming ceremony. This is, I think, our fourth, fifth. So bringing it back to doing our own instead of doing it with several tribes, doing our own ceremonies.

COATES

And where do you learn about it in order to revitalize it?

BOGANY

Just from research and reading and putting it together.

COATES

Did you have elders who remembered something from the past that kind of talked about it? Nothing?

BOGANY

No.

COATES

So it's mostly out of other—

BOGANY

Yes, we don't have elders that—we might have like maybe five elders, but I don't think that remember that far, I think because of the skipped generations. Sometimes I found myself

teaching elders that are older than me what we did with things. Because I had someone bring me some black walnuts, and it was so cute. He polished them. And I thought, "No, I'm going to break them up. Make a game." I didn't want to break them up, so I had to think of something to do with them. But, you know, it's like, "Oh, that's not what we do with them." But it's like teaching at the same time without hurting their feelings that you're doing something that they don't understand or know.

COATES

Have to invent some kind of a new game that they can be used whole in them.

BOGANY

Yes. Polished. Well, I'm going to make necklaces with them.

COATES

Now, you said your expertise was in soapstone. What does that mean?

BOGANY

Carving soapstone. I like to do soapstone with kids. As the elder, I believe that you're supposed to look within the tribe and find out that person that has that gift for that. So I found one young man two years ago in our tribe that I just handed him this chunk of soapstone, and I said, "Here. I want a pelican." Because I'm not a good carver. I can draw and follow the line. But he said, "Okay." So he went and he looked at pictures and stuff, and he made me a pelican. When he got it here, it broke. His beak broke. I said, "I can glue it."

He said, "No, I'm going to make you another one."

Last year he made me a seal, and then this year he made me a horse, because I like that story about the mud pony. And that's not ours either. But he made me a soapstone pony.

So it's like I always say, we didn't have copyrights on our stories. We share them because they were for teaching. So I do carving necklaces for the kids. I just do the little squares and they just sand it, because when you sand it, you know, to get it smooth, the soapstone, it's our talcum powder for our babies. So that they see that we use the whole stone. We also cooked with it in our baskets. We would heat up the stone and put it in our basket to make our stews before we started making pots out of soapstone. So I use it for college kids and high school kids. I do, like, little animals and they make little finishes for their necklaces and stuff like that.

COATES

So do you go out and collect the stone yourself and all of that? That doesn't exist around here?

BOGANY

It's only in Catalina. We have a mine in Catalina. There's one in San Ynez, and then the other one's in San Diego. I think my map that I got from Berkeley was there's like eight mines, but the rest of them are in other parts of the world. So it was a big trade item for the Tongva. There's a story called "Tongva Gold," which is about soapstone. But I buy mine because I buy it processed, you know, slabs. I can cut it. I don't think they'd let me go to get it, crossing over Catalina.

COATES

So it's in some other group's territory or something like that?

BOGANY

No, it's our territory, but it's on Catalina land, so they're not going to let us get the soapstone out of the mine. But there are some gorgeous carvers. A lot of them are Chumash that carve some gorgeous soapstone, big pieces, you know. The one we have, he bought some pink soapstone and I thought that was just so gorgeous.

He says, "I made it last night for you, but it came out in a circle."

So at the end of the meeting I put it on and I wore it. It's pink with gray, and I said, "It represents the women in my circles that I work with."

He said, "Oh!" So it made him feel good, you know. So I kept wearing it and I kept thinking, you know, what does this represent? And it represented the circle. So it's empowering people to find those jobs. Somebody has to take over.

COATES

Can you talk about the circles a little bit?

BOGANY

Sure.

COATES

How did those get started and when and what are they?

BOGANY

The Episcopalian church, the lady that was over it, she's back home now in Tucson, but she had a women's retreat. We just hit it off in the beginning. She put me in St. Jude's Room, because at the retreat center in Echo Park, they have twenty-seven rooms there for retreat center. And I said, "Oh, I just preached on St. Jude this morning. That's my favorite book in the Bible."

And so I stayed there, and then we decided, the women, there was five of us, we decided to go on and do—twenty-one stayed for that night, for the weekend, so we decided to do a circle. So I decided that it would be named First Women, First Tuesday Around the Fire. We have a fire pit on the third-story roof in Echo Park at the Episcopalian church. So that circle will be nine years in April. It'll be nine years.

And then the second circle we started three years ago in Riverside, it's at St. Michael's Church, also part of the Episcopalian Church, and it was started three years ago. There's like a big brick area, it's a slab right next to the church, so we have a fire pit there, and we meet first Wednesdays, so we call that one First Women, First Wednesday Around the Fire.

So now we're getting ready to start our third circle. It's going to be in San Bernardino, but I think we're going to Banning.

But the circles were meant to empower women, because, like, one woman would ask me—well, I took one friend one time. She said, "I couldn't hear nothing they were saying."

I said, "Because you're not supposed to. We're talking to the fire. If you hear her, that means you're supposed to help her." You know, and that's the only person you're supposed to help.

So then one time my friend was gone, and I was there and there were thirty-five women there, and I heard my story in each woman. I thought, no wonder she said, "I want to take this over," because I lived their lives. Been there, done that, right?

So it's been really good, you know, the transition of her leaving and me being in charge. They never knew how in charge I was, but when they found out I was in charge, it became a problem, but now they're okay. So I'm not leaving. I tell them, "I'm not going nowhere."

I find that the women from L.A. have been really empowered because they have to go to the reservations versus us that are here, and so it's about learning and supporting each other, different things they go through with their kids or whatever. It's about that empowerment of women. And when we had retreats, we take all generations of women. We all work in the kitchen together. There'll be like twenty, thirty, forty of us in the kitchen at one time, because everybody partakes together.

In Riverside, we have, like, thirty-five women and we have potlucks afterwards. We don't in L.A. no more because they started showing up late. So, you know, part of their rebellious stage, so I said no more food. So in Riverside we meet and we have potluck afterwards. It's been growing, three years old. There's a woman that comes all the way from Arizona every month to the circle, so that's neat.

COATES

So this is not just women from the local tribes; it's women that are coming from—

BOGANY

There's no local tribe in there. I have no Tongva women in there. A couple have gone with me here and there, but other tribes—

COATES

So these are all women from tribes where they've relocated here.

BOGANY

Yes. So that's empowering, because it's hard for them to understand that—the minister leader that we have now, she's Blackfeet. But she had to explain to them, "This is Tongva land, so Julia's in charge, no matter what." And that's hard for them to understand, because if you haven't lived in your territory for a long time, you don't know what's allowed and what's not. But it's like they get it, finally, but that's hard for them to understand. You know, there's other elders in L.A., well, yes, but they're not Tongva, and correctly, this is the way we do it. Or when I say—I was taking [unclear] Sherman to work with me. One year the women from L.A. came, two years I've had the other women help, and this year I'm going to move it to daytime. And, yes, I'm going to do it, because I find that as new Native people, people who might have grown up as Chicanas and now are Native will ask questions that we don't ask other Natives, right? Like, "Well, how did they do this in your tribe?" Well, you don't ask a teenager that because they know it's sacred or they don't know. Because when I asked the girls at Sherman, "What would you like to know more of next year? What do you think would be more powerful?" and they said, "More culture." And I thought that was strange to me that they would come from reservations and want more culture. But same time, the first year, I really learned because first day I made dolls, and there's tribes that do not make dolls. They're not allowed to touch dolls. So they were in the corner crying and I didn't know why.

COATES

Oh, wow.

BOGANY

And then there was tribes—and then we did the Four Directions prayer bracelet, and we used the Lakotas, because that’s pretty—the one that everybody uses for the four direction colors. And I asked them what their colors were, because we all have different colors for the four directions. And they were calling their moms. Their moms were at the casino, they were gone somewhere. I thought, “Oh, no, I’m not doing this again. We’re going to do the same. Everybody’s doing the same one.”

So it was a learning experience, because it was all about self-esteem. So the corn, in the girls at Sherman, the corn represents the leader. She stands tall and leads. And then the squash, of course, grows in the ground, so it protects her. And then the beans kind of line up around the corn, and she keeps the corn from falling through the winds of life that come. So it shows that all three represent, need each other. And they choose themselves who they’re going to be. Are they the corn, beans, or squash?

They come to events at Pitzer College, they’ll see me in the cafeteria and they’ll say, “Oh, there’s the corn, beans, and squash lady.”

And I say, “I don’t know if I want to be called the corn, beans, and squash lady.” So now when I get to the guard shack, I say, “I’m the squash lady.” [laughs] But it’s become a joke now, so it’s like, okay. It’s neat. It’s good to empower people. It keeps me researching.

COATES

In general, between the tribes that are local here and then the people who are from other tribes outside the area, is there a lot of relationship? Is it good? Is it bad? Is it indifferent?

BOGANY

I don’t think we have a lot of relationship. I think we did at one time. Because I’m out there teaching other things, I participate with other tribes, either far away or locally. I go to a lot of the Serrano things. They have the education conference and I attend. I don’t go to the Cal State one, because that’s hard for me, but I go to the center and attend there at the top of the mountain. And then I attend a lot of events that they have. I attend events with Soboba and with Pechanga, so I’m kind of out there. They know me. And now with the Torres-Martinez and people that see me, they know me by name and they’ll say, “Oh, hi. Good to see you here.” You know, so it’s neat that I’m that connected with them.

COATES

But in general, most people don’t interact the way you do?

BOGANY

There’s no time no more. I don’t think there’s time. It’s like talking to the neighbor next door, right? We don’t have that time no more. I think, too, I was saying in my Bible class two Christmases ago, the neighbors came over to borrow sugar. I was so thrilled, I gave them a five-pound bag, because nobody had asked me for sugar, you know. [laughter] Those days are gone.

COATES

Maybe they thought you didn’t want them to come back ever again. [laughter]

BOGANY

Maybe. I gave them enough for a year. But I just thought, you know, how awesome. They came for sugar, you know, because you don’t have that no more. But it’s neat.

COATES

And what about the people who come from other states and other reservations and things like that? Is there much interaction between the local tribes and those people?

BOGANY

People come and are pretty good. Recently, I think, in recent years, the last three years, I would say, people come and ask permission to be on the land or to do jobs on the land, that they're coming as the protocol, coming to the chief and saying, "We're here. Do you give us your blessing to work here?" or whatever. So that's happened. People from Alaska. It's pretty neat. It's totally different. But some people still don't know we're here, though. "Who are you?"

COATES

Probably most people in the area have never heard of Tongva.

BOGANY

Tongva, yes. Even Gabrielenos still say, "Who are the people?" We got the missions right there, big signs everywhere, but they don't know. And because history was written that way, it's just that they wrote that California wasn't even here, that there was no Indians in California. And you think about people that came in the fifties, right, when they were coming over, well, if there was no Indians, where did these people come from? And now they're claiming they're here? It's not that we weren't. We were still just trying to survive as they were coming.

COATES

Right. And that's another time when people are sort of masking their identity and people saying they're Mexican or whatever.

BOGANY

Right. And then all of a sudden there's all these other Indians, right? So that's kind of hard.

COATES

Have you heard some of the stories, any kinds of stories about what it was like in, say, the 1930s, forties and fifties, sixties, why people—

BOGANY

Well, I know that the fiestas—even though I say we didn't have pow-wows, but we had fiestas, and, of course, fiesta came from a Spanish word, right? But the government stopped the fiestas for California Indians because that's when we were fighting the BIA where the mission federation was—that we were collecting so many signatures to go against the BIA that fifty Tongva were killed in L.A. There was posters put up, and I have those.

COATES

What were they killed for?

BOGANY

Because we were recruiting people to go against the BIA, because the BIA was against the missions, right?

COATES

And they were killed for that, for recruitment?

BOGANY

Yes. So the government stopped the fiestas. So now I know Sobobas had their Fiesta Days for, like, six years, and I love Fiesta Days. It's like a family picnic, right? Everybody's like—it's the most awesome place to go. I set up a table to work with kids, and it's like having a big picnic, a family-reunion-type thing where people are teaching, the kids are having fun, they're free and doing all the stuff you do at a family picnic.

COATES

So are the Fiesta Days associated with Catholic saints and so forth? Is that where they originate?

BOGANY

I don't know where the word fiesta came from. I know that it just meant—because we just had gatherings, right? And so like the casino in Catalina, the word casino means “where the people gather.” So we had gatherings, but we called them fiestas, and then they had to stop calling them fiestas because the government said they're getting too many recruitments to go against me, you know.

COATES

What else?

BOGANY

I don't know.

COATES

Are there other things that are on your mind that you'd like to cover here? Let me ask you this. What do you see for the future for the Tongva people, for the near future?

BOGANY

I think I see a lot—we've already been visible, right? So we conquered the visibility. So now it's about time to make a drastic change. So in the city of Claremont, a historian who passed in January wrote that we never existed in Claremont. So I'm working with Rose Henry, who's from the empowerment of “Idle No More” for November to do a Tongva “Idle No More” and show the strength of the Tongva and have all the groups come together. I want to ask the Tongva what do they see about the Tongva being idle no more. How do they see that? I think it's about California recognizing—so we're state-recognized. So what? Who knows anything about us? But let's show an empowerment of what we have culturally to the public and how we're not sitting back no more. We're going to be out there and we're here to stay. There will be no disappearance of the Tongva. We will continue to exist.

So they asked me to do that, so this summer I'm working with Rose Henry, and she's from Canada. We're going to do our turtle story about how California was formed. The turtles collect these—they're not pipes, but they're wood pieces to kind of follow each other to form California. And she has the turtle mountain story, right? But the pipes that are being built in Canada are causing cancer for women. So I'm going to take that pipeline from our story, representing cancer coming down to California, through those turtles and how they're affecting that story. So we're going to change the stories to a modern-day this summer with our high school students, and teach them the empowerment that they have as young people to change the world.

Then in November they want to do an “Idle No More” for Tongva, and I thought, oh, gosh, I can’t even imagine that. And somebody asked me, “Well, how do you say Idle No More for [unclear]?” Well, what does it look like? What does “idle no more” actually mean? Right? Because they’re fighting for women. It’s a women’s group, right, Idle No More. But how do we see it as a tribe?

But hopefully, it’ll kick off and show the other California tribes, okay, it’s time for all of us to unite and show that we are not idle. It’s not just a women’s power thing, where people can just overlook it, right? You can get women to continue to follow, but people overlook it. But how do you see it as a Tongva person? So I see our weapons guys there doing a day of teaching, and our storytellers, and the language, and all these things that are important to showing what we have to make that there is no more idleness. We’re out. I think that’s what I see. That’s the future, very quick future.

COATES

Looks stronger.

BOGANY

Yes. And let’s do it in honor of my grandma.

COATES

And it always comes back to that, doesn’t it?

BOGANY

Yes, my Grandma Julia.

COATES

I was thinking about that earlier when you talked about skipped generations and everything, yes.

BOGANY

Well, let me see. Because I have my Grandma Julia, because this lady is great, but my Grandma Julia—that’s my Grandma Julia.

COATES

Oh, yes.

BOGANY

And she died at age forty-two. So in a month and two days, I’ll be sixty-five. My mom died at fifty from cancer. So it’s like, no, god has me here for a reason and I’m here to change it, to return to—I told this one lady in Claremont I wanted to be in Historical House. I want our stories to be there. And she said, “You belong over there in the garden. You don’t need to be here.”

And I said, “Lady, I’m not coming to change history; I’m coming to correct it. And I will be in this house.” So in November I’m doing Pilgrim Place, which is the retirement home for people in Claremont, you know, that come to Claremont from around the world. And they say, “Why are you here?”

I said, “Because I want to be in that house across the street. I want our history taught there, that this is our territory.” And I’m going to get in that house.

This little old lady, she was telling me who built the house, and I said I can't even remember that far. I really don't remember the man's name, right? So it's like, whatever. It's like showing that we're here and we're not leaving. So that's what I see.

COATES

Very good. That's probably a good stopping point.

BOGANY

Okay.

COATES

If there's no more, thank you so much.

BOGANY

You're welcome.

COATES

Thank you so much. [End of June 12, 2013 interview]

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*Date: 2014-08-06*