



## Native Perspectives on Sustainability: Antone Minthorn (Cayuse)

*Interviewee: Antone Minthorn*

*Interviewer: David E. Hall*

*Date: 8/10/07*

*Transcriber: Derek Valldejuli-Gardner*

### *Pre-formal interview*

AM: A short definition for sustain is to keep intact, to maintain, and that is a deliberate decision. It's a deliberate thing to sustain, because you understand the system, you understand its nature, so you take action not to harm irreparably that system.

---

DH: If we can start by having you tell us a little bit about yourself in terms of your heritage, where is home for you, and the focus of your work.

AM: My name is Antone Minthorn, and I'm from the Umatilla Indian Reservation in Northeast Oregon and I am Cayuse, Nez Perce and Umatilla, and I am the Chairman of the Board of Trustees for the Confederated Tribes of Umatilla.

(14:23)

DH: How would you describe your own cultural identity?

AM: I'm Cayuse of the Confederated Tribes of Umatilla. That's how I generally describe my heritage, to that place.

DH: Anything else you'd say about that in terms of the history of that connection that you have to the Cayuse and Umatilla?

AM: The Confederated Tribes of Umatilla Indian Reservation are Cayuse, Umatilla, Walla Walla, and the reservation that these tribes live on was created by treaty in 1855 and that treaty was held in the Walla Walla Valley. At that treaty council, three reservations were created, the Yakama, Nez Perce, and then Umatilla. That is the background or history of where I come from.

DH: And is there any summary that you could provide to your life's work, and what you've attempted to achieve in the various roles that you've had.

(16:15)

AM: From an education stand point, I studied urban and regional planning, then worked as a land-use planner for the tribe. In the mid 1970's I was a land-use planner and zoning administrator for the Umatilla Tribe. In 1981 I became the Chairman of the General Council,

which is an elected position, a political position. And I also eventually became the Chairman for the Board of trustees, which is the governing body of the tribe, and served as Chief Executive Officer. My reason for getting into all of this at the time was to look to the goals of restoring the reservation back to its original boundaries after it had been so damaged by the Allotment Act. Another goal was to build an economy to help people on the reservation so that the people could have job opportunities. And the third goal was that of education: that the people had to have the knowledge and the skills in order to be employed within their own tribal organization. Those are the three goals that I had set out to achieve.

DH: Later, I'll ask you some questions about your community. How would you define your community in terms of people and places? What's the geography and the people that comprise your community?

AM: The Umatilla Indian Reservation is located in Northeast Oregon, and the reservation consists of the Umatilla River and the Blue Mountains and plains country. The reservation initially was five-hundred twelve thousand acres. Today, because of federal legislation it is a hundred seventy-two thousand acres. And on that reservation live the people that are enrolled in the Confederated Tribes of Umatilla. The enrollment of Umatilla tribe is two thousand five hundred. Another part of the history of the Umatilla tribe is that in 1885, after the treaty was signed in 1855, in 1885 there was an Allotment Act that parceled up the reservation into individual landholdings and every tribal member got a parcel of land. That divvied up the reservation. The land that was not allotted or parceled out was declared surplus and was taken over by the government or sold. And the condition of the land that was parceled up to individuals that they could sell the land. And much of the land was sold because there was no economy to support the people. But the usual customers that bought the land were white people. And that resulted in what we call checker-boarding of the Umatilla reservation, meaning that the white people that bought the land live on that property and develop it. So today, when you go to the Umatilla Indian Reservation you'll see a lot of homes out there, but they're not necessarily Indian homes, they're Indian (and) white homes, so that the checker boarding pattern that we have on Umatilla. So, in a way we have lived together, maybe not so much in harmony, but we do stay together on the Umatilla Indian Reservation, in a checkerboard pattern.

DH: So, in terms of thinking about your community. It's kinda hard to differentiate geographically between reservation land and land that has taken ownership by other people.

AM: Very much, initially that was the case, if you came aboard the Umatilla reservation, you would not know you were on a reservation because it would look the same; houses and stores, highways, power lines. All that was present on the reservation, but today that is beginning to change. The tribes, the people, are starting to build other kinds of facilities that they designed themselves; whether that's casinos, or hotels, or service stations, or public facilities such as public safety buildings or education buildings. But since we can have some say on how to design them, we want to design it so that it reflects more of our culture.

DH: We'll return more to that idea of your community later. Now, the term sustainability is being used by a lot of people today who are seeking to address the environmental, social, and economical challenges of today. I'm wondering if this is a term that you use and if it is, or it's

not, other terms that might come to mind, or what you think about when you think about sustainability.

(23:45)

AM: I suppose there's different ways of thinking about sustainability...for if the resources that you need are there-and by resources I mean water, I mean fish, berries of various kinds, huckleberries, cherries, or just the roots that we use for subsistence purposes. As long as those resources are there, then we're satisfied with that. If they're not, then we get concerned about that. I think a good example of sustainability in sort of a negative way, or to get to the meaning of sustainability is that on the Umatilla reservation as I mentioned earlier, there's a river that crosses it. And the river runs from the Blue Mountains to the Columbia River, it's a salmon supporting river, salmon spawn there. Well, in the early 1900's there was an irrigation project at the lower end, near the Columbia River, that was built in deep water of a lower river, and that way blocking off the salmon from going to their spawning areas, so that stopped the runs. That was the condition of that river for several decades, like seventy years or so. But the tribes, because of their treaty rights to take fish in all streams running through or bordering the reservations, they have a right to fish in that manner, in those places. So, using that treaty right the tribes decided that they wanted that salmon back and water back in the Umatilla River, so they negotiated with the irrigators that were dewatering the river to get water back and the salmon back. They agreed to that; it wasn't easy, but they did agree to it. Today, there are salmon in the Umatilla River, and they come back every year, and they come back in numbers like twenty, thirty thousand annually coming back. We work very hard to sustain what we have achieved, that those salmon are taken care of. We have a fishing department that hires technicians, a lot of professionals, fish biologists, to manage them. And we work closely with the jurisdictions in other areas of the river so that those runs are indeed sustainable. It takes those kinds of efforts to achieve that state, for maintaining the water and fish in the river.

DH: What else comes to mind when you think of the term sustainability?

(28:30)

AM: I think control; ownership is a big part of sustainability. Like I stated earlier that the reservation is checker-boarded into Indian and non-Indian ownerships. Well, we don't always have control over parcels that are not under Indian ownership, and they do what they want with that property, of course if they meet land-use guidelines. But an example of not having control or ownership is that there's a large gravel pit on the reservation, a large one and its non-Indian owned. And there was another instance where a contractor came in and was doing some road repair, but he needed some gravel material in order to do that-maybe he was working for the rail road to do some construction work. But there was a place close to the railroad and the highway that the contractor was going to shoot, or use explosives to get the rock that he needed for that. Well, that was near my home, and it was in my backyard. And I told the zoning administrator that I would oppose that, they can't just come in from the outside and just say, "We're going to take that rock because we need it." That's not right to do that, because this was the Umatilla Indian Reservation. Because we had zoning authority at the time, we were able to stop that development. Not only that, but the city of Pendleton had a water main near there and they

objected to that also. I guess the point here is that sustainability means that you have to have control and ownership to make it work, or at least the power or authority to make laws to make sustainability work.

DH: When we were talking earlier, you spoke in terms of empowerment. Is that similar? Importance of empowering people?

AM: Empowering people, in which way?

DH: To make decisions consistent with what they deem appropriate.

AM: Yeah, we think about empowerment, the teachings, the respect that people, families have for their home. If they have that authority, if they have that power or the will to be able to manage, so that they can sustain their ways or lifestyles. I think some of that is teaching, as we get into defining what sustainability is. I was raised by a grandmother, which depended a lot on the natural foods, dried food, meat, berries, roots. We use a lot of that, and you could only get that in certain places on the reservation. Growing up that way, I learned that that has to be respected. We cannot be careless about that. I used to fish for my grandmother in the Umatilla River, and I would go and catch fish. It was usually trout or white fish, then I would bring them back to her. I did a lot of that, that kind of subsistence type of thing.

DH: The teachings that you learned about respect, can you say more about that and how respect relates to sustainability?

AM: You're just raised on a reservation and at a home and there are certain things there, environments that are present, and you gotta make a living from that place, from your home. You just know where the food is at, you know where the berries are, and you know where the fish are. You just know that stuff; you know where the deer are. When you go hunting, you have places that you go in order to get what you need to subsist. And you always have to respect that. My dad one day told me, "If them deer do not show up, then you are in trouble because you'll get hungry." There was another incident where this Indian man was asked by a white person, "How many deer did you kill this year?" And the Indian said, "Not many, we didn't do very good. We only got about two hundred." When I first saw that or heard of that I thought that it was *a lot of deer*, but then I realized that that's got to take them through the year. They got to process all that, got to dry it, to make sure that it gets the band, the family through the year. But that was the way they lived and they had to make sure that those food sources were there. The sustainability idea, I think that the treaty of 1855 had a big impact on sustainability, that natural kind of sustainability. We had to depend more on the grocery store for our livelihood. Then again, you talk about sustainability there to us, both, as long as you have an economy you can sustain yourself to get the goods and services you need.

(37:48)

DH: I wanted to ask also, you had spoken earlier in our informal conversation about "natural law." Can you explain natural law and talk about it in connection with sustainability as you're speaking now?

AM: I think the thing we were talking about--the salmon, the water, the roots and berries, wildlife--those are all the things of the earth. They are the natural things. They live according to what their law is. Again that's what we kind of refer to as "natural law;" that deer do certain thing to sustain themselves, as do fish in the water. I mean, the cycles have got to work in order for this reproduction or restoration. If that breaks down, then that's when the troubles begin. I suppose man can do a lot of damage, weather can do a lot of damage, that disrupts those cycles. Like my dad said, "If those deer don't show up, you are in trouble. You will get hungry." If you pick all the berries and they don't regenerate, they don't grow, then that is trouble. And that is the natural law. The tribes or the Indian people learned that over the thousands of years that they had to live according to that lifestyle. So they begin to understand what this natural law was, or is. And they still respect that, that there is this natural process. If they're going to make sure they're there, if we're going to sustain them, then we're going to have to act accordingly. Respect that process so that we don't destroy the foods.

DH: You mentioned that sustainability is a deliberate choice. Can you say more about what you mean by that?

AM: Yeah, I think you make a decision that if you're going to achieve sustainability, whether it's going to be with water conservation, or with fish, and you don't want to destroy them, or exploit them, you want to respect it, that's a decision. That's a decision that has to be made by people. Like I was saying, that in understanding the natural law, and how it works, if you violate that law, to where you break that cycle, then you pay the consequence and whatever that may be. But if you want to preserve it, then you have to make a decision to do so. I don't know if I've mentioned, we wanted water and salmon back in the Umatilla River, all the tribes, the people, the government, made the decision that that's what they were going to do. It was a decision, and it was responsible, and took a lot of will to make it happen, to carry that out. So, self-determination is certainly a big part of that, that decision making.

DH: Self-determination in terms of Indian people's self governance?

AM: Yeah. Self-determination where the tribes, the people, their government, are able to make their own decision rather than have somebody else make it for them. Like the Federal or State Fish and Wildlife Service, distant peoples, government or agency that makes those decisions for you.

DH: Is there anything else that comes to mind when you think about the term sustainability?

AM: I don't know, sustainability is like living forever. If you want to live the long live, good life, then you have to be able to sustain that, and sustaining it is that you make a very deliberate decision in order to do that. You don't be careless when you're talking about sustainability.

DH: You've given a couple brief stories, I'm wondering if there's any others, or metaphors, or analogies that you might use when you're talking with people that are unfamiliar with this concept of sustainability? Any brief stories, metaphors, analogies you tell to help people understand these ideas?

(44:10)

AM: I think there are stories or examples maybe...well, you might think about it as “manifest destiny” versus “respect the earth.” Manifest destiny is a Christian belief that nature can be subdued, and to an extent I would reckon it is. The big examples of that: when Lewis and Clark came through the rivers were flowing thick and full right from the Rocky Mountains, to the Clare Water River, to the Snake, to the Columbia, and to the ocean. And the only thing that would deter them might be rapids that they would have to go around. But that was the way the river was. But you go back there today and look at it, and its one large pool of water that’s backed up. The fish runs are affected by that, and that’s our struggle today is trying to get the fish up and down the fish so that they can sustain themselves. Without needed more water for fish it’s hard to make happen, it’s hard to achieve sustainability in that way. That’s an example I think of sustainability, or a negative aspect of sustainability.

DH: Are there any images or symbols that come to mind when you think of the term “sustainability”? And if so, would you be willing to sketch an image or a symbol?

AM: Off hand, when I think of sustainability I think of natural resources. Natural resources are just the things that grow from the earth. I think of trees. I think of mountains. I think of water, rain. I think of the coolness of maintains and mountain streams. And sustainability, I think in terms of fish, salmon, and the tributary waters. In the shade of a tree in shallow waters, spawning. Because we harvested them that way before. And again, up to a certain number, there’s only a short timeframe you can catch salmon before they begin spawning. Once they get to a certain point you’ve got to stop and let them spawn. And again, that’s an act of sustainability, but you’ve got to know the time with which to do that. I think the fisheries at Celilo Falls was managed the same way. That there was a time they had to let the fish go on by, because they had to go all the way up the Columbia, North, just to spawn. They call them June Hogs. 50 pounders, but they have to get up there to sustain their runs of salmon. Dams I think damage that sustainability. And again it’s a will to achieve a certain level of sustainability. If you’ve done enough damage, it takes a lot to undo it. I’m talking about dams now. To remove them so you get more water flow, that’s a pretty big order, because there’s a dependence that we’ve established by having dams and power, the economy and quality of life. So there’s a trade-off there.

DH: Some of those images you mentioned. I don’t know if you consider yourself an artist, but if you’re feeling inspired now, would you be willing to draw a little bit of that. I have some pens here for you to choose from; you can use all, or just a couple. And then if you can just say a bit more about what these images mean to you, and how they represent the concept of sustainability in some way.

(49:57)

AM: Well, I was talking about a tree...(drawing)...gotta have water...and a fish...(drawing) that’s a salmon...

DH: Looks like one of those June Hogs. (laughter)

AM: ...of course you got to have the sun...(drawing)...



(51:58)

DH: So, what's the story here in the picture?

AM: It's my home...it's my home. It's in the mountains. It's the Umatilla River. It's salmon, the land: that's what we're sustaining. That's what we're keeping. That's what we're holding on to. I didn't think of it that way, but after I drew it, I guess that's what comes out. It's just...my soul. If you ask me, "What is sustainability?" well, that's it.

DH: How is it your soul?

AM: It's where my people are, my culture. Maybe if I knew how to draw a horse, I'd put a horse on there (laughter). But that's basically what's important, I would reckon to say, just the land. That's it.

DH: Why is it so important?

AM: It's home. It's a place for me to live and for my children to live. It's forever. It's my culture. It's my ancestors. The Umatilla reservation is on Cayuse land. There wasn't going to be a third reservation they wanted us to relocate to Nez Perce or Yakama. The Cayuse said "no, we're not going, we have our own lands." That's where that third reservation came from. So I respect my ancestors for what they did. That's it. That's my home.

DH: So the fish doesn't look very happy. Is that just the way the pen drew, or is there any intended meaning in that? (smiling)

AM: No there was really, I just stroked a mouth and it just went the wrong way, I guess I could have gone the other way, had it smiling. (laughter).

DH: Anything else you'd like to say about this before we move on?

AM: There is no house or home there. Well, I can't say that either too because the people moved a lot. They used mobile homes, teepees. So they moved on because of the subsistence kind of living, they moved along over a wide area, range of land. It wasn't until they were actually put onto the reservation that they began to build box houses, only then did they do that. But they do still build teepees, they still do use them. But again that's getting more difficult too because it's hard to get the teepee poles, not enough wood.

DH: Anything else that you'd add to this thinking of sustainability as a concept, trying to define its meaning. Some of the things that you've said: "Ownership and control," "importance of teachings," "natural law," "making deliberate decisions," "having respect," and "home."

AM: I think that home is cultural. When my ancestors created this third reservation, the impact that had, was that a Cayuse could stay Cayuse, or Walla Walla and Umatilla, because they were allied, could stay Umatilla and Cayuse. They didn't have to become Yakamas or they didn't have to become Nez Perce. Although they were interrelated, but they kept their unique cultures. I can call myself Cayuse, or I can call myself Walla Walla, or I can call myself Umatilla and say this is our home, this is Umatilla Indian Reservation. This is our home. It isn't Nez Perce, or it isn't Yakama, it's Umatilla. That's my home. That's what sustainability is, being able to say that. To have the authority, the power, the ownership to do that, to say that, that this is sustainable. It's the law. It's our law.

--break--

DH: Earlier you identified your community in terms of the Umatilla Indian Reservation and the enrolled membership there. I would like you to allow your imagination to take you into the future. Imagine in a very optimistic sense, a future for your community where your notion of sustainability has really taken form. Go ahead and take a minute to bring this vision into greater clarity. Whenever you're ready, report back to us what you see in this future place where sustainability is the way things are for your community. Whenever you're ready, what do you see?

(3:26, part 2)

AM: Maybe the best way to define sustainability, or a sustainable community, is to take a historical perspective, prior to the treaty of 1855. Before there was the treaty, and before there was Lewis and Clark. The tribes, the Cayuse, Umatilla, the Walla Walla, and other Columbia basin tribes, lived their own lives. They had their ways; they're subsistence economies that they followed. They had horses by that time, early 1700's. So they moved about their country freely. They had the freedom to do that. They were able to make a living because of the abundance of water and salmon in the Columbia, Snake Rivers and all the tributaries. But it was when they lost those assets, losing their land base, and losing the water and salmon, and those things they were dependent on, that allowed them to make a living were gone. And they were confined to reservations. And those reservations becoming smaller and the tribes becoming more poor--I



didn't say poverty, I said, "more poor." And that at the treaty, it was noted that these tribes, the Cayuse, had 20,000 head of stock, meaning horses and cattle, that ranged on their original homelands, which was almost over six million acres, but they needed that in order to sustain their economy at that time. But when they signed the treaty, then they signed away their sovereignty and also they begin to lose their access, their land base. And were reduced down from six million acres down to 158 thousand acres, and were under the supervision of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, who was a de-facto government. And the territory, or the reservation, was not being protected by the United States government. So, the Indians became very, very poor, and in need, and the morale was way down. The community traveled around, and it was not until the tribal government was able to restore its sovereign authority that they could come back and be the Cayuse, Umatilla and Walla Walla people again, but it happened, that sovereignty was restored. They were able to make decisions without undo interference from the federal government or the state government. And they created their economy and were able to get employment and profits from that economy. That began to change the life of the Cayuse, Umatilla, and Walla Walla. They came back to where they were before the coming of the white people, but this time, as they are building their nation, their tribe, their economy, it is with a presence of the non-Indians that have come, the Americans, is what I mean by that. Now, when we signed the treaty of 1855, our reservation was 800 square miles, and that was 512,000 acres. That's the dream, to keep the promise, to make the United States government keep their promise to the Cayuse, Umatilla, Walla Walla that they had made earlier. And within that 512,000 acres will be the homeland, the homes for all the members of the Cayuse, Umatilla, Walla Walla people. That's what the initial reservation was established for, was so that the children, the people would have a place to stay and the economy could sustain them on that land. Now, the people were to be farmers, they were to have farm-mills, they were to have lumber-mills, they'd have hospitals and schools. They were to have the technical assistance to develop that kind of community and economy. But that was never achieved. The treaty says these things; it's written down, what kind of community it's going to be like. It never came. All the resources, in order to build that community were pretty much lost. But now that the tribes are back and have the authority, the power, the governing authority to rebuild their nations. That is the vision. That is the dream. That 512 thousand acres would be the homeland of the tribes that we have all that land back. And that we have a state of the art economy. That all our people are education and trained, so that they can be a part of that economy, can take their place in that economy. That they have a strong, capable government that provides essential governmental services for the people, that the people's health are taken care of; that there are medical facilities, state of the art, to take care of people. That social problems are dealt with effectively. Alcohol and drugs are controlled. That is the dream, sort of his "happy hunting ground" kind of a dream. And again, you go back to the happy hunting ground, and all that is saying is that there is adequate game, and roots, and berries, to keep the people fed. Well, it's similar in today's, 2007's, time. We're still looking for the happy hunting ground. And we are moving more toward it every day. Today we have a diversified economy that's moving us away, more from dependences on the casino, but there is other kinds of enterprises that are being developed. So that is the dream and that dream will sustain the people. It will strengthen the culture of the people by providing them the support that they need. They can build all of their cultural kinds of programs or facilities, like longhouses, or museums, or language programs, or whatever it is that they need. With a strong economy they can do it and, of course, a strong education system, and the longhouse; cultural, religious facilities.

(13:51)

DH: Can you use this opportunity to talk more about that dream in terms of what it looks like? You just mentioned a lot of different things. Can you say a little bit more about education? What does it mean that you'll have well educated people? How well educated? What will their knowledge base be, their skill sets?

(14:22)

AM: I think it's whatever the tribal need is at the time. Economies change, needs change. We have land and in order to manage land effectively we need people that have that expertise in land management. It's across the board. I think it's like any community, self-sustaining community, self-reliant community. It needs professionals. It needs doctors and lawyers. And the real problem with that is that some tribes are so small, they're like a hundred and maybe two hundred, three hundred, even 5,000-those are small to get all these professional people out of that, out of that pool that we have. We just need technicians, mechanics. We just need that, those kinds of people. Right now, that is the problem is how to determine what those needs are and finding the people that can do that kind of analysis and let the policy makers know what those needs are, human resources, directors, education departments. Those people have to provide us with the information and data that we can make the decisions on that we need to make. The Umatilla tribe has been very fortunate in getting good educated leaders. Our casino operation is managed by tribal members and it's a very successful casino. Our cultural institute is managed by a tribal member and is very good at that. We have more needs, like we need fisheries biologists, to manage the salmon. We need hydrologists to manage water, river, ground water. We need foresters that can put trees back into the mountains. We need environmental engineering, or however you fix up a river that's been eroded. So, there are a lot of needs, but we need leadership from the departments that policy makers can state a policy that "we need more doctors, we need more nurses, at the (medical) facility--get it for us. Get the tribal members to begin the study of medicine. Find out who they are, and get them involved." We need people like that that know how to get people and send them in the right direction.

(18:38)

DH: So, you see those needs being met by both tribal membership, but understanding limitations within the population, that there is also going to be relationships with external organizations and other skills imported?

AM: We will always need to import people because most tribes are so small. But I think that there's also culture shock that has to be dealt with, because reservations are different than downtown. Where I come from the colleges and technical schools are off the reservation. And tribal members would have to go off the reservation to learn, but they're almost adjacent. If we had a campus on the reservation, from those community colleges, or colleges, the teachers and professors could come onto the reservation and have classes there for the employees of which there are over a thousand there, but there's a constant need to upgrade skills, training. We need to get there. We're not quite there yet. We need that kind of thinking. Tribes are very young. They are very young organizations, cutting edge stuff. We don't need to use the old models, so we can

invent new ones. We've got the people to do it.

DH: Can you say a little bit more about some of these other things that you mentioned like health, in terms of the dream, the happy hunting grounds dream. Healthy people and their health is well attended to. What's the connection? What's the importance of health and what does it mean to be healthy?

AM: Health is happiness. I learned that from my mother, because she suffered a lot of pain and she said that you always take care of her health because without good health it's not good: you're hurt, you're miserable. So health has always been a precious state, a precious thing. The tribes, the people, because of the change in lifestyle, that of gathering the roots and berries, eating all those kinds of foods and game. Having to hunt, pursue that, were very healthy. But when the lifestyles changed and they were confined to reservations and that began to change the state of their health. And the *big* disease now is diabetes. And you have to change the lifestyle or return back to your original lifestyle in order to deal with it. Better diet, more exercise, which sounds very easy, but it's very difficult in today's world where so much convenience. So we have to deal with that, we have to prevent it, or invent a better approach to accomplish that, but you have to have people that know how to do that. You can't just talk about it and say, "Well, there's got to be prevention." What do you do? How do you deal with diabetes? How do you have a diabetes clinic? You go to a dental clinic and all your needs are taken care of. They're all set up, machines are there to take care of your dental needs and they have staff to do it. It's all cut and dry, pretty much. Diabetes, no. It really isn't that proficient; we have to achieve that in order to deal with the symptoms and prevention. That's probably the more prevalent disease, as is alcohol and drugs and suicide, I think probably from depression. But again, you have to have the systems, institutions, you have to develop them to meet the need, take care of that. And that's where we're at, we can bring in help from the outside but they need to know the community there too to be able to deal with our problems. If we had our own doctors and nurses, and they were competent, and they could pretty much deal with that problem. But like I say, there's so few of us that supply is pretty scarce to cover all the needs that we have. But I think we're getting better, more sophisticated, we're going to get more sophisticated in the future in how to meet that need.

DH: Can you speculate on what that model might look like where you are effectively dealing with those kinds of social problems that you just mentioned?

AM: We can deal with symptoms, maybe a lot easier than we can do prevention. I think we have to concentrate a lot on prevention, which I think involves a lot of efforts by families, by individuals to deal with their problems, Things that their government can't really get down to doing. It can't really force people to do things or you begin getting very close to forcing people and that does not get the kind of results that you need. I think there's a lot of self-responsibility teachings that the families themselves have to provide, some order, some discipline to their families and I'm not certain we're there. Again, part of the breakdown I think is because a lot of our children go off the reservation to school and we just now opened a school on the reservation, a Charter school. It started out with 9 and 10 at the time, 9,10,11,12, I think that's what it was, those grades, and people say, "Well, you got to be getting the grade-schoolers too in order to be able to begin distilling good values into them." But that is a huge challenge too, because the

parents have to have a part in that process as well. I think we're getting there, but again we need people that know how to do that kind of stuff, to instill some discipline into the community. What's the process? What's the programs for doing that? How do you get parents to instill this in them?

DH: Do you have any answers to those questions?

AM: Not personally...I guess the answer is to find people that can do that: finding out what the requirements are, what the disciplines are that these kinds of people have to go out in the community to deal with these social problems, which is, I think, pretty hard to do. Somehow we have to find a way, and again it comes down to leadership; that somebody's got to step up and begin taking the leadership part in dealing with these problems. Otherwise, if you're laid back it's just going to continue. Somebody has to take responsibility.

DH: What's good leadership to you? What makes a good leader?

AM: Knowing how to get things done, and that means knowing how to figure out a problem, and what to do about it once you've figured it out, the analysis, or walking the talk. I've always thought that just for some staff that are maybe learning how to solve problems would be very helpful to people. And that there's a process, there are steps to doing that that make it possible to figure out a problem and to solve it. And that means discipline that you want to do something like that, the will to do it. Otherwise, it's a community that has to also want that to happen. There is an example that a long time ago, about 50 years ago say or even longer. That there was this institution called the Whip-man and he instilled discipline into the tribal community. He was designated; there were several of them that were designated to patrol the reservation by horseback. Their duty was to see that the children were kept in line, were disciplined. If anybody did anything wrong then all would pay the price for that--you'd get a whipping. My dad would say that there were times when he would run into the whip man on horseback. They'd come together and the whip man was really nice to him and would talk to him, "How are your parents? How are you?" And then they'd be getting ready to leave and say, "You better be telling me the truth because I'm going to be talking to your parents." That was the fear of the discipline. But the thing about that, in order to be the law, the people had to agree to it. Otherwise, it could not work, because they tried that years later. Some people remembered the whip man and they tried to apply it, but they almost got thrown in jail because the law changed. I mean we go to public schools, if you're hurt by a teacher or something like that, that tries to discipline you--that spans you or touches you--you get in a lot of trouble today over that because it's not the law. It's not sanctioned. That it's not okay to do that because society says it's not ok. The community says that it's ok, then you can do that. If the community does not agree then you can't do it, that's you yourself will get into trouble. That's just an example of tribal law, or any law for that matter, that people have to approve it.

DH: Getting back to this dream of the happy hunting grounds, can you say more about this? If this dream became a reality, what would be some of the qualities of relationships that the community would have with the landscape?

AM: I think that people, in order to achieve the happy hunting grounds have to be disciplined.

They have to work hard to achieve that. And in that process, being trained that way, understand the value of this happy hunting ground and how hard it is to achieve. There was a time that I was attending school. I was in Spokane, Washington, and I came home in the winter time. Caught a ride with some guys that were going to Grant's Pass and they dropped me off in Pendleton. And in those days the US highway 30 was right through Pendleton, there wasn't a bypass freeway then, and they'd dropped me off. The main street was all lit up, there were people teeming on Main Street. The Salvation Army bell ringers were on the corner, dinging away, and they'd drop me off and say, "You really live in a metropolis here don't you?" And I always remember because this was the 50's. There were lumber mills; there were processing mills in town. Farmers had homes out in the country and a home in town; that was the state of the economy at that time. And I think back to those days and then I say that was probably a high point in economic prosperity for that particular region, that town at that time, where everyone was for the most part happy. We lived on a reservation, which is adjacent to the city of Pendleton but it rubs off on us too. To me, I always look at that as, if you got a thriving economy, that's what it looks like. I see that as the happy hunting grounds.

DH: Was that sustainable?

AM: No. No, it wasn't. It was not sustainable.

DH: Why not and what would be the difference between that and the happy hunting grounds being sustainable?

AM: At that moment that I saw it, it would be the happy hunting grounds, but it was not sustainable. Again, the philosophy of manifest destiny. You have timber, the owners want to make money so they go cut it, but they cut it *all* down. And after awhile there's no wood to sustain, no logs to sustain that mill. It closed down and moved on, which is typical of exploitation. It's the same way with agriculture technology. They can do things more efficiently without so much human labor. So it cuts out a lot of jobs, and that makes it not sustainable. I guess technology can have an impact, probably either way, in achieving prosperity or having a negative impact on prosperity. I think if people really wanted to maintain a strong economy, they would have to pay much more attention to their resources. I think Ecotrust has that kind of philosophy with their conservation economy. And I think Umatilla tribe is looking that way. They live right at the base of the Blue Mountains, has land, wants to restore it, put timber back on it. And a hundred years from now maybe could begin to harvest some of it in a sustainable way: taking what we need and leaving what needs to stay there to keep the habitat sustainable. We think that way. As we get more control over that then I think we will do that. But to hear a talk in rural economies that have been devastated by the over-cuts and then the price of wheat, growing competition lowers the price of wheat that sometimes they can't make a living on it. So there has to be better management and probably by the local people, not the huge timber companies that cut and run. I think that the people themselves have got to want sustainability and own it and carry it out. I don't think that a company thinks that way, a corporation.

DH: Thinking in terms of the people and the way they think, can you say a little about imagining a sustainable future for you community, what would be some of the values and the core beliefs in the way that people think in that kind of future place?

AM: I think the vision or dream of the happy hunting grounds, that there is such a thing. You may not know it when it's there, but it's there. Like I said about downtown metropolis, it was there but I didn't know that was it. That there has to be much discipline in the community to achieve the happy hunting ground. Discipline is wanting to get there and doing what you have to do to get there, short of manifest destiny. Taking care of your education, taking care of your health, taking care of you families, I think that those kinds of things are important, to build those foundations or institutions that are needed at that time, whatever they may be.

(41:43)

DH: Anything else you could say about people's world views, and the way they think about themselves in relation to the world?

AM: I think there was a lady one time that I was working for in San Francisco--I was just taking jobs where I could get them. She wanted her room cleaned up. She was an elderly lady, so I was sent out to do the job, so I washed down her walls. She would talk to me--she was from Alaska originally--she taught me that when you first go to a place, a new setting, when you first get there, the first thing you do is you listen and you look around and see what's happening, see what's there. Always. Always listen, always look around, so you know what's going on. I think it was some very fundamental advice and I've never forgotten it. I listen a lot to people. I listen a lot to my peers, the tribal council, to hear what they're saying, to listen to what they're saying, Are we on track together? Are we together? Are we on common ground? That's what I listen to, when I can hear that, "Ok, things are moving along, alright." It's listening and observing, I think are important and there are probably other values...being visionary or proactive. I think it is important, to be tolerant: people make mistakes. I think there's things that right now I can't bring forth, but there are a lot of things about life and about reaching that happy hunting ground. I think that advice, to learn as much about life as you can, as early as you can, that's education. So you have to spend your whole life learning because, it doesn't take long to get to be 70, 80, 90. It doesn't take long at all. And you want to be productive in those years. When you get to the end you can say, "I've accomplished some worth for what I set out to do. That's what I did."

DH: So you're saying education beyond just the normal classroom, but throughout your whole life.

AM: Always, yeah. You need basic education; that gives you the head start. Education is a model to guide you by, but you have to create, you have to invent, you have to challenge, you have to make things better. Education alone will not; it's you that drives it to accomplish whatever it is you think is important. Without it you're not going anywhere, other than to live, to exist... (*sound interference for about 3 seconds*)...Somebody makes decisions. Somebody decides to put a street down. It doesn't happen by itself, somebody makes that decision somewhere. Who is it? Maybe you want to be that person that begins making those decisions, making things happen.

DH: When education has come up in my other interviews, conversations, often times I hear that it's important to change the content of the formal education that occurs in the classrooms for

Native Americans. Would you agree with that? That the content in particular needs to become culturally appropriate or geared towards your people's needs?

AM: Yeah. In this way, they don't teach it in school. They don't teach you about your own government, or your own culture, or your own history, it's not there. You learn about it late in life, maybe when you become a council man, or some other way. The history of tribes has been so negative, that it very often instills anger when you learn it at a later time. There's some rage that occurs, that takes a while to get over that. Very often it can be negative; we have negative reactions, until you learn how to deal with it. You can learn how to deal with it in a positive way, but the only way you're really going to change is to be a part of that change, be the author of that change. Otherwise, like some of my aunts used to say, "you fight the world," and that's hard to do. I think that there should be history, true history accurate history of the United States. At this time, some schools are beginning to incorporate it. I think Washington State is doing that, will have classes in Native American history.

(49:10)

DH: You mentioned bringing about change, and people participating in making that change happen. What are some of the biggest obstacles that you see that need to be overcome from this day forward to bring the kind of future you're talking about?

AM: I guess education would be one of the ways that we would overcome these obstacles to change. You have to understand what's happening, and history is a big part of that, in how to deal with the problems that have been caused by decisions made by others for Indians, causing all these tough problems on reservations. All of this lack of housing, alcohol and drugs...to make those changes, to get more positive, to get communities more positive, it's got to be education at all levels. Formal education, informal education, but just understanding your situation or the environment that you are in, and being able to deal with that. I come from a reservation. I went to school on a reservation. I went to school off the reservation. I've been to the university. I've been to the military. I've lived in large urban areas. I've worked for people outside, but, again, it was circumstances a lot, but it was the will to keep going, to keep moving, to make a living, to be straight, to not be under the influence of alcohol and drugs, to be able to see clearly, ahead, and to make commitments and be able to carry out those commitments, to help people, to help your own people. You've got to be straight to do that, there's no other way. You can help them. The way I'm explaining it, I'd say that the biggest obstacle is yourself, if you can deal with your own problems, your own personality, then make the fix and get on with the challenge of life, then I think you'll make it. But you have to make that commitment, and some people have a hard time doing that, and some don't. Some don't ever make it and they're not here today.

DH: Let's imagine your community in the future, and your people have overcome their obstacles of self, in those terms you just described. There's an exercise in psychology that we do that's called "I am" statements. It's simply a way of expressing a self-image or a self-concept. What would be some of those "I am" statements that the average person would make your community in this future where the dream of the happy hunting grounds has been? This is the form, and it's blank, open, for completion of "I am" statements. Do any come to mind? If so, could you share some of those?

(55:00)

AM: I am Antone Minthorn and I have something to say. I am a person like anybody else and I have something to say. Not just you, but the other guy too-I don't care if he's white, black, red, first they're people just like I am. They have something to say. I have something to say, and I will say it no matter how hard it is to say, I will say it. The reason I say that is because I feared saying it before. I was in my first presentation as a planner. My first one ever and I didn't like speaking, I feared it, I was nervous about it. I wondered, "How the hell am I going to get by this thing?" And then I thought about that, "I have something to say. I am Antone Minthorn and I have something to say." So, I said it. Five minutes. I stood up in front of the class. Maybe it was ten minutes. And I left there; the relief was so great that I almost wept. That tension was so great and it came off just like that. I said, "I've done it. I'm free." Since that time it's been a lot easier. I do have something to say. I can write, but I didn't know that. I used to go the encyclopedia and copy stuff. But a professor told me, "If you're going to do, then at least change a few of the words." I was reprimanded in class. After that, I began to write my own stuff, I didn't know I could write. I knew I could do English and parts of speech. So I began writing my own stuff and I started getting B's and A's on my writing. I can write. I didn't know that. So those are some things I found out about myself just by doing it, like climbing a rope. I look up at the ceiling and "I can't do that." "Sure you can. So go ahead and get started. Get up two steps. Go ahead, you're going." Next thing you know, they're at the top and then after that there's not a problem going up that rope. You challenge yourself. You find ways to get beyond your fears. I think that's been a lot of my success, if you want to call it that. It was just overcoming the fears that I had as a person. In thinking that, "Maybe I'm not good enough for that." But then there's a lot of other people that are thinking the same thing and maybe you can do it better than them. It's competitive nature, I think.

DH: How would that translate to some "I am" statements?

AM: I am smart. I am strong. I am persistent. I can be eloquent. I can be brave. Just overcome these human things. At least for now, there's probably more, with some more thought, that I might be to come up with, but I think those are okay.

DH: That's pretty good, yeah. Before we close, just a couple other questions.

AM: Ok.

DH: One, are there any things that we *haven't* touched on in our conversation yet that you'd like to include. So, something that you feel like, "I wish that he'd ask this question." Or anything that we haven't touched on at all that you think it really relevant.

AM: Just what my dad said one time: there's nothing wrong with an Indian's brain, he just how to learn how to use it. My dad was an engineer. I have a daughter that's an engineer. So they can get there. They can do it. I think the people have to know that, understand that. Whatever you want to do, you can do it. You can do it. I think that's my conclusion of life up to now, my experience.



DH: Is there any other points that you've made in the conversation already that you'd like to reemphasize or say anything else about?

AM: I think you have to do what you have to do. I get involved in these kinds of things here (*gesture to the Ecotrust conference room implying involvement with the Buffett Award, since renamed the Ecotrust Award for Indigenous Leadership*), mainly because somewhere inside I did something or have spoken about an issue and maybe took a position on it, and people ask me if I will work with them or if I will be a part of their organization. That's just how I get involved in these things. A lot of times it wasn't my goal. When I went to San Francisco, California in the 60's, I lived in the housing projects and I got involved in the civil rights. The San Francisco riots at the time. I was part of the housing committee for the neighborhood community at the time. Again, it's just people that I knew and talked to and asked if I would be involved with them. So I said "alright." So I was there, during the San Francisco riots. I was on that scene there just because I happened to be in that neighborhood with the leaders there. So it's just doing. Doing the community thing that gets you into where I've been.

DH: So getting out and being involved?

AM: Yeah.

DH: Following what you believe in?

AM: Yeah, helping people. Compassion for people.

DH: Well that's a nice thought to end on. Thank you again, Antone, it's been an absolute pleasure to talk with you today and learn more from your perspective.

To quote this interview, please use the following citation:

Minthorn, A. (Interviewee) & Hall, D. E. (Interviewer). (2007). *Native Perspectives on Sustainability: Antone Minthorn (Cayuse)* [Interview transcript]. Retrieved from the Native Perspectives on Sustainability project website: