**Interviewer:** If you could introduce yourself and tell me a little bit about who you are and where you're from.

**Allen Parker:** All right. Now, should I look into the camera as I'm looking at you? Okay, all right. My name is Allen Parker. I'm a citizen of the Chippewa Cree Tribal Nation, which is located in Rocky Boy, Montana. Right now, I'm a member of the faculty of the Māori Indigenous University, working with them on--with tribal PhD students. I worked for 20 years in Washington, DC, practicing law from '77 to '97. Then I came out to teach school at Evergreen State College in Olympia. That's all. I think they need to digest it. [chuckles]

**Interviewer:** Sure. Could you tell me a little bit more about your professional background, including in education and teaching, maybe your experience at Evergreen?

**Allen:** Sure. Well, as you understand, I originally earned my living as a lawyer, practiced law for years in DC. So when I came out to Evergreen, being a college professor was new, as far as I was concerned, so I enjoyed a couple of years teaching at the undergraduate level and learning the system that Evergreen uses, because if you know anything about Evergreen State College, you know that it's an experimental school.

They don't issue letter grades or number grades to their students. They're a fully-accredited liberal arts program, but because of their desire to try a different way about higher education, they have this approach where students take only one class per academic quarter. And that's for 12 or 16 credits, they work together as a group. The faculty usually teach in teams of two or three faculty for a group of 50 to 70 students. That gives you the opportunity to really get to know the students, the students to get to know each other and the faculty.

And I think it's a very successful program as far as the students come away with a great deal of confidence that they've acquired in participating in the program. What I found was that every class that the students take, they're obliged to get up in front of their classmates and present their work. I'm talking about undergraduate now. I think that that's very different from the average bachelor's degree where you may be in some class that you're trained to do some public speaking, or you may be obliged to hand in a report and make a report on your work.

That's very different from having to regularly get up and learn to become a public speaker with your material based on your material and to interact with your audience and really become acquired at the ability to speak in public, especially for Indian students, who they tend to be more shy than the average student, I think this just part of our cultural way to be more reserved and so on.

So after doing that for three years, I was teamed up with another one of my native faculty. We started a master's degree program in tribal government studies. But this was within the MPA program, Master's in Public Administration, because if you know how schools are organized, public administration is basically government studies.

The head of the Quinault Nation, Joe DeLaCruz, had come to me after a couple of years of my learning the ropes at Evergreen. And he came to me and said, "Look, I want you to create a special program for our tribal students so that they can earn a degree that is-- credentials to do the kind of work that they need to do out in the world of Indian affairs."

So an MPA degree seemed to him to be just the perfect fit for what he thought Evergreen should be providing to tribal students. So when we heard him out and we did our own survey of tribal officials around the area, it was very positive. Yes, they all agreed with Joe's assessment, that this would be a great way to help their tribal students, not just to get a higher education but to get a specialized degree in a field that really meant something to their future goals and to their abilities to help their tribes.

So we started the MPA program in tribal government studies in 2002. We did one thing that was unique to it, is that we did an intensive weekend class program. So our students commuted from around the area. We'd have students drive over from the Colville Reservation, from Yakima, or from up North with the Lummi Nation, down South to Warm Springs or Yuma Tilá.

The students would drive over to Evergreen College in Olympia Friday morning, get an early start and be ready to start class right after lunch. They would be in class as a group all afternoon on Friday, all day Saturday, and all day Sunday. They would have three of these intensive weekend class sessions for a four-credit course.

Again, like I was describing earlier, doing that work together, the students get to know each other. They get to really learn how to work together as a group. And for graduate students who oftentimes they didn't just come out of college after four years after high school, they came back to school to earn their bachelor's degree after being out in the world for 5 or 10 years. So Alma students were mature young people who were really dedicated to what they were trying to do with their graduate work.

So I thought that was a very successful program. I was reluctant to retire, but when I turned 70, I decided it was time to retire. Two years ago, I retired, and I have been enjoying the work that I've been doing with the Māori University, which is a PhD program for a small group of students. My work is just to be their advisor. I'm not responsible for the curriculum or such.

It follows the model that we were following at Evergreen in that we look for students who want to earn a degree that will enhance their ability to be effective out in the world and any world of tribal affairs or world, in which the work world is dedicated to advancing the interest of their tribal community. Anyway, does that make sense to you? [chuckles]

**Interviewer:** Yeah, it does. I think it leads nicely into the next question. When you think about sovereignty or just the idea of sovereignty, what kinds of components does that entail?

**Allen:** Well, you know because I'm a college professor now, I'm an instant expert on things. Seriously, the whole idea of recognizing the indigenous nations of North America

as indigenous sovereigns--indigenous nation sovereigns goes back to the royal proclamation of King George of England of 1763. Put yourself back in that historical time when this continent was being explored, and some say colonized by the Europeans and Great Britain or England in those days, was very interested in the fur trade up in Canada. So King George recognized that the fur traders from England would come to what was then North America and explore that part of the continent and discovered that the native people were great fur trappers and they could produce raw material for them that was very valuable for their customers in England, so they wanted to get a corner on the market in fur trade with their native partners. And King George saw that this is going to run into conflicts with the goals of England as a sovereign wanting to expand its reach over this part of the world.

So in order to overcome the efforts of the traders to get a monopoly independent of the control of the government, he issued this royal proclamation. The fact that you have a proclamation of the King of England saying that he's going to recognize the native people as indigenous sovereigns became the foundation upon which the relationship with the United States and the tribal nations is built, because this is 1763, and as you know the War of Independence in this country against Great Britain by the American colonists started in 1776 with the Declaration of Independence and so on.

You know that history, that the colonists won the war, Treaty of Paris, ended it in 1787, and so then they went into a convention as a group of representatives of former colonies. And so these leaders of the former colonies got together and created a constitution which, of course, was borrowed from what they learned from the Haudenosaunee, the six nations of that part of the world. Benjamin Franklin, in particular, studied the experience of the six nations and recognized that this was a democratic form of government.

But anyway, so I'm getting sidetracked. What I wanted to say is that the newly created United States Congress then adopted their constitution and inserted into the commerce clause of the US Constitution a role that commerce will negotiate treaty agreements with these indigenous sovereigns. That became the origins of the United States' policy. So there were 370 treaties negotiated across the now United States between the United States and the different tribes as they moved west from the former colonies on the eastern seaboard all the way here to the west coast. To me, that's the origins of tribal sovereignty.

**Interviewer:** The second part of that question is, what is termination?

**Allen:** Termination was the United States government renege on its treaty commitments. Technically, it began shortly after World War II, when the United States government after Roosevelt passed on at the end of the war, 1945, Harry Truman was his Vice President and he inherited the job of being the president. He was approached by his deficit hawks of that era. And they said, "This government is broke. We basically have exhausted our treasury fighting the war with Nazi Germany and then the Imperial Forces of Japan."

They said, "I think we need to get out of the business of supporting these Indian tribes across the country. Whatever money we're spending to administer this network of offices

of the Bureau of Indian Affairs and the public health services, we could save money if we just decided we would terminate their relationship with the United States and let them become just like everyone else." That became the origins of the termination policy that was officially adopted by a resolution of the Congress in 1953.

**Interviewer:** Talk to me a little bit about your experience meeting Lucy or what that sounded like.

**Allen:** I think-- I don't remember for sure but I think the first time I met Lucy was back at the end of the 1960s. No, it was 1970 was the first NCAI meeting that I ever went to. This was while I was attending law school. I had just heard that they were in town. My uncle who was on the tribal council back home said they were coming to town and would I like to go down from UCLA to San Diego where the meeting was being held. I had never been there, that kind of a meeting before, but I was glad to have the chance to drive down the freeway in 1970.

I was very impressed. This was a group of tribal leaders that was a whole new experience for me to see these people in action. Lucy was one of the people I met. I remember meeting some very impressive Indian leaders. Later, I got to meet her a little bit more when Mel Tonasket ran and became the president of NCI at the year, I think it was 1976 or '78. Anyway, the end of the 1970s. He was just a young man then, but he's an example of I think, you know, dynamic leaders.

He was really a protege of Lucy, I thought. He learned a lot from her and took her advice. That's the kind of short version of my experiences seeing the great Lucy Covington in action. Of course, I heard from Mel and others about what they thought of her, the role that she played back in the day because it was a monumental achievement that she made.

**Interviewer:** Anything about Lucy, any qualities about her that you would like for other maybe college students to know about?

**Allen:** Well, just that she was such a person that very much came from a traditional perspective. You could just see the way she carried herself and the way she spoke. I don't know that she had a higher degree. In fact, I don't know what her educational background was but she was very intelligent and very good speaker. She knew how to carry an audience of tribal people. This is what I remember about her. She was inspiring.

**Interviewer:** That's probably good. [sound cut] Do you remember the first time that you heard about termination and maybe what form it came in?

**Allen:** As a young man, I went to school and earned my degree in classical philosophy and then was drafted by the US Army, this was in 1965, and became an officer after going through officer candidate school and was deployed to Vietnam. I served in the Vietnam War from 1967 until August of '68 and my tour was up. My time in the service was-- My obligation was met and I came home to this country and was just glad to be out of the

military. I wasn't sure what I was going to do next but I was just glad to be home and glad to be free from my military obligations.

When my sweetheart, at that time, was working for California Rural Legal Aid and this was one of the great programs created under the war on poverty, of LBJ, and she said, "Why don't you go to law school?" I thought, "Wow." I had never thought about it, but that's a great idea." [laughs] So that's how I ended up applying for law school and getting accepted and went on to law school at UCLA and graduated in '72.

Now, going back to termination, so while I was in law school, I heard about the fight against termination that was waged by Lucy Covington. She was an exceptional leader. She realized that the BIA was going around the Colville Reservation trying to persuade people to agree that they would put their land into private ownership so that they could get thousands of dollars for it and that political pressure being put on them on the Bureau of Indian Affairs by local ranchers and farmers would be satisfied and this was during the Eisenhower administration when they wanted to get out of the Indian business anyway. I told that part of the story.

But Lucy campaigned almost single-handedly, the way I understood it, campaigned to persuade the people that termination was a terrible idea. "We don't want this, we're going to vote against it in the referendum vote," and she succeeded. Just incredible, tough, strong leader. At the same time, the other tribes in this area were suffering from their efforts at termination, including Western Oregon tribes. They passed the termination law for ending the federal statuses tribal nations recognized under US law their lands were taken out of trust and they lost their land.

So that's what I learned about termination while I was in law school. I learned about that terrible history and Lucy, to me, has always been kind of a shining star in terms of the response of tribal leaders, and how they got together as a group here the affiliated tribes and they formed this organization. They affiliated tribes in North West Indians to fight against termination as a group. And they were successful.

When Republicans ended their time in office with Dwight Eisenhower and Kennedy beat Nixon in the 1960 presidential lap race, Kennedy was advised by his people that the proper policy should be self-determination not termination. This came out of the 1961 American Indian Chicago Conference, a leader of tribal people in Chicago and because this was right after the election. This is like today in 2016, we're facing a presidential election. There's going to be a change in leadership. What should be our goals, what should be our strategy in dealing with this change in leadership?

In 1960, 1961, different times, but still it was the impetus for the tribal leaders to get together and decide what should be their strategy. I've just been talking and talking because- [sound cut]

**[00:24:36] [END OF AUDIO]**

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