

Angelique Albert: [Speaking Salish] Good day everyone, my name is Angelique Albert. I'm a member of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai tribes from Northwest Montana and I'm the executive director of American Indian Graduate Center.

Interviewer: When did you first learn about Lucy? How did you first hear about her? Do you remember? Can you talk a little bit about that?

Angelique: I do. I was at a national conference and had another tribal leader who was a woman sit next to me and we were just kind of sharing stories and she was telling me about the project of building the center and so she was giving me some history. Then also did a little research on that, on her as a person and was informed that she was one of our board of directors and one of the founding board members of the organization that I work for. So just in doing the research on her I was really inspired by her activism and what she's done for Indian country.

Interviewer: Was that the first that you had heard of Lucy?

Angelique: It is.

Interviewer: Okay. When you started thinking about that, what was going through your mind?

Angelique: What was going through my mind is that she was a significant activist for us, for all of us. She really paved the way for me, created such a-- She had a strong voice for us as tribal people in politics, but also looking at what she had done for our organization was pretty significant. To be a part of American Indian Graduate Center at its inception is pretty significant. Lucy served as a board of directors from 1971 to 1981. So American Indian Graduate Center was developed in 1969. So she was one of the first board members of the organization and served for 10 of the 50 years which is pretty significant at the beginning.

I feel that the leaders of this organization really set a strong vision and the vision was self-determination through education. That education was an essential part of self self-determination and also there was an expectation and a standard set that it wasn't just any education, that there was an expectation for professional degrees. They set the vision that we wanted. Tribal lawyers, we wanted tribal PhDs, we needed native people educating native people. We needed tribal lawyers to fight for our sovereignty, for our tribal rights and those treaty rights.

That was made clear, that the expectation was those professional degrees, and continues today. Even though we fund undergraduate funding at this point, it is all to get them to those higher level degrees, master's degrees, tribal law degrees, medical degrees, and that vision was set by Lucy and that board at that time. So I feel that that was a strong message and an expectation and I just really respect that and it was such a strong vision that it carries on today.

Interviewer: Can you talk a little bit about how many people have been funded, how many have been impacted? You talk about professional degrees. Can you talk a little bit about some of the numbers on that?

Angelique: In an effort to really achieve the vision of self-determination through education, we have funded over 16,000 students over the past 50 years. And when our founders set that vision of self determination through education, it was up to us to educate our youth. So we set out to do that and have in the past 50 years educated over 16,000 native students. We have contributed to over 1,300 degrees and 1,700 PhDs. That is just phenomenal and it really started because of that vision that was set by our board at that time.

Interviewer: Were you part of the committee on Indian rights?

Angelique: No

Interviewer: What does termination mean to you?

Angelique: Termination to me means federal Indian law that was put in place to take away our cultural identity, to strip us of our inherent sovereign rights, and I am thankful that that era is over.

Interviewer: It's understood that Lucy Covington worked with members of the Colville tribe and other tribes to help preserve tribal sovereignty and promote tribal identity through education and mentorship. Did Lucy Covington nurture you and your leadership skills?

Angelique: I didn't know Lucy Covington. I wish that I would have, so to speak about her as if I know her, I would feel like that wouldn't be very genuine, but I can say that just reading about her and knowing the impact that she has made on this organization is so inspirational. To know that she was an advocate at a time when being a native woman in leadership wasn't necessarily accepted and she placed herself in that environment and she used her voice, you know. Watching videos about her and her strength and using her voice and how important that was, does inspire me to use my voice.

Sometimes we're the only native person in the room and we have to use that voice. Also her dedication to education. She was on our board of directors for 10 years but she was also the president for four years. So her commitment to tribal education is also very inspirational. I love having strong native women as an inspiration because even today there are a lot of native women who do the work. You keep your head down and you do the work. You work extra hard to make a difference and make a change, but also she inspires me to use my voice.

It's something that has not always come naturally to me, but I know that that's important to do. She's inspired me just by knowing the impact that she's had in Indian country and the contributions that she's made politically and educationally.

Interviewer: What do you think must be done to exercise self-determination or self-governance?

Angelique: I believe that education is truly a key building block to self-determination. It is the key to really empower our students, to empower our people to have that voice and to be at the table. Now I do truly believe that education is a building block to self-determination, to self-sufficiency, to self-determination. Education truly is a key to empower us. It equalizes us, it allows us to be at a table where oftentimes we're not, so I believe that education is a key element.

Interviewer: This next question, Lucy Covington's desire to advance native education. Eastern Washington University plans to make people aware of what has happened in the past so that new emerging leaders and students can apply this knowledge to present day problems. Are you familiar with Lucy Covington's efforts to address education and scholarship? I would say you've already answered that.

Angelique: Yeah, I think that, well, just by the fact that Lucy was a part of establishing this organization. American Indian Graduate Center wouldn't be what it is today without her. So American Indian Graduate Center is the largest scholarship provider in Indian country, right? To native students in this country. We provide \$15 million annually and \$200 million since inception and that keeps it growing every year, and that is because of Lucy's contribution. We wouldn't be who we are without her. Her contributions and that vision. The vision to have educated people and to have native people educating native people. To have tribal lawyers, you know, in the right places fighting for our tribal rights.

That wouldn't happen without her in 1971. That was-- to have her and the other board members really setting that vision. I really attribute who we are today to her and all of those leaders who kind of set that path in motion. So yeah I think she made such a huge contribution to tribal scholarships. I think that the 16,000 educated native people that we've supported is because of her leadership.

Interviewer: What do you think Lucy would do these days to address cultural identity?

Angelique: To address cultural identity. I think if Lucy was here today, I would envision her still being on our board of directors and fighting for educational programs that supported our languages, environmental studies, and ways to preserve our culture and cultural identity. I think that the needs have changed throughout the years. We have done a lot to address the needs. Initially you know, in the 1970s, we needed tribal lawyers and we needed tribal PhDs and tribal educators. Now we see that need shifting. We need to be protecting our water. We need to be protecting our earth.

We need our students educated in those fields and placed in places where they have a voice and can make a difference. So in my imagination, I think that she would still be here engaged with American Indian Graduate Center and fighting for the scholarship dollars to send our students to school to be educated and preserve our languages and our natural resources. That's my dream.

Interviewer: Does tribal sovereignty play a role in the education of students?

Angelique: Does tribal sovereignty play a role? Yeah, I think-- Does tribal sovereignty play a role in education? There are many ways that tribal sovereignty plays a role in education, by native educators educating our students, by our educators and activists leading the way to say we need to have native curriculum. We need to have native professors. We need to have our language in the schools.

Us setting our own criteria for what we need to educate our youth is important. You see that through the tribal colleges but also you see it through different policies. You know, Indian education for all. It shouldn't just be educating our own, unfortunately. It needs to be really creating that additional awareness for all youth in education and making sure that we're visible.

Interviewer: Do you have ideas or strategies that you would like to share?

Angelique: Strategies? Some strategies that we're working on is strength through collaboration. So collaborating with other scholarship providers, having a stronger voice when it comes to any policy, you know. There is a stronger voice when you have more organizations supporting a particular policy or initiative. And the other thing is, kind of shifting gears and we, as native people, setting an expectation for institutions that are going to be educating our native youth and saying, "Here are the expectations." If our native youth are going to be going to your institutions, we expect you to have these support systems in place.

We expect you to have a native curriculum on campus and native professors on those campuses, and to be up to the standard for us to send our youth there. So kind of shifting the expectation and saying, "If we're going to be spending our money with you, then we have higher expectations of you as an institution, to make sure that the campuses that we fund are safe for our students and really promote-- promote their success." So we have a voice in that and are working on setting those criteria for those educational institutions.

Interviewer: Are you familiar with any key documents, photos, statements or testimony about Lucy Covington that should be recorded?

Angelique: No.

Interviewer: In your opinion how important--

Angelique: But I need to look into that because I'm sitting here with files from 50 years ago that we're pulling and they're all hand typed with a typewriter. This project is making me think about that, like what do we have? There may be something that we have and I'll definitely look into that. If we have anything that we find, I'll definitely share it with you.

Interviewer: Do you know if there's any photographs?

Angelique: We have an archive of photos and we can go through and look through that and see if we can find anything, that would be really wonderful. You know what? I do have an article that the staff sent to me that was in one of our magazines from a long time ago. We can actually scan the article and give it to you before you leave. I don't know if there's photographs. I just got a text saying that it's available. We can pull that before you leave and see if there's anything in there.

Interviewer: Excellent.

Angelique: Yeah, it's exciting.

Interviewer: In your opinion how important would it be to have resources that tell Lucy Covington's story?

Angelique: Well, I think it's extremely important to document our history whether it's in print or a video or whatever. I think it's critical to know our history, to know the struggles that our ancestors have gone through. It makes me feel stronger as a tribal leader to know that she went through so much to put me here where I am today.

It's inspirational and I think it's important to document that to inspire others, but also to remember the struggles that people went through. Sometimes I feel like my job is difficult but then you look at what Lucy had to go through and it reminds me to be strong, you know. I think that is very important to document that and to share that with the world so it's not lost.

Interviewer: Are there other tribal leaders that should be part of the Lucy Covington center, do you think?

Angelique: I'm just not aware of any, I'm sorry.

Interviewer: That's okay. What pictures or images would you recommend be in the educational materials that effectively communicate the importance of tribal sovereignty and honor core cultural values?

Angelique: Well obviously, photos of Lucy. I love seeing the images of her behind the desk and on a horse, right? This is the life of a tribal leader. You're testifying in front of Congress one minute, and you're out bucking bales the next, right? [laughs] You have to balance that life, right? You're at your pow wow doing Stick Game one minute and you're chopping firewood, and the next minute you're, you know, sitting with President Obama.

You have to have that balance and it helps you to-- Helps me to feel good when I see those different pictures of her in both settings because it really speaks to staying true to who you are and kind of grounds you in who you are, but at the same time reminds you of the work that needs to be done.

Sometimes you have to be outside of your comfort zone and really challenge yourself. So I like the images of her on her horse and in a cowboy hat, and then also testifying in front of Congress. So I think having those type of images are important.

Interviewer: What other methods could be used to share information about Lucy Covington that would effectively reach community elders, teens, young adults, etcetera.

Angelique: I think it's important to--I think our children are so important and it's critical to communicate to them the way that they communicate, so it's important to have things documented, but also sharing through social media. It's an ever-evolving world, right? So sometimes it's Facebook and then that's no longer the thing, it's Instagram. Sometimes it's Snapchat. And so I think it's really keeping up with where our kids are and meeting them where they are. I think that would be another method of communication, social media.

I think what would speak to people about Lucy's message or Lucy's story and her history, is the impact. When you look at her history and the things that she's contributed, I think it's important to really capture the impact. When you start looking at the numbers, you know, that tells the story, right. I think just capturing that and sharing it.

Interviewer: In your opinion, who or what organizations would be a trusted source of tribal sovereignty information and solutions to increase education and awareness about Lucy Covington?

Angelique: A good source on tribal sovereignty and Lucy's history I think would be NARF, Native American Rights Fund, potentially. But for me, I would go to the sources of people who knew her and were at a time, a critical time, right? We have a lot of elders around who still know her. I think that's a credible source of information when you think about her history and contributions. So I would personally reach out to people who worked with her, looking at the other board members who were on the board of AIGC from 1971 to 1981. That would be probably my starting point. The tribe and tribal elders, NARF.

Interviewer: Could you give us the list of the other board members [unintelligible 00:24:02]?

Angelique: Yes, I could do that before you leave.

Interviewer: Excellent. I think that-- This says please tell me your first and last name and about your family, spouse, partner, children, other family?

Angelique: So I am a mother of three beautiful children and a grandmother of two beautiful grandboys. My boys are Bryce, Tyson, and Nick and my grandchildren are Bryce and Kaelynn. So I'm pretty thankful to have been blessed with these young boys. I'm waiting for a granddaughter.

And also I'm the daughter of Linda King and Fred Albert. My grandmother is Wanda Phillips and my grandfather was Burton Irvine. And also, I am the great, great-

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granddaughter of Maxim Matt and Agate Philly. They are both Salish people from the **[speaks Salish]** reservation [laughs]. That's an awkward question, sir.

Interviewer: That's okay. How long have you lived in this area and do you reside on any reservation?

Angelique: So I grew up on the Flathead Indian reservation with my mother Linda, who is known as a beader and a weaver. And then my father, Fred Albert, was a musician. I recently moved to Albuquerque, New Mexico, to fulfill my destiny as the executive director of American Indian Graduate Center. So I've lived here for almost three years.

Interviewer: Is there anything else that you'd like to share that I haven't asked you about today?

Angelique: No. Well before we did this, I watched the videos on Lucy and I think it's important to see her face and to hear her voice. The things that I take away from what she said was really that we need to have a voice and that we need to fight to remain Indian, you know. Hearing her say those things to me, or say those things, that stays with me and I feel that she's a part of this legacy and it's an honor to be able to help carry that legacy forward.

Listening to that, I'll keep that with me, to have my voice, and to remain Indian. To implement that in the work that I do in providing scholarship opportunities, educational opportunities, to really remember that, and to remember where American Indian Graduate Center really received its kind of roots, where our roots and it's founded in that. So I'm going to carry that forward with me in the work that I do today. This has been a beautiful project for me to be a part of because now I feel even more connected to Lucy and committed to carrying her vision forward. So thank you for that.

Interviewer: So we went over some numbers earlier. Do you know how many students you're currently funding right now?

Angelique: We fund about 1,500 students a year and we give away about \$15 million annually, and that is direct scholarship dollars. We also have support services and other programs. So we have academic advisors here on staff who reach out to students to make sure that they don't have any needs. If they have-- if they're falling behind academically, we have the advisors reach out to them, connect them with resources. We also do different trainings. We go around to different reservations throughout the United States and provide college prep programs and financial education programs. There's a lot more to it.

I think that for student success and to get them through college, it's not just giving them scholarship dollars, it's also giving them the support they need. We do surveys annually to make sure that we're addressing the needs because they change. I don't want to ever presume that we know what is best for our students so we reach out to the students and make sure that we're meeting those needs. So we provide those financial dollars to those

1,500 students, but we also add other support to make sure that we get them to and through college, so.

Interviewer: That's a wrap

Angelique: That's a wrap. [laughs] Yes.

Interviewer: That's very cool. I like that. See it wasn't bad.

Angelique: It was