

**Carol Evans: [Speaking Salish]** My Indian name is Samasa, given to me by my late grandmother, Cecilia Peone Abrahamson. My English name is Carol Evans. And I am a Spokane Indian, grew up in Wellpinit, Washington. On the reservation primarily all my life, except for going to college. And then when I got married, I lived in Tacoma for about a year and a half.

**Interviewer:** Can you talk a little bit about your history, your experience at Eastern Washington University?

**Carol:** Okay, I went to Eastern starting in 1975. I graduated from high school in 1974. I had a good experience at Eastern. I always really had to study very hard because I'm not naturally smart. Things don't come to me easily so I had to study real hard to get good grades. I didn't finish my degree before I got married, so I ended up completing my degree through night school-- about 10 years of night school.

That's when EWU was down in the old, what was it, that store before Macy's anyway, Bon Marche. That's where I completed my degree, going to night school down there. I don't even remember the year, but I got a bachelor of arts with concentration in professional accounting. From there I passed the CPA exam, and worked at the tribe as their CFO for 28 years.

**Interviewer:** Okay. How about a little bit about your professional background? Can you tell me a little bit about your work with this Spokane tribe?

**Carol:** I started out at the Spokane tribe working for the housing authority, actually as a bookkeeper, and that's while I was going to school, and was promoted fairly quickly, quicker than I would have liked, to the executive director, and worked there for about six years in the housing authority. Then I went to the tribe as a senior accountant, and then moved on up to the CFO in the mid '80s, and then just worked there with the tribe in that capacity up to 2013, when I ran for tribal council and was elected to the tribal council.

Was a good experience. When I went to the tribe, the tribe was not formalized as far as their financials. Everything was handled by the Bureau. Everything was done by IIM accounts. And when I went to the tribe, we had to have our first audit, develop the first financials and set them up in the correct format and the correct way under accepted accounting practice. So that was a little bit of a challenge, taking over the whole financial and accounting function for the tribe.

**Interviewer:** And would you say that there's been quite a lot of progress over that time as far as you mentioned some coming up to the accounting standards and whatnot. Have you-- Do you think it's in a much stronger position now than it was?

**Carol:** Oh definitely. The tribe when I first started there, they were very small, the structure was very flat. You'd have an executive director and maybe 10, 15 managers. And now you've gone from a \$2 million budget to a huge budget and formally have grown into departments and divisions in the tribal government side, and then on the enterprise side, even more so.

File name: Copy of Carol Evans.mp4

**Interviewer:** When you think about tribal sovereignty from your perspective, what are some of the values-- the cornerstone of tribal sovereignty?

**Carol:** The important thing is that the tribe itself knows who they are. The people of the tribe have to know where they came from and where they're going. And they decide where they're going and how they're going to go there. It isn't someone from the outside telling them, "This is where you need to go and how to get there." It's the tribe themselves. If it's done right, you would engage the tribal peoples so that they are able to be a part of that process.

And that's important because leaders can't take the tribe to where they think it should go. It should come from the people up to the leaders and the leaders need to proceed to make the vision happen, and to do it the way that they say they need to. Whether it's with economic development, or with court systems or with education, or with helping your people that are plagued with alcohol and drug addiction and historical trauma. Whatever you're dealing with, you know, you need the people to be there with you and the leaders need to empower the people to help them decide where the tribe is going to go.

**Interviewer:** One of the key themes in the project we're working on, this talking about Lucy Covington, is her experience in addressing termination. And termination and sovereignty they're really closely related in that you talking about one, you usually reference the other. We've talked a little bit about some of the ideas about sovereignty. Can you tell me of when you hear the word termination, what does that mean to you?

**Carol:** Well, when we were going through that era, I was quite young. I did know Lucy Covington, more from the dance floor, so when I was a dancer. So I would see her when I was on the dance floor. I also know of her from my grandmother, Cecilia Abrahamson, who served on the Coeur d'Alene tribal council, the same time that Lucy Covington served. So I think for me, the termination era for our tribe meant people coming together and of course there were some that were pro-termination, for doing away with the tribe. There were others that stood strong and kept the tribe together.

So I think of the termination era for our tribe, maybe in the Alec Sherwood days. A leader who was kind, gentle, and pulled the people together, was there for the people and really did not look at it as, "The government's going to come and do away with the people, and you're going to go out and be assimilated among the people and you're no longer going to have a tribe. You're no longer going to have a land. You're no longer going to have a language, you're no longer going to have people distinct from the American society." I think that would be devastating for a tribe because we are a people that are tied to the land, we are tied to the environment, we are tied to people, and if we don't have that, we will not survive, so it's real, real-- I'm real thankful for the past leaders.

People like Lucy Covington, Alex Sherwood, Joe de la Cruz, all these leaders who came and stood strong for the tribes and spoke for our people because they wanted us to still be here for future generations, and continue to be the tribal peoples that we are. The people that care so much about the environment, about our people, about being here,

and knowing that we don't own the land, they're gifts to us and we're here to take care of it.

We don't own things, that we need to take care of everything that the creator has provided for us. And I think when we get to kind of where we're thinking more about material things, things like money, more of it, sometimes we lose sight of that and we have to remind ourselves, "Where did we come from? What was our ancestors about? What did-- How did they live?" We need that story to be told.

We need to tell our children that, continue to educate them. I know when I was growing up I never knew we were salmon people, the Spokane people. I didn't know until we got our fish hatchery and Tim Peone educated me. I just wish that when I was growing up, they would have taught it in the school so I knew more where my ancestors came from and that we were salmon people, we were river people. It's just things that I think are very important for our tribe and our tribal peoples.

**Interviewer:** If we think about sovereignty as this ability to do things for ourselves in a way that's consistent with our values and our beliefs and those kinds of things. What kinds of people, what kinds of employees, what kinds of leaders and directors do you see your community needing?

**Carol:** That's a good question. I think that we need people that are caring people that understand that you don't come here and you change everything to the way that you think the way it should be, but you have to be able to come and understand the culture and the people of this land. And that maybe the way we are going to do it, whether it's economic development or whether it's education or whether it's even the courts, our judicial system, law enforcement, you have to understand our people so we can do it the way we want to do it. Whether it's tribal justice or the way we teach our children in the schools, it's the way that we want to do it. And it's based on our people and our ways and our values and how we were taught by our ancestors and involves our customs and traditions.

And so that's important for us, not only the people that come and work with us that maybe aren't tribal people or Spokane tribal people, but also for our tribal people, because sometimes we go away, we get our education, we learn the way that we were taught. Then we come back and we ourselves think we're going to change our community when really you have it right there. You just need to open it up again, open up what our ancestors know and educate ourselves and know that really, that the answer's always been there and we just need to go back and bring it back.

And sometimes I think even when we have gone out and gotten that education, we come back and we've kind of lost touch with that part of us. I just remember this one time, this one elder would always come to me and ask me to do things for him, whether it was going and dancing here or going and doing something in the culture way.

This one time I was working at trying to correct a program that had done some personal charges and I'm an accountant so I'm trying to stop this type of stuff. He told me that that's not the way to do it. You have to do it in a more kind and gentle way. So you got to listen

File name: Copy of Carol Evans.mp4

to the elders and listen to what they have to say, because it isn't like you come back and you say, "Shame on you, shame on you." It's more the way you do things, you have to have a personal touch with it, maybe the way our past leaders had with it. There's a lot to learn from our elders and we need to listen.

**Interviewer:** If you're talking to young people from your community, what kinds of jobs do you tell them that the community needs that they should go to school for?

**Carol:** So when I talk to the young people, I tell them that they can become whatever they want. Even if it is a job that they don't come back and work here, they still are going out and they will make a name for our tribe. So I tell them we need- but if they want to come back to our tribe, I tell them we need teachers. We need doctors. We need nurses. We need tribal council people. We need business leaders. We need just scientists. We need biologists. We need foresters. We need everything.

So what we really need is for them to find out what they want and they go get that and they can come back and they can help us. It's not us telling them what to do. It's them finding out what they need to do. And what's important to them and do it in a good way, in a tribal peoples way, where they go and learn in a institution, a higher ed institution, but they never forget where they came from.

They never forget that they are a tribal people that has values, culture, and they have ancestors that are there for them and they just need to remember that. I would never tell them, "You need to go become a teacher." You need to go become what you want to be and you can do whatever you want to be. If you want to be an astronaut, you can do it. It's a lot of work. You got to focus on math and science.

If you want to be a doctor, you have to be good in math and science. If you love to help people, go be a teacher, be whatever, go work for childcare. We need them all. And so find what you like and do it and do a good job at it because you can do it. That's what I tell the youth.