

## *Gathering Our Voice*

Interview with Arnie Marchand

Interviewer: Cayle Diefenbach

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Cayle Diefenbach: Arnie, how long have you and your family lived in North Central Washington?

Arnie Marchand: All of my life, North Central Washington to me is between Wenatchee and Vernon. My dad was born in Vernon, my mom was born in Penticton, I was born in Omak. And my relatives are in every town from Wenatchee to Vernon.

CD: All right, so what's kept you in this area?

AM: I consider it my home. All of my, I mean all of my, I have a big family, all of my family with the exception of one brother and sister who by the necessity of marriage stayed close by, they all left to go fly away to the big city. I wanted to stay in the valley, this is my home. I wanted to know about the valley that's why I stayed here, I didn't want to go anywhere.

CD: So how have you made a living over the years?

AM: Prior to going into the service in 1964, all good Indians worked in orchards, didn't work anywhere else, in orchards.

CD: So, what do you do now?

AM: Oh, you want me to go through my...

CD: That'd be...

AM: ...my resume? Cool.

CD: (chuckle)

AM: I went in the service for three years. Seen a little overseas stuff, Far East. Was in construction when I come back which like tripled my wages from the orchard. Then with the cave-in, this guy got killed a few feet from me. I didn't, I crawled back out. I worked a couple more months and decided to work for the government, so I went to work for the federal government, 1971 and 70 or 71 and I went from there. Cute story, the Colville tribe, Conrad Evans, called me up and said we hear about your work in civil rights with the national forest service is who I was working for, he said I'd like you to come to work and help the tribe with

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Indian rights, employment, that kind of thing. He said I can promise you that you could get fired anytime from the day I hire you to the day you leave, that you'll probably get no vacation pay, no raise in pay and probably no future because we're just starting out. Now I thought from as secure job with 10 years tenure in the federal government, I only had 10 years to retire, I thought I can't pass up a deal like that. No promise of future, no nothing, but to work for my people, I thought yes I'll go. And I did and from that time to 2005, I worked for the tribe. Some people say I didn't work, but I think I worked for the tribe (chuckle).

CD: So, um, what are your favorite foods that come from our region?

AM: I don't eat like that (laugh). My favorite food is something I don't have to cook or dishes I don't have to wash that's put in front of me and served by some very pretty girl. That's my favorite food, it could be goulash, I don't care (laugh). As long as I don't have to cook it and I don't have to do the dishes.

CD: Alright, mmm. So when you were young where did you get most of your food from, like grocery store or gardens?

AM: We had a small garden, we had a big family. Everybody worked. I worked from the time I was 8 or 9 till I was 95, or about 18 in dog years. Ah, we had a little, we had a little garden, but not much of one because there was always a baby in the house. Either my sister had one or my mother had, somebody had a baby in the house through all of my years in that house somebody had a baby. And the grocery store is where you got most of your food. On occasion, dad, he'd have a heart attack, but I'd bring home a deer or salmon. He was afraid of the federal government arresting him and throwing him in jail. At that time they did that to Indians all the time. Didn't really have to have a reason. My dad didn't smoke, he didn't drink, he wasn't a bad person, but he was terrified of authority, any authority. So we didn't do a lot a go out and get your deer for the, we'd a had to kill a herd anyway for the family we had.

(5:29)

CD: So were there many difficult times when you had to survive with little or no money in your family?

AM: (chuckle) During the time I was born and 1964 when I graduated out of high school, my father and mother made a pact amongst each other that they would never be on relief, today they call it welfare, they'd never be on relief. And they never were. Some of us had to work all the time. Some of us had to work summers only. I had to work summer and winter because pruning; I could do that. So, some of us worked all the time. My little brothers and sisters didn't have to; we didn't want to hurt their little feelings but from me on up, all six or seven of us, we all

worked. I don't know if there were hard times we don't know. It's just like the depression was from 1931, 29 to 37 or something like that. Indian country never knew it, we seen it in the newspapers, but the depression meant everybody was poor and unemployed. We were all poor and unemployed. You mean white people have this problem too? We didn't know it, then and we didn't know in the 50's and 60's.

CD: Alright, so when you think about the food that we harvest and eat around here, what is your hope for the future in this region? Um, what are the ways you can see us increasing access to local food?

AM: We started this coop, uhh, I, I want to say 12 or 15 years ago, it is probably longer than that ago. We started a coop to help people develop organic farms. Its an outfit out of Chesaw that sells organic grass, hay, organic, I don't know what that means , but there is a guy that owns seven or eight very expensive horses in Seattle that only buys his hay. Go figure that one out. And all of the fruit growers and the vegetable growers wanted these farmers markets to or go to Seattle and go to pikes market. They wanted to do that here, British Columbia did something, they had a, they had a store in Vancouver, the back of the store said Okanogan, Okanogan vegetables. And everybody they grew vegetables in lower, in mainland BC which is in the Okanogan valley, could take their stuff to that store and they'd sell whether it's organic or not. That's what we wanted to do here. And to me if that keeps going, more people will start , I think they'll start growing gardens more now because the economy is really flat. Tomatoes, vegetables, everything costs too much money. It's easier to grow it. And we hope that that gives the people incentive to do that.

CD: Alright, uh, so does your family have very many food traditions that are specifically linked to this area?

AM: No.

CD: No, alright. Um, chh..chh...chh.

AM: There's a reason for that you know. Ninety percent of the Indians my father and mother's age when they were growing up in the 20's and the 30's when they were teenagers and 20 year olds and. They were told by police and by everybody walking the face of this earth who were white, "I don't want to hear a word out of your mouth about that Indian gibberish that you talk, if you do your gone. You can't go to school, you can't work, you can't buy in my store, you can't even stand on the street. Keep your damn mouth shut. You're in America or your Canada don't talk your language." And when they tried to take...ahh, they stared taking our children in the 30's and 40's. Well you better keep your mouth shut, they take all your kids. My dad had a lot of kids. Traditional foods, Jesus what if the neighbors said, "Hey they're practicing that Indian crap

in that house.” Unless your on a reservation or near a reservation, they’d harass ya. So that’s one of the reasons. That wasn’t an issue in my, in our house. But even talkin the Indian, they wouldn’t even teach me Indian.

(10:26)

CD: Alright, so have you passed this information that you have learned and gained to the younger members of your family?

AM: (chuckle) Ya, but if you’ve ever talked to a teenager lately you need a mallet, a drill, and a nail to drive through their foot so they don’t walk anywhere. A mallet so you can get their attention all the time...a drill to get some word to where their brain’s supposed to be. It’s hard to get young people to listen. They’re texting, their tweeting; they’re doing all this stupid stuff. And until they get older, they don’t care. Unless their family really forces them, so by the time they get 18 they go screw that, I quit, I ain’t going to do that no more. I don’t live there no more. So parents either push it on too much or don’t do it at all. I’m just glad that we have programs around that kids have an opportunity to go sit and do. I actually got a daughter that’s taking Indian, actual class of Indian. I couldn’t even talk to her about Indian. But she’s taking it now at school, college. So it’s coming, but its turning. I wish I had better answers for these.

CD: I think you got pretty good answers so far.

AM: (laugh) I don’t think so. (???) 12:02... Yes my father taught me and I told my children, phhh, I wished. Might as well.

(12:14)

CD: [recorder back on] All right Arnie, we’re going to talk a little bit um, about some of the precontact (???)- 12:20 questions in that terms. So, um where did most of our people um, gather food around here?

AM: There’s a story about camas. Camas doesn’t grow in the Okanogan. There was a princess, do you want me to tell the story? It’s a cool, I don’t know if I remember it all. There’s a princess from over on the, near the mountains over there. Near those Coeur d’Alene people and the, the flatheads and those Indians over there by the Kootenais. She come this way cause she knew that there was three brothers in the Okanogan valley, sons of very powerful chief. And she wanted one of them, so she came walking from there across, and when you come across generally you walk through where Molson is now. She saw Curlew, she saw Molson, that’s how you get from the Okanogan from there. And she got to the top of Molson, up on top at the summit, and uh she stopped to fix her hair, she wanted to look good. I mean she was a fine looking lady anyway but she wanted to look good. Cause she wanted one of these guys for a husband and the three

brothers heard her coming, heard that she was coming and they run up there. Before they got to her, the two younger ones started fighting in that they wanted to be first. They wanted to impress her. They started fighting and the big brother he told them to break it up, but they wouldn't stop. And she thought that was cool, anyway. The scrap didn't last a long time, dad came along and he got mad at her. And she said I just came over trying to go and get me a good, get me a husband. And he got mad at the big brother, he said why didn't you stop them from fighting? He said, they're kids, that is what young people do. I tried to tell um but they wouldn't listen. So, he said, you need a lesson. He said, you two little brothers, fightin. The littlest one, your are gonna to go there and become a mountain top. But you won't be tall enough and big enough to hold your head up cause you shamed everybody by fighting your older brother over a woman, over this woman. And the middle brother, you'll be able to hold your head up, but you can only look at your big brother. And you big brother, for not stopping the fight, your over there too, so Chopaka has three big brothers, the one in the middle, tallest one. Little brother's the one that can see his head, middle brother, you can't even see his head and shoulders, he's on this side. He got mad at her and turned her half into stone and she had a basket with her cause she was going to bring camas as a gift cause it grew in profusion there where she come from. Well, he said from this day forward there'll be no camas in the Okanogan and turned her into stone. And until nineteen ten or nineteen four, I think it was nineteen four, the miners blew that stone up, but that stone looked like a woman looking toward the Okanogan. It was a site where lot of Indians stopped to lay their gifts. Good luck for travel. There was beads, ah, necklaces, all kinds of stuff around that stone all the time. Cause Indians would leave it there in honor of her. An she...an angel appeared there once. But the crux of the story is there is no camas grows in the Okanogan and that's the reason why. So Indians had pre-contact. We had to go to the camas country that's where we got camas. We either had to go down to the desert, down to the Moses Lake area or over to the Camas, the Camas Valley, all the way over there, there's parts of that country still named camas this camas that over there. That's where we went to get camas cause we couldn't get it anywhere else. We traded for it prior to that, but after that we couldn't get it at all in this valley. It's sad, poor lady. (Laugh).

(17:24)

CD: Um, so, are people, um, we know they shared food and they grew and gathered, but um, how did they do this, was it through like big gatherings or.

AM: I think, I think a lot of it is just like it is today. If you got grandma sitting over there and she's got two stupid fat drunken boys that don't do nothin they're 50, fat and ugly. And their kids are just like their dad, they don't do nothin. You and I would go get her a dinner, cut it up, package it, give it to her, we'd get salmon to give to her. I think they still do that. In Nespelem 25 or 30 years ago, there's a whole bunch of guys, we were all about the same age, and we'd pick,

the women would pick 5 old people who had terrible children (chuckle) who didn't have an income comin in in winter time. So we'd go get them loads of wood and then a deer. And every weekend from like end of July, August, September we'd pick, every weekend, that's what we'd do Saturday and Sunday, dry meat, women would dry the meat, we'd kill the deer. Take it all to this family, we still do that, maybe not the way we did it. We did it in groups of 8 or 9 people and 6 or 7 women. It was a party, I mean every weekend we did it for some family. For some elder, and uh that was nice. Today families do it for their relatives, they don't do it for just anybody. But families are big enough, I think that's how it's taken care of now cause I don't hear that happening very much. Now and then I'll hear about one or two guys that'll get two or three extra deer and take it to someone they don't know that really needs the, an old person that needs the food, I don't like using the word elder, old person.

CD: Alright, so where did these people usually learn um, to grow or gather, like their fathers, mothers?

AM: Well in the beginning, precontact, I call it BC, Before Caucasians you know (chuckle).

CD: That's cool.

AM: Anyway, BC, what they did was, when the women left for two or three weeks, or a month sometimes a little longer than that because the season for picking berries and the season for picking roots came at two different times. So they were gone three weeks this time and they'd be home during the month of June and July they'd go out for the roots so it'd be May , (pause) or it's the other way around, it's May is roots and June is berries, I forget what it is. Mom said they were gone for sometimes three weeks. When they would leave, the children left in camp in town were taken care of by grandma and grandpa. They taught the kids jobs, what to do, pick up wood. The girls hada learn how to cook, what each berry was...how to make each berry taste different with each kind of meal...how to feed 200 people without really trying. The boys had to learn how to hunt and fish and feed this group that was in the town of probably 200. So the, the girls had a job and the boys hada. They had to learn these things, cause we didn't have teenagers. They were either children or you were an adult, so the women when they got to be of child rearing age they wanted to get out a camp and stop listening to grandma all the damn time and go with the women or do whatever women do when they go out and gather...talk, for days. And the guys wanted da ride and hunt and do war like the men do . Didn't want to be kids, so either you were a child or you were a man. You're either a girl or you were a woman. So they wanted to learn as fast and as much as they could and that's how it was done and the incentive was you'll not leave camp until you're an adult. Your grown up and you have responsibility. That's men and women.

(21:49)

CD: So how do these people learn to take care of the lands and waters, how do they do that?

AM: When we hunted, when we hunted deer, sometimes it'd take moccasins and string em out through two or three miles in a draw and then go up the other side of the draw and just talk to each other and walk and run the deer into the moccasins and the deer would smell it and go down this canyon into this corral. And that would be the killing zone. Take all the deer run em into the corral, fence it up, then tha'd be the killing zone. We could hunt for a whole town one afternoon. Pretty much get all the deer you want. How did we learn that? That was taught to us, and it was, somebody done that long before my great grandfather knew about it. It's just handed down. Another one is like the berries in that valley, or in that canyon draw near Omak Mountain on the left. The berries are about the size a yer top of your little finger, and the should be the size of the top of your thumb. Well so the Indians'd go up and burn the draw out, they'd burn the draw out, they'd do it every seven years. Certain draws they'd just burn em out every seven years. That would increase the flow of wildlife and birds to come through and the berries'ud get bigger. Bear hunting would be easier. All that would be easier. And where did they learn that? I was just handed down, that's what grandpa knew. Grandpa taught the little kids when the kid grew up that's what he knew. Now when grandpa died and he became grandpa, that's what he'd do, teach his kid. And that's kinda how it was done. A lot of it's gone, but some of us still know where the answers are. (pause) Some of us.

(23:58)

CD: All right, so how did the community here deal with people who were in need?

AM: All that I've read and of all the people that I talk to, I mean old people I talk to, I ask em about poor old Aunt Sarah who was crippled up and she can't hear good and her damn kid ain't worth a damn. She's in a bad way, this was back then. At the time the chief was, he was the leader, and there were other, I call them sub chiefs, they had jobs, they were salmon chief, there was a religious person, and there was a disciplinarian. And he'd go to her and ask Aunt Sarah how she's doin and she needed food and she needed help. So her neighbors'd just bring it. They wouldn't question it. They'd take half of their own food and give it to her, because they could replace their half. But that stupid kid of theirs, Aunt Sarah's stupid kid, banishment was the worst thing we could do and it scared the hell out of you. If you were banished, you'd never be able to talk to another person that spoke Okanogan. That's 25,000 square miles. That's a long ways to go to talk to somebody, because once you're banished and the chief banished you, you're dead. Anybody that lives beyond that (chuckle), a lot of times they were our enemy. So you didn't wanna get banished, all you had to do was threaten to banish. People were poor only because

some of their children were lazy. That was it, if death took the family, then there wasn't anybody in need. That family would be absorbed by another family. A cousin of somebody's would take them in. And it wouldn't be "Oh God, we gotta take in Aunt Sarah," it's "Please come live with us." Because her wisdom is something they didn't have in their house. There's only one Aunt Sarah. So everybody wouldn't mind having them in their house, in their family. So if we had to uh, I don't want to say shoot her kid, if they had to get extreme Aunt Sarah would be absorbed in the tribe, somewhere. Somebody'd take care of her. There were, the only people in need were lazy and those were the only people in need. Lame and lazy, and I mean mentally lame, they were just lazy.

CD: Alright, so do you have any thoughts before we close out here? Any last words?

AM: I wish I'd coulda given you better answers, I wish the answers could be more thought out, but I'm bad at that, I can't do that. And if I had to read um it'd be easier. But they'd be thoughtful, incisive, accurate, touching, and traditional, I just can't be like that. That's my only regret, is that I can't give answers that people want to hear from Indians. And I feel bad about that.

CD: All right, thank you for your interview Arnie.