

INDIAN PERSPECTIVES ON YUCCA MOUNTAIN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“Indian Perspectives on Yucca Mountain” is a 10-minute video program that offers straight talk from tribal spokespersons concerning the Yucca Mountain Project. This video project is unique to Yucca Mountain Project related communications, in that while a limited exposure of Indian views about the project have been previously documented through print mediums, this is the first successful communication vehicle to present Indian opinions unfiltered by outsiders.

This video production is a significant advance in the County’s continuing efforts to provide outreach opportunities to local tribes. Clark County shares financial funding through inter-local agreements with the tribes to assist in communicating current, factual information about Yucca Mountain.

Criteria for tribal involvement

The Nevada Indian Commission has identified more than 20 tribes and colonies in our state. Major Indian nations include the Northern Paiute, Southern Paiute, Shoshone and Washoe. Yucca Mountain itself is located in an area of historical and spiritual significance to many tribes.

This video project was commissioned by Clark County’s Comprehensive Planning Department Nuclear Waste Program and produced by Aztec Communication for informational purposes only. This project focuses only on federally recognized tribes that are geographically located within the borders of Clark County: the Moapa Band of Paiutes and the Las Vegas Paiute Tribe.

Tribal themes

Several commonalities surfaced between the tribes interviewed. Key issues included:

- Concerns about water contamination
- Concerns about land contamination
- Concerns about the overall safety of the repository
- Lack of communication from the federal government
- Lack of recognition and respect from the federal government

Approvals

Representatives of both tribes previewed the edited program and approved its release in January 2007.

“American Indian Perspectives on Yucca Mountain”

Clark County’s Nuclear Waste Program provides a myriad of communication tools and tactics to inform Nevadans about the Yucca Mountain Project and its potential impacts.

Strategic goals of the public outreach program are:

- Increase the public’s awareness of the Yucca Mountain Program
- Enhance the existing information campaign
- Position Clark County as a leading, credible information source
- Encourage citizens of Clark County to discuss, learn and evaluate the complex issues surrounding Yucca Mountain

This video production exemplifies and reinforces our primary key messages, including:

- The health and safety of all Clark County residents is our primary responsibility;
- Clark County opposes the transportation of high-level nuclear waste through Clark County;
- Impacts will not be alleviated by federal funding.

Public outreach materials, including print materials and podcasts have been produced in three languages (English, Spanish and Mandarin Chinese) to fully meet the needs of Clark County residents. Print, audio, and video projects address both general and specific demographics, such as the Hispanic population, the business community, students and seniors. However, until now, the public outreach program has not focused on the highly relevant Native American perspective.

While the Native American population in Clark County is small in number, these tribes represent a historical connection to the land that is unique to any other

demographic in the State of Nevada. However, they have not been afforded the status of an Affected Unit of Government by the United States federal government. As a result, Clark County's Nuclear Waste Program deemed it appropriate and necessary to assist the tribes within its boundaries to have a voice in the Yucca Mountain debate.

Work was initiated in early 2006 to formulate a means to represent the views of local tribes. Selecting the medium of a video program allows the County to serve in the role of producer to facilitate an honest, forthright presentation of tribal opinions without the interjection of "outsiders," or non-Indians.

Production Process

Previous video productions for public outreach purposes have been fact-based informational programs. For example, "Radiation Basics" scientifically explains what radiation is. Other video programs discuss how Clark County communicates with residents, and the county's role in its oversight responsibilities relevant to the proposed national high-level nuclear waste repository at Yucca Mountain.

The first step was to contact the Las Vegas Indian Center, 2300 W. Bonanza Road. A meeting was set up with its director, Richard Arnold, who was enthusiastic about the project. He provided a list of tribal leadership in Southern Nevada.

Through months of communication and rapport building, Aztec was successful in gaining the confidence of key leaders and the chairpersons of the Las Vegas Paiute Tribe and the Moapa Band of Paiutes. Interviews were set up with absolutely no preconceived directions or restrictions to the tribal spokespersons.

Unlike other video programs produced for Clark County, no script was written in advance of its production. Instead, the spokespersons were given total freedom to express their comments and opinions. Only after interviews were completed and reviewed, did we write a script that allowed for narrative transitions between the spokespersons' comments.

Alfreda Mitre, chairman, and Kenny A. Anderson, cultural chairman of the Las Vegas Paiute Tribe were selected as their spokespersons. Lalovi Miller, an elder, was selected by the tribe as spokesperson for the Moapa Band of Paiutes.

Chairman Mitre and Kenny Anderson were interviewed on camera on Sept. 27, 2006 at the Las Vegas Paiute Golf Resort; the downtown reservation, Tribal

Council meeting and Las Vegas Paiute stores were shot Oct. 10; and Elder Miller was interviewed on camera on Oct. 18, 2006 at the Moapa Reservation. Footage was shot of the Paiute Indian Pow-Wow on Nov. 25, 2006.

Clark County's role was to provide a vehicle through which tribes could express their thoughts, opinions, and beliefs. Only Indian voices are recorded, including the narrator, Theodore Tso. Original Paiute music was purchased and used with permission by Indian Sounds, Inc.

We were particularly proud when Elder Lalovi Miller said, "This is the first time that we've actually had somebody come to the reservation and ask us about our concerns."

Key messaging themes

There were many common messages between tribal spokespersons. They ranged from concerns over water and land contamination and potential impacts to future generations, to political misgivings and concern for the perpetuation of the tribe. In fact, several quotes referred directly to a fear of extinction of the tribe(s).

WATER

In at least eight references to the potential of water contamination, tribal representatives expressed a fear of water contamination as a major concern.

"The contamination that can occur to the water affects all citizens of the Valley, not just Native Americans, but all human beings and anything else that needs water for its survival." Alfreda Mitre

"Water is everything for us. It's a life-giver...we are people who have revered water from the beginning. It was put here for our use." Lalovi Miller

"You're going to dry the water up for our people in Armagosa Valley, Pahrump Valley, even Death Valley." Lalovi Miller quoting another tribal elder

LAND CONTAMINATION

In approximately a dozen references to both the significance of the land to Indian cultures and the possibility of contamination and potential impacts due to a repository at Yucca Mountain, tribal representatives were passionate on this subject.

“This land is our mother. It has sustained us since time immemorial. The possibility of the damage that could happen if there was an accident is maddening. It’s just complete insanity.” Alfreda Mitre

“If you disrupt the land, you disrupt the culture, and then there is no lifestyle.” Alfreda Mitre

“The land to us is living. It protects and helps us. It clothes us and gives us food. It still does today, if we want it to...but putting waste in Yucca Mountain will destroy that.” Kenny A. Anderson

“We were created from the dirt. We were told that our gods would provide for us...Southern Nevada is our ancestral lands. We learned to survive off of the resources that were put her for our use.” Lalovi Miller

“The land is important to our people—and, water, air.” Lalovi Miller

“Our duty as the Southern Paiute people is to care for this land.”

Alfreda Mitre

SPIRITUAL & CULTURAL COMMENTS

This is an extremely important and recurring theme between the tribal representatives we interviewed. The Native American culture holds a reverence for all living things that is not matched in Western values, placing a greater value and appreciation of plants and animals as fellow residents on this land.

“Our spirits will be here forever and ever. Fifteen hundred years from now our spirits are still going to be here. This is not the end for us. Our spirits are born here and they will remain here.” Alfreda Mitre

“We are the only thing American, really, about America. Everything else has been imported into this continent. We are the original people and no one can do it (speak for the land) better than we can.” Alfreda Mitre

“Unlike Western thought, we don’t compartmentalize aspects of our life. It all runs together as one complete circle.” Alfreda Mitre

U.S. GOVERNMENT

Numerous opinions centered on the lack of communication and/or recognition from the federal government. As sovereign nations, both tribes indicated their input is ignored or discounted.

“Our neighboring tribe was heavily contaminated by above ground testing. When restitution was made to human life in the area...Moapa Tribe has not received any aid whatsoever.” Alfreda Mitre

“What we have said in written comments to the DOE and NRC for years now, is that the tribe does not agree with this project because of the nuclear waste that could travel through tribal lands and the state of Nevada...As part of their trust responsibility, they should be right there talking to us.”

Kenny A. Anderson

“We do voice our opinions, but I don’t think it really counts. The native voice has never had any impact. They don’t listen to our opinions on anything.”

Lalovi Miller

“Our concerns are never really addressed, even though we do make contact.” Lalovi Miller

“We just are always treated the same way from the time that the non-Indians came over and took our lands.” Lalovi Miller

SAFETY

Safety concerns include transportation and the threat of contamination. Because the tribes are small in the number members, the leadership worries about their very survival in the event of a serious nuclear-related accident.

“By having nuclear waste come through our reservation and maybe have an accident, we’d be extinct.” Kenny A. Anderson

“We are opposed to this because of the uncertainty of the safety which has yet to be determined, even by their own scientists.” Kenny A. Anderson

“There’s no guarantee on how long the contamination would be.”

“Yucca Mountain is dangerous. Say no. Say no to Yucca Mountain.”

Alfreda Mitre

“We’ve never had any planning of any kind for our people. If a spill should happen, we don’t know what the effects are, we don’t know where we would go. We’ve never been told, although I’ve asked that many times. What is our recourse then? It will affect not only us, but the outside communities of Las Vegas, Overton, Logandale, even Mesquite. Especially in Las Vegas and our valley because it’s not safe. Lalovi Miller

ECONOMIC IMPACTS

“(An accident) would be devastating to our business.” Kenny A. Anderson

“The transportation would go right through our lands. There’s not a guarantee on how long contamination would be. And with the railroad and the Interstate, that would (affect) all industrial business for us.” Lalovi Miller

“I think the greatest challenges facing the tribe are economic... development of the valley...the real estate market and economy of the Valley moving right towards us.” Alfreda Mitre

THE FUTURE

“You need to care about the future. Not just right now, but for the next generation. You need to think about how this project is devastating. It’s going to impact all life.” Alfreda Mitre

“You have to think about the future. The future is our younger generation. Not only for Native Americans but for everybody.” Lalovi Miller

Summary

Native Americans have lacked a political, socioeconomic and culturally sensitive “voice” in the Yucca Mountain developmental process. This video production provides a true voice, literally and symbolically. It credibly tells the story of how Indian tribes of Clark County feel about Yucca Mountain. Told in their own words, their own voices, it conveys distinct tribal concerns, positions and cultural/spiritual impacts to tribes.

Transcripts

Verbatim transcripts of interviews with Paiute tribal leaders for
“Indian Perspectives” video

ALFREDA MITRE

Chair, Las Vegas Paiute Tribe

Question: What are the greatest challenges facing the tribe?

Answer: I think the greatest challenges facing the tribe are economic; the environment of the area; developers, the development of the valley; pollution of the valley; real estate market and the economy of the valley moving right towards us. When we first acquired this land in 1983, the city was about eight miles from the reservation boundary, now it is about two.

They are going to build all the way up to the boundary, with the new southern Nevada lands sales. They will jump over us and build on the other side of the tribe. The challenge to the tribe is to protect the land. To give a voice to those who cannot speak for themselves, the plants that live in the area, for the animals who have made this their homes for hundreds and hundreds of years. For the things that can pollute our citizenship.

Question: A thriving economy is a two-edged sword. Don't you think growth could help your tribe?

Answer: I think that smart growth, and I think that if they take into consideration conservation areas. In the Valley they have cemented over the majority of their property. If you work with the land, I think that you can develop land that is sensitive to all living things, not just human beings.

Question: With a thriving economy, we have need for greater energy consumption. As a result of that we have more nuclear waste produced. What concerns you most about the Yucca Mountain Project?

Answer: What concerns me most about the Yucca Mountain Project is the uncertainty of the safety and security of the repository in general. The contamination that can occur to the water affects all citizens of the Valley, not just Native Americans, but all human beings and anything else that needs water for its survival. The contamination of air. We have our neighboring tribe that was heavily contaminated by the above ground testing. When restitution was made to human life in the area, St. George received benefits to help them deal with the fact that they were down-wind. The Moapa Tribe has not received any aid whatsoever.

So we've lived through that already. The air the water, the land, all of that. Once it's put in the repository (nuclear waste) how long is it secure? For what duration of time? A hundred years? In a hundred years we're still going to be here.

You know, the citizenship of the Valley has the option of moving to another state, another city. We're the people of this land, we're not moving, we're not going anywhere. Fifteen hundred years from now our spirits are still going to be

here. This is not the end for us. We're still going to be here. Our spirits are born here and they'll remain here...We've been here long before cities were here, we'll be here long afterwards. We are the people of this land...we don't really know how safe it is...our spirits will be here forever and ever. We have an obligation to our ancestors who are buried here.

Question: Tell us your thoughts about reparations.

Answer: I think there's an obligation. Even in the most crude or primary cultures of the world, if you cause damage you're obligated to fix it. You're obligated to accept that responsibility. I mean, that's what human beings are supposed to do. When the above ground testing happened, Moapa should have been compensated. They should have been recognized as people who were down wind just like the people in St. George were recognized. Just like all of the movie actors who were contaminated at the time. Their life—our life—is just as valuable as any human life, and I think the U.S. has a responsibility toward that.

Question: In that regard, how do you think the tribe has been treated by the various governmental agencies that support the Yucca Mountain Project?

Answer: I think it's kind of a double-edged sword. There are agencies that have been very supportive of tribes, and there are agencies that have not. I think it all depends on what the participation of a tribe is in the process. How is it valued? If it is valued highly and tribal scholars are looked on as equals of academicians and scientists, then we are treated very well. But if we're looked at as storytellers, as historians for the sake of telling a story about the land, or we're treated as entertainment, then we're treated very rudely.

I think that as indigenous people, we have a voice; we have a connection to the people that the academy (colleges and universities) can't teach you. That the field of science can't teach you. You can deconstruct whatever discipline is out there but to speak for the land, for all living things...I think Native Americans do that best, and we have an obligation to try to do our best because this country is where we are from. We are the only thing American, really, about America. Everything else has been imported into this continent. We are the original people and no one can do it better than we can.

And I think that the academy needs to look at Native Americans as native scholars, and treat them as equal. Because where else does the information come from? (When) we're used as informants, it is put into the academy, and once it is coded into the language of the academy, native people lose their usefulness. They become reduced to storytellers.

Question: What harm could possibly come to your people in the event of an accident involving high-level radioactive waste?

Answer: In the event of an accident involving nuclear waste, the damage that could come, not just to my people, but people in general, because the message out there is for all humanity for all living things in the Valley, the citizenship of the Valley, the animals, the plants, the contamination that could occur and its long term impacts are incredible, they are like no other we have seen before. Because no one knows what the effects are. We can hypothesize and we can speculate, but I don't think we come close. I don't.

As I said, everyone will probably move out of the Valley, they will move away. They'd be able to go someplace else. We're going to be here forever and ever. Our duty as the Southern Paiute people is to care for this land. To treat it like our child. This land is our mother. It has sustained us since time immemorial. And the possibility of the damage that could happen if there was an accident is maddening. It's just complete insanity.

Question: To follow up on that specifically, how would an accident involving high-level nuclear radioactive waste affect your land, culture and lifestyle?

Answer: Our land, culture and lifestyle? We can't really separate them because the way we live, everything is connected. Unlike Western thought, we don't compartmentalize aspects of our life. It all runs together as one complete circle. And I think that circle inspires us to create from the beginning all the way through whatever life cycle it has. To be cyclical and if you disrupt the land, you disrupt the culture, and then there is no lifestyle. There is absolutely nothing.

Question: We have a lot of new people coming to Las Vegas. And a lot of them have never heard of Yucca Mountain. What would you say to someone who knows nothing about the Yucca Mountain Project?

Answer: I think what you should know about Yucca Mountain is that you need to educate yourself. You need to care about the land. You need to care about the future. Not just right now, but for the next generation. You need to think about how this project is devastating. It's going to impact all life. If you look around, you'll notice our mountains in the Valley don't have trees on them. Imagine the desert with nothing on it, just sand. People look at the desert now, and they don't see anything.

If you're going to live here you need to empower yourself by knowing and educating yourself about the dangers in your community. About possible pollutants in the Valley. Yucca Mountain is dangerous. It is dangerous to us now,

and it has been dangerous to those who were here when they did above ground testing. The quality of life is changing drastically. I would say empower yourself, educate yourself, know the dangers and accept the responsibility. Have a voice. Participate into the process. Say no. Say no to Yucca Mountain.

KENNY A. ANDERSON

Cultural and Environmental Chair, Las Vegas Paiutes

Question: Would you please draw a picture for me of the tribe, the number of tribal members, and what geographic area it encompasses?

Answer: Well, we have around 53 tribal voting members, a total of 72 with kids. The actual geographic area of the Paiutes ranges from Southern Nevada, Southern Utah, Northern Arizona—that's the actual range of the Paiutes. Right now we (the Las Vegas Paiute Tribe) have a little over 4,000 acres that we live on in downtown Vegas and here (US-95), around 20 miles north of Las Vegas.

Question: What's the economic base of the tribe?

Answer: We have businesses, a golf resort with three courses, and a smoke shop and gas station at the Snow Mountain Reservation, and downtown we have another smoke shop.

Question: One of the smoke shops is right on 95 north. If there were a truck accident within range of the reservation, what effect do you think that would have on the tribe?

Answer: Depending on who was home at the time, because there are houses less than 1/2 mile away from the freeway, it could have a devastating effect on our businesses, plus the people around at the time, which could eliminate all of us through radiation poisoning. Basically, too, the main thing would be economic. People wouldn't come out here if there were a nuclear spill. It would be devastating to the tribal economy.

Question: So you think there would be a lasting stigma if there were an accident near the reservation?

Answer: Yes. Devastating to our business plus the tribal population. The land we have is what we have. And as a tribe we would not relocate. This is where we live.

Question: What do you see as the major concerns about the Yucca Mountain Project?

Answer: The major concerns for the Las Vegas Paiute tribe is the safety of Yucca Mountain. It's like the studies that have been done have not been complete. Yet they still continue to build. A lot of the scientists are saying it is not safe, and the DOE, NRC, they still continue to build.

Besides the safety issue, it's the ground water that flows through this valley. Mainly the water. There's no study that proves it is safe. The radiation that's going to be stored there is going to be there for thousands of years. A thousand years from now will it be safe? I don't think anybody really would know that because it's a volcanic area. And a lot of earthquake activities (are) in the area.

Question: Is your tribe an affected unit of government?

Answer: To me it is, but to the Yucca Mountain Project, the tribe is not.

Question: Why do you suppose they haven't given that status to the tribe?

Answer: Well, the thing they say is that the route has not actually been chosen, yet the state of Nevada is receiving funds, so why can't the tribe? I mean, we're right here next to it. And we are a sovereign government.

Question: Do you think the U.S. government is affording the correct respect to your sovereign nation?

Answer: No. The government is not doing that. We should be one of the first people they should be talking with. As part of their trust responsibility, they should be right there talking to us. And besides the state, we should be there too, as a government.

Question: If you could send a message to other people who are not tribal members, what would you say?

Answer: What we have said in written comments to the DOE and NRC for years now, is that the tribe does not agree with this project because of the nuclear waste that could travel through tribal lands and the state of Nevada. We are opposed to this because of the uncertainty of the safety which has yet to be determined, even by their own scientists. It's a health hazard to all of Southern

Nevada. Sixty million people come here every year but they leave. We don't. The Paiute people live here. We've lived here for thousands of years. And we're still here. By having the nuclear waste come through our reservation and maybe have an accident--we'd be extinct.

Question: Help us, those not of your people, understand your history and your sense of connection.

Answer: Our history is that we've lived in this valley for thousands of years, and the land to us is living. It protects and helps us. It clothes us and gives us food. It still does today if we want to. By putting waste in Yucca Mountain it will destroy that. In that area (Yucca Mountain) is where we picked pine nuts when it came time to harvest, and we hunted in that same area. Now we can't on that land. We just have a little (land) left here in Southern Nevada.

LALOVI MILLER

Elder, Moapa Band of Paiutes

Question: Can you tell us, generally, your thoughts about the Yucca Mountain Project?

Answer: My views on Yucca Mountain...it's going to go through whether (or not) we voice our concerns. It's going to affect our tribe because of the rail and the Interstate. Even though they say they are going to build the rail spur up at Caliente, it's still will affect our tribe, because, that's our back yard. That's what I call the test site and Yucca Mountain and that area. It will have an effect on us.

We've never had any planning of any kind for our people. If a spill should happen, we don't know what the effects are, we don't know where we would go. We've never been told, although I've asked that many times. What is our recourse then? It will affect not only us, but the outside communities of Las Vegas, Overton, Logandale, even Mesquite. Especially in Las Vegas and our valley because it's not safe.

Yucca Mountain is not safe--the repository. I've made the trip there. You know it's going to eventually erode. It may not be in my lifetime, or my children's generation, but I'm talking about the future. It will affect the water, and since water is one of the most important things that Native Americans have always had, there really will be no life. Look at some of the areas. It's not like what it used to be...it's like it's miniature.

Yucca Mountain is already here. They're bringing in the waste from foreign countries. But do we know how many (shipments) go through daily or monthly? They never tell us. They never say.

It's going to affect our people. We're not prepared for it. I mean, how can we prepare for some disaster in the future?

Question: To what extent have your tribe's interests and concerns been considered in the decision making process, especially with regards to water?

Answer: We do voice our opinions at those meetings. They are nice and listen to our complaints, but I don't think it really counts. The native voice has never had any impact. They (have meetings) just to pacify us. They don't listen to our opinions on anything. Southern Nevada was once our ancestral lands. We have an interest in all the things that happen around us. Like I said, it was our ancestral lands.

Question: What is your biggest concern with respect to Yucca Mountain?

Answer: My biggest concern is the contamination that will happen, and there is really no guarantee or proof that it won't. You have to think about the future. The future is our younger generation. Not only for Native Americans but for everybody.

Question: In the event of an accident involving radioactive waste near the reservation or your other properties, what would be the specific impact on the lands, and on the tribe?

Answer: I think that if anything like that should happen the land would be contaminated, even if they do clean it up, it would be already there and I don't know how many years it would take...it would not be usable. And with the railroad and the Interstate that's would (affect) all industrial business for us.

It's like the outsiders don't really want us to prosper. The transportation goes right through our lands. There's no guarantee on how long the contamination would be.

Question: To what degree are your tribe's cultural resources being protected?

Answer: We have the consolidated tribes, the CGTO. We have our concerns, and we always talk about it. We have an executive session for the members of the tribe that come. There are three tribes, the Southern Paiutes, the Western Shoshone, and Owens Valley Paiutes. And then there's the Mojaves, which are

not part of the Southern Paiute Nation. But we all have concerns about Yucca Mountain, and we make recommendations. I don't know how they have honored any of them.

Question: It's my understanding through DOE materials that the DOE is indeed trying to protect tribal cultural resources. That they are in frequent contact with affected tribes. That said, how is your tribe communicating your tribe's thoughts about the Yucca Mountain Project?

Answer: We attend these meetings that are set up by the Yucca Mountain Project. We have usually two representatives and the tribal chairman. A lot of times we don't have the resolutions to actually speak on behalf of the tribe, so we tell them our personal views as tribal representatives.

Question: Are you being adequately informed of the changes, progress and status of the Yucca Mountain Project?

Answer: The only way we learn things is if it comes to the attention of the Tribal Council. If it's something important, they will let the tribal members know. The Tribal Council acts on behalf of the tribal members. We are the ones above the Tribal Council. The Council just does the business part for us. So they are notified, and they let us know when there is information coming in.

Question: In general, what are the greatest challenges facing your tribe today?

Answer: I think the greatest challenge is the contamination of the water in the future. I saw an article in the paper years ago; I think it was plutonium that was seeping through. Water is one of the most important things that people need for survival. You can live without power and other things.

Water is everything for us. It's a life-giver. We are desert people. Without water we could perish. If it's contaminated, there goes a lot of the people. We're not a big tribe, we are small in number. I think the Chemehuevi are about our size. There are other tribes in the Southern Paiute Nation that are larger.

Water contamination is a major concern. Not for my generation, but I'm thinking about years and years in the future. Water is one of the most important resources anybody needs. With all the pollution, and contamination from these nuclear power plants, Hanford for one, look what it did to their people. And all of that's coming here to Nevada? Yucca Mountain is not safe. It's inevitable that it will contaminate.

Question: What if you lost your water?

Answer: I guess if we lost our water we wouldn't survive because we are people who have revered water from the beginning. It was put here for our use. But now, with Yucca Mountain, my greatest concern is contamination of the water and the land.

Question: For those people who are not familiar with Yucca Mountain, particularly those coming into Southern Nevada, what one thing would you want someone new to know about Yucca Mountain?

Answer: I think that people moving in need to know that they are so close to Yucca Mountain, and that it will affect their lives too. Not only reservation life, but the outside. And I don't know if they are told they are only 80 miles from Yucca Mountain.

It is coming. There's really nothing we can do once the government decides on a program, just look at all the money they've generated into that area. There's going to be a new six-lane highway to service the repository. I found that out going to some meetings.

These are some of the things that we are concerned about. I mean, should there be a spill, whether it be near Las Vegas, or by rail, below Tonapah, these are concerns other people should have.

Look at the ranchers in Southern Nevada. Not only my area, but surrounding Yucca Mountain, such as in Armagosa Valley. They talked about drilling for water there for Yucca Mountain. One of the native elders spoke up and said, "You're going to dry the water up for our people in Armagosa Valley, Pahrump Valley, even Death Valley," she said. You (DOE) have no concerns about that, only drilling the well for Yucca Mountain. They are getting good pay for working at Yucca Mountain (she told them). But she is just one vocal person. She knows all of Southern Nevada, she and her family. She knows where all the springs are, she knows the names of them. They know all the water sources. Unfortunately, they are from an unfederally recognized tribe, so we take them under our wing, either Moapa or Las Vegas Paiutes, so they can speak up.

Our concerns are really never addressed, even though we do make contact. It looks good when we make a comment, right, because it's taken down, but nothing is ever answered for us. We just find out (information) from going to the meetings, and it's kind of sad that we don't have meetings (anymore).

Question: What is the relationship Indians have with the land. If something happens, can't you move away?

Answer: It goes back to some of our stories. That we were created from the dirt. But yet, we were told that our gods would provide for us, and it was that way. Our history goes back years and years, and we were told in our legends and stories, that when we were created, we lived with our gods in the caves in the mountain. And one day, he told the Paiutes, my people, "Go eastward until you come to the big red mountains, and that's where you'll be." So, Southern Nevada is our ancestral lands. We learned to survive off of the resources that were put here for our use.

So our people did survive. I can drive to Las Vegas, look over our land, and say, how did our people survive on what we have here? But they knew exactly what to do. They knew it for food value; they knew it for medicinal value. And some of us still use it for native foods and native plants for medicinal use.

Question: What is the economic base of the tribe and how would an accident impact the tribe economically?

Answer: We survive on what we generate. We compete with other tribes throughout the nation for government grants and sometimes we get them, sometimes we don't. Being a sovereign nation, we can sell fireworks, which in the beginning was a little plywood shack. We kept reinvesting, and now it's a big thing (the casino and store on I-95). Today we give people the opportunity to set fireworks off throughout the year right there (at the store).

That's how we survive. It helps a lot for our programs here on the reservation. It helps the children and the elders, and all the tribal members. We don't get many dividends, but hopefully when Ash Grove comes through, that will also help our reservation.

We talk about the other places on our new lands, that perhaps development of it will help our economy. If a government based facility or program (is developed) it will help us, because you can't fight the government. We can only accept it for the betterment of our people.

It needs to be that way because a lot of the programs for Native Americans are dwindling, such as the health services. It's a myth that people on the outside believe that we get free medical care. No, it comes as an as-needed basis, and our dental plan is not good. Our tribe does a lot for our members.

Question: Is there anything you'd like to add?

Answer: I would just like to see for my people, for the future, to actually have the government tell us exactly the things that they plan. Why can't our people be trained (for emergencies)? I don't think that now we have the capability of cleaning up a spill on our lands. Especially near Valley of Fire, the new lands.

We were once by executive order given two million acres in 1874, and in 1876 it was reduced to a thousand acres. Then in '81 we got the addition of 70,000 acres, and that's smack dab through the rail line, and the Interstate runs right through it. We haven't been told, you know, where's the nearest agency that will respond to us. I mean, are we going to dial 911 and say, "hey there's a spill out here, what is our recourse?"

I'd like to see them come out with information. To explain...this is the plan that we have to help the people. And I'm not talking just about the tribe, but the community around us. What happens to them?

This is the first time that we've actually had somebody come to the reservation and ask us about our concerns. To me, it's after the fact, because Yucca Mountain is already there, with the money being already generated years ago for it. So, we just are always treated the same way from the time that the non-Indians came over and took our lands. We would actually help them. We told them how to survive on the lands. And if it weren't for us...

Our people are not warring people. But we have a mountain over here called War Mountain, in our language. That's where they fought the Spanish conquistadors and the government military troops many years ago. Not too many of our tribal people know that. There are a few of us who listened to our elders. It was handed down verbally from generation to generation. Our stories, our songs, our language. I can speak and translate the language. I can tell some of the stories. We were told the fall and winter months are the time we can tell our stories and legends.

Question: What is the Indian word for radioactive waste?

Answer: I would say in Indian it would be "no good" (Kay-too-ka-iowa) meaning, it's not good. There is no literal translation. For example, we have no "hello" or "goodbye," we say "we'll see you later," because goodbye is final.

Question: Final thoughts?

Answer: The land is important to our people—land, water, and air. Look at how air is contaminated. Pollution plays a part in our environment, whereas before we didn't have all these illnesses that we now have. I feel sorry for the people

who live close to the Nevada Power (facility on the reservation) because of the smell.

Yucca Mountain is already here, so what can we do? When the government wants to do things like that, you can't really fight them. Even though it's our ancestral lands. So we have to accept that it is here. And that's my story.

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