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Deisha Myles, Oral History Interview, 2021

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Eastern Michigan University, Oral Histories

EMU Logo Change Oral History Interview with Deisha Myles (DM)

Interview conducted by History graduate student Erica Moore (EM) and EMU Lecturer Matt Jones (MJ) on March 26, 2021 via Zoom.

Transcribed by Erica Moore

EM: Okay, and we are recording. Okay, so what I'm going to do is I'm going to read in a short introduction, and then we'll go on and get into the interview. Okay?

DM: It's okay...

EM: Great. So, my name is Erica. I'm a History graduate student of Eastern Michigan University. It is March 26, 2021. I'm interviewing Deisha Myles, an alumna of Eastern Michigan University, for the EMU Logo Oral History Project. Ms. Myles was a student at the time of the logo change, and a member of the Rama First Nation in Canada. She also was a member of the Native American Indian Student Organization and was actively involved in the campaign to change the logo. She was present at every local related Board [of Regents] meeting. Currently--

DM: Almost every...

EM: Okay, okay, *almost* every local related Board meeting. Currently, she is an advocate of promoting awareness of the rich history of the indigenous peoples who first settled in Ypsilanti over 10,000 years ago. She's also a community activist who has been the organizing force behind several political rallies in Ypsilanti and is a crusader against fracking and the Michigan pipeline. Alrighty, so let's go through some background really quickly. In past conversations, you said that you grew up in Detroit, and briefly moved to Garden City and then graduated from high school in Garden City. You also—

DM: I was born in Detroit.

EM: Okay, you were born in Detroit. I'm sorry about that. Yes, you were born in Detroit, and then moved to Garden City and graduated from high school in Garden City. You also told me that your grandmother was a survivor of the Indian boarding schools. Can you tell me about that—a little bit about that?

DM: Well, her mother left the family. So it was just her dad and her siblings. And then she was taken to a boarding school. And that's where she grew up. It was in Muncie, Ontario, which was quite a ways away from Rama. They did teach her how to sew. So that's how she made a living most of her life. But she went in speaking Native, but came out of there only speaking English.

EM: Did she ever speak your native tongue with the family, like, growing up?

DM: Um, no.

EM: Okay, okay... And was her experience in the boarding schools- what kind of experience did she have?

DM: I just hear little stories. But overall, she's very kind and very kind of, has a low-key strength and was very kind, but it's not something that a lot of people talk about.

EM: That's understandable. Has her experience impacted your life? Would you say this would be a catalyst for your activism?

DM: Not really, it's just part of the family. Something that we all knew.

EM: I understand

DM: You know, I'm not-- I don't know of any, like, sexual abuse that could have gone on but maybe it happened... but if it did, nobody spoke of it.

EM: Okay. Okay. So what would you point to as the catalyst for your activism during college?

DM: Yeah, well, I think it started at Eastern and I'm just hearing that they were going to open up the conversation when I started college there in 1988, and just never really given a good enough answer to me about why they're using-- a white institution is using imagery of a Native person.

EM: Okay.

DM: While we're [unintelligible] I don't recognize you as the honorer of people, you know. So, you know, just, one can bestow honor upon you, they can bestow dishonor upon you. So I rejected that authority that they gave themselves, that they can honor peoples of the world.

EM: I understand

MJ: Can I jump in here? Erica?

EM: Sure.

MJ: Before you got to EMU, did you know about the Huron logo? Was there any talk about it? In your family?

DM: No.

MJ: Okay

DM: No, I didn't know about the Huron.

EM: Okay. So how did it come about? Was it the first day you stepped on campus?

DM: I heard [about], you know, [the Michigan Civil Rights Commission recommendation] and that's when I heard that they were going to open up the conversation about the Huron logo, Huron Indian logo being an athletic mascot. And I didn't know anything. I didn't have an opinion about it. But it was just something I wanted to know about. And like I said, I was never given, you know, a good excuse about why they were using it. You know, what's the historical, well, slavery's historical, and we change that. So maybe this needs to be changed too.

EM: Right, right. I do remember reading from the archives, that in '88, the Michigan Civil Rights Commission did issue a recommendation to all institutions that use the Indian logos, to stop using those logos on the basis that the usage of the Indian images is racist, and that it's discriminatory. Now, when they brought it up and it became an issue on campus, did they have seminars? Or did they have talks? Were the Michigan Civil Rights Commission, did they have talks? Or did they have representatives say, you know, to make people aware of what was going on? Or did the university do that?

DM: No, I would say, like, I didn't know anything about the Huron logo before I went to Eastern. And it's not much of a topic of conversation before then [either]. And even now, you know, there's lots of things going on. And yeah, I mean, the fact that the "Washington Red Bleeps," changed their name. That's pretty huge news. But it just got away from everything in the pandemic. So I would say there was no talk of it. The Elliott-Larsen [Act] thing did, uh-- Elliott-Larsen recommendations came out. And that spurred the conversation. But no, they [the conversations] would never never come to Eastern.

MJ: Mmm-hmm...

DM: How about that, and it had no teeth. So it was just a recommendation. And to this day, “Clinton Red Bleeps.” In Lenawee County, they still use that name. And so I've gotten down there a few times and it starts up where some people started with the activism there. But there's nothing forcing them to change that logo.

EM: I understand that... Well, I do see from the records that the Indian- EMU formed the Indian symbol review committee, and I do see that you were a member. How were you chosen to participate in the symbol review committee?

DM: I can't- Sorry, my son is making too much noise. I can't let me turn you up a little bit [on Zoom]. I'm sorry. Can you repeat that?

EM: Absolutely... How were you chosen to take part in the Indian symbol review committee?

DM: I believe they asked me.

MJ: I have a question. When you heard about the committee, was there talk in the Native American Indian Students Association about the logo proceedings? Were there discussions about who should represent your organization there? Or were there other members of that organization at those meetings with you?

DM: There was.. I'd say the bulk of the people- there was Stacy Fallis and Gary Butterwick. And then there were other people that would come and go, depending, you know, depending on what time of the year it was, but I was pretty much a student all around, and I tried to stick around there during the spring and summer so I could stay... stay on that issue and attend the meetings. No organizations... If there's nobody there to refute them, sometimes they'll go ahead and make decisions without you. So I would try to make it to every single Board meeting. I might have missed a couple.

DJ: Okay.

DM: But I would say you know, my persistence and involvement, you know...

MJ: Okay. Erica, I have one more question. I'm sorry. [laughs] Um, I'm going to be doing this periodically jumping in here. But with you— you said it started when you got to EMU. But then once it started, you were there for almost every meeting, you're in our records over and over. You're quoted in different newspaper articles, you're in the meeting minutes. You're everywhere. And so it's ...

DM: Yeah.

MJ: It's really significant to me that you weren't doing any activism work before you got to EMU. But once you did get there, you just skyrocketed. So help me understand, I guess, how you went from zero to 60mph [in activism]. What was it about this issue?

DM: Well, I saw that it was a bigger issue. You know, it's not just a Native symbol being used in athletics. It's a cultural signifier. You know, this is where a white institution takes it upon themselves to appropriate Native imagery in them, and if you know a little bit of history where they, you know, took the land, you know, we-- the Treaty of Detroit is what ceded this land. And, that's not right. It's not right that people move into other people's land and the Hurons were shipped out to Kansas, they were shipped out to Oklahoma, you know, and still, I have a problem with that. I—I will never get over that. That will never be okay with me. [It is] what creates that fertile ground to make atrocities and genocide possible. You know... and so... The logo, they say that it doesn't matter, but --to me, it's a part of that larger societal construct that we have, you know, that creates the class system in this society, that creates concentrated, well, where you have the Mercer family with just so much money. You have other people working two jobs, making \$9 an hour and never getting a vacation. So it's a social construct then I'm challenging [it], right. And now the logo was a way for me to talk about other things, too.

DJ: Okay. Like what?

DM: What I mentioned about a social contract about the disparity of wealth in this nation. You know, why is it that Native Americans, like on a Red Rock Reservation in Minnesota have 40% unemployment? I mean, we start breaking out at seven, 8%.

MJ: Yeah.

DM: So, yeah.

MJ: So when so when you went to meetings, and you would, presumably, make all this known to the committees of the Board of Regents? Explaining the broader context to this problem. Were they receptive?

DM: Yeah, [but] probably tackling these big problems would be a lot harder than just changing a logo.

MJ: Okay, I'm gonna, I'm gonna jump back out. Thanks, Erica.

EM: You're fine. You're fine.

DM: I really, I did log into the link that you sent me, Matt, but it was like a lot of information. So Erica, you probably maybe read more about this than I have.

EM: I understand. So I remember reading that there were 14 people that were a part of the symbol review committee. Do you recall, or, do you know how they chose the people to be a part of the-- the review committee?

DM: I was not a part of choosing the people that were on that review committee.

EM: Do you know how you were chosen? Or how other people were chosen? Or do you know what process they went through? How did they get your name?

DM: I don't remember anything about it.

EM: That's okay. That's okay--

DM: I was [brief connection problem silence] every meeting... I probably bumped into him a lot.

EM: Yeah, I would assume so too. Do you think, looking back, that the committee was a good sampling of the EMU campus or the community?

DM: I know from experience that they try to get a wide range of people, you know, to represent, but I don't really remember the people on that committee.

EM: Okay. Do you think it was balanced?

DM: I remember it being very divided. And then there was this one gentleman... and he was talking about how-- how about if we compromise: we'll say that EMU can have the logo for five years, and then they'll change it all. And I was like, that's not bad. You know, it's better than gridlock. So yes, I do remember that.

MJ: Hmm. So what was his reasoning for that?

DM: Just thought it was a good idea. I don't know his reasoning. But it seemed like it got us away from the gridlock and that there was somebody that was willing to step in and say "Okay, you can have some of your way, and you can have some of [our] way. Why don't we do it this way?" Uh, you know, a third way?

MJ: Sure. It's interesting, because I've heard now from all sides of this issue that at some point, everybody just wanted to break that gridlock, you know, and like, whether it was trying to choose a new logo, people were like, 'Oh, my God, I don't care what it is- just pick something. You know, we have to get back to work.' And then other people, like, they're saying that we're coming up with compromises because they just wanted this thing to be moving in some direction. I heard another suggestion that was to keep the Huron logo *and* name but add an eagle to it. So it would have been the "Eastern Huron Eagles."

DM: [unintelligible] I remember hearing that.

MJ: Yeah. But it just brings me back to, why not just get rid of the offensive logo? If you're gonna add on to it, why not just get rid of it?

DM: Yeah, one idea. And I was always in the position that we should change it. And we should do it with a lot of information on campus to quell a backlash. And like I said, I was looking into compromising, yeah, maybe they could use it for five years, and then we'll change it after that, you know, that will give time because there were concerns about the letterhead would have to be thrown away, all the Eastern Huron stuff would cause waste if we just had to chuck it in the garbage. And I was like, well, that could be a transition time, where we don't have to just throw everything in the garbage or change everything right away. But as things naturally wear and tear and run out, we can change it. So yeah, I was up for that compromise.

MJ: Mm hmm. Mmm hmm. But doesn't it? I don't want to ask this in a way that's leading because I tell all my students "Don't ask leading questions, be objective," but I'm going to try to ask this subjectively. When you went in there, and you were putting all this time into these meetings, and a lot of energy into these meetings. To hear that one reason why we should keep the logo is because it's on the stationary. How did that-- How did that strike you? It seems almost like they were kind of reaching.

DM: Yeah, there was a lot of reaching. Okay, yeah, I know, you want me to. But well, you know, I recycled. So I understand that, or, you know, it's not just paper and letterhead, it's uniforms, it's, you know, it could be a whole new floor. You know, it's lots of things to think about and lots of things to change. Ultimately, that was not my stance. My stance was we should change the name, we should change the logo, not one or the other, both. And we should do it as soon as possible. We should start thinking about how we're going to make the transition in a methodical way, and where we can inform the campus. You know, that's how I was talking at the meeting. Everybody was saying, "No, we should keep it, it honors you. If we get rid of this logo that's just going to be Native people disappearing." Yeah, there's a lot of reaching. And, you know, there were, you know, different sides. And that was the side that I was on. But I think his name was Robb, now that I recall. It's coming back to me slowly.

MJ: Richard Robb?

DM: I remember him saying- yeah, I think that was his name. And then he talked about, well, you know, "I think you're both right." And that's where he talked about a compromise. And I was like, well, that's something I can get on board with, you know, being a recycler, but yeah, there was a lot of reaching for it and a lot of opinions. You know, yeah, yeah, you heard a lot. And going into Board meetings, I would have little aspects of the issue that I decided to enlighten [the Board with] that day, you know. I don't want to go on and on, I can pick one, or write it down, write it down and talk about that. I can talk about the larger social contract, I can talk about a psychological study that was done about how it's damaging to Native American kids who have to go into a predominantly white educational setting and experience that, to be a second class citizen in the school that they go to, even though their ancestors were here, going back 10,000 years. So you know, I would have lots of things to talk about, that was my forum to talk about, it was all around this logo issue.

MJ: So you would bring issues like that to the meetings about those studies and everything?

DM: Yeah.

MJ: Can you remember that study?

DM: Oh, we had big packets and stuff. That [was a] psychological study. But yeah, I'm sure the Board got it. I'm sure. Shelton got it. And everybody- they got big packets of information.

MJ: Hmm. I'd like to see one of those. I wonder if we have one, somewhere.

DM: And when we were trying to change the Ypsi Braves, we had an even bigger packet for them. And just all the, you know, all the data about why these logos are detrimental not only to Native people, but white people, to the general society, [it] diminishes the understanding of Native peoples in this land.

MJ: I'm just coming off an interview with [former EMU Regent] Anthony Derezinsky, who was Regent. And he was talking about how this logo issue is also harmful to whites. Can you explain that?

DM: It gives them a false sense of superiority. It gives them a sense of entitlement that is unhealthy for anybody, you know. No, you're not entitled to things just because of the color of your skin. I mean, that's the construct of this nation. But in reality, it's not the construct of the world. When the bottom falls out, and the Midwest turns into a rust belt, you get a lot of different

disenfranchised white people who feel, you know, like this is not what [was] promised to them, which is detrimental to everybody. You understand?

EM: Absolutely.

EM: [laughs] You're, you're fine. So, circling back to the mission of the review committee, it was to discover the use-- if the use of the Huron name and logo was derogatory. Now, the committee conducted a survey, and it said, basically-- 86% of people said that they wanted to keep both the Huron name and the logo. And then I also noticed in records of these, that seven people identified themselves as Native American, and only one wanted to change the logo, but keep the name. The other six wanted to keep both-- both the logo and the Huron name. Was that correct?

DM: Well, you know, I talked about that. Due to the Treaty of Detroit, Native peoples went to the majority population, to the, you know, 0.012% of the population here in Michigan. So, you know, these surveys, yeah, they're going to reflect the fact that people want to keep the logo. But we have to, we have to look at the bigger picture again, and impress the fact that, you know, there's not a lot of Native peoples here. I've protested the Dearborn Heights Junior football team, the "Red Bleeps," I call them Red Bleeps [instead of] Redskins. This redskin is like the N-word to me.

EM: Mm hmm.

DM: Um, but you know, I'd be the only one protesting out there. And they would say, "So where are all your other Native peoples?" Like, well, they were removed and killed, you know, by this country to become this country. So, you know, we can't really go by surveys. I was on a radio talk show talking about that. And then people say they're Natives. But, you know, are they really? You know, I mean, not-- not that an Indian card. I have an Indian card that I've been issued through my tribe, but, you know, anybody can say that they're Native. But are they really? You know, who's to verify? So, I don't trust these polls... At all.

EM: I understand that. I understand that... Could you possibly speak to why there was such a low response to the survey?

DM: And that goes back to the, well-- I told this one radio host on a sports channel that a majority of Americans don't care about sports. It may be even less about a subcategory of a sports issue, which is Indian logos. And... and I think I shocked him with my answer.

MJ: [laughs]

DM: It's true- my husband hates it; he's a sports freak, but a majority of Americans aren't. I'm sorry.

EM: That's true. That's true.

DM: Mm hmm.

MJ: I have a quick question. They brought in representatives. I want to ask you how your thoughts on [pro-Huron logo group] Huron Restoration Incorporated, but before I do that, I want to say that we know they brought in representatives to come into the meetings and support keeping the logo. How was that? And what were the factions amongst indigenous people? What were those? Were they present in those meetings? Were there different sides to the indigenous viewpoints? In the meetings?

DM: The Huron Restoration Committee did find a native in Oklahoma, I think his name was Chief Bearskin, and brought him up to say that he was okay with EMU using the Huron logo and the name. And I questioned his motives and his agenda. You know, they were paying for his airfare to come up here. And, so I just questioned his motives, like, what were they doing for him? To make him say these things? I just didn't take the fight to him, on his level, I always try to keep the big picture going about how these are hurtful to Native people, Native children who are in school, you know. How was EMU gonna say that they're open to all people who come into their school, to get a good liberal arts education, and justify using this logo? And they-- when they know, when they've been told that these are harmful to kids? You know, just try to stick to that message.

MJ: Sure.

DM: You know, we're not a monolith.

MJ: Mmm hmm.

DM: And I don't claim to be Huron, even though my tribe personally-- and I never really brought this up. But my tribe, personally, has relations with Hurons. Historically and ancient. There was the Anishinaabe, there's a big migration that happened over 1000 years. And it was the Hurons that told the Chippewas that you got to look for the food that grows on the water. And that ended up being wild rice. That was back during that big migration. And then there were other alliances that were made because the Iroquois were trying to wipe the Hurons out. They would come and be with Chippewa people. So, you know, we were allies at that time, though I never pulled the Huron card. You know?

MJ: Yes.

DM: I wasn't pretending to be Chippewa. I wasn't Huron.

MJ: Okay.

DM: Yeah.

MJ: Were the people that they were bringing in, the Huron Restoration Group, were they Huron?

DM: I would-- I would not refute that. I believe that. Chief, you know, I believe Chief Bearskin, that he was chief and that he was Huron and I was okay with having him having an opposing viewpoint of mine. I questioned his agenda.

MJ: Did you ever have discussions with him? Just one on one?

DM: No.

MJ: Okay.

EM: To piggyback on Matt's question, I saw an interview with President Shelton a couple of days ago, an actual snippet of the interview that took place. He said that the younger generation of Native American students were for getting rid of the logo, and that the older generation were for keeping the logo. Do you agree with that assessment? Or do you think that's accurate at all?

DM: Hmm... Again, I would refer back to my opinion that most people, Native and otherwise, don't care or think about the logos. If there are some older generation Native peoples that were [concerned], I would say, a lot of them would not be vocal and get involved actively to keep the logo. They may express that opinion. But then that depends on who you're asking also. Because, you know, me and Stacy, coming up during that time, we knew that there were neighbors back in the 70s that were challenging them here on the logo, so that's not necessarily so. And then [there were] times before them. There were other natives challenging that so, you know, I guess it just depends who you ask.

EM: I understand that. One more thing and then we can switch gears. I did read the records. It's kind of controversial, because it was unearthed by the Huron Restoration Committee. They said that the Huron logo was actually chosen by a Native American student back in 1920. In the 1920s, the college had a contest to choose a logo. What are your opinions about that?

DM: Well, what did you find out when you googled about back in 1920, when the Huron logo was picked? Did you find out who picked it? What was her name?

MJ: I don't know that.

EM: I don't know.

DM: It was a young white lady. It was a young, white lady. So.

EM: Okay.

DM: And, like, you know, public knowledge, you just Google it, you can find it. So now, all of my studies, you know, in all of my research, no, I've never heard that. So they're probably lying.

EM: It was controversial, because, of course, it was in their promotional material that they sent to their supporters. So I mean, of course, you have to take it with a grain of salt. So I understand. But let's go ahead and change gears. In the 80s and [90s,] they had the logo selection or review committee, and the results of the review committee [survey] was that 86% of the people wanted to keep the logo. However, a year later, Brian Andrews, who was the Student Government President, entered into public record that the student government did not support the keeping the Huron logo. What are your thoughts about this dichotomy? Do you think that their original conclusions actually reflected the sentiments of the EMU community at large?

DM: Again, the sentiment of the community at large was, they didn't... You know, I mean, I live across the street from a couple of frats. So that was the main concern of the EMU community, like, where are they going to party that week?

EM: [laughs]

DM: But I was happy that we got support from the Student Government. I remember. You know, because they're at meetings and they're listening to the arguments for and against and... I would say they were, you know, the liberal-leaning type of government. So, you know, we persuaded them.

MJ: Can I just go back for one second because of something I just heard, like in the last couple days? In one of our other interviews with a Regent -I actually it was an interview with former-President Shelton. And he told us he was a big supporter of getting rid of the logo. And I think that the student activism in the stories that were told, in some of those meetings, affected him greatly. And he said that a lot of the Native American students that came to the Board of

Regents meetings and made public commentary came from University of Michigan. Do you remember that?

DM: Yeah, I remember Michael Dashner came in there. It was pretty compelling, his story, you know, about his argument about why we need to get rid of these native imageries and athletics. Yeah...

MJ: Did his story... was it kind of parallel with yours? His reasoning?

MJ: And also, you mentioned athletics a few times, and that is one of the takeaways we're getting from this whole thing was that, sometimes, it sounds like it was almost athletics versus administration, or like athletics was the main supporter of the logo. But the rest of the campus wasn't as involved.

DM: Yeah, I would agree with that. Of course, after the committee was formed, and things were progressing to the level of voting, I would say it became more well known throughout campus, what was going on. EMU was covering [it] and the press was covering it. And, yeah, and, you know, nobody really knew which way it was going to go. But when they did change it, it was pretty big. By the end of my time, at Eastern was pretty well known, you know, community wise, as well as campus-wise.

MJ: Did, did you become well known?

DM: Um, you know, people would stop me on the street and ask me or just walk up to me [and ask] "Do you think it's going to be changed or not?"

MJ: Yeah.

DM: So, you know, I made sure I kept my grades up. You know, if you're gonna stick your neck out, you got to make sure you know, you don't have a point two five GPA.

MJ: [laughs] That's why I could never get into activism.

DM: You know, people are going to be scrutinizing you and, you know, seeing if you have any legitimacy, I'm sure...

MJ: I'm sure they might be like, well, we got to listen to her. She's gonna be coming out next week. So...

MJ: Did you find support coming from other organizations like the Black Student Association, or any other places?

DM: Yeah, Blacks, Hispanic.. gay... Oh, yeah. There wasn't anybody that we wouldn't talk to about it, to this day, like I told you, I go to the west side of the state to campaign for Biden or campaign for not Trump there, [and] I would talk to anybody; it doesn't have to get nasty, you know. So it's just good to be talking and being persuasive and just challenging people's viewpoints. They may have been hearing viewpoints from their parents or just general society. And I like to challenge that. Not to tell people what to think. But, you know, to give them a different viewpoint that they may not have heard before.

MJ: You say that it didn't have to get nasty; did it ever get nasty?

DM: Oh, yeah. Like in the Board meetings, and especially when it looked like they were going to change it. You know, it was always on the line, we were never really sure it was going to get changed until it changed. So, yeah, they bring their signs into the boardroom. Of course, we would have our signs, they drove by my house and, you know, flipped me off or acted like they were gonna, like, kick my butt or something like that. You know, trying to intimidate me.

MJ: Who was trying to do that?

DM: And those people in the boardroom: one gal had a hook nose; I would probably remember her if I saw her unless she had a nose job. And, you know, I remember this other blonde fellow. And they were from athletics. A lot of support for the logo came from athletics. That's where they were from.

MJ: Okay. And they were coaches, or were they students? Or were they--

DM: I think she was in cheerleading.

MJ: Okay.

DM: I'm not sure how the guy was involved.

MJ: Okay. Well, that's something I've been interested in- just the atmosphere and the tension in those meetings. Because as the years go by, I feel like a lot of people's memories kind of soften a little bit. Maybe they don't remember those kinds of ugly interactions. Sometimes we just try to get a handle on how tense it did get in there. And this is the first I've heard that people brought signs in and things.

DM: Yeah, they had signs. I just didn't know what to do. Don't show up at the meetings? You know, how should you react to, um, intimidation? You know, should I say I was at almost every meeting, but I know they weren't. You know, only when their "way of life" is threatened. Okay, then they decided to come and try to be intimidating. But I've been to almost every meeting, and then suddenly, I'm not going to show up because of them. So that was an option. You know, even though there's tension. Part of life, I guess.

MJ: It sounds like maybe they were intimidated.

DM: I don't know. You'll have to ask them. You'll probably interview them. I know they spoke at the meetings. They're on public record.

MJ: Mmm hmm. Yep. Okay, I'm done again, Erica.

DM: I'm just thinking they'd probably flabbergasted that there was a chance that this logo might be changed. And, you know, they're the majority in the school, the majority in society. They've had that sense of entitlement ever since they were born. And that logo might be changed, you know, so I think they were probably more flabbergasted than anything else.

EM: To piggyback on Matt's question, um, I know when we spoke on Sunday, we talked a little bit about this. And you said you stood your ground and you're like, "come on." You were ready for it. But did anyone in the Native American organization, did anyone-- were they-- did they experience physical violence?

DM: That came afterwards, where, you know... I would have to send over some information for you. I don't remember it right off. And the VA trustee... I believe he was threatened with physical violence. He was. He went in, he was in NASO after the logo was changed. There was another student in the organization who got some wires cut in her car.

DM: I can find out more details about that later if you need...

EM: Absolutely, absolutely. I'd appreciate that... So, this happened after the logo was officially changed, or was this during the struggle?

DM: This was after it was changed, and I was not a student there.

EM: Okay, so was it like in 92? I think you said you-- from our previous conversation that you graduated in 92?

DM: Yeah.

EM: Okay. Okay. So, let's go back one year, in '91. After the logo was changed, you said that the people who were really gung ho about keeping the logo were in athletics, but with the other parts of the campus, was there any kind of isolation that was experienced? Did you experience any isolation or, you know, standoffish behavior? Or, you know, of anyone who may have experienced that?

DM: Kind of like some-- I'm not sure what you mean by isolation?

EM: Well, you know, how when something's not popular, when the majority isn't for something, the majority has a tendency to group off to themselves and look at the person or the group that's doing something that they don't like; they kind of have an attitude change. So that's what I mean by a standoffish behavior.

DM: I would say, if that was happening, I didn't experience that. NASO, we did other things. We had an art show. And native movie night. You know, we were doing things. We were busy. So I would say no.

EM: That's great. I also read that you did have a lot of support from the African American student union [Black Student Association]. I think her name was Hicks- Ms. Hicks actually supported Shelton's decision to recommend changing the logo. And she said that she said that it was a sensitive thing that he did- being sensitive to other people's needs and I thought that was a really good thing. It was a really nice thing that she said about him, being sensitive to others. Also, President Shelton also said that we should change the logo, so that it wouldn't denigrate, even unintentionally, members of our community. So it seemed that he was trying to keep it together, keep the community [of] Eastern Michigan University campus and everyone together. Do you think his efforts helped to bring people together?

DM: I would say we did something that was viewed as unpopular. But I was at that meeting when the logo was changed. And I went outside. And there were so many people that were so happy. I mean, like, elated, giddy. And I think people just saw it as a good chance to really, like start fresh, you know. You have an opportunity to do something from the ground up and start fresh. And I felt like that. And I think a lot of people just felt... I was surprised by the reaction, to see everybody just so happy. I didn't see anybody that could actually be done. And these are Native people that really were less than 1% of the population. And, you know, to not bowl people over or force them to... but really just appeal to people's reason, [to their] decency... Shelton did the decent thing by doing that. And ultimately, I think he did bring people together. They wanted to say, "Oh, the alumni are gonna bail and the donations are going to be down." But the donations remained the same. And you do the research in the articles. There's an article there,

because I did cut it out, that EMU did not suffer [any loss] in any donations when they changed that logo.

MJ: That night that you're talking about when it was changed: was that the same night that Shelton read that statement at the Board of Regents-- it was a long statement on why they needed to do away with the logo.

DM: Yeah, I believe that was the time that he changed it. Yep.

MJ: Yeah, so... Do you [remember] the atmosphere inside that room that night? Was it the same? When they took a vote to change the logo, he was there? What was the reaction like? Was there applause? Was there...

DM: I just remember it—outside... and people were happy. But they might have been pretty shocked. I don't know, my [unintelligible] outside because it's like, “whoa!”

MJ: Yeah, yeah... Wow, that must have really been... That must have been kind of redeeming, to you, who had been there for every meeting.

DM: To that point, it could have gone either way.

MJ: Yeah. Yeah. We know that then, there was another committee to choose a new logo. Um, but... I'm just, I guess I've always wanted to be a fly on the wall of that meeting where they decided to change it. Because things have been going on for so long. And for a year or two years by that point. It must have been a really good feeling and a really good scene. I would have liked to see it.

DM: [laughs]

EM: Changing gears a little bit... What responsibility do you think universities and colleges have to bring about social change in the broader community?

DM: I think they have a big responsibility. They educate the kids. They employ a lot of people. U of M's talking about zero carbon. You know, they need to step up and do these things... and lead the way in. Yeah, so I would say universities, you know, they have a big role to play in their communities. Yes.

EM: Absolutely, I do remember that a part of the logo panel. There were some points of suggestion that were made. And you also made a suggestion. I just have a list of them here in my notes, just a small list that they were trying to commit to making EMU the model for

recruiting and retaining Native American students. And they were going to do that by establishing cultural support services, hiring of a Native American recruiter, establishing Native American focused lectures, through the equity program, hosting an annual Native American art exhibit and the inclusion of Native Americans in multi-ethnic learning series. Did they do any of those? Did they accomplish-- the Board or the powers that be-- did they accomplish any of those goals around the time that they changed the logo?

DM: I would say...I don't know. But, you know, I'm kind of to blame for that, too. Because after that, I had some kids, and then I kind of got out of the picture, then. Then my child was at Lincoln, and they were playing the Ypsilanti Braves, and I got involved with that. But I probably should have stayed on them, regarding that [unintelligible] But, you know, that could be for the next generation, you know. That could be for somebody to take the baton on that.

MJ: Yeah, Was there anybody coming up behind you at that point? When you got out?

DM: There was Dubi Trustee. He was involved in some activism there. And let me see, I seen him at the Heritage Festival a couple years ago. So just talking to him for a while. And you know, yeah, there were other people coming up and being involved. Yeah.

MJ: You know, I one thing I'm interested in, and I'm always interested in this, is, why, in a small blue collar town, a small working class town like Ypsi, and as you know, mid-size, and mid-size university like EMU, one of the most diverse schools in the state every year, but still working class, blue collar, first generation students. But still, in this town, and at this university, there's real depth of activism. Whether it's LGBTQ activism or POC activism. And sometimes it's surprising, because we're such a small place. And I'm wondering if there's anything about Ypsi that lends itself to that kind of diversity and that kind of activism?

DM: I would say that diversity leads to that kind of activism. And now, you know, I was telling Erica, we have a lot of history here. You know? It's not like Garden City, which is [a] suburb of Detroit. You know, but its founding and, you know, they had a lot of union activism around the 1920s. And me and Erica were talking about that. Do you know Matt Sigfried?

MJ: Yes.

DM: Okay, well, he put on a tour of Ypsi during Women's History Month a couple of years ago before the pandemic and I learned so much about the strikes and the factories. The factory owners lived right there on Huron [Street] in big houses where they can look out and see their factories. Sometimes having a couple thousand workers, and this small little corner and mostly unmarried women, living in boarding houses where the Riverside Theater is right now. That was

a boarding house. Right down the block was a bathhouse, where they I guess would get their bath once a week... So, a lot of history.

MJ: Yeah. Can you tell us about your work-- about your research that you've been doing?

DM: Oh, sure. Erica, I could probably show you some pictures. You know, sitting in the NASO offices, a lot of times it's just by yourself. You're putting in your hours. And a lot of times you have people come in about-- they're coming in telling you about their "Cherokee" grandmothers. She's always Cherokee.

EM & MJ: [laughs]

DM: You get information about real history. And [I've] just kind of collected these things and just whatever I've found out-- I have a poster board, right now, with a grid of Ypsilanti and historical references, landmarks that go back from thousands of years ago with the mound people who were here and to woodland Native peoples. And, also during contact, we had Andrew Blackbird here getting a couple of books published. One was from the Ypsilanti Job Press, now where City Hall is. Another one is Scharff. That's also Scharff CAG Publishing House, downtown Ypsi, there. He got another book published there. And it's just fascinating to think about historic people. Well, he was an Ottawa Indian, and wrote the history of the Ottawa and the Chippewa in Michigan. And here he is walking down the streets of Ypsilanti. And you can just imagine it in your mind. It's fascinating.

MJ: Yeah.

DM: If you take a walk on Water Street along the Huron [River], well, that's a brownfield right now. But nothing's stopping you from walking back there... You can kind of see the grade of where the mound used to be.

MJ: Wow.

DM: [There is a] high point and it kind of grades down... So, you know, Water Works [Park], which is right across the bridge from that area which was called Indian Field. And I'm thinking well, Native people must have had some corn growing there at one time for it to get named there. I don't know. But it's just nice to imagine history...

MJ: Yeah.

DM: You know, contact after contact. And Barb Mickenowitz, [I] believe her husband is a local historian here in Ypsilanti. They gave me a bunch of books that they thought I might be

interested in. And I read about Old Snow [unintelligible] perpetrated genocide against Native peoples... and I'm assuming they were, it was more to the south. It was Augusta Township.

MJ: Mmm hmm.

DM: [unintelligible] Huron people there. Because they were there around the 17th, the 18th century. Or it could be the Pottawatomie, who lived along this area and a large swath, going from Detroit all the way up to Chicago.

MJ: Mmm hmm.

DM: What it means for, you know...

MJ: Yeah.

DM: [Those] that lived out here. So those must have been his victims. But, you know, we did need to learn about history. And not sweep it under the rug, because, you know, it's something that doesn't reflect the patriotic swill that you might get in public school teaching about what America is. I'm certain there's probably all kinds of little genocides. All of these towns throughout Michigan... Ypsilanti is no different.

MJ: Do you know of any historically significant locations for indigenous people on EMU's campus?

DM: They have burial grounds.

MJ: Really?

DM: Peninsular Paper [company site]. There's a burial ground there. Bowen Fieldhouse- they found a body. I was trying to investigate, like, what happened to that skeleton.

MJ: Wow.

DM: I have yet to find out. But yeah, I'm sure throughout all of [campus].

MJ: Oh, okay... But what are you gonna do with all that? I'd like to see something happen with all your research.

DM: Yeah, me and Erica talked about it. We're working on it. Maybe get some more people involved. You know I'm thinking about panels, like historical markers, panels. Ypsilanti has a

birthday coming up in 2023, the 200th birthday. And, you know, I'd like to see it indigenous-focused.

MJ: Hmm. Okay...

DM: [Indigenous people had been] here 1000 years. I think should be indigenous-focused.

MJ: Have you talked to Cheyenne? My other student?

DM: You mean, Stacy?

MJ: Oh, no, I have another student named Cheyenne, who said she was going to contact you. Because she has quite [a bit of] indigenous heritage, herself. And she's doing her final history project on indigenous people in this area. And she heard about you and really wants to talk to you. So, I thought maybe she had gotten a hold of you--

DM: I haven't heard from her. But yeah, I need to bring... This is a big project. And if it's gonna take up to two years, then we have time. And I'd like to see it involve more people. Not just me. But more input, more resources, you know, probably fundraising. And get something-- get something going.

MJ: Okay.

DM: Yeah tell her I'm interested. And anybody else... Erica?

MJ: Yeah. I mean, we here at the archives are also interested as well.

DM: Thank you.

MJ: Yeah. But we should-- we should definitely keep talking about that in the future.

DM: Okay. That'd be great.

EM: Absolutely. Was there anything else you'd like to add to our conversation today?

DM: Well, I'm sorry about, you know, all the losses that came with COVID. But, you know, I don't know if the Washington Red Bleeps would have had that logo changed without COVID. You know, same with the Cleveland Indians, doing away-- they were in the process. But it got done. And, you know, it's a symptom of a problem. We have to solve the problem, the great wealth inequality in this country. And it doesn't mean that Native peoples or some other

under-represented community in this country can't become a logo, again, it can happen. You know, so we need systematic change. So, this can never happen again.

EM: Absolutely... Well, thank you so much for your time and taking out this hour or so to speak with us about the logo change. We really appreciate that.

MJ: Wait. Hold on, I still have another question, Erica.

EM: Oh, you have another question.

MJ: Erica, you've done great, but I do have another question... I think it was 2013. And I think that was the year when President Susan Martin was here. Well, I guess I can't say it was Martin herself, but the logo was brought back to the marching band uniforms. Were you aware of that?

DM: I was aware of that. But my friend, Karen Sharman, who used to be a professor at EMU was involved with that more so than me. Okay. So I'm aware of the situation and I did write a letter, but she spearheaded a protest.

MJ: Okay. Yeah, I wondered if that maybe kind of rekindled that interest that you had back in 1990-91... if you were involved in that at all... in the protests.

DM: Not really... No, not with that one.

MJ: Okay.

DM: I've been going through a hard time and Erica knows all about.

MJ: Okay.

DM: You know, that problem is soon to be solved, you know, a couple-- and I hope to get back into a lot of things, you know. We just can't let up. This is, you know, this is as serious as a heart attack, what's going on. You know, even though Biden is President now, you sound like you both are happy about that.

MJ: Yes, liberal here.

DM: For Trump to even get in there in the first place, is mind boggling to me. So, if that was possible, then almost anything was possible. And it's like, like I say, you know, we can become logos again, you know, until we take care of the problem.

MJ: Alright, well, thank you.

DM: You're welcome. It was good to meet y'all.

MJ: Yeah, yeah. I'm surprised-- I guess I'm surprised we haven't met. I run into Stacy sometimes. I've always run into Stacy at different places. And like, if we were at Sidetrack or something, I would come up to the table and just embarrass myself. But I hadn't met you yet. So I'm glad to meet you.

DM: We might have been in the same places, but just walked down by each other. Who knows.

MJ: Okay.

DM: Maybe we'll bump into each other again, maybe at the site.

MJ: We will. All right, thank you so much.

EM: Thank you so much. Have a good evening.

DM: Okay, you too.

EM: All right.