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DIANE ATWOOD

Conversations About Aging
Wayne Newell, 77
March 23, 2020

Wayne: Hi, good afternoon. This is Wayne Newell and I'm so glad to be with you today. That's my opening line in everything I do.

DIANE: Welcome to Conversations About Aging, a Catching Health podcast. I'm Diane Atwood and I've been traveling around my home state of Maine interviewing people 60 and above about their lives and what it's like to be getting older.

Today's conversation is with Wayne Newell, a Passamaquoddy Indian man who lives at Indian Township, a Passamaquoody Indian reservation or community in Princeton, Maine. I made the trip -- about five hours from Portland -- with Sister Ellen Turner who introduced me to Wayne. For many years she and other Sisters of Mercy taught school on Maine's reservations, and she and Wayne were co-principals at St. Ann's School in the 70s and again in the late 80s in the newly built Indian Township School.

Wayne and I sat together at his dining room table, in the home he shares with his wife Sandy overlooking Big Lake. Beautiful country. I hope you enjoy and learn something from our conversation. I certainly did.

Wayne: If I didn't have this pneumonia, my voice would be much better. Oh. But that's just the way it is. I didn't want to cancel.

Diane: I'm so glad you didn't cancel. Yeah, so glad you didn't cancel.

Wayne: But my voice is not the best condition that it could be.

Diane: Well you do have a broadcast quality voice.

Wayne: Yeah, well, it's better when it's not sick.

Diane: When sister Ellen suggested you've got to interview Wayne Newell, I went I know that name. I know that name. So you've been around for a few years. Oh, yeah. How old are you now?

Wayne: I'm 77.

Diane: What's your birthday? April 16, 1942. Alright. You didn't grow up here?

Wayne: No, I grew up at Pleasant Point, which is near Eastport. And then that's about, I'd say an hour from here.

Diane: East from here? Yeah. Okay. And this is all Passamaquoddy land? It is. And you are a Passamaquoddy Indian?

Wayne: Yup. I grew up there and then I went to school and I came here for the summer and I've been here for well over 40 years.

Diane: Wow. So tell me, first of all, Indian Township is near. Is it near Calais? It's near the Canadian border?

Wayne: Well, Princeton is just over the bridge here and then Calais is about I'd say another 25 miles. And so Calais is the midpoint of the two reservations. It's sort of where everybody gathers. That's our way you get to the store, you know, that kind of thing. So it's a midpoint, and then from here to Bangor, it's about two hours. But everything is pretty well as you introduced the place. It's pretty well country. You know I live right by the lake here.

Diane: Oh this unbelievably beautiful.

Wayne: And people keep asking me because we have other land, too. People say must get a camp. I said why do I need one? My boat's right here. I've got to walk down and that's it, you know, and I don't need a camp. I got one already.

Diane: You live on it. Well, when we came in and we parked across from the church and the moon was out and so was reflected. That's called Little Lake?

Wayne: Big Lake.

Diane: Wait, are there two here that come together or is it just this one?

Wayne: Yeah there's one. This is Big Lake and you go a little further and it's Long Lake.

Diane: Okay, so even that part that's across from the church is called Big Lake?

Wayne: Well, that's where it changes. Okay. Yeah, the lake narrows and the cemetery is there, and then it just opens up here to a very big lake.

Diane: It's magnificent. Well, I would like to go back in time, and then we'll come back to Indian Township.

Wayne: Sure.

Diane: I'd love to know about you as a child, and growing up at Pleasant Point and what was it like for you as a child there?

Wayne: Well, everybody was poor. We were poor, but we didn't realize we were poor. It just seemed like it was a way of life. And, you know, you knew about like indoor bathrooms and stuff like that. We didn't have them on the reservation or water, you had to go to a common well to get water to take to the house. And you had your own source of fire and that was wood. So my brother and I kind of learned that there's a way of life and didn't think any more about it. We lived in a very small house, a two-room house.

Diane: Were there just two kids and your parents?

Wayne: No, there were three. It was my sister and my brother and I. And my mother was sort of a primary provider because my father drank a lot. So he was home, and then they would have a fight and he would be gone again. So, you know, we had a very, very small father relationship.

Diane: Did you ever reconcile with him?

Wayne: Oh, yeah, we did. Good. We did, yeah. And he, unfortunately, he smoked bad too. So he died at an early age, what I consider now an early age. I didn't then. 56.

Diane: Did he have lung cancer?

Wayne: Yeah, yeah. Lung cancer. Smoked those cigarettes without any filter or anything.

Diane: They're bad enough with the filters, let alone without.

Wayne: Yeah, yeah. And so he just smoked and smoked and by the time we learned to smoke, we used to take cigarettes from him, you know, and, but 56, for me was an early age. Because I'm 77 years old now and I think that's early.

Diane: And you quit smoking?

Wayne: Yeah, about 38 years ago.

Diane: Okay, good for you. Yeah. Now, when you hit your 70s suddenly you have a whole different perspective on what's old.

Wayne: Yes, a whole, I don't know. I'm just reaching the age now when they start introducing elders. I used to never stand up.

Diane: Now you have to.

Wayne: Now I'm about to because what happens is a lot of my friends have already gone, have passed and I just don't have an idea of, you know, I'm, I'm not afraid of it or anything like that, but a lot of my friends have just gone.

Diane: I found that when your parents go and your aunts and uncles go and you realize somebody just said it yesterday, I think, you're in the front row.

Wayne: That's a good way to put it. You're, you know. To realize that you're on the waiting list.

Diane: So you gotta make the best of it. That's what I'm finding out. Yeah. It is what it is and you've got to make what you can of it.

Wayne: Yeah, and it is, actually it's a lot of fun.

Diane: What's fun about it for you?

Wayne: It's what's fun about it is that you get to wait your turn. You know it's going to happen. And I just sort of sit around and you know, like, for example, I decided there's a lot of books that have been written over the last 40 years through work that I've done. I said, well, the little individual books are all gone now. I have a master set. I'm going to make a book, a volume out of these things and ask the tribe to pay for it. And they did. They, both reservations gave in to publishing because as you probably know, things aren't free when you're doing that kind of thing. So they gave us some, a nice sizable thing in their budget and we're going to publish the first volume, Ut's already at the printers actually, and they're going to publish it, oh, probably in the next couple of months.

Diane: What's the book about?

Wayne: It's all the collection of all the work written by, some written by me and others written by other tribal members. So instead of saying written by Wayne Newell, which would not be totally correct, I said, edited by Wayne Newell and I did edit a lot of the books. And a lot of my friends, for example, the first book, the first story is called Malyan, which is Marianne. And she wrote the book interviewing a lot of the elders at the time about what it's like to be an Indian girl living on the reservation in the 1920s. Wow. And she went and interviewed people like my mother and other people and put the story together in a chronological way. And very well done, very well done.

Diane: And written in the Passamaquoddy language?

Wayne: It was written in the Passamaquoddy language and in English. Yeah.

Diane: Because she was bilingual. Yeah, yeah. And you are too?

Wayne: We were all bilingual when we were children.

Diane: So you learned, it was just the language that was spoken in your family? Did it go back and forth between English and Passamaquoddy?

Wayne: We were all Passamaquoddy speakers. We were all, that was the primary language. We learned English as soon as we went to school. There was a, I didn't go here but I learned about her. Her name was Mrs. Wellington and she taught in Princeton, from Princeton came over across the bridge and started teaching school. Mostly the alphabet and how to read

English and how to speak English and arithmetic, you know, which was a very common curriculum in those days.

Diane: And did you have an actual school there or did she come and …?

Wayne: No, it's a little, they converted a schoolroom and multi-grade and also it served as a church, you know, on weekends.

Diane: So, the reservation was separate from anything else around you?

Wayne: Yeah, nobody was here. And we learned later as we studied things that a lot of parents taught their children if you're not good, I'm going to send you up to those Indians. You know, it was a negative thing.

Diane: Oh, what a horrible thing.

Wayne: Yeah, yeah, and so that's kind of what happened. Mrs. Wellington appeared to be a very kind soul and taught, I don't know if she got paid or what the deal was. Probably the state paid her.

Diane: So she came but you don't know who sent her in the first place?

Wayne: Yeah, and I think that she was very kind and very anxious to teach. Hmm, that's nice. And the kids that Malyan interviewed, Marianne, her name was Mary Ellen actually. The people that she interviewed spoke well of her, you know, spoke kindly of her as a, and that was not always possible because sometimes the white people living around us made us negative too, you know.

Diane: Because of the way they talked about you or treated you? Yeah. That didn’t actually bring out warm feelings from you toward them?

Wayne: That's exactly what it was. And so we learned to be negative also.

Diane: Terrible lesson for a child to learn.

Wayne: it is very, it is not a very good way to look at the world. As you grow older though, you kind of put that away to a certain extent. It still lives inside you? Yeah, but you was always careful because you could tell who was genuinely likable and you could tell who was not likable, you know, and so as you grew older, you learned those kinds of things.

Diane: Tell me when you were a kid how you would come into contact with white people.

Wayne: You didn't, very often you went to Eastport, in my case that was the town that you would go to. They had a train service there, my mother taught me and the train would stop at Pleasant Point. There was actually a little station there. And you'd get on and it was 12 cents to go to Eastport. And so they'd all go to Eastport at a certain time and they would, the train would go quite often it was a freight train in those days. And they would go quite often my mother named the times I can't remember them now. The train station is gone. But they would get on, pay the fine and they'd go to Eastport and the English part was handy when you talked to the merchants. JJ Newberry's was there, and some other little things and they're all gone now you wouldn't recognize it.

Diane: But would you go with your mother to Eastport? Yah. And you'd do some shopping? Yeah, yeah. Did you ever go to school outside of the reservation?

Wayne: Oh, yeah, I went to the high school there.

Diane: So you went, did you get on the train and go to Eastport to go to high school?

Wayne: I can't remember. No, they had a bus, the state provided a bus.

Diane: So for many years as a child, you were mostly on the reservation. Yeah. And then you started to go to school, to high school. Is that the first time that you were with white people white kids in school?

Wayne: Yeah, well, no, it's not the first time because the nuns taught us. We had a three-room schoolhouse and the grades were all split up pretty evenly. So when you got to the big room, we called it the big room. And that was, I think it was seventh and eighth grade. They kind of polished you off before they sent you off to high school.

Diane: Was that challenging, because you talk about the way white people treated you when you were a little child, and then suddenly you're in there sharing a classroom with white kids.

Wayne: Well, that was part of the problem. There was a problem there. If you were a good student, like I was, you did, all right, and everybody pretty much accepted you. If you weren't, then you had trouble getting acquainted and getting, you know, getting used to the situation. It was hard to adjust. One thing I noticed, which is different today. But one thing I noticed was, we never invited them to our houses or the other way around.

Diane: But you became friends with them in the schoolyard?

Wayne: Just in the schoolroom. There was no social mixing at that time.

Diane: That must have been such a negative experience.

Wayne: Well, you didn't notice it until later on in life, you know, at least I didn't.

Diane: You mean in looking back. Yeah, yeah. And so do you think that means that in those moments, you've just accepted it? Because that's the way it had always been?

Wayne: No, I think its shame. We were ashamed of our houses. You know, and the way they looked and they were brought up, don't forget, I told you a little while ago. If you're not good, I'm gonna send you over to those Indians. You know, that was a negative thing.

Diane: That's a shameful thing. Yeah. That wiould induce shame in somebody. Yeah. So just shame in who you are?

Wayne: Yeah, a lot of that was interplayed here. And so there was very, very low social mixing, if anything else.

Diane: So, you must have struggled at some point with what they call low self-esteem.

Wayne: Very, very much so, even though for example, I was an A student, I still didn't think much of that, you know. They talked about when they put you in the different classes, there was a general, there was a commercial and, and then there was a college course. No Indian ever

got put into the college course even though he was a good student. I was a good student, for example.

Diane: And so you should have been in the college course?

Wayne: At least, or at least the commercial but I never got there. They all put you in the general course. And you just didn't have any place to go. We thought that's where you belonged.

Diane: And so it would never occur to you to even speak up about it?

Wayne: No, no, it would never have occurred. There were a few teachers that were really good. They're still friends of mine today. Well, or they have passed already. There was a lady called Mrs. Grant. She lived in Dennysville. And she was really, really super. And we would wait for the bus in the morning and her car would come first and she'd load it up with Passamaquoddys and zoom, you know? Yeah. And she wrote a book later. And I'm in the book. Yeah.

Diane: Oh, good. And you liked what she wrote?

Wayne: Oh, yeah. Yeah. Yeah. And she was quite elderly by then. And though she retired and became a substitute, and we all looked forward to her substituting you know, she was super. Yeah.

Diane: Your book that you've edited, you say it starts off with Mary Ann's story.

Wayne: Yeah, Mary Ann's story and then it goes with some of the traditional stories that were part of what my grandmother would teach or some other person would teach on the reservation. I put those in there.

Diane: Did you include your story in this book?

Wayne: Oh, yeah, there was one famous one about an oven. Talking bread going into the oven, and they would look into the window. I'm ok, you know and, you know, this is all spoken. It's like television now and kids watch TV. Yeah. And so it started getting warm and he started turning a little bit brown and he would report that and as it progressed, its dialogue became your monitor. Oh, I don't know, it's getting a little warm in here, you know, that kind of thing. And it would be in Passamaquoddy, of course. Right. And and then finally, the owner would say I think he's done.

And this one word became famous. It's okiya, which means ouch. And so it was time to take him out. Okiyah. Okiyah, yeah, it was an ouch. And of course, used it again when they took the knife out to cut him up. So it got picked up by the adults and they all kind of use that word. They knew the word obviously. And it just, especially by the elders. Right. The elders loved it

Diane How many people speak Passamaquoddy these days?

Wayne: These days? That's the trouble we've been having. The more we worked on it the less it became in terms of usage by the younger generation. I'd say anybody that's 50 or older probably is bilingual. But that's not the whole, that's not totally true. And then, after that, that's a lot of people like my sister. My sister grew up in the same house that we did. 20 years later she was born, and she understands everything but her generation would answer you in English and so. I test her every now and then. Like she'll drive me to Bangor to the cancer center and so what I'll do is I'll speak nothing but Passamaquoddy. She understands me.

Diane: But she can't answer back?

Wayne: Oh, yeah, she can when I say and I say why don't you answer me in Passamaquoddy? She can and I say why don't you use that? She says, I'm afraid to make a mistake, you know, that kind of thing. And she and that generation, it's the same time that television started entering the reservation.

Diane: It's very important to you at age 76 to preserve your language, and yet fewer people seem interested in even learning it now?

Wayne: Well, I think that we need coaching. We need a lot of help. What we've been doing lately is preserving, is using electronics as our tutor and that helps a lot. Publishing these books, you know, and using some other methodology has helped an awful lot. Books, CDs, that kind of thing. And we've been working hard at it so after we're gone, there'll be something left.

Diane: Right. There will at least be something. I listened to some of your audio. Well, I listened to a couple of things. There were some recordings from the late 1800s?

Wayne: Yes, we were the first. Actually, we were the first Native American tribe in the country to be recorded by Fewkes. And in 1890, he came to Calais to test his new machine, this new Edison machine. And he was a colonel or some, I think it's major and he was going to go out to

Hopi country. And somebody suggested they said, well, there's a tribe in Maine that still speaks their language and the language story is quite fluid. Why don't you go there and test it. And he took up the audience, took up the challenge and came to Calais. And so people at Pleasant Point, as well as here, gathered there. And we were the first tribe, in fact, to be recorded. And it's in a book somewhere. We just found it. We just happened to find it. We tried to teach our children that fact. That you and your descendents.Or is it descendents or? Ancestors, well the descendents or the ancestors. Yes, the descendents. The people, their chldren and their children. Is that what you're talking about? Yeah. Future generations. They were the first and you carry on the tradition. We try to teach that as much as possible in school. You talked a little bit earlier about the whole notion of low self esteem. It's still strong and heavy here. Or if you're going to be successful, people usually will point to the white community as the mark of success. Sure. Which is not good.

Diane: I've got to tell you that it makes me feel shame. Yeah, it makes me feel shame for white people.

Wayne: Yeah, yeah, well, what we tried to do is work together, build a coalition and try to work as If that stuff did happen, we try to make sure it doesn't happen again. And that's the kind of thing that works the best in my life anyway. Use what God gave you. Because God gave us all the same gifts and put yours in a protectively positive way and it will work. It will work. It's worked in my life anyway.

Diane: Well, I need to know. I have a lot of questions. I would like to ask you a personal question. Were you born with an eyesight problem?

Wayne: Yes, I had the, we were all what you call midwives and she didn't have that stuff that they would drop in your eyes like they will have a common birth now. She didn't have any that day I was born apparently. And so I lost my left eye. This is a glass eye you're looking at. That's why it's closed.

Diane: The left eye is gone. They took it out and you got a glass eye right? The right one you can hardly see out of it without glasses?

Wayne: Well it's 2200 and I function real well, with it. All your life? Everything I know.

Diane: Everything? Has it been like that your entire life?

Wayne: Yeah. That's the only thing I know.

Wayne: I can do all of the things that you can do except I do them slower. Slowly.

Diane: You've been defined well, that's maybe not the right word. You've been described as a brilliant man.

Wayne: Well, thank you. I'm not sure I can live up to that. But I'll take it.

Diane: So you had to have some brilliance, both in spirit and in your brain to be able to. I understand that when you left high school, you went to Massachusetts, you went to Boston, you went to Harvard.

Wayne: I went to Harvard eventually, after flunking out of two schools, Harvard still accepted me.

Diane: Okay, so tell me about the flunking out. After high school, what did you decide?

Wayne: I went to Emerson College in Boston. It's the same place that Carol Burnett went to.

Diane: Were you hoping to be another Carol Burnett? Or were you wanting to be something else?

Wayne: I just wanted to do something. It just was too difficult. Because I lived on the reservation, don't forget all of my life. And then I went to Eastport High School, which is next to the reservation and then graduated, and then somehow or other I wanted to go into broadcasting.

Diane: And you landed in Boston, Massachusetts. Massachusetts, the big city. Was it really?

Wayne: it was shocking. It was a cultural, a true cultural shock I can now ascribe to. And at the time? Oh, my god, it was just unbelievable. Big Boston. I mean Eastport was big enough.

Diane: But wow, you were so brave to even try it.

Wayne: Well, I wanted to get to broadcasting so bad that I would go anywhere.

Wayne: And so I went and it just did not work out. I was in too many situations where God, we didn't do this at home.

Diane: Like what?

Wayne: Just going to a restaurant. Just going, no having, I had $28 a week of discretionary funds. And so I ate, of course, at the high school, that was part of my, I mean at the college. That was part of my scholarship. I had a scholarship to go there. Okay. A full scholarship? I can't remember. Somebody provided the scholarship. And so, that's where I ate, but it was only one meal a day. That's the only thing that, so what I would do would be use the $28, stretch it as much as I could. But at night I would have a big meal to last me to the next night. And so it was, it was something else.

Diane: But what made you leave?

Wayne: It was just harder than I expected. The work or the environment? The environment and the other thing was the equipment. The equipment that I was used to playing with was nothing compared to what was in the studio at Emerson.

Diane: So you had already been dabbling in broadcasting in high school?

Wayne: Yeah, yeah. And you had to write commercials, which I never did. You know, it was just unbelievable.

Diane: So it was harder than you thought it might be and you were struggling to learn it?

Wayne: Well, the thing that I wanted to do was just, what came out of me was natural. I can do that. You know, I could speak and I could present, but I can, I couldn't write commercials. And that discouraged me.

Diane: And what about how people treated you?

Wayne: There it was a little less. It was not, it was away from Eastport. I was just a student.

Diane: So that was good. That must have been good for how you felt about yourself. Not having to put up with the discrimination.

Wayne: It was on the outside, but it was still me that was fighting me. I was fighting my own devils at that point. I couldn't really blame anybody else.

Diane: So after two years you just decided I want to come home? After a year. One year and you came home but you gave it another shot someplace else?

Wayne: I went to Houlton directly from Emerson. I went to Houlton which was again right in the heart of reservation country and we're back to discrimination number one again. And what's at Houlton? Is there a university? There were a lot of Indians living in there. Some of them lived at the Houlton dump.

Diane: Some of the Indians lived at the Houlton dump?

Wayne: There's a reservation there now. What's it called? Not at the dump but. In Houlton? Yeah, there's a nice village there.

Diane: And what's the reservation called? And are they Passamaquoddy Indians or another tribe?

Wayne: They're Maliseet, Passamaquoddy, Micmac. What they call mixed in.

Diane: And in Houlton was there a school, a broadcasting school that you went to?

Wayne: No. You just moved to Houlton? Just a liberal college. Okay, and how long did you last there? A year. Did you learn anything? No, my grades were very low, and I knew I could do better but I didn't.

Diane: So how did you land at Harvard?

Wayne: There was a friend of mine. He was the Commissioner of Indian Affairs. He said why don't you apply to Harvard. I said, I can't apply to Harvard, I flunked out of two schools. He said, give it a case. Write down why you should be accepted at the Masters level. I said I can't do that, I don't even have a bachelor's degree. He said make a case. So what I did was I stayed up

all night. You know, I'm getting emotional. I can tell. And I stayed up all night and just poured the stuff right of me. And I wrote and wrote and then I had Sandy type out what I wrote and edit somewhat. She was a secretary. And so I did that, read it over pretty good, sent it out. So I sent it to the school of admissions and pretty soon I get a letter that said we'd like to have you interviewed. I said, aah, we're in the business now because I love, I can manage an interview better than I can manage a ballgame.

Wayne: I went and got a new suit. It was all black. Looked like an undertaker. Anyway. So I went up there and it was my turn, and I walked in. There is a guy with a full beard with a flannel shirt and dungarees. Of course, now dungarees are fashionable. I wear them all the time. So there was that and everybody else had a sort of a flannel, funny dungaree getup. And there was a big table. They're all sitting there and so I introduced myself, they take my paper out and test me for it. And, you know what, what did you mean when you said and so, once we got started, I was in charge of the interview. Wow. Pretty much and someone said they only allowed a certain time, said well thank you very much Mr. Newell, we appreciate it and so I left the room and I said ah, shit I really blew it. I didn't. They sent me a letter a few few days later saying I had been accepted to matriculate. I didn't know what matriculate meant.

Diane: You looked it up. Back in the day when you didn't Google it, you went to the dictionary.

Wayne: You got it. You got it. Yeah. Anyway, which meant that I was okay and start school at a certain time. But I had to go to summer school. I was a little behind with, they saw my marks at the other places, but they still accepted me. And this year, this past year, I got to address the graduation class. I was in the School of Education. I got to address the graduating class of the School of Education

Diane: At Harvard? At Harvard. Yeah. What an accomplishment.

Wayne: Well, it was a lot of fun. I enjoyed it except the only thing is, it was outdoors and it was late May and it had to be the coldest day in history that I can remember. I'm trying to give the speech and my jaw is going like this.

Diane: But when you attended school there, was it a good experience?

Wayne: Oh, yeah. Oh yeah. I loved it. I really truly loved it. And if I can get another scholarship, I'd like to go back and finish my doctorate.

Diane: So you have a master's degree?

Wayne: Yeah, I have a masters but I'd like to have a doctorate. Dr. Newell, that sounds good. I don't know why but. Why not? Yeah, why not? Why not?

Diane: When you left Harvard, you chose to come back to Maine and you chose to live here?

Wayne: Well, that's an interesting story because I was 40 years old. No, I wasn't 40 years old. That was 40 years ago. Okay, so. I had one child, and one was born before I graduated. So I didn't just study.

Diane: So it was not just being a full time student?

Wayne: Right, right. Because you were still living down there while you went to school. Yeah.

Diane: Now I've gotta go back for a second. Yeah. Sandy still sitting there. We're going to talk about her. You said she helped type up that letter. Were you married at that time or dating or?

Wayne: No, we were married. We had one child already.

Diane: Okay. How did you and Sandy meet? Sandy's not Passamaquoddy, is she?

Wayne: No. We met. I worked at WABI Studios on Channel five in Bangor.

Diane: So you did get into broadcasting?

Wayne: A little bit, little bit. What did you do? I was pretty much a technician, technical person, and then you did some on unglorified work like wash floors. I'd do anything to stay in the business. Right. But anyway, that's how we met. So Sandy worked there? I would go over, no. Sandy was quite a, one of the best bowlers in Bangor at the time. And what happened was, I would go over for coffee for the gang, after the news and after, after the busy part. And so I would meet this woman and she'd always sort of smile at me. And so one night I decided to talk to her and because we were both shy. I was more shy than I led on and she was very shy, very shy. She still is. Anyway, something must have worked because the other day we celebrated our 52nd wedding anniversary. I love that story. Yeah.Yeah.

Diane: Was there any kind of pressure from your family though to marry somebody within your tribe?

Wayne: I think there might have been.

Diane: But they accepted Sandy?

Wayne: Yeah. Oh, yeah. Yeah, she's a very likable person. And nowadays, Sandy probably understands as much as the language as anybody over the years she's picked up a lot.

Diane: Tell me about some of the traditions, like the cultural things that you grew up with and that you're trying to preserve.

Wayne: Well, we're trying to preserve the things about sharing about you know, making sure that that you always have a when you eat, you always share whatever you got with anybody that walks into your place. About sharing stories about how life was in the past and how it is now. Because even then there was a way in which things were different to what it was then. There's always a time clock, there's always a chronology. And you always have to kind of find it and make sure that it gets wound up every now and then. This is a cultural chronology. And of course, there has been more change from the middle, from the low 60s to today. Because of all the changes, I mean, just just look at these communities now. I don't know if you looked around while you were driving in but this particular where we're sitting on did not exist 40 years ago.

Diane: I sense that it changed mostly with the Indian land claims settlement.

Wayne: I think it would have happened anyway. You do? You know, people always point to that. I think it would have happened anyway,

Diane: Just because the world in general was changing?

Wayne: Yeah, world in general was changing. And the other thing is that you've got better housing. This is all not related to the land claims. Land claims came after that.

Diane: So the houses started to become better?

Wayne: Yeah, you had indoor bathrooms, indoor faucets, that kind of thing. That was quite a change.

Diane: You were living here before the land claims here? No.

Wayne: Yeah had to be because I graduated in 1971.

Diane: And when was the land claims? I can't remember.

Wayne: 1980. And the community didn't really start to feel it until after that.

Diane: So what changed with the land claims and for people who don't know about the land claims settlement or any of that, can you give us a summary of what that was all about?

Wayne: We sued the state, we didn't really sue the state, we sued Maine in a federal court, and they were supposed to be protecting us. We wanted the protection that other tribes got throughout the nation.

Diane: So the tribes of Maine did not get any protection?

Wayne: We wanted the federal government to sue Maine. Okay. And they did, because of Gignoux, Judge Gignoux said that it was the obligation of the federal government to protect us and came down with the judgment in 1980, or maybe a little earlier. And right off the bench. That was a miracle movement on his part. Edward Gignoux is one of the most brilliant judges to, as a matter of fact, they considered him for the Supreme Court. Right. Yeah. At any rate, that didn't happen, but he continued with, when the thing came down with that decision. And so what happened with the community though, there was a realization on the part of the community.

Diane: The Indian community?

Wayne: Yeah, on the part of the Indian community that something really was going to happen and it's going to be real. That was really when it caught on in the community.

Diane: And what was going to be different?

Wayne: We were going to own more land. We were probably going to have some funds to go with it. That kind of thing.

Diane: And it did happen?

Wayne: And it did happen. It did happen.

Diane: So at that time we've got how many tribes here in Maine?

Wayne: There's four.

Diane: So there's the Passamaquoddy, the Penobscot, the Maliseets. And the Micmacs. The Micmacs.

Diane: How much more land did you get, the Passamaquoddys get?

Wayne Well, we had 300,000 acres divided between the two communities. Evenly? Evenly, yeah. Penobscot and Passamaquoddy divided the 300,000 acres, which would be, what, about 150,000 each.

Diane: Okay. And then your 150,000 was split between Pleasant Point and here?

Wayne: And other places that didn't have any people in them.

Diane: But now do?

Wayne: Well they have to ask the tribe if they can.

Diane: So what happened here at Indian township? How did the population change?

Wayne: People just started coming back home.

Diane: What did you fowork when you came back here?

Wayne: I worked at the school and I also worked with two other people to develop the blueberry company, myself and a well-respected former tribal governor. Now they call them chiefs. I don't

because I grew up with calling them governor. So the three of us and the president of the Bar Harbor Banking and Trust Company, the three of us were the, we had exclusive right to work with the company. And so we worked at it. I knew nothing about, I knew nothing about blueberry operation. So and my friend didn't either. Her name Colleen Beebe and Francis Nicholas, but this other guy knew the financial end of it things, the President of the Bar Harbor Banking and Trust Company, and I said to myself, this guy must know something. Yeah, if he's running a bank. Yeah. So I said I'm gonna learn from him, which is what I've always done. I've always sought out smarter people than me.

Diane: That's good advice. I always ask the people I interview what's the best advice you could give you've learned.

Wayne: Yup.Think about people who know more than you do, and they'll teach you something. And that's exactly what I did. And then the other way around was culturally, he wanted to know who he was working with. And so he was looking at us. All this was not expressed, by the way in like, you know, like this. It was expressed in the way in which we operated it, right. Yeah. And so.

Diane: But you learned from each other something? Yeah, yeah. I'm worried that I'm, I know you've got your lung issues and so I'm worried that I'm going to sap you of your energy and I have some questions that I want to ask you.

Wayne: No, I'm still good. Okay. Yup.

Diane: You said you retired not too long ago.

Wayne: I retired from the school from 2012 when I got diagnosed with cancer.

Diane: Oh, yes, that's right. You're under treatment for cancer still.

Wayne: Yeah, and I was diagnosed at 2012 and so they didn't give me much time but I'm still here. I think why I'm here is because I'm so energetic.

Diane: What kind of cancer were you diagnosed with?

Wayne: It's a blood cancer, multiple myeloma. Multiple myeloma. Yeah, you got it. You got it.

Diane: And how did you find out that you had it?

Wayne: Well, I was sick a lot of the times and I was anemic, that kind of thing. And I went to about every specialist in Maine. Finally this one lady said I want to send you to this oncologist and we'll see what happens. So we went. And they discovered that that's what I had. I would lose blood, they don't know why. Nobody knew why. And so I said, how much time do I have without treatment? She said two years. I said, what about treatment? She said, we don't know.

Diane: They have new kinds of treatment now. Are you doing the new treatments? Is it immunotherapy?

Wayne: Well, they've got some kind of a treatment. Right now I'm still doing chemo and some other stuff. So whatever combination they're given me, it's working.

Diane: And how often do you have to go and have a treatment?

Wayne: A month that's, I used to go twice, twice a week. Sandy would drive me to Bangor twice a week, no matter what the weather was. Wow. And now it's just maintenance. I go once a month.

Diane: Okay. And you've got oxygen in your nose, you've got those little, I think they're called cannulars in your nose. Yeah. So you've been having some trouble with your lungs?

Wayne: No, it's my heart. Okay. And that's a separate issue? Well, it's related. To the, is it related to the disease or? It's related to the disease but the heart is also weakened somewhat. By the cancer or by the treatments? By, no, just weakened, and they want to put less stress on the heart. I had two successful operations. What did they do in the operations? Well, one day they stayed on the, they kept me on the table for nine hours. Good Lord. And then the other one, six hours. What happened was that the. Fibrillation? Yeah, a fib they call it. Like when your heart starts to like your hands were going? Yeah you got it. You got it. Yeah. And then so they fixed it. The first time they thought they fixed it. And they didn't. So we went back in again. This is inside the heart. They went back in again, and they did fix it. And so now we're playing close to the heart, making sure that everything's all right now today. My heart rate was 72, which is good. Yeah. But before you couldn't tell when the heart was gonna go.

Diane: And you're a little hoarse you said. Your broadcast voice isn't quite what it should be. No, no, it isn't. So you have developed pneumonia, too?

Wayne: Oh, I had a lot of pneumonia. You had a lot of pneumonia? Yeah. So I said to them, anything, I'll do anything, but keep me out to a hospital, you know.

Diane: You're quite a fighter, aren't you?

Wayne: Yeah. I said I don’t want to go to the hospital. I've been there so many times. So, uh.

Diane: How do you keep up your spirit?

Wayne: I think I believe that, I believe enormously that we're all gonna die and my turn is coming somewhere. Meanwhile, we're given gifts, that maybe we don't realize the gift as we undergo this chapter of our lives, and god has just given all these lessons to us while we're still alive so that we prepare for the next next part of our lives. I don't know what to call it, but I believe there's something else besides this. I believe you don't just die.

Diane: Right. You believe that there is something after you die?

Wayne: Yeah and I believe that very strongly. That's why I'm not afraid to go. I mean, you know, the other, a few, last year, I think it might have been my lung shut down both of them from pneumonia. And they said, we'd better send him to Bangor. So they got one of those helicopter things tied me up and the whole nine yards. And I thought it was then.

Diane: So you may not have been afraid, but I bet your family and Sandy was probably.

Wayne: We've talked about it quite a bit, me and Sandy. And what, what. It will happen. It might even happen before me. Who knows?

Diane: That's right. We don't know, do we? No. What do you think has been some of the hardest lessons you've had to learn in your life?

Wayne: I recognize my own devils much better than I used to.

Diane: What do you think is the hardest devil you've had to fight? Me. What makes you a devil?

Wayne: It's just spirit that won't quit trying to fight you. You know it's like that. Remember I said at the beginning of our discussion, I said something to the effect that we were poor, but we didn't know it. And the more that I experienced, the more that I experienced this, this bad spirit. And so you get ready and you get your forts ready and you start saying, all right, I'll take you on. You know. I probably would be dead like so many of my friends if I weren't utilizing the philosophy of 12 steps and I use that program because it makes sense to me. It makes sense to use something that views life in a different perspective.

Diane: Right like that you feel like you have to be in control of everything. Yes. But you don't have to be in control of it.

Wayne: And I'm not, butI could be part of it and that's the thing that I like the best.

Diane: Tell me about your gifts. What do you see your gifts as?

Wayne: You know, I've never really thought about that.

Diane: Well, I'm giving you the chance now.

Wayne: I never really thought about that. But the special gift for me has been able to go at a certain pace with the handicap so-called handicap with the limited, I said it a while ago, with limited vision.

Diane: So you had to learn right from the get go, how to move through life without being able to see very well?

Wayne: That's exactly what it is and I haven't, I haven't gone through life without it. I don't know what I would be or what life would be like if I had 20/20 vision. I don't know what I'd be like. So to me this given this eyesight that I'm given is a special special gift. Because I'm always using it, utilizing it the best I know how. That's the lesson for me. That's the gift.

Diane: And so you have to do that now as you're battling cancer, you've got these health issues and you have to slow down you have a walker that you use so you're just trying to make the best of it.

Wayne: Now sometimes I don't do it that well. What do you mean? I don't do it that well. I forget, you know. I forget what I'm supposed to be doing.

Diane: Does that mean that you're not quite as serene as you should be? You fight about it. Right. You know, you fight it, you get angry about it?

Wayne: Yeah. Because, you know, if we all forget sometimes we're human We're human beings and we forget or become ungrateful. And I forget that. The thing that makes me remember is when I have my family all around me and I can look and I can say what a lucky man I am. And you know, I can look at each one of those individual people from wife on to the smallest one and I say, I'm so damn lucky and it puts me back on the track again. You know, we're all on a little train.

Diane: We are on a little train. Yeah. When you wake up in the morning, do you have hopes for how the day will go or what makes it a good day for you?

Wayne: Makes it a good day when I do a little reading of my own, thank the good Lord for another night of rest and so we go on with that. Sometimes I forget to read my literature. And that's when I have the bad times.

Diane: There's something that I want to talk about this day and age, phrases that we all grew up with suddenly are not okay to use. What do I call you? Are you an indigenous person? Are you an Indian? What is respectful and the right way to say it?

Wayne: I'm not quite sure. Indians doesn't offend me, except it's not the right title. You know what I mean? What is the right title? That's I don't know that. I don't know. Native American? Native people? Native people is one of my favorites. Indigenous to me is a little too. I never used indigenous. Maybe because I can't spell it.

Diane: But so, you are fine with, you're an Indian? Yeah. You're a Passamaquoddy Indian.

Wayne: The Passamaquoddy part is the thing that I'm most proud of. If people will say you know, this is a Passamaquoddy Indian man or this is the Penobscot Indian Nation man.

Diane: And we still call this a reservation?

Wayne: Yeah, or community. And do I call it an Indian community? That's what I like the best personally. Alright. Yeah. So. Indian people.

Diane: I'm gonna ask you one more thing and then we'll end. Okay. I want you to say something in your language like, Is there a short blessing or something that you could give Sure.

Wayne: I used to do it with Blanch but I do it with Joanna who lives just across the way here, but it goes like this.

Wayne: Gives Blessing in Passamaquoddy

Wayne: Now what that means — you want a translation? I do. Thank you for bringing us here together again.We are so grateful that we are here as a community. We are so here with our children, we are so here with our women, we are so here with our men, we are so here with our elders and we are so here as we gather for another day of your special blessings. Thank you for another day for your blessings. Neealage, which means let us be together. So it's a fairly short one but it's very inclusive.

Diane; How do you say thank you?

Wayne: Woliwon. Woliwon. Yeah, woliwon.

Diane: So I would like to say to you woliwon.

Diane: You've been listening to Conversations About Aging, a Catching Health Podcast. I'm Diane Atwood and I've been talking with Wayne Newell, a Passamaquoddy Indian man from Indian Township in Princeton, Maine.

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