Dr. Marty Reinhart

Northern Michigan University

November 17, 2015

Interviewed by Tori Zremski (Principal Interviewer), Grace Menter, and Sara Bradshaw

Tori Zremski (TZ) Is it recording, is it on? So, what day is it? The seventeenth, November 17, 5:58 AM. We are interviewing Marty. Say hello

MR: 5:58 AM?

TZ: Oh I'm sorry.

MR: I'd say that's

TZ: I've been working for a while. [MR laughs] It's 10:58 AM

MR: Okay.

TZ: I think, no it's 11:01. Okay. It's 11:01 on November 17 [whispers] it's right? Right. And this is Marty. Okay, so our general question, can you tell us your name and your birthdate?

MR: It's Martin Reinhart and I was born April 22, 1969.

TZ: Okay. And your job and/or income?

UFV: If you're comfortable asking

MR: Yeah, sure. I'm an Associate Professor of Native American Studies and I think I make about seventy some thousand a year. I can't remember what the exact number is.

TZ: Do you live in the Marquette area?

MR: We live in Gwinn.

TZ: So that's like around. Okay, I know where that is. And then, if you're comfortable answering this, what is your tribe affiliation?

MR: I am a citizen of the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians. I'm a descendant of the Garden River First Nation of Ojibway in Ontario. We call ourselves Anishinaabe Ojibway, we are part of the Anishinaabe Three Fires Confederacy, which includes the Chippewa, Odawa, and Potawatomi.

TZ: That's cool. And your university position?

MR: Yeah. Associate Professor

TZ: Okay

MR: A little bit redundant

TZ: Yeah I know. What's your preference on like, if you're comfortable with this. What's your preference on like how you would like Native Americans to be called like Native Americans, Native Indians, First People?

MR: That's often a question because it's so little understood, Aboriginal, Indigenous, Native, North American Indian, they're all the same. They're all names that we've been called. And so my preference is that we're called Anishinaabe Ojibway, which is who we are. It's kind of like if you go to France, you wouldn't call them Europeans, you'd call them French. So if you come to Anishinaabe Akiing, our territory here and we prefer to be called Anishinaabe, Ojibway, Odawa, or Potawatomi. As far as a pan-Indian term, I really don't care what people call us, as long as they don't use it in a negative fashion. My preference would be for American Indian, it's the most historical term used in a legal-political sense. However, in the 1980s there was a preference for Native American. Native American seemed to stick around, that's why the Center for Native American studies was named Native American. It was a move toward a preference to being more inclusive, and so that's where we're at today.

TZ: Okay, specifics. What was your motivation for you to help with the university to make the Native American Studies a major? Like, what was like your big drive behind it?

MR: Well we are the first people in this area, and if you go to any other country they all have studies of their own society, their own culture. You come to Anishinaabe territory, most of the colleges don't have studies of our own Native History and country and language and such. So I mean that's probably the first and foremost reason in my mind, that's where we're at. I mean it's 2015, right? Isn't it about time? You know, I guess the other reason is that the Native American Studies offers a large perspective on many issues. It's inter-disciplinary in nature, it's a way to address colonialism, which is something that most of the other disciplines don't even touch on. We certainly have it as a central tenant of what we look at, because of who we are. And so I think it's important that we address that in a very meaningful way. You know, it's kind of like when people say, "What kind of job can I get in Native American Studies?" Well, whatever job you want, but is that why you're in college? To get a job? And if that's your ambition in college, you know, it's kind of a low level ambition in my opinion. My opinion is that you go to college so you can get smart, so you can make good decisions as leaders, change our world, and you can do that in whatever job you want. Be the best at whatever you do, but make good decisions right?

TZ: I agree.

MR: That's what we're here for, and I think Native American Studies offers a really good opportunity to study indigenous-non-indigenous relations, which is really what's transformed our world and caused a lot of strife. I think, if you look at what's happening in Syria right now. In Syria you have climate refugees, you have indigenous people who are refugees from their own country, their own area. Moving into other areas and causing a lot of conflict. And the refugees aren't causing the conflict, but the crisis is causing the conflict and it's escalating into world concerns. Now the people are blaming the terrorism on the refugees. You know, we're saying, "Oh, we're not going to have these refugees come to the United States now." You have how many state governors that are idiots that are saying, "No, no Syrian refugees because we're afraid of terrorists." Right? I mean, so it's escalating into a world crisis and it's only going to get worse because of climate change.

TZ: Yeah

MR: We're going to have a lot more climate change refugees. What are we going to do with them? Say, "Oh too bad, so sad?"

TZ: Well this will never get figured out, right?

MR: Sop yeah, I think Native American Studies offers a fresh perspective on world issues, and a much needed one. I don't think we can walk through this world blindly assuming that these relationships, these deep historical relationships don't matter. They do, you know. It's the idea that we can be here in Anishinaabe territory and you never have to learn about Anishinaabe culture and history. Right? I mean that attest to the idiocy we have in our world today. So.

TZ: Yeah. As a school, like what made you choose Northern? To be here because I know that you've worked at other universities in different parts of the country and I know that you came back here. So what made you want to come back? Cause I know that ___

MR: Well Northern is right in the middle of Anishinaabe territory, and it's one of the most progressive institutions. It's probably that has the greatest programmatic efforts near my home. You know, I'm from Sault Ste. Marie, three hours away, but this is all Anishinaabe territory. And so I wanted to be close to home but I also wanted to be at a institution that's working, in my opinion, in the right direction. We're growing and developing our Native Studies Program, which the major being approved is certainly part of. And so I think that's a very good reason to work at a progressive intuition. It could much more progressive in my opinion but.

TZ: Yeah. I think everybody has room to improve. I think everything does. And, okay. Do you think that the Center for Native American Studies has had like a really great impact on the university and like the surrounding areas or do you think it could make like a greater impact?

MR: Yeah, I think it's had a great impact. I think it could be much greater. And it's a matter of leadership, it's also a matter of resources, it's a matter of critical mass. I think the leadership in my opinion has been tremendous. And I don't like to float my own boat, but we've done some pretty cool stuff here. Do we need more resources from upper level, the administration? Absolutely. I think the Board of Regents, or Trustees, the administration, needs to be much more supportive in allocating resources. But I think in order to get there we need critical mass among the population, the faculty and the students and the staff and the community who surrounds us and sends their students here. They need to get to that point where they think this is important and once they do then the administration and the board will fall in line. They're political entities, you know, they're going to step it up when the community meets critical mass. You guys demand it, they'll respond. As long as everybody's complacent, yeah, it's kind of cool to have a Native Program, but it's not core.

TZ: Yeah

MR: Right? That's what they think. So they'll use it for mileage in their diversity efforts. But they're not going to do anything core. You know. It's not like we're going to get five million dollars in our budget to expand.

TZ: Yeah, like especially with the, the...I can't.

UFV: The budget cuts?

TZ: No not with the budget cuts but with how.

MR: The shrinking enrollment?

TZ: That and but like how you want, the masses, like how with the mental health thing that's going on right now, they're actually considering changing it because so many people signed the petition to change it, and it was student run and everything. So I think that they're definitely.

MR: Yeah, got to have critical mass.

TZ: Yeah. Okay. We know that you went to Arizona and Colorado. Why did you go there and what did you do specifically there?

MR: I left here for Arizona with a couple of reasons. One is my arthritis, I'd assumed that, I had heard, that I'm going out to Arizona, dry desert climate was good for arthritics. I have arthritis in my hip, I've had it since I got out of the military. It's not true, it didn't change a thing. And I also had a great position that I was going into for an online education corporation. So it was a good move in my career, and that didn't work out either. I didn't really enjoy the corporate world, wanted to get back into public education.

TZ: Okay

MR: And so then from Arizona I went to Colorado. Colorado, I worked at Colorado State University in the Inner West Equity Assistance Center where I was a research associate helping schools deal with equity issues in education. Specifically looking at American Indian Education, and then when a position opened up back here I was like, "Hey, going home." Got the position and now I'm back.

UFV: Home is where the heart is.

MR: Yep.

TZ: Okay. Do you think that like having the Native American Studies as a major is going to make a really big impact on the rest of the state or to…

MR: I think so.

TZ: like kickstart them to do it too?

MR: Yeah, we are the first in this state, and you know, I think when you see things like that happen at other universities it creates competition. The other universities are probably going to look this way and say, "Geeze, why can't we do that." Hopefully, hopefully that's what happens and we'll continue to see Indian Education in Michigan continue to grow and develop like we are. That all really depends on the critical mass though. We're lucky here, we had good leadership and we had the right things happen at the right time. It may not happen at other institutions like it happened here. You know, it depends on what perspective they have, if they have a more complacent community membership than we do, it's doubtful it will happen. We had, whatever caused us to be able to do this at this time, it's been over twenty-five years we've been waiting for this. And so we got to a point where we said, "Let's do it." We'll see.

TZ: And especially with like areas like with U of M Ann Arbor there's like a lot of diversity in there because everybody comes from like all over the world to go there. So there's a good chance that'll happen because it'll be like, "Oh, Northern has it. We gotta have it."

MR: It could. Right, it could happen.

TZ: Yeah. Okay. Will you be teaching any courses in the major?

MR: Um-hmm

TZ: Which ones?

MR: The courses I'm teaching currently are going to be part of the major. I anticipate that I will have the opportunity to teach some of the new courses. Either the, we may work back and forth, April Lindala and I working on the Introduction to Native American Studies and the other capstone course which is a critical theory course.

TZ: Okay. So you said it took twenty-five years to get the Native American Studies as a major.

MR: Over twenty-five years.

TZ: Over twenty-five years? How many years exactly, do you know?

MR: Well the first course, to my knowledge in Native American Studies was taught here in 1971. Do the math.

TZ: That's a long time.

MR: So the minor is going on twenty-five years. The Center is twenty years, so yeah.

TZ: So

UFV: It's about danged time.

MR: Right?

TZ: Making progress

MR: And if you think about it, how long ago did we discover Christopher Columbus on the shores of Hispanola? So it's actually about 525 years plus. About damned time.

TZ: Yeah. During like the process to get the major authenticated and turn it from a minor into a full blown major, what was like the biggest challenge for you and everybody who was trying to get it to become a major?

MR: Getting support on the university campus, I think, from the administration is very challenging. Getting support from our fellow faculty, very challenging. Everyone was going through their own budget cuts, resources are scarce. We were facing shrinking enrollment. And people would say, "Why on earth would you ever try to attempt to create a program in the midst of budget cuts?" And so for Indian people we're like, "Oh? That's worse than the holocaust we've suffered through for 525 years?" or however long it's been.

UFV: And plus wouldn't you think like having this new major being the first one in Michigan, that would bring people to the school?

MR: Well we hope that's the case. But you know, I mean, you know it's never going to be the right time. We're never going to be the program that they say, "Hey this is the one we want to help transform the university!" So why not now? Right? If we're never going to be the core program of the university, does it matter if it's in the midst of budget cuts and enrollment decreases? You do what you got to go.

UFV: As long as it's happening.

MR: If we wait for them to say, "Hey, you know what? You guys should have a major." We will never have a major

TZ: Yeah that'd be a long time coming, yeah a long time coming.

MR: Right? So it didn't matter when it was, it was just, it was time.

TZ: Oh, that is not what I wanted thing. Like what are the goals for the program? I know that you want to spread, like knowledge of it right? And are there any other goals you have for the program? Like where do you see it going, like do you think that, I don't know.

UFV: Think it might become a core thing in the future?

TZ: Yeah especially for like this area.

MR: Well, continuous growth and development I think is how you have to look at it. You don't want to just get to the major and say, "Okay. We're done." Right?

UFV: "We've accomplished all our goals."

MR: Right. So we have maybe some internal things that will continue to reshape the major and those will happen on all departments on campus. We also have opportunities to think about higher levels of education, Masters, why not have a Doctorate, you know? I mean that's a good goal. We have the minor, we have an Associates, we have a major, we have a certification in Indian Education, we have a tie-in to a Masters in Educational Administration or Leadership. You know, why not have our own masters? Why not have growth and development of our courses within the major, within the minor. And there's a lot we can do. We just have to see what our resources are to work with, what the interest is from the larger community of students, and the world around us. Maybe we do something that's going to address climate change, maybe we do something that's going to address refugees, maybe we do something that's something beyond what we have right now that's very important for folks. The future's wide open.

TZ: Okay. In the major are we going to be in the major? Okay, let me reword this. In the major are they going to be focusing on like this particular area of American Indians or we, or are they going to like spread out throughout the U.S.?

MR: Yeah there is an emphasis on Great Lakes Region, which is one of the core tenants, I think, of how Native American Studies or Indian Education should be. It should have a concentric circle model that you start with what your local tribal focus and then you emanate out from that. And that's important, so why should we not do that here? It makes sense, right?

UFV: Yes.

MR: Do we have to get going?

Unidentified Voice: Yes.

MR: Okay. So try to wrap it up.

TZ: Okay we have like two more questions left. Okay, so we know that you did the Decolonizing Diet Project? Okay, so what exactly is that, like explain it?

MR: The Decolonizing Diet Project or DDP for short is a study of the relationships between humans and indigenous plants and animals, indigenous foods of the Great Lakes Region. And so we had twenty-five of us who participated in this year-long research project. We ate indigenous foods, we took biological readings of our health, we kept track of our sociological-cultural relationships, and we exercised rights and dealt with policies. And so we looked at it on three different dimensions, and then now we have the things that are extending from that research project like our camps that we're supporting, the presentations we're doing, writing chapters for books and assisting other folks with our data that we collected.

TZ: And, so what, what was the exact like results of this? Like what happened at the end?

MR: The DDP?

TZ: Yeah.

MR: We found that we had positive weight loss, that people lost weight, significantly. And so it was a good thing. Decreasing girth, so where their waist or hip dimensions shrank. On an individual basis we had significant outcomes in the reduction of cholesterol and pulse or not pulse but blood pressure. And for some folks they had a decrease in blood glucose level, and so that's really good biological outcomes. Created community, revitalized cultural traditions, introduced people to ideas, helped us revitalize the relationship between humans and indigenous plants and animals. And gained a new appreciation for the world around us, we exercised our treat rights, we shared ideas. All good stuff, created a cookbook, and wrote a chapter, or making post cards, flash cards. I mean it's really cool stuff. It's ongoing.

TZ: Alright, so this will be the last question. But would you like recommend this diet to other people who want to see how it works or would you just be like?

MR: Absolutely.

TZ: So yeah?

MR: Absolutely, yeah it makes a lot of sense. Why would we not want to eat locally, truly locally? Indigenously and locally. Very healthy.

TZ: No more McDonald's

MR: Yeah.

TZ: No more Big Macs.

MR: I wish I could spend more time with ya'll, but I have another presentation I got to get to.

UFV: Thank you

MR: Sure.

UFV2: Thank you so much.

MR: Sure, thank you.

TZ: Thank you for your time.

UFV: Thank you.

MR: Yep. Oh I'm sorry, can I send that to you?

TZ: Yeah, you could just sign it.

MR: I'm just going to sign it and you can fill it out? The date, seventeen. There you go.

[All]: Thank you.

MR: Sure, take care!

END OF INTERVIEW