

Interview with Traci Maday

Northern Michigan University Student

Marquette, Michigan

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START OF INTERVIEW

[Dial Tone]

Interviewer (I): I'm doing oral histories with my older alumni that are going into the university archives, but they might put this conversation in there too.

Traci Maday (TM): Okay.

I: So talk to Dr. Hendricks about that. Now can you spell your name for me so I'm sure that I have it right?

TM: Sure, it's T-R-A-C-I M-A-D-A-Y.

I: And how old are you?

TM: I am 26.

I: Okay, and you're going to graduate?

TM: In May of 2000, if everything goes accordingly [laughter.]

I: And what's your major?

TM: My major is Secondary Social Studies Education. Did you want to know my minor also?

I: Yeah.

TM: Okay, I'm a minor in Native American Studies and a minor in Earth Science.

I: Earth Science?

TM: Mhm.

I: So that's a lot, to have two minors eh?

TM: Yeah, yes. Well I started out when I transferred up here from junior college, I wanted both of the minors. Then I decided that it probably would take too long, too much money. I really wanted the Native American Studies, but when I got accepted into the School of Education, I found that the Native American Studies minor was not a teachable minor. So then I went back to my original desire and chose Earth Science then for my teachable minor.

I: What does that mean? That it's not a teachable minor?

TM: That there's no certification test for it. It's not a recognized component of curriculum I guess. But, yeah basically that there's no certification test for it. They don't consider it like economics, there's a test for that. Social studies, and the regular subject areas.

I: So that's something maybe that we need to get changed?

TM: I would like to see it changed. I really would because there's, I've had Native American history and American Indian, which is relevant and pertinent...

I: Absolutely.

TM: To social studies. Traditional oral literature, some of the older histories and ways of knowing. There's a language component, some anthropology classes are part of it, so it's all applicable I think, I'll definitely draw on it.

I: Did you take Ojibwa language?

TM: Yes. I took Ojibwa language parts 1 and 2.

I: So what's your tribal background?

TM: My family comes from the Bad River reservation, which is in northern Wisconsin on Lake Superior. My parents divorced when I was young, and my dad stayed in the area, but my mom and I moved around quite a bit, so I never actually lived there. But it's always been a place to go home to because we moved around so much that was the constant for me, was going back home. It's right by Ashland, Wisconsin. So we return there.

I: So are you Ojibwa?

TM: Yes.

I: And where did you go to junior college?

TM: At Bay de Noc Community College.

I: Oh, great. Did you go there with the intention of coming here?

TM: I started, knowing that college was in my future and I was going to do something with a college education, probably, I don't think I made the decision to go into teaching until maybe the end of my second or beginning of my third semester down there. Then I went part time so it took me a few years to get through there and when I made the decision to transfer I really didn't think about going anywhere else. It was probably more out of convenience, the fact that Northern was so close. But after having been here for a few years now I know that the education program here is a good one, there's good teachers. Working the job that I have here has been an incredible learning experience. I mean, could I, I really didn't think about going anywhere else and now I'm glad I came here especially.

I: What's your job in Diversity Student Services?

TM: I, well I started out working for the Gateway Academic Program. I was a mentor, a student mentor in that program. Last year in August I started coordinating the College Day Program which is a, it's a program designed to get 6th thru 12th graders interested in pursuing a college education, specifically minority students. "Traditionally underrepresented populations" is the term they use in the guidelines. So we bring them to campus, we have overnight stays and one day visits. We've gone, no we haven't gone to the schools this year. But depending on the age group that's here, we'll do student shadowing and different workshops with financial aid for the older students. They get to stay in the dorms, learn about college and hopefully pique their interest.

I: Have you made contacts with students that way?

TM: Oh yeah. You mean the 6th thru 11th graders?

I: Yeah.

TM: Yeah. We've brought just about 150 students to campus this last year. So we had two visits for 6th and 7th graders. The rest were anywhere between 8th and 12th grade. A lot from Munising, we had some students up from Bark River, from the Baraga and L'Anse area. Manistique has always got a good turnout. Yeah, there's been interesting...

I: Are you the first in your family to go to college?

TM: No. There's, on my dad's side there's less, my mom's family has... well. Okay do you mean in my direct family?

I: Yeah, like my father has an 8th grade education and my mother graduated from high school. So I consider myself the first in my family to go to college.

TM: Okay. Nope, my mom finished college. My dad has made a few attempts but hasn't finished anything. But there's, on my mom's side I would have to say there's a stronger emphasis to go to college. Whereas on my dad's side I think there's, I've got maybe one aunt and four cousins out of 6 aunts and 14 cousins, so.

I: Right. What did your mother study?

TM: She went to school for biology. Then after she graduated with that she went to respiratory therapy school for two years, and she's been doing that ever since.

I: How did you know that you wanted to be a teacher?

TM: I wanted, I had always felt very strongly that I wanted to change something for the better. What that something was, I, it kind of depends what I'm learning about and what kind of issues I'm dealing with. But I really felt, I'm just thinking about it for, it's in college for a couple years that teaching the young, those I don't want to say passionate, those teenage students who are just so curious about everything around them. Showing them the differences they can make. I guess that I always wanted to do something to better the world around me, and teaching is, it was like an enlightenment when I decided and I just never looked back.

I: Do you have an idea where you want to teach? Do you want to stay in the area or do you want to?

TM: I will go just about anywhere, if they're willing to give me a job. I've got, I would like to teach maybe on a reservation? A reservation school because I like the idea of teaching a curriculum that's infused with the native's history and the culture. Or if that's not available, there's maybe some kind of, I don't want to teach in the same kind of high school that I went to.

I: What kind of high school did you go to?

TM: It was typical, what most people think of when they go to high school, they have six or seven separate classes in a day taught by one teacher who doesn't collaborate with anybody else outside their subject area. There's a couple different institutions out there I know of that support more hands on service learning type curriculum. Where teachers are put together in teams and they collaborate and work together to support each other. Rather than it be so regimented where a teacher just has their space and nobody enters that space. We all share and work together. It was just amazing to me when I got to college and they were talking about my sociology class in my history class and my comparative government class and it's all kind of connected, and that was never anything that I saw in high school. So I've kind of got my eye out for a certain kind of school like that I suppose.

I: Have you been down Nah Tah Wahsh, the public school academy?

TM: In Hannahville?

I: Yeah, that is an amazing place.

TM: I am, I've asked, I talked to Dr. Clarke just briefly about during my student teaching there. I hope so, I hope to do it down there. It really depends if there's a teacher who's willing to take on a student teacher.

I: You know; Mary is her name Mary Harris? Is it Mary Wilson? I'll find that for you and make a copy for you. There is a great science teacher down there who has, who won Science Teacher of the Year for the UP recently. I went down there to Nah Tah Wahsh and took a photographer. It is such an amazing place. Tom Miller, who is the superintendents, is a no limit person.

TM: Really?

I: He's amazing, what he's been able to do down there. The only native people that they have on the staff are the superintendent and the principle. They really need a native teacher, I think. They have these fabulous students and they have a lot of Northern graduates who are teaching there, but no native teachers. So I'll find that, I'll make a copy of that for you because Mary is a master teacher, and she's a science teacher. She's just incredible.

TM: That would be really helpful. In fact, I was looking on a website the other day and I came across Hannahville and there are a couple things on there from the science class, but I don't think I caught the name of the teacher.

I: I think it's Mary Harris, but Northern ran a press release when she won that award and I'll see if I can hunt it up for you because she's wonderful. That's an amazing school, I'm doing a spread, a couple of pages in this booklet on that school.

TM: Oh really?

I: Because it's such a unique, it's one of the most, it's considered one of the most outstanding native academies in the country. So we're really lucky that it's here in the UP.

TM: I didn't realize that.

I: Yeah, it's pretty awesome. So are you thinking that you want to teach at the high school level then?

TM: Yes. I would teach junior high; I'd like to teach junior high too. I think my certification will be 7 thru 12 but I would most likely like to do high school.

I: So then, how does this work? After you graduate then you get a certification with your?

TM: Yep, I'll graduate with my degree and then I'll have to take the certification test, actually I can take the certification test any time. So hopefully I'll be taking those sometime in the next year. So I won't have to deal with that while I'm looking for a job next summer.

I: Okay.

TM: But yeah, I'll have my degree and then I get certified.

I: So does every test have a different test then?

TM: Yes, although some, mostly likely what'll happen once I get my certification in Michigan, some states, Michigan's actually pretty respected in the field of education. When you transfer to another state they usually just say, okay we'll give you a provisional until you take, like they might have a certain requirement in their state. Like Arizona state history, or something like that. Then once you take that, they'll grant you your permanent. But other states require you to take a different test when you come in.

I: Well this booklet is coming out in October, and I'm sending a copy to Tom Miller who's the superintendent of Nah Tah Wahsh, so I'll just put my card next to the little thing about you and say "You need to find out about Traci." It's such a wonderful school but I do wonder about role models, because all the students are native and the teachers are not.

TM: Right.

I: It seems like it would be a beneficial thing for them to have some native teachers. Did you have role models, or mentors, when you were deciding to be a teacher?

TM: As a native?

I: Either way, any kind of a mentor or role model.

TM: Not so much in high school. Not really so much in high school. Now, there's people around me, people who I work with or work for and those people are my mentors. But I can't really say any one person stood out through high school.

I: And who are your mentors now and what are you learning from them?

TM: Well, I've done some volunteer work at the Children's Museum. The education director over there, Jim Edwards is he's a, he was a drama teacher in England for years. And so he's, from him I get ideas about being creative and being not so much just a talking head, I don't want to say entertainer, but someone who can capture the attention of your students. The people I work with here in Diversity Student Services, Pam ____ and Bill Hill you know they're incredibly supported and very knowledgeable about anything concerning people and different cultures. I've learned a lot from them.

I: The person at the Children Museum, his name is Jim Edwards?

TM: Mhm.

I: And what is his job there?

TM: He, I think his title is the Education Director.

I: I can check on that. Okay, so you were talking about Pam and Bill?

TM: Yeah, I've learned a lot from them. They've given me a lot of opportunity to develop my skills and learn about other cultures. If it weren't for, and Shirley Brozma [spelled phonetically] too because she hired me for the Gateway Academic program first. The three of them together taught me a lot.

I: Now, when you start teaching, where did you go to high school?

TM: In Gladstone. Gladstone High School.

I: Oh, and they have the Gladstone Braves right?

TM: Mhm.

I: That's gotta be discouraging, doesn't it? I mean I drove past Marquette High School when we first moved here, and I vowed that my daughter would never go to school with that, with the Lakota chief as the mascot. It's so offensive.

TM: Mhm. It's, that's been a hard one for me to sort out, because to me any symbol that there is, the meaning of that symbol is unique to the person who respects it or uses it. I know that that's not the kind of native dress that was around here and I know that the significance of the eagle feathers that that person is wearing. So the picture itself, although I've seen a picture where he's got a really aggressive face with a snarl on it, that I found offensive. But the one just where he's looking up, the picture itself is not offensive to me, it's the name and the picture together that I would like to see changed. I just, the way the communities are handling it is a missed opportunity for education. This issue has come up in other communities and instead of saying "Well this is ours and we don't want to change it." The school board asked the community, the

native elders and the native community to come together and they said “we like this symbol and we want to keep it and what can we do to make it right?” They said that “we want you to teach this in your classroom. We want you to address this in your classroom and we feel that your kids aren’t respecting it for what it is and what it really means. Then we’d change our mind.” But just to say, I really feel like they’re honoring, they say they’re honoring somebody but they don’t even know what they’re trying to honor.

I: Right.

TM: So.

I: But when you’re, Gladstone is the Braves right? And do they, I don’t remember what the mascot looks like.

TM: Yeah they, I know they’ve had a cartoonish head.

I: Right.

TM: But they might have changed that, or they use different ones depending on what they’re putting it on. But they also have one that’s a little bit more respectful, the drawing with what we might consider a Brave with just a couple eagle feathers hanging down.

I: So how did you feel about that when, were there very many native students in Gladstone?

TM: Not a lot, there was, when we went and did things with our Title IX program there was I think maybe 20.

I: What kinds of things did you do with Title IX?

TM: Let’s see, we came up to Northern for an overnight visit once. I’d like to say that was a College Day Program, but I don’t really know for sure. But it was something very similar to the College Day Program. I should look through our files and see if my name is on any kind of roster [laughter.]

I: But, because Title IX used to be women in sports and then they changed it so it’s a program for native students, is that what it is?

TM: I think what it is, is a program for equity in education, but I’m not real sure. But it might be just natives. Definitely up here Title IX means native students in the minds of most people. I’m not sure how it reads today.

I: So how did you feel about going to a high school where the symbol was a Brave?

TM: You know at that point in time, there were people who took issue with it. Those people ironically, weren’t native. At least not to my knowledge. I really at that time, I didn’t think anything of it. I didn’t think anything of it and I also really didn’t know much about native heritage, native culture. My culture, my history. I’ve talked about issues like that on some discussion panels that native people are always talked about in the past.

I: Right.

TM: There's nothing, nobody ever talked about how they exist today in this world. Nothing about who they were and what they did it was just all, in the first pages in reference to Columbus and that was it. I really didn't know a whole a lot, and maybe if I had known more I would have taken issue with it.

I: My instructor for native history when I was an undergraduate said that people know much more about Geronimo than they do about the Native Americans who lived next door to them.

TM: They know much more about what?

I: Geronimo and Chief Joseph. Famous Native Americans from the past, but nothing about what the reservation, what's happening on the reservation today.

TM: Right.

I: So when you start to teach, let's see, you didn't really start to learn anything about native history until you went to college then?

TM: Yeah, until I came to Northern.

I: Oh, because you didn't get that from Bay de Noc either.

TM: Nope, not at Bay de Noc. Until I came up here and I met, I mean it wasn't just in the classes either it was the friends that I made and working with the Native American Student Association and American Indian Science and Engineering Society, that's all been a huge influence.

I: So you're a member of the Native American Student Association?

TM: Mhm.

I: Which April Lindela [spelled phonetically] founded, that hasn't been that long ago.

TM: Right, right.

I: And the Native American Studies program is new too?

TM: Mhm.

I: So those have all been important influences?

TM: Oh yeah. Looking back now, I don't know how I got so far without it. You know without a little more anyways.

I: So how will it be different then, how do you want your students experience to be different from what yours was?

TM: More real life application of what they're learning. More, I like the benefits of service learning where you're learning about an issue, you examine the issue, and then you actually go and do something in the community about that issue.

I: Can you give me an example?

TM: Let's see I've read a couple books about it. Well like homelessness or hunger can be one. You study the, maybe the economics or the societies impacts, the impacts on the society of homeless people or people who are the working poor. Then as a class you decide, well we're going to do something like volunteer at a pantry or do a fundraiser, help out at a soup kitchen or something. Something like that.

I: Okay, so service learning, more real life application. Then how will all that you've learned through your Native American Studies minor, how are you going to bring that into the classroom?

TM: It's, as far as, it can be infused just about anywhere I think. For example, if they in the spring, in your science class your studying about plant life and its maple sugaring time you can teach about the science of maple sugar and actually go out and gather it. I know there's a school on a Navajo reservation where they teach, it's an alternative school and their curriculum is really innovative like that. But they teach horsemanship down there, and they have a strong history in horsemanship. The students dug the water lines and built the stables and then their classroom studies at the end of the week were centered on, like math would be feeding rations for the horses or how much, what was the volume of dirt you had to dig for the water line and things like that. I think there's more and more, when you look around there's people developing units of studying and curriculum centered on native values.

I: And what do you mean when you say 'native values?'

TM: The traditions, the traditions and practices. The language is a real big thing, but also the traditional pattern of movement. The Ojibwa moved from camp to camp, year round. So they're the ricing time, there's maple sugaring time, there's you know blueberry picking time in the summer. Hunting in the winter, fishing. But you know it's really dependent on the area that you're in.

I: Now did you, when did you graduate from high school?

TM: In 1991.

I: So then did you do something else before you went to college?

TM: I did, I was, I just wanted to take a break from school for a while. So I got, at the end of that summer after my senior year I took a job in Baltimore working as a nanny. I was living in Baltimore from, let's see I think it was November of '91 I moved out there until the November of '92. So that was a really good learning experience. I mean I definitely learned a lot about myself. I'd have to say I learned more about myself in that one year than in the four years of high school.

I: Because it was so hard to take care of other people's children?

TM: Well, because there was nobody there to back me up. I was out there on my own and I had to stand up for what I thought was right, or what I felt I needed. I really depended on myself, I mean I wasn't in school and I spent most of my time in the house working so there was no

socializing like there is in school. So I spent a year out there and then when I came home I started at Bay de Noc in January of '93.

I: Okay, and you did part of that part-time while you worked?

TM: Yeah, I did that. I went to the Bay part-time probably for the first couple years, and then after I actually made the decision to go into teaching that's when I started taking on a full load, 12 to 16 credits. Then I finished that up and got my Associates Degree and then I still had, I could still transfer more credits, so I took one more semester and came up here.

I: And what's your Associates Degree in?

TM: Just Associate of Arts, I mean I took the prerequisites for education so I guess you could say something along the lines, maybe even social studies. Actually when I first started political science was my first love, so I had things like comparative government and international relations and stuff like that.

I: Okay, now we talked about a lot of things, and this piece will probably be pretty short. But is there anything else that you wanted to address?

TM: Gosh I think I, I really think we hit it all.

I: Okay, and then I will, I hope this will be a really good thing. Because I'm going to find that article on Mary Harris and then I have to send a note to Tom Miller who's the superintendent of Nah Tah Wahsh anyway. So I'll just let him know about you, because you think you might be interested in doing your student teaching down there.

TM: Definitely.

I: And when would you be ready to student teach?

TM: In January.

I: Okay. Mary is one of these people, she's such an awesome teacher that I just kind of stood there in awe and watched her.

TM: Really?

I: I've been very lucky; I've had really good teachers. But once in a while you have someone where you just kind of stand there and go "Wow, how did you do that?" And that's what she's like. This will come out in October, so I'll send the part about you to Tom.

TM: Oh that would be wonderful.

I: He's really amazing, I feel like I learned a lot just from listening to him. Just from doing an interview with him because this is amazing that we have this school here because most of the money for these schools goes around the Albuquerque area.

TM: Okay.

I: And he got additional money for the school during the Reagan era when nobody was getting money for education.

TM: Wow.

I: What he's been able to accomplish is just incredible. And he's one of our graduates from 1976.

TM: Oh really?

I: Yeah, we need to have him, he needs to be in the Native American Academy of Distinction. He's an awesome person and Bill Vode [spelled phonetically] is the principle there and he was just installed. So thank you very much for your time.

TM: Well thank you!

I: And I will...

TM: And thanks for your help with everything too.

I: Oh, I think that would be neat if you're interested. It's a great school, I was so thrilled that I'm doing this project so I had an opportunity and an excuse to go down there because what they're doing is really awesome. And they have a day care and they also have an adult education program. So they have people from 6 months old to 70 in and out of the school all the time. And I think that they have a canoe making class, they do a lot of hands on vocational education kind of thing. So it's an awesome place.

TM: Yeah, I'd like to learn more about it.

I: And I'll get back in touch with then when I figure out when we can get this picture taken.

TM: Okay.

I: Thank you very much Traci.

TM: Thank you.

I: Bye bye.

TM: Bye bye.

END OF INTERVIEW.