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## Emmett Oliver's Story: Psycho-Social Development of an Extraordinary Native American

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## Emmett Oliver's Story: Psycho-Social Development of an Extraordinary Native American

### Abstract

Emmett Oliver's life story offers clear evidence that human resilience originates in a combination of many aspects of personality traits, abilities and interests, and supportive social relationships. Living in an era when many of his Native peers did not develop their talents or find a meaningful place in their rapidly changing cultures, Emmett pursued an education. He became a teacher, a Coast Guard Commander, a counselor, and an educational policy maker. His achievements seemed to bolster his motivation when he felt drawn to a less challenging work.

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## Introduction

The original document was published in 2002 when the ORPC series was being developed at Western Washington University. As Emmet Oliver's life has developed since that date, it is time to provide some added information to this document. On December 2, 2010, Emmett and his family celebrated his 96<sup>th</sup> birthday. Again, this Quinault elder is exceeding expectations of vitality and longevity. While he is in good physical health, his mobility is seriously curtailed, especially when considering the pace of life he previously maintained. Now he walks with the assistance of a walker and his short term memory is failing. However, he is still the gregarious man of his youth, happily greeting visitors and enjoying family gatherings.

It is very important to note that the Canoe Celebrations that Emmett began with the launch of the Paddle to Seattle in 1989 when the city of Seattle recognized the importance of Native peoples to the early history, social, economic and political growth of the Pacific Northwest continue to thrive. Each year in the summer, tribal peoples of the Canadian and United States West Coast gather for a renewal of the Canoe Celebration. Now there are hundreds of canoes that participate. The gathering of tribal nations not only affirms that native people want to sustain their traditions as seagoing people, but they value the social and ecological harmony that travel by canoe represents. For many tribes, the journeys to the annual celebrations involve hundreds of miles of travel. Not only must the paddlers be very skilled and strong, they must also plan their trip carefully and arrange for provisions to sustain them over many days and nights on the open waters. Tribal communities along the coastline welcome their brothers and sisters with songs of praise and happiness. These stopovers have become mini canoe celebrations that culminate in the major gatherings of hundreds of members of diverse tribes. As one stands on shore and watches these majestic vessels approach the shoreline, the beauty and power of the people and their vessels is awe inspiring. Many nations have sought out their traditional master carvers who have taken on young apprentices who create the intricate designs of the bows of their canoes.

With his family members, Emmett continues to make his visits to the increasingly important Canoe Celebrations. The canoe pullers know where Emmett is positioned on the shore. As each canoe comes toward the shore all the beautifully carved paddles rise up in unison as a traditional way to honor the man, who has given so generously and effectively to all the tribal nations. In reply, Emmett stretches out his arms to the canoe people as his acknowledgement of their shared tradition and his great admiration for the canoe journeys. He is the Great Grandfather for all who wish to celebrate with him.

These updates are possible primarily due to the author's continued relationship with Emmett and his family. Associations with Emmett began in 1974 when he served as the Supervisor of Indian Education for the K-12 schools of Washington State and the author was employed by a school district located on the Colville Indian Reservation in North-eastern Washington. As a recent graduate of a doctoral program at the University of Michigan and having completed several major educational studies in collaboration with the Colville Tribes, Emmett and several of his colleagues shared common interests and

concerns about tribal education with the author. One obvious and pervasive factor that concerned many educators of Native students was the lack of Native educators in the schools. Shortly after their marriage, Emmett and his wife, Georgia, had taught together at a small Bureau of Indian Affairs day school on the Acoma Reservation in New Mexico. As young Native Americans, they easily and successfully reached out to students and the community. The school at Acoma was a hub of social-educational activity that was endorsed by the community. One of Emmett's hopes that he worked to realize was to encourage more young Native people to enter educational professions.

For over six years Emmett and the author worked with public and tribal schools on or near the reservations of Washington to encourage active and meaningful community participation in the education of students. With funding that originated and was sustained through the Johnson O'Malley Act of 1934, Emmett was able to support the employment of Native professional and paraprofessional educators in schools that enrolled a considerable number of Native students. Over eight years of professional collaboration, Emmett and the author travelled to schools and reservation communities to advance the goal of meaningful education for Native students and their communities. Many training seminars that carried college credit were offered at sites approximate to interested Native educators. Over the years, Emmett and the author developed professional and social relationships with many community members around the state who became educators. Therefore, the following account of Emmett's personal and professional life story includes information obtained in formal interviews (as cited) as well as many more discussions and instructional meetings with colleagues and friends. Perhaps an indication of the spirit of working with Emmett can be gleaned from a large sign he carved and hung on the trunk of a large fir tree near his home on Hood Canal: "Oliver's Potlatch House". For Emmett, giving to others in the spirit of the Potlatch of his people is what sustains his life and energy. He was a great teacher and mentor to all those with whom he lived and worked.

### **A Brief Overview**

This essay explores the social contexts, personal, and family relationships that influenced the life style and career choices of Emmett Sampson Oliver. Born on December 2, 1913 in the small, multicultural community of South Bend, WA, Emmett is an enrolled member of the Quinault Tribe. Now a tribal elder, he continues his life's work with Native American educators and students to encourage achievement of their educational goals and positive career options. Emmett knows well the social and economic constraints that can negatively influence Native students and thwart their aspirations. As a young man, there were many times that Emmett doubted he would be able to achieve his goals. However, through his remarkable talents, motivation, and support from family, friends, and educators, he realized extraordinary achievements.

Emmett's father, a fisherman on the Willapa River, gave his son a skiff and fishing net when he was 12 years old. Emmett could have accepted this as an orientation to his life's occupation. Rising early and rowing across the river, he gathered his catch before school each day. His father sold the fish and gave Emmett the proceeds. But personal and

intellectual curiosity prompted Emmett to seek career goals well beyond the models that surrounded him. His path was difficult, yet he persisted despite temporary setbacks.

At age 14, Emmett became discouraged about school and dropped out to work in a local clam cannery. His employer found him to be an unusually effective and responsible worker. Recognizing his potential, Emmett was advised to return to school and expand his career options. The message was not new. From early childhood, Emmett was strongly influenced by his mother who encouraged each of her children to graduate from high school, no small accomplishment for the times. Victor Johnson, a maternal uncle, had attended Carlisle Institute in Pennsylvania and Dartmouth College. He achieved a distinguished career in education and became one of Emmett's role models.

Another uncle, Wilfred Johnson, self-educated and widely read, took an active role in guiding the leisure activities of Emmett and his peer group. Wilfred taught the boys basic water and land survival skills like sailing, navigation, camping, hunting, and food gathering. Affectionately known as "Unc", Wilfred's adventuresome and inquiring nature appealed to Emmett and his friends. This group included both Native and non-Native neighbors. Two of the non-Native boys remained close, life-long friends who shared fishing and sailing expeditions as adults.

Wilfred saw himself as his nephew's teacher of cultural values during important adolescent years (E. S. Oliver, personal communication, October 4, 2001). He intentionally influenced decisions Emmett and his friends were making on a daily basis. Emmett remembered that "Unc" was very generous and enjoyed a rich sense of humor. However, he was firm and taught the boys to do their tasks responsibly and consistently. To earn a little money on their outings, they peeled and gathered burlap bags full of cascara bark that was sold to local buyers.

Two of Emmett's early male role models, his Father and Uncle Wilfred, used alcohol excessively. He recalled confronting his father about going to the home of a friend where several men gathered and drank (personal communication, E. S. Oliver, October 4, 2001). Even though he was only ten years of age at the time, Emmett knew his mother strongly opposed alcohol use and would not approve of his father's behavior. Emmett remembered raising Uncle Wilfred's ire when he threatened to drop his beer overboard as they rowed down the river to a campsite. However, as Emmett recalls, Wilfred's desire to share information and his interesting conversation and stories far exceeded the effects of alcohol consumption. Expanding the diversity of adult role models, there were several excellent educators at South Bend and later at all Indian boarding schools who were sources of positive encouragement.

Emmett's life story offers a moving example of how important early encouragement and positive expectations are for Native students. When the rewards of education were demonstrated through positive interpersonal experiences, Emmett developed the motivation to persist in his schooling. He attended several schools including South Bend public school, Tulalip Indian Boarding School, and Sherman Institute in California where he graduated from high school as a successful student and athlete. With encouragement from his teachers and advisors, Emmett decided to enter college. In 1932 he enrolled at

Bacone, a two year Indian college in Oklahoma that focused primarily on training future teachers.

His athletic and academic achievements brought him honors among his college peers who came from all regions of the country and diverse tribal memberships. After two years at Bacone, Emmett received a scholarship and transferred to the University of Redlands in California where he continued to excel, and was chosen by peers as a student leader. Shortly after graduation in biology and education, he returned to Bacone to begin his career as a high school science teacher. He was joined by Georgia Abeita of Isleta Pueblo, whom he met and courted while they attended Bacone. Together for sixty-three years, they dedicated their lives to teaching and improving educational programs for Native students.

### **Sustained Influence of Historic Changes**

To appreciate the many historical, economic, social, and psychological phenomena that influenced Emmett's development, it is important to understand his primary frame of reference, his Native heritage. Most contemporary Native Americans of the Northwest, even those who live in cities like Spokane, Seattle, or Portland, are tradition oriented in some aspects of their fundamental values (Swinomish Tribal Community, 1991). They believe the ancient ones, their ancestors, provide lifelong guidance to all descendents all through their life journey.

Spiritually, they hold all life, both human and natural, as sacred. This reflects a fundamental value that all being is connected through a common source within creation. For most Native people, the focus of daily life is maintaining and nurturing positive relationships, primarily those with extended family members (Twohy, 1999). A painfully ironic conflict for the people is the aggressive devaluing of their culture that occurred individually and collectively during the period of colonization and continues to the present (Deloria, 1969; Lipka, 1998).

Economically, past generations of Northwest Coastal tribes thrived on the abundance of food, water, giant cedars, and the beauty of magnificent mountain ranges and sweeping coastal beaches. They fished, hunted, gathered fruits and vegetables, carved cedar canoes, and built cedar long houses. Their clothing was made from the soft inner bark of the cedar and animal hides. Women used a variety of grasses and roots to design and weave baskets and mats that were highly functional, durable, and beautiful. Now their surviving works, found in public and private collections around the world, are treasured examples of Native art. However, the artists themselves, except for a few of contemporary fame, remain anonymous as an indication that they, as individuals, were not recognized for their achievements.

Over centuries of experiences, the people learned to provide for their needs and well-being through careful utilization and conservation of natural resources (Bancroft, 1890; Drucker, 1966). Enjoying a moderate coastal climate, Native communities moved with the seasons to traditional sites where they harvested and preserved food, medicines, and essential materials for the making of clothing, tools, and domestic utensils.

Maintaining a harmonious balance with the natural and social world was central to sustaining their way of life.

Although warily cautious about visitors from other lands, Native people were innately generous with those in need (Nassaney & Johnson, 2000). Europeans relied on native food supplies and instruction in survival skills when they first arrived. Eventually, the long term plans of the Europeans unfolded. Once they acquired a relatively secure economic base, they aggressively seized tribal lands. Native warriors fought to protect their families, camps, and right to live according to their traditions and values (Swan, 1966). However, the cultural clash was perpetuated in destructive warfare. Native communities were decimated by genocidal tactics inflicted by the colonizers as well as the retaliation of federal military troops when Natives fought in self-defense (Nassaney & Johnson, 2000; Prucha, 1962; Spicer, 1961; Swanton, 1953 ).

By the mid eighteenth century, millions of Europeans had fled poverty and political oppression to search for a "new world" of freedom and prosperity. Trade relations between Native tribes, France, and England sparked competition for dominance. In 1753 the French and Indian War began and persisted for ten years (Swanton, 1953). When the war ended, the combatants agreed that Native sovereignty would be respected and land could not be taken without consent of the tribes.

Despite the existence of formal agreements, no consistent effort was made to enforce them. Tribal political and military leaders defended their people and land as best they could, but were strongly opposed ideologically, politically, and militarily by the colonies and then the federalists (Prucha, 1962). Natives were frequently vilified as savages and enemies of progress. Reflecting this viewpoint, the federal government administered relations with Native people through the Department of War from 1788 until 1934 when the Interior Department was charged with responsibility for tribal relations (Prucha, 1962).

Westward movement of European-American settlers greatly increased as news of sudden wealth derived from gold and silver prospecting spread across the country. In the decade of 1840 to 1850, the peak of the mining boom, tribal people of California and other Western states, including Washington, were overpowered and lost most of their land and possessions to ruthless newcomers (Swanton, 1953). Simultaneously, highly infectious diseases carried by the invading population devastated the tribes. Historically, the people and way of life that existed for thousands of years were all but eliminated in the span of a few years (Prucha, 1962). In 1887 Congress passed the Dawes Severalty Act that granted individual male tribal members' parcels of their traditional land, an effort to further erode tribal unity and identity. Non-allotted land was opened to and claimed by homesteaders, another way to curb tribal solidarity (Swanton, 1953).

The colonial history of the United States has great meaning collectively and individually for contemporary Native people. In many respects, Emmett Oliver's extended family continues to be strongly influenced by interactions between his tribal ancestors, European settlers, and the federal government. His Grandparents were survivors of the invasions and conflicts cited above. Emmett's maternal Grandmother, born in 1848, and other relatives informed him of their encounters and experiences with Europeans.

Once the military resistance of Native populations ceased to be a threat to settlers, miners, and military troops, they became the focus of frequent and intense studies. Their knowledge and skills as naturalists and eloquence as philosophers, poets, and artists gained recognition among researchers around the world. The public speeches of tribal leaders like Chiefs Joseph and Sealth are often quoted as moving and wise reflections on peaceful co-existence and social harmony among all people (Young Joseph, 1879). Emmett's life reflects the cultural richness of one who learned to thrive in both Native and non-Native environments. Like his parents and grandparents, he developed a unique approach to cultural co-existence, if not acculturation.

### **Emmett's Family Background**

Emmett's Mother, Cecilia Johnson was the oldest of nine children. His maternal grandmother, Cecile Jeanne Haguët, was born in the area of present day Vancouver, WA in 1848, a member of the Chinook Tribe. Her Father was an explorer and trader originally from Toulouse, France. Among the Chinook, Cecile is remembered as Comita, a highly respected matriarch and historian (Smith, 1995). She married James Randolph Johnson, the son of an English sea captain. He worked as a ship pilot on the Columbia River and harvested oysters at Willapa Bay. He was one of many settlers who claimed 160 acres as a home-site near the coastal community of Ilwaco, WA. Emmett's Great Grandfather and Grandfather Johnson both perished at sea in the violent storms that took the lives of many seamen who navigated the Columbia River.

Sampson Oliver, Emmett's father, was born in 1875, the son of a Cowlitz Mother and an Italian Father. Like many men of the Northwest, Sampson was employed as a logger and then as an independent fisherman. His work took him away from the family home in South Bend for extended periods of time. As a child, Emmett and his two older brothers, James and Charles, helped their Mother with household chores and the care of two younger sisters. To contribute to the family income, Emmett remembered that he and his brothers helped their Mother launder clothes for single working men of the community (personal communication, E. S. Oliver, October 5, 2001). Cecilia was a resourceful provider who harvested and canned wild berries and the produce from a large garden.

Despite limited finances, Cecilia Oliver fed her family and many community members in need. She helped her neighbors, especially those in greatest need. While she taught her children to work hard, she was also determined that they would be healthy, responsible, and successful in completing high school. In her quiet and persistent way, Cecilia was unfailing in her encouragement and demonstration of approval when her children excelled. Emmett remembers an afternoon when his Mother invited neighbors in to have tea made in a beautiful ceramic pot he bought for her with funds he saved from fishing. He overheard her say to her friends that her fondest hope was to see each of her children graduate from high school. She lived to have her wish more than fulfilled, especially on the part of her youngest son, Emmett.

In the early twentieth century, school attendance was often a source of contention among Native American families and educators from both public schools and those



operated by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. However, this was not the case in the Oliver household. Emmett's Mother graduated from Chemawa Indian School near Salem, Oregon. Her brother, Victor Johnson, graduated from Carlisle Institute, an all Indian school in Pennsylvania, and from Dartmouth College. He went on to a career as an educational administrator. Early in his career he became superintendent of the Tulalip Boarding School located on the Tulalip Reservation, approximately 20 miles North of Seattle. He conveyed his endorsement of formal education to his family members and found them responsive.

### **Leaving Home For Boarding School**

When Emmett was about to enter fourth grade, the adults of the family decided that he should join his two older brothers, James and Charles, at the Tulalip Boarding School where students were housed, fed, and given academic and vocational training. When he first considered leaving home, Emmett was excited about the new experience (personal communication, E. S. Oliver, October 5, 2001). However, when it was time to board a train for Seattle, he realized the meaning of separation from his family, friends, and the familiar surroundings of his community.

His introduction to boarding school was a sharp contrast to life on the banks of the Willapa River. At dawn, Emmett and several other boys were marched to the dairy barn to milk cows. He hated that assignment but realized failure to comply meant harsh punishment. Student discipline was strict and followed a military model, including time in a school jail for those who violated rules. Another chore Emmett remembers was that of emptying the wastebaskets for his Uncle's office staff. He carried the refuse to the basement of the building. Emmett used the private time to cry and give vent to the loneliness he tried to keep hidden within himself (personal communication, E. S. Oliver, October 6, 2001).

Despite the emotional stress of a regimented lifestyle and separation from family and friends, there were also positive memories of Tulalip. The school had a marching band that performed at local festivities and parades. Emmett learned to play the clarinet and joined the band. The musicians wearing military uniforms sat on wooden benches in the back of large trucks when they travelled to performance sites. These outings were enjoyable variations from the routine of school, particularly since the band members had much better food than was offered at Tulalip (personal communication, E. S. Oliver, October 6, 2001).

Emmett also remembers that boys and girls at Tulalip were carefully segregated when they worked and attended classes. The few times they were allowed to associate, Emmett met Dehlia Solomon from the Lummi Reservation. On one of his band trips, he purchased a box of candy for her. She showed her appreciation by waving to him when they saw each other around the school buildings and grounds. Attendance at Tulalip afforded Emmett the opportunity to meet members of various Northwestern Tribes who were born and raised within reservation communities. In addition to representatives from over twenty Coastal communities, members of the Yakima and Colville Tribes from Eastern Washington were also enrolled at Tulalip. In the 1970's and 80's when Emmett served as the Director of Indian Education for Washington, he renewed friendships with

many Tulalip alumni as he visited education programs sponsored by Native parent committees in collaboration with public schools (personal communication, E. S. Oliver, October 7, 2001).

By the time he reached sixth grade, Emmett had developed the stamina and speed of an excellent runner. His brother Jim, a member of the Tulalip football and track teams, was Emmett's mentor and athletic role model. In time, Jim watched his younger brother out pace and out distance him in all events. As Emmett advanced in school, Jim was one of his mainstays, offering consistent personal and financial support. Rather than engaging in sibling rivalry, the brothers shared common interests and mutual respect (personal communication, E. S. Oliver, October 7, 2001). After three years at Tulalip, Emmett returned to South Bend for Junior High School.

### **Return To South Bend**

Emmett's Mother chose her son's first name out of respect and affection for her neighbor, Emma, a non-Native woman who was a beloved friend and served as mid-wife at Emmett's birth. Most of the South Bend neighbors and classmates with whom Emmett and his family associated were of European origin. One of Emmett's closest and lifelong friends was Arne Johnsen whose parents were Norwegian immigrants. While cultural differences were obvious to the boys their personal similarities and common interests provided a foundation for lasting respect and understanding. Arne's Grandmother lived with the family and taught Norwegian to her grandchildren and their friends. Emmett and Arne spent so much time together they both learned common phrases and expressions. In their adult years, Emmett and Arne offered each other unfailing support whether it was building a home, advancing their teaching careers, or sharing a retirement vacation to the Johnsen hometown in Norway. As a reflection of their friendship, Georgia and Emmett named their first son Arne.

While some community members and classmates showed disregard for "Indians", Emmett and his family knew their tribal heritage and were proud of it. When a classmate at South Bend commented to all the students that Emmett was an Indian, the teacher stated "that is nothing to be ashamed about" (personal communication, E. S. Oliver, October 8, 2001). That comment, perhaps made with no harm intended, was never forgotten. Rather than taking the statement negatively, Emmett used it as a challenge and source of motivation to demonstrate his academic and personal capabilities. Even at age 87, that statement remains a vivid recollection of his school days in South Bend.

Emmett remembered that his father, Sampson Oliver, was not a very communicative or responsive parent (personal communication, E. S. Oliver, October 8, 2001). Nonetheless, when Emmett returned home from Tulalip, his Dad gave him a skiff and fishing net so he could learn to be a good fisherman. When Emmett joined the eighth grade football team, his Dad attended the games where he watched proudly as his son gained recognition as a star athlete. Generally, Sampson's quiet and relatively uncommunicative traits were in remarkable contrast to his son's enthusiastic extroversion.

When he re-enrolled in public school at South Bend, Emmett was considerably behind his peers in academic achievement. The half days he spent doing farm chores and vocational training at Tulalip, limited his progress. As the seventh grade class advanced, the gaps in Emmett's skills became more apparent. It became increasingly difficult for him to endure the quips from those who mockingly reminded him of his deficiencies. When his increased effort did not result in desired academic improvement, Emmett decided to leave school and take a job at a clam cannery where he could at least earn a decent wage. (personal communication, E. S. Oliver, October 8, 2001).

Because the cannery was ten miles from his home, the employer provided Emmett with a room to sleep and store his belongings. At the end of his scheduled work-day, Emmett spent time digging clams to sell for additional income. When the new school year was about to start, Emmett realized he wanted to be involved in school again and to be with his family and friends. Although he liked earning a good income, working at the clam cannery lost all appeal.

In Emmett's reflections on his junior high and high school years, two elements stand out as very influential. One was the many benefits he derived from being involved in athletic competition, particularly track and football. He had the physical strength and coordination to excel and was encouraged to do so by his brother James, coaches, and friends. He demanded top performance of himself and enjoyed the spirited interactions with teammates and competitors (personal communication, E. S. Oliver, October 8, 2001). Secondly, the consistent support of some teachers and administrators enhanced Emmett's motivation to excel. Homer Davis, the school principal and vocational teacher, visited Emmett's parents at home to let them know he regarded their son as an unusually talented student. His encouragement is still deeply appreciated as Emmett recalled those who particularly influenced his confidence about attending college (personal communication, E. S. Oliver, October 8 2001). Humorously, Emmett acknowledged that were it not for Homer Davis, he might still be digging clams.

Another person of influence during high school years was Tony Lewis, a commercial fisherman whose wife was a close friend of Emmett's mother. During summer fishing seasons, Tony hired Emmett as a deck hand, knowing he was experienced, responsible, and able to manage the rough seas off the Washington Coast. Tony clearly communicated his expectation that fishing was a part-time endeavor given the talents Emmett demonstrated as a student athlete and a committed worker.

Such reinforcement was very meaningful to a young Native American. Reflecting on his classmates at South Bend who planned to attend college, Emmett recalls they were all sons of financially secure European-American families. Other than his Uncle Victor, Emmett had no association with a Native American who attended college. His practical nature led him to conclude that family and peer group norms meant it was unlikely he would experience college. Instead, he hoped to find a vocation that would be interesting and pay a wage that would allow a good living (personal communication, E. S. Oliver, October 8, 2001).

Even with his practical nature, Emmett was admittedly impulsive, and open to calculated risks, thereby allowing unique experiences to play an important part in major

decisions. When a new ship docked at the lumber mill below Emmett's home, he and his friends asked permission to go aboard for a tour. What intrigued Emmett most about the ship were the diesel engines that powered it. He asked the captain if he needed any additional crew and received a positive answer. That affirmation sparked Emmett's sense of adventure.

When Homer Davis received word that Emmett was actually planning to join the crew, he made a point of intervening and convinced Emmett that staying in school offered lifelong benefits over the immediate attraction of a fine ship (personal communication, E. S. Oliver, October 10, 2001). However, a fascination with the sea-going life persisted throughout Emmett's personal and professional life. He was, after all, the Great Grandson of a sea captain as well as a descendant of ocean going Native canoeists.

In his third year at South Bend High School, Emmett's Uncle Victor told him about Sherman Institute, an Indian vocational school in Riverside, California. Although encouraged to consider college, Emmett thought vocational training was a viable option. Sherman offered a wide variety of programs and an all Native student body representing many Western tribes. To satisfy his interest, Emmett applied to and was accepted at Sherman. No one, not even his Mother, could convince him to stay in South Bend even though he was a star athlete and beginning his senior year.

### **Exploring Secondary and Post-Secondary School Options**

Sherman enrolled 1200 male and female students including Apache, Hoopa, Hopi, Klamath, Mission, Mohave, and Navajo tribal members. For a Northwesterner, the social and physical environment of Southern California offered a unique experience. From his years at Tulalip, Emmett was familiar with the rigid schedules and military characteristics of Bureau of Indian Affairs schools. He joined the track and football teams and rose to the rank of captain of his student unit. The discipline learned at home and the encouragement received from mentors prepared Emmett to meet new challenges with optimism and a resolve to succeed (personal communication, E. S. Oliver, October 10, 2001).

Another unique opportunity came about when the Sherman chaplain, Rev. Burnett, selected Emmett as a Sunday school teacher for the eighth grade students. Initially, Emmett, who had little exposure to religious instruction, debated whether he was suited for the role in terms of the content he was expected to teach his 13 and 14 year-old students. However, with guidance and support from Rev. Burnett, teaching and leading discussion groups eventually became enjoyable. The chaplain consulted with Emmett about his vocational plans and learned of his ambition to become a diesel engineer. Rev. Burnett strongly encouraged Emmett to consider a teaching career. He promised to secure a scholarship to Bacone, an Indian Community College in Muskogee, Oklahoma, if Emmett chose to accept it. After discussing his immediate future with friends, Emmett agreed to enter Bacone. This decision marked a major turning point in Emmett's life. He was on his way to a career he did not anticipate.

For a high school graduation celebration, Emmett joined a group of friends on a trip to the Olympics in Los Angeles. Although he spent frugally, the trip depleted his modest

savings. When he returned to Sherman, Emmett, Rev. Burnett, and Oscar Pete, a sophomore at Bacone whom Emmett knew from Tulalip Boarding School, planned the 1,800 mile trip to Muskogee. Like many men with no money during the depression years, the students caught rides on the Southern Pacific Railway. With less than five dollars between them, Emmett and Oscar slept in box-cars and were offered food at "hobo camps" along the route. After a stressful and sometimes dangerous journey, the two students walked onto the Bacone campus with nothing more than the clothes they wore.

Again, football and track provided an immediate basis for friendships between Emmett and his new college peers. Bacone's population, including students from Bureau of Indian Affairs schools at Carlisle, Pennsylvania and Haskell, Kansas, was even more diverse than that of Sherman. The academic and extracurricular programs were focused on teacher training and included choirs and student theatre groups in addition to sports and community service activities. A church supported (Baptist) college, Bacone's president was a non-Native ordained minister, Dr. Benjamin Weeks, who required all students to attend weekly chapel services.

To his own surprise, Emmett found the chapel gatherings both informative and inspiring. He admired Dr. Weeks whom he regarded as a dedicated educator who took a personal interest in the students' general well-being (personal communication, E. S. Oliver, October 12, 2001). Emmett remembered that school policies forbid any participation in Native religious practices. Students who wanted to hold traditional rites did so in secret gatherings off campus. Raised in a small multi-cultural community rather than on a Native reservation, tribal religious or spiritual gatherings were not part of Emmett's experience. He did not feel the conflicts that his peers did when they were forbidden to practice their Native traditions, a constitutional right of all citizens. His primary teachers in matters of moral and spiritual life were his family members who interacted with and became somewhat acculturated to the ways of Euro-American populations.

While students were encouraged to work hard to distinguish themselves academically, Emmett and his peers enjoyed many social activities. It was at Bacone that he met Georgia Abeita of Isleta Pueblo, the talented and beautiful woman whom he courted throughout college and married a year after graduation (personal communication, E. S. Oliver, October 12, 2001). Although their personal and cultural backgrounds differed considerably, they found common interests in their plans to become teachers of Native children.

Like Emmett's Chinook Grandmother who married a non-Native man, Georgia's Isleta Grandmother married, George Pradt, a non-Native civil engineer who surveyed New Mexico when it became a state. As an only child, Georgia had a very close relationship with her Mother who was a teacher in the Bureau of Indian Affairs school at Laguna. Her Father was a tribal leader and rancher at Isleta. He taught his daughter the language and customs of his tribe. Georgia experienced both her Native and non-Native heritage. As a child she lived on the reservation and enjoyed an active social life with all her extended family. As a high school student in a private girls boarding school, St. Vincent's Academy, in Albuquerque, she was the only Native student among privileged Euro-Americans who were trained in literature and the arts, areas of interest Georgia enjoyed all of her life.

### **A Scholarship to University of Redlands**

After two successful years at Bacone where he took top scholastic honors, athletic awards, and was elected class president, Emmett was offered a scholarship to the University of Redlands in Southern California. As one of a few Native students in a prestigious private university, Emmett adapted to a social context of economically and socially advantaged students. Georgia returned to New Mexico to care for her ailing Mother. She also enrolled in the University's school of education and studied for a degree in elementary education. It was a difficult separation for both of them; however, their plans for marriage sustained them.

Emmett kept a very busy schedule, as has become his way of life. He worked as a waiter in the student dining hall, and concentrated on classes, the athletic field, and maintaining an indomitable sense of humor. He felt an obligation to do well out of respect for his family, his numerous mentors, and for Georgia whom he missed greatly during their separation (personal communication, E. S. Oliver, October 13, 2001). Three close friends from the Bacone football team transferred to Redlands with Emmett. They studied together, sustained a high morale, and were primary contributors to an outstanding football team at Redlands.

With the support of good friends and mentors, a deep love for his fianc,e, and a strong motivation to become an excellent teacher, Emmett graduated from Redlands as president of his class. His mother travelled to California for the graduation celebrations, met her future daughter-in-law, and was welcomed warmly by her son's many friends. For a woman who hoped to see her children complete high school, Cecilia was thrilled to watch her youngest son receive a Bachelor of Science degree. That day, Emmett acknowledged his Mother as his first and essential source of motivation in his educational pursuits.

### **Return to Bacone**

For his first teaching position, Emmett returned to Bacone as a high school science teacher and coach for the track and football teams. He saw himself as demanding, firm, and dedicated to bringing out the best in all his students (personal communication, E. S. Oliver, October 13, 2001). His track students distinguished themselves as medal winners in state competitions despite their relative inexperience as competitive runners. In the spring of 1937, Georgia returned to Bacone as a newly graduated elementary teacher, following her Mother's career pathway. As young professionals, Emmett and Georgia began life-long teaching careers. As beloved friends, they were married in June of 1937 and began a life-long partnership of mutual dedication and devotion.

After three years at Bacone, Emmett and Georgia decided to apply to the Bureau of Indian Affairs for teaching positions among the Pueblos. Georgia's Mother had recently died. She wanted to be near her Father and family members to offer support at a time of great loss. Emmett and Georgia were hired by the Bureau and assigned to the McCarty's day school at Acoma, a Pueblo community on a high plateau, with an intact cultural and

language tradition. Acoma was remarkably different from any community Emmett had ever known. He was admittedly very thankful for the guidance he received from Georgia based on her knowledge of the tribal beliefs, customs, and language (personal communication, E. S. Oliver, October 13, 2001). From the way children were trained to respond to elders to their manners when eating lunch, Emmett had much to learn. Reflecting his strong commitment to professional growth and formal education, Emmett enrolled in night classes offered by the University of New Mexico in Albuquerque.

Even though Emmett and Georgia were both certified teachers and the only professional staff at McCarty's, Emmett was designated the school principal mostly because he taught the older students and the majority of school administrators were males. Reflecting on some of the most rewarding and enjoyable years of his life, Emmett realized how important it was for him to know about the culture of the people as an educator of the children. His appreciation of the Acoma tribe and his happiness among the people would have been compromised without Georgia's valued knowledge and insight. In that respect, she was truly the school principal. They worked as a team to encourage parent participation in school activities which was well received since they also joined in community gatherings and celebrations.

While living at Acoma, Emmett and Georgia became parents to their first son, Arne, on October 1, 1941. Members of the Acoma community and Georgia's Father became Arne's caregivers when Georgia returned to teaching. They enjoyed a peaceful and happy life with a healthy son and many close friends (personal communication, E. S. Oliver, October 13, 2001). Arne became a member of the Pueblo family in a way that bonded his parents more closely to the community.

However, even the peace, security, and accomplishments of life at Acoma could not restrain Emmett's compelling need to utilize his Oklahoma training in the National Guard when he learned of the nation's entry into World War II. He contacted a recruiting office for the U.S. Coast Guard, was examined for admission to the Academy, and received a commission after successful interviews in September, 1942.

### **Military Service: The United States Coast Guard**

Shortly after the school year began, Emmett's sister, Frances, a certified teacher, arrived in Acoma to assume his teaching responsibilities. Emmett said tearful good-byes to his beloved students and friends. His greatest difficulty was in leaving his wife and baby son. Fortunately, Georgia and Arne were able to live with Georgia's father on his ranch at Isleta. Emmett had every assurance they were well cared for in that home and community. However, it was a very long train ride from New Mexico to the Coast Guard Academy in New London, Connecticut. He reflected on the absence of his loved ones, the loss of his role as teacher and coach, and the new challenges and risks he faced at the Academy (personal communication, E. S. Oliver, October 14, 2001).

Once he arrived at the Academy, a new world was waiting for him. He was soon given the nickname of "Hogan" in reference to being a Native American arriving from the Southwest. Emmett took this as a sign of friendship rather than an affront (personal

communication, E. S. Oliver, October 14, 2001). He had little time or emotional energy to dwell on minor relationship issues with his new peers. There were complex nautical skills and vocabulary to learn, many strict military rules to follow, new friends to make, and strong feelings of longing for his wife and son to manage as best he could.

After three months of intense physical, mental, and emotional training, Emmett was among the selected few who advanced to applied experience as a crewmember of the *Danmark*, a magnificent sailing ship loaned to the Coast Guard by Denmark. With all of his tradition and experiences on the water, this phase of the training was most rewarding and enjoyable for Emmett. Of 366 carefully screened recruits admitted to the Academy, Emmett was one of the 126 who graduated with the commission of Ensign. A brief leave afforded him a visit with his family in New Mexico before beginning active duty on board the *Nemesis* for anti-submarine patrols along the Eastern seaboard.

By the end of his first year in the Coast Guard, Emmett was promoted to lieutenant junior grade and was able to make arrangements for his family to move to New York for a year. They rented a home on Long Island and were together when Emmett was in port. They enjoyed all that the city offered in theatre, arts, and entertainment. The many military families in the area shared a ready conviviality and mutual support during the war. When World War II ended, Emmett received a one-year leave from the Coast Guard to finish graduate studies at the University of Washington.

Again, another major life transition was successfully completed but not without personal challenges to overcome and the responsibilities of a growing family to meet. Marvin, Emmett and Georgia's second son, was born on July 1, 1946 in Seattle. The combination of academic demands including writing a thesis, limited income, and to raise a family led Emmett to think about leaving the University. As had happened in high school when Emmett contemplated dropping out, Homer Davis, his former principal who lived in Seattle at the time, came forward to offer encouragement and guidance to stay and graduate. Erna Gunther, an anthropologist at the University also supported completion of graduate studies. Emmett heard the wisdom of his friends and completed the master's degree. Family attendance at this commencement included Georgia, Emmett's Mother, Father, his brother Jim, and his wife Jo. Although the master's degree completed Emmett's formal training, it was not his last involvement with the University.

### **Public School Teaching Career**

Several new options opened to Emmett and Georgia. One was to return to teaching in New Mexico, a move Georgia preferred. Another was accepting a teaching position at Shelton High School, located in a small community near Olympia, Washington where childhood friend Arne Johnsen was teaching. Realizing he could continue his Coast Guard reserve duties in Seattle, Emmett chose the position at Shelton and Georgia complied.

In September, 1947 when Emmett signed his contract at Shelton High, the principal shared his expectation that now the school had a real Indian to take care of troubled Indian students (personal communication, E. S. Oliver, October 14, 2001). The blunt reminder of ethnic stereotypes originally encountered in childhood was a rude orientation for an



energetic Native American educator in his first public school teaching assignment. As a teacher of successful Native students at Bacone and Acoma, Emmett realized that with encouragement and rewards from all teachers and administrators, Native students were capable of excellent work (personal communication, E. S. Oliver, October 15, 2001). The attitude, that non-Native teachers could do little to help Native students, conflicted with Emmett's philosophy of education and his cross-cultural experiences. He had non-Native teachers and mentors throughout his career who were very helpful and supportive to him. In Emmett's view, Native American students can and do learn from dedicated, effective educators regardless of their ethnicity or culture.

To make a difference for his students, Emmett utilized his motivational skills to reinforce their athletic and academic abilities. Remembering his feelings when his seventh grade peers at South Bend teased him about his deficiencies after attending Tulalip Boarding School, Emmett did everything possible to encourage his Native students to be successful in their daily school activities (personal communication, E. S. Oliver, October 15, 2001). He shared a lesson learned at the Coast Guard Academy. If you consistently show up, remain alert and pay close attention, there is a good chance your efforts will produce positive results.

Always highly energetic and aware of the interaction between school and community goals and philosophy of education, Emmett became a leader in school and community organizations including the local teacher association and the Junior Chamber of Commerce. He also participated in regular meetings of the Coast Guard Reserves. To earn extra income, Emmett and Arne Johnsen worked the night shift at the local timber company. Given that certified Native American teachers were rare, one who demonstrated such extraordinary ambition, completed a master's degree, and graduated from a military academy was even more unusual. Emmett received many comments about his status as an educated "Indian" in his school and community interactions. He made it clear to those who commented that his success was made possible through hard work, self-discipline, and the help of his family, friends, and caring educators who guided him.

Similarly, Georgia's teaching, musical, artistic, and domestic talents were not accepted by local community members when they first met her and realized she was a Native American. It took more than a year for local schools to call her for substitute teaching positions despite her degree and record of professional success in Bureau of Indian Affairs schools. When Georgia's father came to live with the family and shared childcare responsibilities for his Grandsons, she had more time to expand her contacts in the community. A third child, Marilyn, was soon to arrive and Grandfather Abeita cherished his role in caring for her and her brothers. The Oliver family experienced many significant changes during their life in Shelton not the least of which included integration into a primarily Euro-American community.

### **Service in the Korean War**

With the United States' entry into the Korean War in 1950, Emmett was recalled for active Coast Guard duty aboard the Bering Strait. With Georgia's Father at home to care for the

children, Georgia began teaching on a full time basis. After two safe and successful years of patrol in the Pacific, Emmett returned home to a growing family. He resumed his civic and professional duties in Shelton and added house building to the schedule. With skills learned in shop classes and various part time jobs, Emmett and Arne developed plans for a new and spacious home. With help from family and many friends, a beautiful home was completed. For Georgia, it felt like they finally had a real family home.

Never content with the status quo, and having his love for the sea rekindled through his service in the Pacific, Emmett grew increasingly interested in assuming leadership responsibilities with the Coast Guard. He realized that to maintain their professional excellence, even Academy trained officers needed continuing education (personal communication, E. S. Oliver, October 15, 2001). Emmett addressed his concerns to the leadership trainers at the Alameda, California Coast Guard Base. He proposed developing an experimental leadership institute that focused on high achievement of military tasks, personnel management, team building, motivation, and problem solving. His plan was accepted and the first program was conducted in 1957. With successful results, the Coast Guard adopted Emmett's program.

### **Transition to the San Francisco Bay Area**

After successfully implementing the leadership training program, Emmett and Georgia decided to move their family to the San Francisco Bay area. Emmett directed the leadership program from 1957 until 1960. His work merited promotions to the rank of Coast Guard Commander. In the early 1960's, political energy in the Bay area was stimulated by a national wave of activism for recognition of civil rights for all citizens, including members of ethnic groups and women. Questions about the legitimacy of the Viet Nam War were raised at public debates, rallies, and protests. Changes in the popular culture of the times included: experimentation in life styles that allowed women greater participation in the workplace; increased concern for preservation of natural resources; openness about recreational drug use; and open questioning of many traditional social conventions. To understate the case, moving from Shelton to Fremont, CA represented a major cultural shift for the Oliver family, particularly for their teen and pre-teen children (personal communication, E. S. Oliver, October 15, 2001).

Concerned for the future of local youths, including his own children, Emmett decided to return to the public schools as a counselor and coach. Georgia was welcomed by the faculty of an elementary school when she sought a full time position. Bay area communities were growing rapidly and included a wide array of diverse cultural groups. With her interests in art, literature, and theatre, Georgia was very happy to live in Fremont.

When he assumed his responsibilities at San Lorenzo High School, Emmett found many students experimenting with drugs and engaging in behaviors that defied social conventions (personal communication, E. S. Oliver, October 19, 2001). Often, students were rebelling against their parents' authority and expectations that they would follow pathways to financial success and high social status. Students wanted to expand their

horizons and escape what they saw as stifling and conservative lives (personal communication, E. S. Oliver, October 19, 2001).

With his self-discipline and experience as a leader in times of difficulty, it was important to Emmett that the counselors, faculty, and administration establish and maintain clear and commonly supported policies and practices regarding student behavior. He found the faculty and administration at San Lorenzo High School in basic agreement about their views of an effective educational program. Strong bonds of personal friendship complemented the professional unity. In addition, the healthy and happy development of the Oliver family contributed to the contentment Emmett realized in his career development.

When Native Americans became active in the Civil Rights Movement in the Bay area, Emmett joined and was chosen as chairman of the Bay Area Native American Committee (BANC). The group planned and executed the takeover of Alcatraz, an island in San Francisco Bay that was an abandoned federal prison site. BANC demanded that the land be granted to the Native people in acknowledgement of vast areas taken by force during the years of colonization (personal communication, E. S. Oliver, October 19, 2001). There were no injuries or destruction of property. The people sought to make a forceful statement that their rights were important.

Emmett realized his experience as a group leader could help Native people unite to demonstrate against historic and contemporary violations of their tribal and civil rights with clarity and appropriate emphasis. His son, Marvin, was deeply interested in the work of BANC and joined his Father at the meetings. Over the years the two have shared their commitment to Native American education. For Marvin, his interests and talents led to the study of Native American art, a position as professor of Fine Arts at the University of Washington, and an international reputation as a Native American sculptor, carver, and painter. In addition to his focus on Coastal Native American art, he is an advisor and mentor to an increasing number of Native American students of all disciplines at the University.

### **University of California Los Angeles (UCLA) Indian Student Center Director**

In 1969 the director of the UCLA Indian Student Cultural Center left campus during student protests without giving notice to the administration. There was an urgent need to appoint an effective new director. Emmett's reputation as a community and military leader, his academic achievements, and his success as a high school counselor and coach, led UCLA administrators to seek him out as an interim director. When asked if he was interested the position, it did not take Emmett long to make his decision. Even though it was mid-way in the school year, he obtained a leave of absence from his counseling position at San Lorenzo. By April, Emmett had prepared and received approval for a generous operating budget for the Indian Cultural Center.

As a Native person who had fought his own battles against discrimination, Emmett understood the emotions students felt about current social and political issues. However, as an experienced educator and counselor, he believed that a college degree was more

important for the long-term benefit of Native students than participation in campus and community protests. He went to the Native students individually and collectively and pressed them to take seriously their responsibilities as students. By June of 1970, the UCLA Indian Cultural Center had a program that was recognized and accepted by the rest of the University. A working advisory board served to support programs, guide policies, and conduct personnel reviews (personal communication, E. S. Oliver, October 20, 2001).

### **University Of Washington Indian Student Program Director**

Emmett's success at UCLA resulted in an offer to head the Indian Student Program in the Minority Affairs Division of the University of Washington. Emmett accepted the offer and moved North while his wife and children remained in the Bay area to complete their educational programs. In Washington, Emmett visited all of the federally recognized tribes, over twenty-five, and arranged meetings with teachers and counselors to identify and recruit qualified students. Once students arrived at the University, the Indian Student Program provided support services including financial aid, academic advising, and tutoring to sustain them through their undergraduate or graduate degrees. Being educated with hundreds of Native students at Bacone, Emmett realized that most needed strong, consistent support from faculty, administration and other striving Native students. They did not lack for ability, but needed confidence and assurance that their efforts would have positive consequences for themselves and members of their tribal communities (personal communication, E. S. Oliver, October 20, 2001).

### **Supervisor of Indian Education for Washington**

After less than a year at the University of Washington, Emmett accepted an administrative position in the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction in Olympia. He was hired as Supervisor of Indian Education. In this role he helped educators and community members design and implement compensatory educational programs in public schools that were eligible for federal funds on behalf of enrolled Native American students. Commonly, Native students were frequently absent from school and had some of the highest dropout rates in the state and nation. They also failed to achieve academically at a level commensurate with their abilities. Often, there were limited or antagonistic relations between school personnel and members of the Native communities (personal communication, E. S. Oliver, October 20, 2001).

Within sixteen months Emmett had managed three complex, demanding, and politically sensitive leadership roles. When he accepted the position with the state superintendent's office in the summer of 1971, he realized this was likely to be the final official assignment of his career. Emmett focused on three key elements: educational policy with regard to education of Native Americans at the national and state level; general educational practices in K-12 schools; and Native community involvement in the education of their children (personal communication, E. S. Oliver, October 20, 2001).

Until his retirement in June, 1982, Emmett traveled across the state meeting with Native American parent committees who monitored the development and results of programs intended to enhance the education of their children. He insisted on accountability and helped formulate clearly stated goals and objectives for programs specifically funded through Native American education sources such as the Johnson O'Malley Act of 1934 and Title IV of the Indian Education Act of 1975. Historically, the funds were usually added to the general school budget rather than providing for the unique needs of Native American students. Emmett insisted that each district formulate a specific plan for services that focused on Native students. He knew from his own experience and formal studies (Oliver, 1947) that Native communities were seldom given a voice in selecting or designing programs for their children.

Without active parent committee involvement and approval, no schools received Indian Education funds from the state Superintendent's office. Every proposal had to include a statement of goals, objectives, and evaluation strategies that was developed and approved by the full parent committee. Emmett regularly brought parents, teachers, and administrators together to discuss progress, and resolve questions or disputes. He also hosted gatherings to honor students, educators, and parents who performed with excellence. These events rallied communities in happy celebrations that Emmett saw as positive reinforcement for educational achievement.

The themes that were dominant in Emmett and Georgia's work in the late 1930s and early 1940s at Acoma remained consistent throughout their careers. To foster positive social and economic conditions in multicultural communities with high birth rates and the majority of members within school age, educators need to build schools up as vital community centers where student accomplishments, family participation, and pride and hope for the future merge. Schools also afford opportunities for meaningful intervention when students are having difficulties. These themes continue to reverberate in studies of Native American education (Szasz, 1992; Tonemah, 1992). Through his role as Supervisor of Indian Education in Washington, Emmett recognized that his personal educational goals were similar to those pursued by Native students around the state. They sought opportunities to realize a meaningful and rewarding life through happy and constructive outreach to other Native American students and their families.

### **Retirement Years**

A year after Georgia retired from her teaching career, Emmett decided to join her in 1982 and begin a new phase of their partnership. They traveled the world as goodwill representatives of various civic organizations. They also enjoyed cruises to sunny and interesting ports around the world. Emmett and his friend Arne Johnsen traveled to Norway to visit Arne's relatives and attempt to use the language they learned from Arne's Grandmother. However, as could be expected, Emmett never let go of his deep interest in civic and volunteer activities. In 1984, Washington Governor, John Spellman, appointed Emmett to the Washington State Heritage Council and the State Board of Geographic Names (Smith, 1995). Emmett represented Native people when the State made decisions

about naming new parks or buildings with Native American identifiers. He also secured Native American input when decisions were made about Native artifacts or human remains that were uncovered during excavations or building projects.

As the state of Washington was preparing to celebrate its centennial in 1989, Emmett, as a member of the Heritage Council and the Maritime Committee of the Centennial Commission, offered to coordinate the state's tribal communities as they prepared for the celebration. After many discussions among all the tribes in the Puget Sound area, they decided to make a united appearance on Puget Sound in a flotilla of newly carved traditional cedar canoes. To create ocean-going canoes of over thirty feet in length, ancient cedar trees were needed. Emmett did not hesitate to approach directors of the National Forest Service who had authority over all old growth timber harvesting on lands within their jurisdiction. The ancient cedars – many over 500 years old – are very precious to the people. However, no other trees were suitable for the canoes. Traditional carvers, spiritual leaders, tribal political leaders, Native community members, educators, state and federal agents, all cooperated to identify the people and the resources needed to organize the flotilla of forty canoes that had not been witnessed on the Sound in over 100 years (Smith, 1993).

Local communities rallied around experienced carvers who trained and guided the work of new recruits. The entire process was a source of great joy for both Emmett and Georgia who received profuse gratitude from thousands of Native and non-Native citizens (personal communication, E. S. Oliver, October 21, 2001). The Centennial Celebration revitalized an ancient craft that many considered a lost art. Tribal people of Western Washington were also joined by related Tribes of the Canadian Pacific Coast.

Emmett continues his active engagement with tribal groups and individual Natives who are seeking to grow educationally, socially, and politically. The alumni association of University of Redlands knows him well, as do the University administrators. Emmett has established a scholarship fund for Native American students at Redlands. At least once a year he visits the tribes in the area and asks to meet with any students who are college oriented. Through tribal education offices Emmett contacts tribal and public schools to arrange informal visits and meet with students and teachers. He clearly remains committed to supporting educational excellence among Native Americans nationally.

When Georgia died of cancer on February 14, 1999 she left a bereaved and dedicated husband. While she was ill, Emmett took care of her at home as long as possible (E. S. Oliver, personal communication, November 3, 2001). He wanted Georgia to remain in their home overlooking Hood Canal, another home they built together and lived in for nearly fifty years. When her condition required care from health professionals, Emmett moved Georgia to a nursing center where he visited her daily. Fortunately, his family, especially his children, their spouses, grandchildren, and many friends were there to sustain him when Georgia died.

With inimitable resilience, Emmett contacted Georgia's alma mater, the University of New Mexico. With the help of Georgia's immediate and extended family and friends, the School of Education at the University established a scholarship for awards to Native American students who were preparing to become elementary teachers. Through the

funds at Redlands and New Mexico, Emmett and Georgia will continue as an educational team. As of this writing, Emmett is eighty-eight, living at his home on Hood Canal, going out to visit local schools, attending monthly meetings of retired Coast Guard Officers, attending football games at the University of Washington, helping his Grandchildren and great Grandchildren prepare to achieve the best education possible. He continues to support Native children, parents and educators in their pursuit of educational excellence. He is also planning a trip to Africa, the only continent he has not visited. He hopes to visit historic sites in Egypt. He will never tire of learning and adventure, two powerful sources of motivation throughout his long and enriched life.

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### **About the Author**

Susanna A. Hayes, associate professor, is a member of the psychology department at Western Washington University. She is also an associate of the Center for Cross Cultural Research. As a certified teacher and school counselor, she worked among the Colville Indians of Eastern Washington for eight years. She first met Emmett Oliver in 1973 when he visited Nespelem School on the Colville Reservation where the student enrollment was 98% Native American and the surrounding community was actively involved in educational programs for their children.

### **Discussion Questions**

1. Who were some of Emmett's role models during his early developmental years of life in the community of South Bend, Washington?
2. Among those role models, whom would you say were positive influences? Negative influences?
3. How was Emmett's ethnic/cultural identity as a Native American shaped during his adolescent years?
4. What personal characteristics did you recognize in Emmett's adolescent development that allowed him to set and achieve his educational goals?
5. In his adult years, Emmett became dependent on alcohol and entered a treatment program when his arrest for DUI indicated his problem. After willingly participating in a residential treatment program (Sundown Ranch near Yakima), he has remained drug and alcohol free for over twenty years. What may have been some elements in his development that could contribute to alcohol abuse? What may have been some elements in his development that could have contributed to his ability to control his alcohol use?
6. What role do you think Emmett's intelligence (aptitude for learning, ability to adapt to new situations) had on his career achievements? From the information presented about Emmett's family, would you say his intelligence was exhibited in a way that was significantly different from that of other U. S. citizens?
7. How similar or different do you think Emmett's life story is compared to Native American men of his era who lacked his athletic abilities?
8. As a graduate of the Coast Guard Academy, Emmett went on to pursue a master's degree at the University of Washington. How might his success at the Academy have influenced his decision to enter graduate school?



9. How were some of the personal and career choices made by Georgia Oliver similar to those that may be made by contemporary professional married women who are also raising a family?
10. If you had the opportunity to interview Emmett, what questions would you want to ask him about his life experiences? What questions would you like to ask his wife Georgia? What is your rationale for the questions you ask?
11. If you reflect on the many effects of acculturation on Native Americans of the United States over the past century, how do you think Native people will be distinguished from non-Natives in the next century?