DIANA "DEDE" YAZZIE DEVINE
1950



Honored as 2025 Historymaker
Created Innovative Housing and Health Programs for Native Americans

The following is an oral history interview with Diana Devine **(DD)** conducted by Josephine Pete **(JP)** for Historical League, Inc. and video-graphed by Leonardo Buono on June 24, 2025 at The Center for Positive Media in Phoenix, Arizona.

Original tapes are in the collection of the Arizona Historical Society Museum Library at Papago Park, Tempe, Arizona.

JP I am Josephine Pete. This oral history review is being conducted with Diana "Dede" Yazzie Devine. It's June 24, 2025 at the Center for Positive Media. Ms. Devine, congratulations.

DD Thank you.

JP Congratulations on being selected as a 2025 Historymaker. I'm honored and delighted to be here with you today. I'm going to ask you a few questions, give you an opportunity to please tell your story.

DD I've been called Dede since I was small. If people call me Diana, then, it's a little bit more formal. I use that name for work, but when I'm in relationship with somebody, they call me Dede.

JP Dede, tell me, where were you born, a bit about your childhood, your early years growing up.

DD I was born in Lansing, Michigan. My dad was a football coach at Michigan State and it's kind of funny how my family has grown as I have a large family, seven brothers and sisters. We sort of define, where we are in the birth order by where we were born, where

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my dad was coaching. I was born at Michigan State in Lansing, Michigan. Don't remember too much because I was quite young and then when I was five, we moved to Arizona. We moved to Tempe. My dad was the football coach at Arizona State University. It was Tempe Teacher's College or Tempe Normal at the time. It became Arizona State University while he was coaching there. That's where I remember playing. We lived in Tempe. There was only about 10,000 people at the time and we had a house that had tumbleweeds all around, the desert was right by our house. It was Daley Park, which is now in the heart of Tempe, but back then there were tumbleweeds all around us and I grew up playing outside, playing in the desert. A lot of our activities surrounded the university and sports. My family, my mother fell in love with Arizona, and built lifelong friendships there. My grandma lived with us, and they played cards a lot. I learned how to play bridge when I was quite small, because I was my grandma's bridge partner when somebody didn't show up. But most of the time what I remember in Arizona, because we moved to Missouri when I was seven, was playing outside and getting to know the desert and how much I just loved being outside.

JP So you began school in Arizona?

DD I did, I don't remember the name of the school, but I remember the church we went to was Mount Carmel Church. This was the first place that I went to the Catholic Church with my family. Then we moved to Columbia, Missouri, which was another college town. That's really where I kind of grew up. I went to high school and built high school relationships, made friends, and then my dad took a job in Green Bay, Wisconsin with the Green Bay Packers. I moved with him to Green Bay. My mother actually stayed in Missouri for another six months so that my younger siblings could finish school, then they moved on up to Green Bay.

JP Younger siblings, where were you in the family?

DD I am right in the middle. I have two older sisters, a younger brother, and three younger sisters. So, there were six girls and one boy.

JP So you attended high school in…?

DD In Columbia, Missouri.

JP Then you went on to Wisconsin?

DD Then we went on to Wisconsin.

JP You chose the university of…

DD Wisconsin in Madison.

JP What was it about the University of Wisconsin that caused you to be interested in it?

DD So, when I went to the University of Wisconsin, like most freshmen, I was studying the common freshman courses, basic courses and everything. But I had spent some time before traveling outside the United States in volunteer services. So, I already knew when I went there that I wanted to learn about how you solve problems and work in other communities. Maybe clean water, economic development and so, I had pursued some of those courses. So while I was at the University of Wisconsin, I applied for an internship. I saw an internship in one of the tribal communities in northern Wisconsin. It was an Ojibwe community called Lac du Flambeau and it was doing some work around Indian education and economic development. I was accepted for that internship and that was my first exposure to working in tribal communities. I finished the internship, and I got a job at another Ojibwe community. I ended up working there for about five or six years learning all about life on the Reservation. That community was relatively small. It was a very subsistence community till then. It was in the early 1970s, it had a natural wild rice lake and fishing lakes and so fishing, hunting, harvesting wild rice, harvesting cranberries, and logging were all part of the job skills that people in that community were used to doing. Subsistence eating and farming were very much a part of their life. They didn't have a lot of grocery stores and amenities close by and so it was still a very basic community. I learned to accept life in a different environment than that to which I was accustomed. In a different culture and a different viewpoint. There had been an experience with the interns that had gone a year before me. They had come to this small tribal community and they wanted to clean up the Reservation. They saw these parked cars and saw them as a kind of trash. So, they hauled all the parked cars to the closest town and sold them or donated them to the junkyard. They failed to realize that maybe the family had one running car with two broken down cars and they were harvesting parts from the two to keep the one car running. Now, the community didn't have all their spare parts and were having to go to the nearest town and buy back their old donated parts, this did not make them very happy, and they were very expressive about it. I really think I took that to heart and said, it's not what I think is best for the community or what's an eyesore. It's listening and asking them what do you want? Here's my skillsets, what can I do for you? That became part of the philosophy that has guided me the rest of my life.
That was a big learning experience for me, and a good one.

JP Tremendous perception. So having that experience caused you to stay year after year and recommit yourself.

DD Yeah. So, the Indian Self-Determination Act, there was a lot of movement going on federally about recognizing tribes as sovereign nations and recognizing their sovereignty. Some of the national public acts were about doing that. The tribes were starting to receive funds like local municipalities, the community development block grant funds, home funds, and CETA funds. Community development organizations and tribes were beginning to be recognized similar to local municipalities and receiving those funds. I was learning about that and I had a good education and was able to write programs and document things. I was able to document research and things like that and those skillsets were helpful. I also recall that the tribal chairman at the time was probably the smartest person I knew. He knew everything about that community and seasonally and how the community lived and what they needed, but he didn't have a formal education.

JP Was this in Arizona?

DD No, this is in Wisconsin.

JP Oh Wisconsin.

DD He was one of the smartest people I knew. So, then I also began to realize that I had some of those formal skillsets that I learned in a college education, and he had skillsets that I didn't from his lived and learned experiences. He knew how to put those two together and get a better outcome. So, I brought some of those skillsets to a community that needed some of that knowledge and I felt very welcome there in that I was contributing and as long as I feel like I'm bringing added value and contributing, it was great to be there.

JP That's wonderful.

DD Yeah.

JP Outstanding. Then, this experience created an interest in something else that was going on and that motivated your move to Arizona. Tell me about that.

DD Yeah. The job I had been working was ending. I had been there for quite some time. I hadn't intended that to be my career's work or my life's work. Northern Wisconsin was very cold, and so I was at a point in time where I thought, I'm ready to make a move. It was a positive time to make a move. I had built some really strong friends in Indian Health Service and they had invited me to come stay with them in Arizona. I always had such a strong calling and heart for Arizona. I remember being there as a child and how much I loved it there. I moved to Arizona, not having a job, but having somebody to stay

with, friends who said I could live with them while I was looking for my next adventure and my next new job. As I was on my way back to Arizona, coming through the Grand Canyon all those wonderful memories came back. This beautiful state, that I have now made my home for almost 50 years. I came back and the family that I was staying with, the man that worked for Indian Health Service said, "Hey, I'm volunteering over at this little service program, that's providing support to Indian men that are homeless on the street and have alcohol problems. They are advertising this job for their administrative support. Would you like to apply?" I went down there and I visited. It was a small program in downtown Phoenix, and I thought, okay, this is something that I feel like I could add value. They were starting to get a few funds or grants, small ones, at the time. There were two other people there, who knew about helping the people, but didn't know much about administering funds or grants. So, I took the job and I immediately had a review from the State licensure around licensing the facility. It had never been licensed. I'm just going to say, everything that came in front of me, I had to learn, but I was a good listener. I was also a good asker. I said to the reviewer, "I will do everything you tell me. I will give you every piece of paper I have. If you will, just kind of guide me through it. Let's do this in a partnership where you're going to help me and I'll learn while we are getting licensed." He took that on that way. So, right away I was kind of thrown into learning and doing some things that weren't familiar. The process of everything I do here, I'm probably going to be learning for the first time and doing for the first time. But I was up for that challenge. I'm a curious person. I have a lot of energy. I always want to learn and so day one, I was learning right along. I can't say I had the big vision of what Indian Rehabilitation became, Native American Connections, but every day was a new challenge and something new to learn.

JP When did you come to the realization there was a such a need.

DD I would say I learned that pretty quickly because it was a small program. There were only twelve beds at the time, and there were the guys in the program who were telling other people out on the streets about it. They were doing the outreach. They were networking so there were people coming every day asking for help. It was fairly quickly that I knew we needed to think about expansion. That we needed to either grow the program right there or we needed to find a new place and add beds. Pretty quickly within about three years, we opened up Guiding Star which was the women and children's facility. It was just a block away, right on Portland Street. Before we expanded the men's center, because there were a lot of men, many, many more men who were homeless and on the streets. We opened the women's facility. So that was our next expansion. Immediately I

knew how important it was because the women could bring their children with them. I didn't see anything else like that happening.

There were a couple rehab centers, Calvary Rehab was right down the street, but they were focused on men. There weren't very many centers that were focused on women, maybe domestic violence shelters, but not alcohol recovery centers, and certainly there wasn't anything that I saw addressing the importance of keeping the family together. So, what those women were really experiencing and expressing to us was that their role as a mother was what grounded their sobriety. If their children had been taken away from them by CPS or they weren't able to bring them they probably wouldn't have stayed. They would have been back out on the streets. But they stayed, they got healthy, and they learned skills. Their children stayed safely in the childcare center, while they were getting their training and reclaiming the power in their role of being a mother. They wanted to create a safe, healthy environment for their children. So, it was quite clear to me how important it was to keep the family together, because women were assuming again the role as mother, a lot of women stayed. Many would have relapsed and went back on the streets, if their children were taken away. So, we just continued that model and added beds and by the time I left, we had over 60 beds for women and families and children in the Patina Wellness Center, that was so important. The next expansion I think was transitional housing because people didn't want to go back out on the streets homeless. So, we built a transitional housing program. In the meantime, I had the opportunity to acquire the property, non-profits didn't own their buildings at that time. But the owner of the property, was a real estate developer from Canada, and wanted to sell the property. I didn't know anything about mortgages, and we probably didn't have the balance sheet to get a loan. So, he said, "Well, I'll just carry your mortgage for you." I didn't quite know what that meant, all I knew was I had to pay him a dollar down. So, that was our first real estate transaction. We leveraged that small program and by owning that small site, we were able to use it for every single new piece of property we bought, and expansion we made. People want to say that I had this big vision and all, but every positive step we took gave me the reassurance, understanding, and knowledge to take the next step. I also think that I surrounded myself with people who wanted to say, "yes." I'm not very good with, "no people." "No, we can't do that." "No, we tried that before." I like people who say "we can do that, let's work on it. Let's do a plan." So, I surrounded myself with really positive people and I also have to say there were so many positive people that I learned from. As the program grew, we needed somebody, a clinical director that really understood trauma. I didn't have those skillsets. So, hiring somebody was the thing to do. We had a Native American woman who had experienced trauma herself, and she was a clinical psychologist. She came in and started teaching those skillsets to the

women. Not only alcohol and drug recovery, but healing the pain that was underneath the trauma that caused the addiction in the first place. So just adding people. I have so many memories of such wonderful committed, mission-driven people who came to work for Native American Connections. I don't think anybody came for a paycheck.

JP Wonderful.

DD We would start an interview with the question? "Do you want to be part of this mission?

JP As Eleanor Roosevelt said, "No one accomplishes anything worthwhile alone."

DD That's right.

JP How did you secure your funds to grow these programs?

DD Yes, that's a really good question. When I left Native American Connections, we were generating about 20% of our budget, about 20 million dollars annually, from fundraising. I never wanted to have to depend a lot on fundraising. So, building a service model in which you were actually billing and generating revenue was a big part of Native American Connections. So, initially, we built relationships with the foundations and grant makers, and if what we were doing fit into their mission, they generally would support and fund us. Some people supported our work around homeless youth, and some supported our work around the women and children recovery model for keeping the family together. There is not a billable Medicaid source or billable code for families in treatment. It's still individual by individual. So, we had to convince foundations to fund this model of keeping the family together. We became very sophisticated as a behavioral and medical health provider billing Medicaid. And, that third party income and revenue, supported the healthcare service mission. It's not funding that you have to raise every year, so our knowledge of medical billing became a reliable source of funding each year.

And, that sophistication comes with other requirements in terms of facility and professional State licensure, knowing all the State requirements, and Medicaid codes and requirements. So, you're a small nonprofit doing the same kind of services that hospitals are doing and so you have that same level of infrastructure to support that. And, on the housing side, we started utilizing the Low Income Housing Tax Credit program for financing our housing development and construction. It's a federal program that provides tax benefit to states each year and the State requests proposals for those tax credits. That tax benefit is sold to businesses in exchange for private equity investment into the projects. It's the single largest source of equity investment into building affordable housing. And, you're reaching out to the state, cites and other municipalities

for CDBG and HOME funds for the gap in financing, and it becomes part of the capital stack and financing model for affordable housing. Native American Connections became quite good at that. And there are other sources of gap financing like the Federal Home Loan Bank Affordable Housing Program that we utilized. Some of our housing developments had as many as ten or twelve funding sources, so getting to know each of those sources, how you acquire those funds, and the how you meet the compliance of using those funds was a large part of the process. Sometimes nonprofits don't have the business infrastructure to meet the compliance of government funding, but it's necessary to meet the requirements because it is what allows you to go back and get more money for your next project. I thought Native American Connections did a really good job of learning where the resources came from, how you apply for them, but also the importance of reporting, compliance and outcomes that are necessary in order to repeat the process with your next project.

JP Which leads me to think about the Indian Self-Determination Education Act, was it helpful?

DD I think the Indian Self-Determination Act was really helpful. Those federal acts helped tribes, but we were an urban program, and we never wanted to compete for funds that went to tribes. We wanted to access funds that tribes didn't have access to, so that we weren't pulling money from tribal needs to address the needs of communities in urban area. We wanted to compete for those bigger pots of money. Now, Native American Connections did become an urban Indian health program under Title V, which is a federal program. There are 42 of these programs in the United States that provide health care to the American Indian urban population. We became certified as an urban Indian health care program, which allowed allocated funds to come directly to us. The budget is a congressional federal appropriation passed on to Native American Connections. So, in the area of health care, we did benefit from federal funds and federal programs. On the housing side, we competed with all the other housing programs, non-profit developers, and profit developers. We did not want to take funds from the tribes to develop housing. Our goal was to build our own pipeline of funds. But, towards the end, our projects were 20- to 25-million-dollar projects. So, putting together the capital development fund for the next project was a lot of what I did the last 10 or 15 years I was there.

JP So, the goal was to keep the funds separated, but to keep the families united.

DD Absolutely.

JP The long-term effects of the holistic approach. How did you manage it? What were your steps to accomplish this goal?

DD Great, great question. So, funds don't do that. Funds are very segregated and they're very specific and they tell you exactly who you can serve and people don't fit into that and families don't fit into that. So, we never wanted the family to know where the money was coming from because that was our job to bring it in and make sure that we could serve the whole family. So, it wasn't just a holistic approach about keeping the family together. I am going say, in the last 10 or so years, that family wasn't just women and children. There were men who were raising their children. Maybe they were the single parent and/or keeping the father with the mom and children. Even if there was domestic violence, getting the help both parents needed was important to keep the family together. So, it was not just keeping women and children together, but the entire family unit. These services applied to the integration of health care and housing. So, when I tell the story about back in the early 1980s, the first thing the clients would tell us was, "We need housing. We need a safe place to live that we can afford with a low-paying job." So, remember when COVID first broke? They began linking health and housing. Everybody starts to realize good health care requires a stable, affordable place to live. Housing was then integrated, but our clients were telling us that back in the 1980s. They were saying, "In order to maintain our healthy self, we need a safe, affordable place to live with a meaningful job." So, now you are talking about, kind of the vitalist wheel of health, where you are close to transportation, you are close to social services, health care, housing and educational institutions. These are the necessities of a healthy community wheel. It's really that holistic integration that you are striving to achieve. Native American Connections tried not to mission creep, but really focus on health care and housing. Then bring in community partners that provided the other services really well. Phoenix Indian Center, Work Force Development Program, and so working with them to bring work force to our clients. St. Joseph the Worker, and Urban League, were the partners that did the work force piece. Having partners that ensured food security. For example, in our affordable housing communities, St. Mary's delivered a Kid's Care meal every afternoon for the kids when they came home from school. So, the children had a secure meal each day. Our program did not provide meals. So, who was our strong community partner? St. Mary's. I think what Native American Connections realized was this holistic approach wasn't just about keeping the family together it was about providing the continuum of services the people needed. The strength of the holistic approach was building strong community partnerships.

This became their mission and focus. We also provided access to our families and where possible the space to deliver that service. Free Arts of Arizona brought arts to our kids in our communities. We did just whatever we could, to give them access to our families and a place, a beautiful community space in order for them to provide that service became our model for over 30 community partners. These partners brought that sense of community and all those touch points in the community. This allowed us to then focus on what we did best. The health care and the housing part of the program.

JP It takes a village.

DD It takes a village. The traditional healing part of the program, I'm gonna say that started very early on when we built that sweat lodge in 1980. Those traditional Native American men who said, "We have the skills to heal ourselves. This is one of the cultural services, spiritual services that will provide healing. Can we build it here?" Our reply was, "Yes, you can." It was integrated into the program, and we saw the positiveness of that immediately. We used to say that once the detox occurred and they gained their sobriety it took a while for them to physically feel better. It took a while for them to mentally feel better. And then it took a while for them to spiritually feel better. We found that cultural support, language, culture, religion, is in that spiritual realm, and providing that became just as important as physical detox and then learning new skills, the educational mental piece of learning new skillsets, and still today, a lot of the hospital-based programs don't talk about that spiritual component. That healing of the soul and the person. Recognizing the language and culture, what now they call culture competency is in that spiritual piece to me. And extending that throughout all of our programs is what's important.

JP It is global.

DD Yeah.

JP Well let's talk about you a little bit.

DD I don't like to.

JP Mother of three children. How did you balance it all? Job responsibilities and parenting responsibilities?

DD You know, that's a really good question. I'll just say, just a little personal and I don't really talk much about my personal life, but I was divorced in 1987 and I never remarried. So, for a long time I was a single mom working at Native American Connections. I would say one of the hardest times is when I decided to go back to get my

master's degree, the MBA program, because, that was a little bit of a stretch degree for me. The natural one would've been social work and I do just want to just say I became an independent licensed counselor in the State of Arizona. So, I could've practiced independently. I didn't practice because I was running the organization, but it was important for me to have that clinical background and understanding. It was a stretch for me, the MBA program. It's a two-year intensive program and I would say that was probably very difficult. The kids were still there. They were entering junior high and high school and the program was growing and now I was in a full-time MBA program. I prayed a lot to get through that. And I just had to be very extremely organized. I had lists of everything and I reached out to my community and to my neighborhood for people to watch my kids after school. I built a sense, just like I built at work, I built that support system within my neighborhood. And said, "I'm going through this, can you help me? Can you do this with my kids?" I had a deaf son that couldn't use the telephone to communicate. We created our own numerical messages with a pager. Texting, "I'm home from school,c is what the numbers meant. We created our own little texting messages, numerical messages to communicate with each other. So, you just do what you need to do as a resourceful mom. I have a couple more things I want to say about that, but when I did have my retirement party, I apologized to my children for not always being there. There were times – I was at work when I probably should have been home with them. Of course, children always say in retrospect, "Mom, we always felt part of the community." Now, my children are all enrolled tribal members, and all of my grandchildren are enrolled tribal members. So, the Native community is their community. They were raised and grew up in their community, in the Native community by the work that I was doing and all the ancillary things that I was doing. They felt that community support. And I always had such strong friendships and community members that they felt very supported by that. But that was a very difficult time, getting through that, and I remember my very last class I thought, I can't do this one more day. But what I wanted to say about that is it was in the executive MBA program. It was a cohort where you worked in groups. And you stayed together those two years. The same people those two years and all your work was in groups. Every project that we did I think we did for Native American Connections. We needed a new financial operating system and so I made that our group project, because financial operating systems, business systems were really changing back then. We needed a new medical – electronic medical record. All these things that we needed, I made a school project. And so, they would do all the research, find out the pricing, if we implemented it, we would implement it right at work. And so, they kind of took on Native American Connections, my group cohort, to build our strength of the business skills that we really needed. This is the mid-90s, when

computers are becoming much more important and data and everything, so, it was really helpful to me. They would say, "Well, what are you gonna do when you graduate with an MBA?" I go, "What do you mean what am I gonna do? I'm gonna use this to take us to the next level." So, it never occurred to me that I would get an MBA and then leave Native American Connections. Everybody was getting their degree to take their career to a new level. I was just using it to improve the skillsets where I was working and the community in which I worked.

JP Legalize what you were already doing.

DD Yeah.

JP I mentioned necessity but you talked about the importance of need.

JP You ask for what you need. Not what you want.

DD Yeah.

JP I am going to talk a little bit more about the children. In terms of how children from the tribes were educated at the Indian School.

DD In 2006, we bought the office building on North Central. And my office was up on the 6th floor. The Indian Center was in the same building and originally Native Health was in the same building.

DD My office looked out over the Indian School. And we were all familiar with the Indian School. We all knew people that went there. I had been there several times for sporting events when it was still open. The Phoenix Indian School was open from 1891 to 1990. 1891 to 1990. Ninety-nine years it was open. Many people don't know that it was still open through 1990. And then it closed. So, here it is, this legacy right here on 3rd Street and Indian School – Central and Indian School. Really, if you pinpointed the heart of the Phoenix Metropolitan Area, it's right in the center of the city and it operated there for 100 years.

JP Well the school with the street named after it.

DD And a street named after it. People don't even know why Indian School Road is called Indian School Road. Everyday, from my office, I'd look over it (Indian School Park). I had a really good friend, Patty Talahongva, she's a Native American journalist, and we started talking about having a presence at the former Indian School. When the school closed in 1990, it very quickly became a City of Phoenix park. The city actually traded

with Barron Collier, the real estate developer, for the park land. Barron Collier traded the federal government their Everglade swamp land in Florida for the Phoenix Indian School property. So, Barron Collier ended up with the Indian School who then traded with the City of Phoenix for the property in downtown Phoenix where the Collier Center is located. And that's how Barron Collier owned that land downtown and by trading with the City of Phoenix, and City got the Indian School land from a trade for Everglade swampland in Florida. So, now the City of Phoenix owns the former Indian School land. Patty and I started talking to Mayor Stanton and Councilwoman Laura Pastor, her father actually, Congressman Pastor, about reclaiming the history and important stories of the boarding school. Two of the buildings were empty, and the City had only opened Memorial Hall, but didn't really talk about the boarding school. Memorial Hall was just an event place. There were 27 buildings when the school closed, and the City immediately demolished 24 of them, so only 3 buildings remain. Those were the ones on the Historic Register. Thank goodness they were on the Historic Register because they couldn't demolish them. So, we started with the City of Phoenix and saying, "We want to have a presence back at the Indian School. We want to reclaim that land." So, Native American Connections reached out to the tribes because we thought we better ask the tribes' permission to reclaim that site, since it was tribal children that went there. We probably went to about half of the tribes in Arizona. There's 22 Tribes in Arizona. They immediately said yes. So, we convened what you call a charrette, you know a community meeting to ask what do you want to see happen in this building? It was the original elementary school building. And they said, "Well we want a place where we preserve and tell the true history of the school. And we want a gathering place for the community. We want an office or a meeting spot where tribal leaders or people that want to come to Phoenix have meetings there. And then we want to have a classroom for education. You know, to teach people about the boarding school and the history. And we want to feed people, you know, food." So, we built a commercial kitchen in the former elementary school, and the gallery that tells the history of the school, and it has a little conference center. It has the largest Native American operated gathering space where it holds 125 people, and a commercial kitchen in which people can prepare and serve food. During COVID it was used a lot to serve the community. So Native American Connections raised the funds for the renovation, about 4 million dollars. We converted the original elementary school and negotiated a long-term lease with the City of Phoenix to operate it. The City still owns the property, but Native American Connections has a long-term lease to operate the site. And, we asked for the artifacts the City found when they did the demolition of the site. They went down about 12 inches and they found a lot or artifacts that are housed at the Pueblo Grande Museum. We asked that anything that originally

belonged to the Indian School remain the property of the Indian School on behalf of Native American Connections. Originally, the City did not put that in the contract, about three or four years later, we were able to add that. "Cause they were starting to find documents from the Indian School in other old historic buildings and they didn't know what to do with them. We said , we'll take them. The importance of the school is so significant that when Secretary Deb Haaland, the first Native American woman to be a cabinet secretary for President Biden, did her healing and reconciliation tour of the boarding schools in the United State, she visited the Phoenix Indian School and listened to the survivors of the boarding school. So, if you go there in the gallery, it tells the history. If you can imagine in 1890, it was brutal. General Pratt was the originator of the boarding school concept while Native American people were held under the Department of War. So these children were wards of the Department of War and forcibly removed from their communities. There were over 500 federal boarding schools.

Carlisle Indian School is probably the most famous one, and Carlisle Indian School was only open for 40 years (compared to Phoenix Indian from 1891-1990).

There's still a few boarding schools that are open, but over time, you know the schools changed. They cut their hair. They changed their clothing. They forced them to speak English. Punished to speak their language. They attempted assimilation. Assimilation of children. And, if you think about it, if you have children, age 5, and somebody forcibly takes that child from you, puts them in this boarding school, many of them didn't go home until they were 18 or 20. By the time they went back to their community, they were strangers in the own community because they had been introduced to a different religion, a different language, a different culture, and they didn't know the survival knowledge and arts and crafts of the community.

JP Experience?

DD You know it was pretty a devastating experience - the boarding school experience in the United States. Over time, when the school closed, kids were speaking their own tribal language and nothing about cutting your hair. So it changed over time. So, if you talk to each generation, you would've gotten a little bit different story. There are pictures in the gallery of Robert Kennedy. He visited the Phoenix Indian school in 1968, about three months prior to his assassination, because he was very concerned about the education that was being provided in the boarding schools across the nation. They were originally industrial schools--and I know we're going way off, but I know this is an interest of yours--to teach the trades, they built the cities. So the children, like African American children, were the labor that built our cities. The boys were taught crafts and the trades

and girls were taught domestics. And they were loaned-out living in peoples homes and did the domestics in people's homes. So, it began changing in the 1940s or 1950s…Robert Kennedy said we need to be preparing kids for college. These institutions, these boarding schools, are not doing that. So, the emphasis and the importance of that shift of what the boarding school was for in the first place, shifted along with their practices over time. That story is told in the gallery at the Phoenix Indian School Visitor Center.

JP I could see lots of traffic at the school site. My view from the window was the same as yours. My building was next door to yours. The Phoenix Union High School District Administration Office.

DD Yes.

JP Those Indian students who attended Phoenix Union helped build my home.

DD Yes, they did.

JP It was a part of their on-job-training program. The program gave them the experiences they needed to acquire the skills to actually construct homes.

DD Right.

JP If they wanted to go back to the reservation, they had a skill to contribute to the improvement of the community.

DD Yeah. So, Patty Talahongva became our first director of that site and she would just rejoice when maybe a college graduate had his graduation celebration at the Indian School. Here, a place where they were never encouraged to go to college, now having their graduation ceremony there.

JP I have a couple more questions. I want to know about Dede, "The Ironman participant."

DD Oh, okay. So, I'm going to say it was during that time where I became a single mom and working hard. I started running. I ran for about 25 years. Like, in a running group and I have to say, I had wonderful men that I worked with and they were so positive at work. But my support systems were the women. So, sometimes I had a running group and sometimes a couple girlfriends. But running became what centered me and my mental health and sometimes when I would run, I would think of new ideas that I would never get to that place to have this idea about work, because I was always so busy on task. So, I became a runner. Then I had an opportunity to go hike in Nepal in the Himalayan range,

that was in the 1990s. I went to hike in Nepal for a month. Which was a long time for me to be away from my kids and a long time for me to be away from work. But I felt it was important. And I needed that time to assimilate and to hike up into the higher altitudes and it changed my life. One being with the culture. One living off the land. One hiking in that beautiful environment. I always felt the closest to God or my spiritual beings when I was not quite in control. Mother Nature was in control because you have to give up the things that control you. You give it away and say, there is something much greater than me, more powerful than me. When I came back, I was in such great shape that I went and ran my first half marathon, and I actually won my division. So, I thought, oh. So, running quickly became an important part of my life. A year later, I was running my first marathon. I ran several marathons, maybe 20 or so. When I would run the marathon, I would accidentally qualify for the Boston Marathon. You have to run a qualifying time. I ran the Boston Marathon three times and qualified. When you're running a marathon, you are out running for two, three hours. You become very close to the people in that running community. I would say they become really your best supporters and your best friends. Because you tell them everything. So, we would talk about work. We had a confidentiality agreement that we adhered to and we would solve our own personal issues and our work issues. There is just something special about running. I actually ran with this Native American man his name is Dave. I trained him for a half marathon and we began running like I would run with my women friends. I was probably 15 years older than him, maybe more. And he said to me, "I never knew you could have friends like this." This kind of support in this community, so I introduced him to that level of community support. When I got a little older, my body began to ache. I started hiking and then hiking just took over. I hiked The Grand Canyon several times and I went back to Nepal and hiked in Nepal. Wherever I went, I hiked. If I went to Alaska, I would hike in Alaska. Wherever I went, I would just get on a trail. Get on a trail and see where it would lead me. I would always want to go a little bit further. Let's just see what is around that corner or this river bend, or let's cross over to the other side. They would say, "No, we need to get back." I was the one that always wanted to go just a little bit further. So, running and hiking. It just became my soul saver. It helped preserve my mental health. When I was 60 years old, I committed to Ironman.

JP Sixty?

DD I was a 60-year-old Arizona Ironman. It is a 2.4 miles swim, and then 112-mile bike ride and finally, a 26.2-mile run. So, that was kind of the end of my running. Then I began hiking. Hiking became my love, just because, you're older, it's harder on your body, but it wasn't so much the competition, it was the support, and the effort.

For example, I was at the dentist the other day, and they wanted to schedule six procedures on one day. And they asked me, "Can you handle it?" I go, "Oh yeah." I have this place I go to. I learned to go to this mind over matter, mind over pain, place. When you are an Ironman athlete or a marathon runner, you get tired and it hurts, but you have to keep going. You find this place that your mind goes to and I go, "Oh yeah, no worry." "I just have this place I go to in my mind.

JP You have that safe place to go to.

DD Yes

JP Well, we are about there.

DD Okay, let me just tell you one thing.

JP Go right ahead.

DD In 2018, I hiked across Ireland and on the last day of that hike, I jumped off a fence, it was muddy and raining. I usually wore just a light trail shoe, but they told us to wear our boots, which are heavy. It was raining and it was muddy. So, I jumped off a fence and when I hit the ground it snapped my calcaneal, my heel bone in half and ruptured my Achilles tendon. When I came home, I had multiple surgeries, and I can't run or hike anymore. The only reason I'm telling you this, it took a real shift, a mental shift for me to adjust to that. Because it was so much a part of my life. So now I have had to do other things. I read a lot more. I have had to find ways to adapt again. I started reading, gardening and cooking. These different things are now kind of my shift. It was a very difficult transition.

JP Yes. And you are such a positive person, you can still travel. Your story is so interesting. Just a couple more questions I want to ask.

JP What advice would you give a 25-year-old Dede Devine?

DD There are so many lessons I learned the hard way. I wish I could tell the 25-year-old Dede Devine those lessons, but I've learned in life sometimes you just have to go through them. Somebody can tell you and you hear it, but you don't feel it. You don't really understand. So sometimes I would say in your life, you are going to have some challenges, and there are going to be some hard times, but you are going make it through. You are going to have the people around you who will help you get through. You are not going to be able to avoid the challenges. I wish you could. I hope you can avoid some of these things I'll share with you, but you won't. So, that is just the way life is. I

would say, what served me so well is, remembering to ask the people who are most affected, or impacted for their opinion. Not only their opinion, but their ideas about moving forward and fixing the problem. Because so many times I think we move up in leadership and we start making those decisions for them. We become less and less connected to the people we are serving. So don't ever lose that connection or that understanding that you know what is best for them. Because you've lived or been doing it so long. You don't. That is what I would tell a 25-year-old Dede Devine.

JP Is there anything else you would like to tell me? How about the next generation? What do you want to tell them?

DD You are so lucky to live in Arizona. My children were born and raised here. None of them have left. I have been here now for 50 years. I thank my dad for introducing me to Arizona as a child. The diversity of this state, and I don't mean just cultural diversity, but the beauty of the state, the different people, the friends that I have made. There are a couple hundred people a day moving to Phoenix, Arizona. So, there is good and bad to that, but the good is that there are always new ideas or people coming from other places, you have such a great opportunity to learn from them and continue your life. I know Josie, you are like this, I'm still curious. I still have FOMO, "the fear of being left out." Oh, I was at a meeting the other day, I was there to honor one of my friends and there was an afternoon session it was Arizona Town Hall. They were going create plans for the next Town Hall. I didn't need to stay. I'm not part of the Town Hall. But they had put me in a work group. I wanted to stay because I wanted to know what is the next for Town Hall for Arizona. What is the importance and the focus? I didn't really need to or have to stay, but that curiosity was there because what is next for Arizona? The state in which I live, the community in which I live and work and raise my family.

JP That curiosity is what makes you a Historymaker. Because you have done so much for so many, your legacy will live on and on. I am honored and humbled to have interviewed you. Because in telling your story, you told my story. I can't thank you enough for the time that you have shared with me today and the years of service that you have given to our state. Specifically, the people who are natives.

DD Thank you, Josie.

JP That concludes my interview.