

Twyla Melton

Attachment 3
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Janell Wintersteen

From: janelle wintersteen <calendula14@hotmail.com>
Sent: Friday, March 13, 2020 12:55 PM
To: Twyla Melton
Subject: Indigenous Women _ Testimony from Coyote Short

I am the Consulting Geologist at the Idaho Mining and Geology Museum. I have been informed that Idaho is the only state whose Consulting Geologist is native American My father's mother was a Paiute from Duck valley and my mother's family were Modocs from the Oregon and California. I graduated from Boise State University i have passed the Idaho State Certification exam. At the museum I insists no rock specimen be discarded until I have examined it. I started doing this after some "pebbles" in the waste basket, pebbles that I pulled out and discovered to be rubies from northern Idaho.

It was not easy to get my geology degree from BSU, especially since I insisted on specializing in mining and in mineral ores. Most women at BSU graduate as Hydrologists because there is less prejudice in that aspect of geology against them. I experienced insults and active attempts to get me out of BSU because I insisted on the studying the hard science of geology. One professor, from whom I had to take 3 classes, went all the way to the BSU president protesting my presence in his classes. He seemed equally outraged by my being a woman and being Native. In not only his class but others, I had to prove myself academically over and over. Prejudicial comments about my race and my gender were the norm. I fought professors pushing alcohol on me, disrespecting me, and demanding that I get a boyfriend or a husband. All other Natives, male and female whom I met in my classes, were driven out before they graduated.

I also narrowly escaped being one of the Native women who were murdered or whose bodies were never found. In my twenties, I did mining in the back country of the west, especially Montana. I was finding gold for one group of miners when one decided that he wanted more than gold. I was assaulted, beaten , thrown over a cliff, and left for dead. Blackberries cushioned my fall. I survived. I was woodswise enough to know how to get out of the area. Those miners found no more gold after I was "gone." Still, it is amazing that I am testifying before you and identifying specimens at the museum instead of being a moldering heap of bones somewhere under a steep fall.

Even now, some male visitors to the museum, when they realize that the specimens they want identified go to a woman geologist, go into fits of rage. Men and women both have cursed me and told me I do not deserve to do the work I do at the museum. The occasional Native American visitor asks me how I managed to get through the university without being driven out. I have to apply a lot of self control get through many situations. I have to remember that I am the professional. Thankfully most people just want their rocks identified, which I love to do. Late last fall I had a day when 3 people brought in meteorites. The Owyhee valley has yielded some incredible fossils finds that people have brought to me. I carefully identify the rocks both children and adults bring to me, never just saying carelessly that "It just a piece of quartz." All rocks are precious in my view.