



### Skywalkers (12/13/18)

- 00:00:25 Alice M. Greenwald: Good evening and welcome. My name is Alice Greenwald. I'm president and C.E.O. of the 9/11 Memorial & Museum, and it is my pleasure to welcome you to tonight's program, along with those who are tuning in live to our web broadcast at [911memorial.org/live](http://911memorial.org/live). And as always, I am so pleased to see museum members in the audience with us. We welcome you, especially.
- Tonight's program celebrates a new exhibition that is just recently opened and on view at the museum called "Skywalkers: A Portrait of the Mohawk Ironworker at the World Trade Center." The exhibition features tintype photographs by New York-based artist Melissa Cacciola.
- 00:01:11 Mohawk ironworkers have shaped the skylines of North American cities for more than a century. It was, in fact, their storied fearlessness working at great heights that earned them the colorful characterization of being skywalkers. Using a trade honed across generations, members of the Mohawk Nation have built some of our most iconic bridges and buildings, including the Empire State Building, the George Washington Bridge, and, of course, the World Trade Center.
- 00:01:43 What makes the presentation of this exhibition at this museum so poignant is the fact that these Native American ironworkers not only helped to build the World Trade Center, decades later, their sons and grandsons would return to the site to aid in the rescue and recovery operations after 9/11, and then many continued to work on constructing the new skyscrapers that now declare our collective resolve to rebuild and renew.

- 00:02:14 In 2012 and 2013, Melissa Cacciola created tintype portraits of Mohawk members of Local 40, a New York branch of an international ironworkers' union. Dating to the American Civil War era, tintype is a medium in which photographs are made by creating a direct positive onto metal plates, producing unique images. Through her evocative work in this medium, Melissa has produced a powerful testament to the shared history of the Mohawk ironworkers and the World Trade Center site.
- 00:02:50 When I first saw Melissa's photographs of the Mohawk ironworkers a few years ago, I was completely captivated, though I was already familiar with her work, having seen her equally haunting tintype photographs of veterans of the Afghan and Iraq wars. Using this signature approach with 19th-century photographic processes, she has documented a number of communities in addition to the Mohawk and the U.S. military, including New York City skateboarders and New Orleans brass band musicians. This is a wide spectrum of interests. Her work has been published in "The New Yorker," "The Wall Street Journal," "The New York Times," and "The Washington Post," and she has had previous solo exhibitions at the National Museum of the Marine Corps and here at 4 World Trade Center.
- 00:03:41 Joining Melissa this evening are Chief Lindsay LeBorgne and Bob Walsh. Chief Lindsay LeBorgne always wanted to be an ironworker. His great-grandfather, Peter Rice, is one of the workers famously photographed eating lunch on a steel beam during the construction of Rockefeller Center in 1932. He has been an ironworker for 35 years, alongside his grandfather, father, uncles, and cousins. His father worked on the original construction of the World Trade Center, and years later, Chief LeBorgne would respond to Ground Zero as a rescue and recovery worker. He currently serves as an elected council chief at the Mohawk Council of Kahnawake.
- 00:04:27 Bob Walsh has been a structural ironworker for 55 years and is part of a five-generation ironworking family. Tragically, his own father lost his life on the job when Bob was only 11 years old. There is no question that ironworking is the Walsh family trade. Bob is the brother of two ironworkers, the father of two ironworkers, the uncle of four ironworkers, and grandfather of three ironworkers. (chuckles): Since, since 2002, he has been the business manager of Ironworkers Local 40. In

his current capacity, Bob works tirelessly to defend the rights of ironworkers who, through his efforts, are now endowed with fair wages, health benefits, a college tuition reimbursement program, a pension plan, and much more.

00:05:21 We are truly privileged to have these incredibly accomplished panelists with us this evening to tell us their stories as a complement to this moving exhibition. I want to take just one more moment to express our sincere gratitude for, to both of you for your roles in the birth and the rebirth of the site that surrounds us.

00:05:42 Here at the museum, we are truly proud that the "Skywalkers" exhibition is accompanied by an audio guide available not only in English, but in two dialects of the Mohawk language. Because language shapes how we see the world and preserves our history and unique community values, we are actually completely thrilled to be able to amplify the importance of the Mohawk language. And to our knowledge, this is the first museum audio guide ever to be recorded in Mohawk.

00:06:17 Without further ado, please join me in welcoming my friend Melissa Cacciola, Lindsay LeBorgne, and Bob Walsh, in conversation with 9/11 Memorial & Museum vice president of collections and oral history Amy Weinstein.

Amy Weinstein: Oh, thank you, Alice.

(applause)

00:06:39 Amy Weinstein: Good evening, everyone. I'm looking forward to a lively conversation, and would like to begin, as we begin our oral histories in the museum, by asking each of our narrators to introduce themselves. Even though Alice did a wonderful job, I want to give everyone a chance to introduce themselves um... as they feel like they would do. So let's start with Melissa.

Melissa Cacciola: Okay, um... Do you just want me to...

Amy Weinstein: Just introduce yourself in any way that makes you feel comfortable.

Melissa Cacciola: My name is Melissa Cacciola.

Amy Weinstein: Okay.

(laughter)

00:07:13

Bob Walsh: Who does lovely work.

Amy Weinstein: And Chief LeBorgne, or Lindsay, would you like to introduce yourself?

Lindsay LeBorgne: Sure, Lindsay LeBorgne. My Mohawk name is Skanenratti. It means, "The other side of the river." I grew up in Brooklyn. I was born in Brooklyn, because my dad, being an ironworker who was from the reserve in Canada, didn't want to travel the 12 hours it used to take before all the modern highways. So I, I was born in Brooklyn, I grew up in Brooklyn. And I went to school and eventually the military.

00:07:45

Amy Weinstein: Thank you—and Bob?

Bob Walsh: Yes, Bob Walsh. I'm an ironworker, and I'm also the business manager of Ironworkers Local 40, and very proud of it. Like Alice said there before, that five generation... I'm part of a five-generation family of ironworkers, and extremely proud of that, as well.

Amy Weinstein: Thanks. And, Melissa, I know Alice did a, a good job um... with an overview of what a tintype is, but would you like to elaborate on that and give us some additional historical background about the, the medium and the process?

00:08:20           Melissa Cacciola: Sure. Tintyping is a process that dates back to the 1850s. It, it comes upon its popularity during the Civil War, and it's one of the earliest photographic processes. You have the daguerreotype, which precedes the tintype, and prior to tintyping, you know, people would go have a portrait painted, and this was something only people with wealth could do.

00:08:57           And the, the beauty of tintyping is that it really opens up portraiture to, to everyone, and people really began experimenting with identity. You have very early tintypes of people wanting... Well, first, soldiers, you know, tintyping kind of photo booths or tents being set up at camps during the Civil War, and soldiers mailing back portraits of loved ones, or, excuse me, portraits to their loved ones.

00:09:33           And you also have, after this, people wanting to have themselves photographed at their professions, whether they were a butcher, a shoemaker, and I think that's extremely interesting for portraiture and photography, that... um... these very early portraits, what they can tell us.

00:10:02           And something else I would mention is that, you know, early photographic processes are employing... It's about the interaction between silver and light. And you have, you know, analog photography these days, and then digital, and with the rise of digital photography, you know, we're... We're seeing a difference in that interaction with a, a pixel or a computer-generated, you know, image, and how that, you know, sits on a surface.

00:10:42                   And what is it about a silver particle that creates such, you know, such depth, such, such tonality, and I think it's something that really creates a beautiful portrait and is, is a beautiful process.

Amy Weinstein: You know, and you're sort of leading into my next question. I'm wondering how, at the start of the 21st century, you came to choose a, a 19th-century process. I imagine that making tintypes is maybe not a standard part of the curriculum at... where you studied?

Melissa Cacciola: No.

(laughter)

00:11:25                   Melissa Cacciola: I, I had a, a kind of a spectacular... Well, a few spectacular teachers at... I went to graduate school at N.Y.U. to study historic preservation, and I studied paintings. But part of the courses you would, you would take in different blocks. So you could take, you know, photo on paper, and I was, you know, still finding my way.

00:11:50                   And Nora Kennedy taught a class in... Well, she's a photo conservator at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and I took a class with her. And for my paper, she said, "You're interested in tintyping." We, we'd looked at Civil War portraits, which... They're captivating when you think about, this was the only image, this was the only portrait of this person, and how they chose to represent themselves and, you know, it's an object. It, you hold it in your hands.

00:12:25                   And... I, I wanted so much to, to try this. And so she said, "For your paper, go ahead, you know, make a tintype and write about it." And that's what I did.

Amy Weinstein: Oh, well, I'm glad, I'm very glad that you, that did you that. And, you know, let me switch over to Lindsay. I'm wondering what

you thought when you were approached about this project, and, and if you could sort of explain what it was like to sit for this particular kind of portrait.

00:12:58 Lindsay LeBorgne: Well, I was... when I was informed by my daughter, who, who had gotten in touch with Melissa, and I thought it was very interesting, you know, being... the, the format that she was using. As she mentioned, Civil War. I'm very interested in the Civil War. And... I thought it was, it was a very inventive way to do it, using metal and, you know, ironwork, metal. I could understand, so it's almost like a poetic thing she was trying to, to evoke.

00:13:30 So I was very interested to do it. And... I had no idea how it was done. So when I went to her studio, you have to stay perfectly still for, like, ten seconds, am I correct, something like that? If you move just the slightest bit, it's blurry. So that was a little bit odd. Then you think, everybody, you think, "Ah, ten seconds." Ten seconds is pretty long.

(laughter)

00:13:51 Lindsay LeBorgne: Actually, like, just to not move. You can't flinch. So I think we ended up taking about four pictures, maybe five, if I'm, if I remember right. And I got to watch her. I'd go in the back when she was developing them, and it was really interesting. And I was proud to do it. And honored.

Amy Weinstein: And were you happy with the way yours came out?

Lindsay LeBorgne: Well, you know, every...

(laughter)

00:14:17 Lindsay LeBorgne: If everybody... if you have seen the pictures, we sort of look like, it looks like mug shots from the 19th century. So having never had a mug shot, it was very interesting to actually see me in that perspective. It's kind of harsh, because the lighting is kind of harsh. There's lights, like, really close to you. And it looks stark.

00:14:37 And I guess, you know, if you look at it like an artist, it's sort of a poetic thing. I don't know, it brings out something in everybody. It makes you look a little bit different. So totally interesting medium. I, I never, never have prior and probably never will again. So I'm glad I was able to participate.

Amy Weinstein: You know, to me, they don't look like mug shots.  
(laughs): They look very dignified, I...

00:15:07 Melissa Cacciola: I wouldn't say mug shots is at all...

(laughter)

Bob Walsh: See what you started?

Lindsay LeBorgne: I wasn't... I'm not trying...

Melissa Cacciola: What I was going for.

Lindsay LeBorgne: Don't get me wrong, I'm not trying to put it down. But I love to read things about the 19th century. So I remember when they... I remember reading a book and seeing photographs of mug shots from the 19th century, when they first started doing that. And that's the first thing I thought of, so... I'm not putting it down. I'm just saying, to me, that's the way it struck me.



00:15:36 Amy Weinstein: So let's go back to the dignity.

(laughter)

Amy Weinstein: And I'll turn it over to Melissa.

Melissa Cacciola: I think art, I think art is subjective. And I... People interpret things the way they're going to, and I would never tell anyone how to interpret my work. I know how I interpret it. And I've spent a long time studying painting, and especially Netherlandish painting, and the lighting in that, that style, and I love dramatic lighting.

00:16:07 I love light on one side, dark on another. And, you know, I, I also read a lot about other photographers, and you have Diane Arbus talking about trying to take portraits, which... kind of exploit a, a flaw or a crack, and that's never been what I've been after in a portrait. I, I... it's... it's about photographing someone as, as they would want to be represented.

00:16:42 And it's about trust. You, you're never going to get a good portrait if there's not some relationship, some element of trust, you know, with you and that person. It's... you're striking a, a compromise... not a compromise. You're working together to, to make something beautiful.

00:17:06 Amy Weinstein: And I do think they are beautiful, beautiful portraits. And, you know, you chose to work in a studio, even though we know that tintypes, you... Civil War era, the portraits of the soldiers were done in the field. And a lot of portraits of workers have been done either in the field, in the factory, in the coal mine. Can you talk about your decision to do these in a studio?

00:17:36 Melissa Cacciola: Absolutely. I, I think it's, for me, it was really important to the way I work. I think with all the years I've been tintyping, it... I've really wanted to, to elevate this from being seen as, you know, a party

trick, something... you know, these days people with money hire people to come to a party and take tintype portraits. And it's, that's what it, it is. And you don't really see it being used very often or in editorial.

00:18:22

And I really worked at the craft of it to, to make sure that technically I was doing everything I could to elevate it, to make sure that, you know, people kind of embrace the mistakes that you make in tintyping, but I don't want splotches all over my portraits. I... that's not how they were meant to be.

00:18:53

I mean, if you think back to the Civil War, yes, you have some latitude there, but someone would bring their portrait back if, you know, their, their face was totally... It's, it's not true for the way it, you know, it, it is.

Amy Weinstein: Bob, Melissa has told us that you facilitated introductions to the community of Mohawk ironworkers. How did you decide who to send her way? And did you stay involved in the project throughout?

00:19:29

Bob Walsh: Well, I was trying to help as much as I could with it, anyway. But I think, getting back to what Lindsay was saying about, they look like a con man or something like that, it was just the serious look of the, of the bone structure of the American Indian. You, know, it's different from us.

And I was telling Lindsay something earlier today about my sister-in-law and her husband that came over from Ireland, and we're out in Montana. And this couple came in, and I said-- they were an elderly couple-- and I said to my wife's brother-in-law, I said, "There's two American Indians now." He says, "How do you know?" I says, "Well, I worked with American Indians, and I can see by their bone structure and the look of them, like, you know."

00:20:11            So anyway, he says, "Would you mind if I went over and asked them to have a picture taken with me?" He's from Ireland, and he was up on top of a hill, where he came from in Ireland. But, anyway, I said, "I don't think they'd mind at all." And I'd go over and ask them, you know? So he got his picture taken with American Indians, and he was proud to show it all over Ireland when he was going around.

(laughter)

00:20:30            Bob Walsh: But Melissa came, called me one time, and she asked me, would I be interested in trying to help her out to get some people? And she was interested in the American Indians. And the reason is because, when you see these pictures, they're really... the bone structure of the people, you know, that's exactly the way they are. And they do have a much lighter side, as well, you know?

But this was the serious look of the American Indian. And I think it brought out the picture, you know. That's what Melissa was trying to do, was show the bone structure and the seriousness of the, of the picture, as well. Am I right, Melissa? Uh-oh.

(laughter)

00:21:08            Melissa Cacciola: Um, I, I think that a big part was about documenting, you know, this community. Stephen Nessen had done a story for WNYC in which Geggs Martin, whose portrait is part of this exhibition, was featured. And I emailed him, and he was very generous to write me back and say, "Okay, absolutely, I'll, I'll share a contact with you."

00:21:43            And so I got in touch with, with Geggs and started learning about... how, you know, Mohawk ironworkers were much greater in number in the early 20th century, and how those numbers have diminished somewhat. Fewer, fewer generations... generations are going into ironworking. And Lindsay and Bob could speak more to that.

00:22:21 But I felt it was important to, to look at that community, and my way into it was to, to look at rebuilding the World Trade Center as, as a very, you know, both as an accomplishment of this community, as part of the history of New York City, where I'm from. And those were a lot of the reasons behind, you know, why I chose to do the project, why it was fulfilling for me.

00:22:57 Amy Weinstein: And going back to Bob, we've established by your accent that you are not a Mohawk. (laughing): But you do... Alice mentioned that you, you do come from an ironworking family. When you look at Melissa's portraits, do you see yourself or your father, your grandfather, other members of your family, who were ironworkers, or... what's the common thread?

00:23:21 Bob Walsh: Well, what I see is what I just said there before, is the bone structure. I think the pictures are beautiful, I really do. And for anybody that didn't see them, you'd better take a look at them. They're really lovely, they really are. She did a terrific job on the work, there. She really did. And she had great people to work with, as well, you know, that brought out the picture, you know?

But listen, you know, getting back to what Melissa was saying, that there's not as many anymore, well, my mother and father came from Ireland in the '20s here, and they were here right before the Depression. And of course anybody that comes from another country, especially Europe at that time, if they had children, they're going to be doctors and lawyers and police officers and everything like that.

00:24:02 Well, it doesn't happen all the time, you know. And we were fortunate guys that did listen to our parents, and we did very well for ourselves. I'll be honest with you. A lot of us did, you know. And it's really a great, great business that we're in, you know. And I can't say enough about the ironworking industry. I really can't.

00:24:22 Amy Weinstein: You know, and after 9/11, I think absolutely everyone in New York seemed totally captivated by the ironworkers and held them in great esteem for individually, collectively walking into the World Trade Center site to unsnarl the horrible pile of tangled, twisted, burned metal. Without the ironworkers, it's probably true that the search and rescue would have taken longer than it did. Were you surprised by the show of warmth and affection?

00:24:53 Bob Walsh: No, I was expecting it of them, I'll be honest with you, because that's the work that we do. Am I right, Lindsay?

Lindsay LeBorgne: Yeah.

Bob Walsh: That's the work that we do. You know, in the very beginning, they had all the trades that were down there working, trying to do their best. and that's what they were trying to do, their best. But when it came to the actual work with the cranes and removing the steel, and everything like that, I think it was... They were talking about two years of getting it all cleaned up. It was done in nine months, which was a credit to all the trades, not just the ironworkers, but all the people that did work down there.

00:25:25 It was, you know... and, listen, one of the... two... I had two great experiences, was when I brought our international general secretary, Michael Fitzpatrick, down on a bus, and all of a sudden, we hear the roars of people, and, as we came closer to the Trade Center, the site. And the people were applauding and yelling at us, you know, and throwing gloves and sandwiches in the windows at you, and everything like that. It was really a very emotional thing. It really was, you know?

00:25:56 And then the other, the other incident that I can... I'll never forget was the, the night of the last column, the removal of the last column. They had, they asked all the building trades to come down, and the reason was because they all did a good job for everybody, you know? And New York was very happy with us. They really were.

And, and then, you know, everybody loves to get up to the front row and everything like that, you know. There was lots of people up there. That's not my cup of tea. It's not Lindsay's or any of our people, to get right up in the front there.

00:26:29

And then all of a sudden, one of the people that was in charge of the night, he got on a microphone, and he started yelling out to bring the ironworkers up to the front. Whoa! You don't know how that made me feel. Honest to God. It was beautiful, it really was. But that's two real big incidents with me that I'll never forget about down here. Of course, that terrible morning that... what happened, as well, that's... Nobody will ever forget that.

Amy Weinstein: And you told me a story about the ironworkers being recognized in Ireland. You told me your sister-in-law...

00:27:05

Bob Walsh: Yeah, my sister-in-law called up my wife and said, "You're not going to believe what they're talking about with the ironworkers, how, what they're doing over in New York, you know, at the World Trade Center site." You know, it was kind of nice. It's nice to get recognition, too, especially when you don't go looking for it. That's what I like about it.

Amy Weinstein: And did you, Lindsay, feel that warmth that we all felt towards the, the ironworkers while, while you were down here or afterward?

00:27:30

Lindsay LeBorgne: Oh, everybody was really, they were great. There were a whole bunch of people that were constantly trying to give you your phone even, like, "You need to call somebody?" You know, they're giving you your cell phone. They were... the saddest thing, though, was to see all the people standing there when you would come out of the site at the end of the day. Because there was a... sort of a cordon around the whole site for, like, several blocks.

00:27:55

So when you finally got out of that cordon, there were people there with photographs, you know, their brother, their father, their sister. "Did you see them, did you see them?" And, you know, as Bob knows, you're looking at a pile, everything's pulverized. The steel's twisted. And, you know... what do you say? "No, I didn't see them."

You know, I don't think people realized what it was really like there, you know? That was, that was really bad. But I had people actually saying, "Hey, you know, you need a place to stay? You can stay in my place." I remember somebody in a hotel room letting me use their shower to take a shower, because I couldn't, I couldn't, you know, I couldn't get to a place.

00:28:40

And I even... I slept on the floor at the Javits Center one night, because I couldn't get a place to stay, and they said, "Just..." It's pretty cold on the floor in there, if you ever go in there.

(laughter)

Lindsay LeBorgne: Beautiful building.

Bob Walsh: Even in September. Even in September.

Lindsay LeBorgne: Yeah. It's a beautiful building, but it was really... I was really uncomfortable. But, you know, I had a place to sleep where I was safe, so... People were very nice.

Bob Walsh: Yeah.

Lindsay LeBorgne: There's no doubt about it.

00:29:05 Bob Walsh: And I'd just like to butt in there a second and say at, at the church over here, St. Paul's, they were tremendous to all the tradespeople, everybody. They'd let you sleep in the pews. They'd come along, and they'd put blankets over you. They would feed you and everything like that. Very nice. Very, very nice. And you know them, Amy, the two of us, we read names out, don't we?

Amy Weinstein: Yeah, yeah.

Bob Walsh: Yeah.

00:29:30 Amy Weinstein: You know, and you... I, I sort of want to go back to something Alice said about the, the hazards of your profession. And I know you each have personal experience and, and knowledge about the, the history and the hazards. And, Bob, I'm wondering if you would be willing to speak for a little bit about the, the, the dangerous nature of your, of your profession, perhaps in the context of your own work on the Verrazzano-Narrows Bridge, or as the son of the ironworker who was hurt and died on the job, as Alice said.

00:30:09 Bob Walsh: Well, my first job in 1963 was an apprentice out on the Verrazzano Bridge. And I used to travel from the north Bronx, get on the train, get on the ferry, get on a bus in Staten Island, and go out to Fort Wadsworth. And that's where we would meet out there. That's where the shanties were for the company. And, you know, it was a great job. Actually, my first job was with an, an American Indian. He was a Sioux. His name was Buddy Warren at the time. And he was a great character and a great fellow, as well, a great ironworker.

00:30:43 But anyway, I ended up working for a bolting-up company, a bolting-up gang. The fellow's name was Mike Cawley. He was with American Bridge for years. He used to travel around with them, like a lot of those people did at that time, the foremens for them. And... and I used to carry baskets of bolts, nuts, and washers. And they had, the big trusses were laid out,



and then you would have floor beams on top of it. And they were spaced about every five feet apart.

00:31:13

And I... lift up the buckets, and I'd start jumping from one beam to the next beam and to the next one, just to bring them out to the fellows that were bolting up all the beams on the cords. But I was probably a little too stupid at the time, to be honest with you. I never took the easy way of walking on the big part. You had to walk on top of the small beam. That was about four inches wide, you know? But you did those things when you were younger, like, you know? And I had the misfortune of going down and, and landing in a net.

00:31:48

Otherwise, I would have went about 220 feet, I'd say, to the ground, on Fort Wadsworth. And if it wasn't for the union going on strike for just over a week... One of my predecessors years ago, Ray Corbett was his name, he was a great labor leader, and he also became the state AFL-C.I.O. president. He, he joined with Local 361, and we stopped the job for about a week and a half to get the nets put out there. The nets ended up saving a good few lives out there. So that was, the contractors at the time said they wouldn't be able to do it.

00:32:26

So the unions, they spent the money on getting an engineering firm to design something to put nets up, and I used them. They work.

(laughter)

Bob Walsh: Yeah. But, but listen, it's a very, it's a risky job, you know? Lindsay will tell you the same thing. Any, any ironworker will tell you. It's, it's a dangerous job. But we all seem to love it. I don't know why, you know? It's, it's great. It's a great feeling to be an ironworker. That's the truth.

Amy Weinstein: And Lindsay, what about this myth or stereotype, or is it reality that the Mohawk have no fear when walking on that high steel?

00:33:07 Lindsay LeBorgne: Well, you hear a lot of kind of stories like that, and, and I think... I would say it's more a very healthy respect for... Not a fear so much, but you respect the fact that a wrong step, as Bob said, or something, doing something that you shouldn't be doing, could either severely injure you, kill you, or hurt somebody else.

00:33:31 So I think with that in mind is, is really... That's the way I always felt. I wouldn't say I was afraid, but I'm very aware that you could be severely hurt if you don't, you know, pay attention. So I, you know, I can only speak for myself as far as that goes. But I've heard the same thing. I'm sure Bob has heard something similar to that. And, uh, but to me, that's what it is, just a healthy respect for the job. It is dangerous, you could be hurt. Bob was just telling me, a mutual friend of ours, who was one of our ironworker brothers, was severely hurt. Was it yesterday, Bob?

Bob Walsh: Yeah.

00:34:10 Lindsay LeBorgne: On a job. And it happens. You know, you just have to be careful and be aware of where you are at all times.

Bob Walsh: Yeah, I'd just like to say something, you know, about that myth. Years ago, it was in the early 1900s, and there was a bridge being built in Canada, and part of the bridge was on the reserve, the Mohawk reserve up there. And... There was an agreement made that they had to use so many Indians that was on the, on the reserve. And lo and behold, didn't the bridge collapse, and a lot of the, the Indians got killed on it, you know?

00:34:49 But that was probably the start of a lot of it, like getting the Indians involved in the steel business-- business. And, listen, like Lindsay was saying before, it used to take 12, 13, 14 hours to travel down to New York years ago. And now it's a lot faster.

Lindsay LeBorgne: It's, like, six hours-- it's cut in half.

Bob Walsh: It's cut in half now, you know.

Amy Weinstein: Still...

Bob Walsh: And they'd do that on the weekend, you know? They'd go home on Friday, you know? A lot of them would hope that it would rain on Friday, so they'd get the early quit...

Lindsay LeBorgne: Early start.

00:35:18

Bob Walsh: And go home, like, you know, and beat the traffic later on in the day. And then they'd leave Sunday morning, early... I'm sorry, Monday morning. They'd leave early Monday morning and go right to work then, you know? And they'd work their hearts out, like a lot of us do, you know?

But that's, that was their way of life, you know? That was their way of life. And there wasn't that much work on the reserve, so they had to do something to support their families, and that's what they were doing.

00:35:44

Lindsay LeBorgne: Just to elaborate on that story Bob mentioned, 34 men from our community, actually, were killed on that bridge. That was in August of 1907. And at the time, there were only about 600, approximately 600 residents, so that was a huge blow for the community at that time.

Amy Weinstein: And I think, tell me if I'm wrong. I could be misremembering this. There's a... some steel from that bridge, symbolizing that tragedy?

00:36:16 Lindsay LeBorgne: A company called Dominion Engineering, they put, I believe it's... there's three crosses. When you first come into our community-- at the time, the community was much smaller. We've since, you know, spread out. But at the very beginning of the, the village and the end of the village and the cemetery, there are iron crosses made by Dominion Bridge to signify that, that terrible day.

00:36:43 And also in the cemetery, I assume it was, maybe the company had them put up, but there are, like, huge monuments at each man's grave that was killed. They didn't recover everybody, but the people they recovered... because it was a huge river, that was where the bridge... the bridge actually collapsed twice.

Bob Walsh: Yeah.

Lindsay LeBorgne: And the third time, it finally, it finally went. It still exists to this day.

00:37:08 Amy Weinstein: You know, when I was asking about those steel, the tribute steel, or the, those crosses, because there's a piece of World Trade Center steel in this exhibition here, in the shape of the Twin Towers. Can you elaborate a little bit more on the, the practice or the tradition of ironworkers cutting or burning those symbols?

00:37:32 Lindsay LeBorgne: Well, I know that we have some in our church that were made from some of the tubing, the outside of the skin of the World Trade Center. And I believe it was one of the gentlemen from our community that had made a bunch of those. And I, I think it's, it's one of those things that after a major disaster, sometimes people, like a folk art-type thing, they'll, they'll, you know, craft something from, from something that was involved in the accident. I, I'm sure it goes back a long way. I couldn't tell you exactly how long, but I know that it's been done.

00:38:07

Amy Weinstein: Is that something you've ever done?

Lindsay LeBorgne: You know, I didn't think to do it when I was there. Although, you know, we picked up... I picked up some bolt heads and things that were, you know, just to remember the, the Trade Center. But I really don't think we were supposed to take anything, eh, Bob?

Bob Walsh: No. I'm not telling you what I have.

(laughter)

00:38:26

Lindsay LeBorgne: But, but I'm talking about millions of tons of steel. I, I thought, you know, "One bolt that snapped off, "I'm not going to, you know, I'm not going to do anything that's going to upset anybody." But I... it's just, I guess it's human nature. It's something to commemorate an event, so...

Bob Walsh: Yeah.

Lindsay LeBorgne: I've seen a big piece of steel in Bob's office. I don't want to get him in trouble, but...

(laughter)

Amy Weinstein: Well, let's, let's move off of that. Let's...

(laughter)

00:38:53

Amy Weinstein: But, you know, next to the, the steel Twin Towers in the exhibition is a hard hat. It's a, a decorated hard hat, and it's got symbols,

elements of Mohawk culture, of the ironworking culture, and hard hats are a symbol of your trade. Sometimes you're even called hard hats, the construction workers are. Would either one of you like to talk about that helmet or what seeing the, the helmet in the context of this exhibition means to you?

Lindsay LeBorgne: I don't know if you've seen it, Bob? Did you see it?

00:39:27

Bob Walsh: Well, I, I know the one, We had one that was given to the museum. It was from a fellow that wore it down... He was down here for nine months. His name was Larry Keating, was his name. And he was a very hard worker. He was here through all the burning and everything like that, all the removal. Like I said, he was here for nine months.

00:39:47

And, uh... Larry had a bit of a problem when he was younger. He used to drink a lot, you know? And he got his life straightened out. And we made him our, our director of alcohol and drugs in our union, you know? I, I gave him that job. And he was very helpful to a lot of people, you know? And I thought it would be a very nice gesture if I asked his wife, would it be okay if she could donate the helmet to the, to the museum, you know? And it was very nice.

Amy Weinstein: It was.

Bob Walsh: That's the hat that I know of, anyway.

Amy Weinstein: So, that's a real... That's a functional hard hat that was actually used. But this one...

Bob Walsh: He used it here. Yeah.

Amy Weinstein: Yeah, but this...

00:40:24

Lindsay LeBorgne: The one, the one that she's talking about, that's the one right next to the representation of the World Trade Center. Somebody had put a turtle on it, a little... some beadwork. Like a hood ornament from a Pontiac, Chief Pontiac. I don't know if everybody is familiar with that. And then a, a copy of the current World Trade Center with a, with a native on top of it. I don't know who it did, but, you know, it's a piece of art. And I'm pretty sure nobody wore that one.

Amy Weinstein: Oh, I'm pretty sure nobody wore it, either.

00:40:56

Lindsay LeBorgne: But, but the helmet itself, if anybody sees it, it's red, white, and blue, sort of has a flag on it. Somebody was giving those out at the Trade Center when I was there, and I, I happened to get one. But I didn't do all that. I just kept it, you know, as a souvenir.

Bob Walsh: Yeah.

Lindsay LeBorgne: But, yeah, I've seen that.

Amy Weinstein: Do you want to talk about any of the elements that are on the, the hard hat?

00:41:16

Lindsay LeBorgne: Well, I know there's a turtle on it. So the turtle goes towards the creation story that the Iroquois have about all of us being this, North America, we're on the back of a huge turtle. And so I seen that on there. Some beadwork, I guess it just represents things that natives used to do. And, well, Chief Pontiac was an actual Indian chief, and General Motors decided to make a car named after him at some point.

Bob Walsh: That's for all the younger crowd here. The older ones know what the Pontiac...

00:41:48

Lindsay LeBorgne: It's true, Pontiacs don't exist anymore, for about the last ten years. So, yeah, if anybody is too young to remember Pontiacs, but...

Amy Weinstein: No, and there's a few dreamcatchers. There's at least one dreamcatcher on the helmet, and you said something interesting to me that I hadn't quite realized, that it's to catch the bad dreams.

Lindsay LeBorgne: Exactly. If anybody knows what a dreamcatcher is, it's a circle, and it sort of looks like a spider web in it, and there's beadwork on it. And the whole idea of that is, it's going to catch your bad dreams, so you don't, I guess, you don't have a bad mind. You have a good mind. And that's all... that's...

00:42:23

Amy Weinstein: I know, I know you're not the artist who, who made that, but do you think the, the dreamcatcher is on there because of the, the PTSD, the, the terrible emotions that accompanied what you all saw down there?

Lindsay LeBorgne: Not being an artist, just, again, using my own, I agree. It's probably somebody trying to evoke the idea of bad memories down there, and, and, you know, this will catch them and... and, you know, artists have their own way of doing things. Right, Melissa? You have your own... You have your own view and your own dream. And I would never want to step on that. And... it's interesting.

00:43:03

Amy Weinstein: Good. Did you want to say anything about the hard hat, or you're good?

Melissa Cacciola: No, I didn't make the hard hat.

(laughter)



Amy Weinstein: I want to go back to something Bob said earlier, I mean, sort of feeding off the, the symbol steel, the Twin Towers as symbols. There's other pieces of symbol steel throughout the museum. You mentioned the, the last column, one of the biggest pieces of symbol steel that we have. You describe being at the, the cut-down ceremony. You witnessed it being carried out of the site.

00:43:39           And I think you were with us a few years before the museum opened, when the last column came back to the site. And when you were here maybe a month or so ago, we looked at the column together. Can you talk a little bit more about, about the last column and the ironworkers, about the signatures on the column?

00:44:01           Bob Walsh: Yeah. Well, all of the people that were down there, you know, they all lost friends. We all lost somebody, you know, that we knew. And, you know, you would write your name on it, and "Rest in peace, John Doe," and stuff like that. And that's what a lot of it was, you know, and they even stuck pictures to the column, as well, that night.

00:44:22           And... it, it was a very emotional night. And then when it was put on the trailer to be taken out, to be brought out to JFK, and it was going to stay in one of the, the hangars out there, and a lot of the other steel, as well, you know. And then, then I was here for when they brought it back, and they set it down in place. And, actually, there was a fellow by the name of Mark Sebay, he was the welder of it, putting it in place.

00:44:48           His, his father had worked at the... the old World Trade Center. There was a great picture of his father with... He was holding on to King Kong. It was down in front... They were making the movie, you know. And they were going to blow this King Kong up and make him huge again. But he worked on it, as well. But, you know, and then to see all these names again. It brings up... it brings back a lot of memories, you know?

00:45:14

And a lot of them we don't like, you know, but it's there, it's life, you know? We just have to move forward and try to do the best we can with, like, you know, it, it's very hard living with a lot of that stuff. I know... that was the last time I was down here, except for the first night of Melissa's exhibit in building number...

Melissa Cacciola: Four.

Bob Walsh: Four, which was a lovely one, as well. It was, it was a beautiful night down here. And the way she had it done up on the glass, on the windows, in the middle of the window, the pictures of the fellows. And, you know, you could look out and see the lights, and all you saw was this face that was on the glass. It was a really beautiful sight, it really was. It was a lovely location.

00:45:54

And I didn't see this one here yet, but I'm going to look at it in a little while. And I'm sure it's going to be just as pretty as that. But, yeah, it... listen, we all know it was emotional. I dislike talking about it that much. But that was the, the last time I was down here until just a couple of weeks ago. And it was just emotional all over again, and I don't even like looking at the 9/11... the videos, when they have 9/11 come up again every year. You know, it's... I... It happens to a lot of people, you know, not just me. I mean...

00:46:26

Amy Weinstein: No, not just you at all.

Bob Walsh: Yeah.

Amy Weinstein: And, you know, Lindsay, when you and I walked through the museum earlier today, you started to talk to me about the antenna...

Lindsay LeBorgne: Mmm.

Amy Weinstein: That was on the North Tower. Can you share that with the audience?

Lindsay LeBorgne: Yeah, my dad worked off and on when they were building the Trade Center. The company that built the Trade Center had other jobs, so my father would bounce back when work slowed down somewhere else, and he would fill in. And he worked when they put the antenna up, and he was always... he would always tell me the story.

00:46:56                   And I, I just seen a, a huge piece of it. It's not all of it, right? There's other pieces in different museums. And it just made me think of my dad, who passed away six years ago. And... and... yeah. And I'd just like to mention, one of the gentlemen that is in the exhibit is here. Kaniehtakeron Martin is in the audience watching today. And he was just telling Bob and I that he helped when they lowered some of the exhibits that are down in here with a crane, in, you know, in the museum. And I, I didn't know that, anyway.

00:47:33                   Amy Weinstein: Oh, well, thanks.

Lindsay LeBorgne: Wherever you are, Geggs, good job.

Amy Weinstein: And you can see his, his picture.

Lindsay LeBorgne: Yeah.

Amy Weinstein: Actually, his you see twice, right? The only one at the beginning and the other beginning.

Bob Walsh: You'll never hear the end of that.

(laughter)

Lindsay LeBorgne: Way to go, Geggs.

Amy Weinstein: But, actually, I would like to get back to, to Melissa and the, and the portraits. And, you know, as Bob just mentioned, you have shown this body of work at, at other venues. What's different about showing them here, on the site of the World Trade Center built by those same individuals or their, their fathers who, who you photographed?

00:48:07           Melissa Cacciola: I think it, it's a great honor to, to be able to show the work here. And... I think for a number of reasons. These men have, have worked, worked on this site, you know, for... you know, since 9/11 and all the years after, on the Trade Center site.

00:48:36           And... The other venues that I was showing the work at were very, you know, access was extremely restricted, and the 9/11 Memorial & Museum has the, you know, great ability to be able to bring these portraits to the public.

00:49:01           And... And also, you know, I really wanted to... The, the rebuilding is, is a story of, of light, and to, to bring something of light to the audience here. And I think that the museum has also put great effort into the audio guide, and having it in both dialects of Kahnawake, and... I have a little trouble pronouncing this...

00:49:40           Lindsay LeBorgne: Akwesasne.

Melissa Cacciola: Thank you.

Bob Walsh: You should have had the other name first.

Amy Weinstein: Lindsay, give us the other name. Kahnawake.

Lindsay LeBorgne: Kahnawake.

Melissa Cacciola: Kahnawake.

Bob Walsh: Yeah, yeah.

Melissa Cacciola: And, you know, having... hearing the men, the men... some of the men's voices in front of their portraits, I think is... It's, it's a rare thing to be able to look at a portrait and hear a voice, as well, and... But, but to have it in dialect and, and keep that language vital and have the audience be able to hear that, that's an incredible thing. So I, I applaud the museum.

00:50:26

Amy Weinstein: Thank you, thanks. And, you know, I see... are we about ready to open... I've been asking a lot of questions. I have about another four hours more to go, but I'm going to stop.

(laughter)

Amy Weinstein: And does anybody in the audience, Dani has a microphone if you have a question.

Man: ...your presentation. Just a small question about, how did you contend with very high levels in the wind? How did you contend with the wind, protect yourself, be careful?

00:51:02

Lindsay LeBorgne: You mean, you mean, when you're working at height?

Man: Yes, very.

Lindsay LeBorgne: Uh, you know, you just, you have to compensate sort of. You have to lean into the wind or whatever. You just have to be careful. Especially when you're handling decking or something that will catch the wind. Decking is the metal flooring that, that they put down on buildings now. So, you know, as you know, if you put anything up to the wind, it gets that sail effect. You just have to be very careful when, when the winds are high. And they usually tie everything down, eh, Bob?

00:51:36

Bob Walsh: Yeah.

Lindsay LeBorgne: And nowadays, they usually shut a crane down, what is it, 25 miles an hour?

Bob Walsh: Yeah, if it's 25 miles an hour, yeah.

Lindsay LeBorgne: Yeah, so they'll shut the job down until the winds die down. That's how you deal with it. You just have to be careful.

Bob Walsh: Yeah. A lot of the time, we don't even think about the wind, I'll be honest with you.

Lindsay LeBorgne: No.

00:51:55

Bob Walsh: You know, we really don't. And then, you know, if it rains or snows or something like that, we have to go home, because it's too dangerous to work on the steel. And you don't get paid for when you don't work, you know? When you go home, that's it, the time stops. That's the bad part of our job, you know? One of the bad parts.

Lindsay LeBorgne: But strangely, you never seen a happier bunch of guys when you get knocked off.

(laughter)

Lindsay LeBorgne: Right, Bob? You know, the guys are working, and they're all happy, you know, "Hey, we're going home."

Bob Walsh: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Amy Weinstein: And we have a question up front here.

00:52:27 Man: Talking about how dangerous ironworking is, just the process of tintypes. I think that tintypes is kind of, there's a dangerous process to that, too, in terms of the chemicals that you use. Can you explain what, what you use and how that's kind of done?

00:52:40 Melissa Cacciola: It's, it's a very toxic process. And the reason... one of the reasons... It's a good question, because I did not say, when I rent the studio in Brooklyn, it has ventilation in the darkroom. And, you know, to be breathing in all of this stuff, it's... some of it is ether. You know, some of this stuff is, they're carcinogens. It's, it's not great stuff, you know. And I wear gloves.

00:53:19 I try to, you know, I... it... this is... These chemicals are extremely expensive, and you're using pure silver. You get it in your eye, it causes blindness. It discolors your skin. You know, it, it... and you don't get rid of it until it leeches itself out. What other stuff do I use that's terrible? Let's see.

00:53:49 Well, the, the fixer is, contains cyanide. You need a license to use that. And it... it's... you have to be very careful. You have to be careful for the environment, for yourself. Um... (laughs): And daguerreotype, which came before it, was even worse. But, you know, it, it... I, I try to be more careful now that I have a child. I, I want to be around for her.

00:54:23 And, you know, I, I limit my exposure. These days, if... A project will have to be really, really good for me to expend my time, my money, and, you know, my health.

Amy Weinstein: Um...

00:54:50 Woman: Thank you, I wanted to ask if there are women in the ironworkers' trade, and if so, how long women have been doing ironwork.

Bob Walsh: There certainly is.

(laughter)

Bob Walsh: Actually, we probably have one girl that works in the raising gang. And she's a spitfire. Justine Ida is her name. But a lot of the girls, they become welders, you know, and they go bolting up, as well, you know. So we have a good mix of girls our local. Yeah.

Amy Weinstein: You know...

Bob Walsh: And it's all over the country, as well.



Amy Weinstein: And, you know, I asked, I asked Lindsay earlier today if either of his daughters was an ironworker. And do you want to answer that question?

00:55:37

Lindsay LeBorgne: No, neither one of them are ironworkers. One's an artist. She, she's very, very good. And the other one is an actress in, in Canada. And I just want to tell a real quick story, if I can, about women in iron. When I was first an apprentice, and first a journeyman, women had just come into the business. There weren't, you know, I didn't really deal with them.

00:56:02

So I was working on a bridge, and you had to climb on your hands and knees, get on a ladder, and get up. So I climb on my hands and knees. It's noisy, you can't hear, they're busting rivets. And there's a set of legs there, it was wintertime. So I started hollering, you know, "I'm trying to get out. Get up, get up." And the person wouldn't move. So I reached over, and I pinched her leg, you know? So the legs jump, and they go up. So then I go up, I get up-- it's a woman.

(laughter)

00:56:29

Lindsay LeBorgne: I was, like, "Oh, my God, I'm so sorry." You know, I'm thinking I'm going to be arrested. I'm going to be thrown out, all kind of thing. And, and the woman was, like, "Oh, no, I know you didn't, you know, didn't mean anything by it." I didn't know it was a woman, you know? I was, like, "Oh, my God." She wasn't in our gang. And, like, we had a gang on the, on the Manhattan side and the Brooklyn side. So I didn't know who she was, you know, that there was a woman there. Anyway, I almost got in trouble. My wife, I don't know if I ever told her the story, but I'm sure she'll be asking me about it after...

(laughter)

00:57:00 Amy Weinstein: And, you know, since you've both used... Maybe all three of you have used the phrase "the gangs." Can you explain what a gang is in this particular profession?

Lindsay LeBorgne: Go ahead, Bob.

Bob Walsh: Yeah, well, a raising gang is, is the gang that usually sets all the steel. You'd have a pusher. And he's the guy that directs everybody, tells them what to do. Then you'd have two connectors, the guy that puts the steel together. You'd have a hooker-on, and what he does, he puts the choker or the sling, the wire rope around it. And the hook will come down, and he puts the hook into it. And he has to make sure that it goes up level, because if it's... it turns sideways, it's very hard to get into position.

00:57:44 Then you have a tagline fellow. He has to guide it up to the ironworker, where, when it's windy, he has a problem. But they usually, they usually have gangs that work together. And you have the signal men, as well, which is very important today. You know, we were just talking a little earlier about how... They used to drink a little bit on jobs years ago.

00:58:07 Lindsay LeBorgne: Just a little bit.

Bob Walsh: Just a little bit.

Lindsay LeBorgne: A wee bit.

Bob Walsh: And there'd be fellows now that would be giving signals with a, a box. They press buttons.

Lindsay LeBorgne: The bell man.

Bob Walsh: The bell man, he was called the bell man, and he'd be giving a signal to an operating engineer, who was probably about 20 or 30 floors down below, to pull which lever, you know?

Lindsay LeBorgne: Up, down.

00:58:30 Bob Walsh: These guys would drink plenty. And I used to say to this fellow that I worked with, Jack Doyle, I said, "It's a wonder there wasn't more guys killed in this business, the way the drinking used to go on years ago." But that's all cleaned up now, and it's good for everybody. It really is, honestly. But, so, that's what the raising gang is. And then you'd have, you'd have your plumbing-up gang, as well. He's the fellow that would put the cables around the columns and make sure the building goes up straight. Because if you didn't, you'd have it wibbly-wobbly.

00:59:00 Then you'd have the bolter-ups that would do all the bolting of the beams together. Then you'd have detail gangs that would make changes or whatever had... If something didn't fit or anything like that, they'd do the repair work. And, you know, and then you had the welders, as well, you know, which is a big part today. There is a lot of welding on the majority of the jobs today. But that's what the gangs are, you know? That's what a gang is, you know, we consider them.

00:59:25 You know, and before, I just... I don't want to forget. A lot of the American Indians, you know, they were great characters, as well, besides being great ironworkers, you know? And the original World Trade Center, there was a fellow by the name of Artie Van Damme, who was an American Indian. And he ran the, both buildings here. He was in charge of, for the Koch Company, who erected the Two Towers here years ago.

And then... I spoke to Lindsay before about two other fellows. They were brothers on one of the towers. They had, they all had nicknames, you know? One of them name was "Ham Bone," and the other one was "Chicken Bone." And they were brothers. They were Walter Beauvais and Louis Beauvais, you know?

01:00:06 But just a quick story about Walter. Walter was down on the ground this time when it was probably up about 60 or 70 stories. And they were bringing one of the platforms, which covered... which made up the whole floor. So anyway, you would try to throw stuff on it and make sure you tie it off and everything like that, so it wouldn't get blown off or something might vibrate off. And they had this, a 55-gallon drum in it, as well.

01:00:30 So they send up the whole damn thing, up to the top floor. And they land it down. And all the guys are grabbing it to hold onto it so it doesn't... make sure it fits right and everything. Up out of the 55-gallon drum is, is Chicken Bone, you know?

(laughter)

Bob Walsh: And of course, one of the inspectors happened to see him getting out of the, out of the 55-gallon drum, and that was the end of him—he was gone.

(laughter)

01:00:55 Bob Walsh: But, you know, that's the type of characters they were then. But like I said, they were all good ironworkers, as well, you know? And they go back a long time in our local. Well over 100 years in our local, you know? And there was a great tribute to the, to the American Indian, really. They did a lot of great work for us. And for you people, as well.

Let's not forget, they were here, right where we are right now, before any guy, Peter Stuyvesant was here, you know? So let's not forget that, either, you know? And I don't, anyway. We give them the recognition they deserve.

Amy Weinstein: And I think we have another question. Maybe... Dani's got...

01:01:35 Man: Hi. I've been to some programs presented by Mohawks, educational or artistic programs. And they often begin with some kind of ceremony, such as to recognize the four elements that were directions of the compass or the fact that we're part of a big universe, or to recognize that the ancestors on this land were there for many generations before us, and thanking them for the fact that we're using the space now.

01:02:07 And I wonder whether there is any kind of ceremonial activity or any sort of recognition of cultural history on the job when ironworkers are working. Because I was really impressed by the fact that you could maintain that sort of attentiveness to the elements around you that would be the way you'd stay safe.

Lindsay LeBorgne: I guess you're directing that question at me?

(laughter)

01:02:36 Lindsay LeBorgne: Uh, you're correct. A lot of times, when there's a presentation giving out, we usually have somebody that would do it. Unfortunately I'm, I'm, I don't speak the language. There was a time when the language was forbidden to be spoken, and it was, like, two generations ago. My grandmother, she was punished, physically punished in school, for speaking the language.

01:03:04 So they didn't pass it onto, like... Two generations lost the language. And, and... not that the... the information was lost, because we had elders that, that had it. It was the younger generation. My youngest daughter now, she went to school totally in Mohawk. She learned how to do everything, the mathematics, everything in Mohawk. So she's fluent.

01:03:29                   Unfortunately, I missed it. I'm a, I'm a Brooklynite, unfortunately. I grew up in Brooklyn, so I, I, you know, I could probably recite a lot of things. But, unfortunately, I missed out on that. And, and believe me, I'm kidding around, but it really hurts to lose a piece of your culture. If you don't speak your language, it's, it's very, it's very uncomfortable, I'll tell you.

01:03:54                   And I can't say I'm mad. I, I know the people at the time thought they were doing the right thing. You know, "civilized natives," so to speak. But it hurts not to be able to speak your language. But there are people that do that, and we still have people that speak the language. Unfortunately, I'm not one of them.

01:04:14                   I was speaking to Bob earlier, if we have time, when I went to apprenticeship school, this is, like, 1983, the teacher, his name was John Mataggi, an Italian gentleman. And when he got to my name, he knew my father, so he started speaking to me in fluent Mohawk. So, I was, like... he finished speaking, and he was, like, "Well?" And I said, "You know, I know you're speaking Mohawk, but I don't speak it, I, I didn't learn it. How did you learn it?"

01:04:43                   And apparently he was working with four other... in a gang with four other Mohawks that conversed to each other in Mohawk, and they told John Mataggi, "If you don't learn how to speak Mohawk, you can't be in our gang." And he learned how to speak Mohawk, an Italian gentleman, which is pretty amazing, fluent Mohawk speaker. So, I just... just to tell you, that's the reason why I don't, I don't speak Mohawk.

01:05:13                   Amy Weinstein: Just one more.

Man: Can you give us a sense of what the salaries are in this business?

(laughter)

Bob Walsh: Well, when you don't work, you don't get paid, let's put it that way.

(laughter)

01:05:37

Bob Walsh: And with the danger that's involved in it, that compensates for a lot of that stuff, you know? And... you would probably be getting something around \$125 an hour now, you know, even maybe a little bit more, you know. But a lot of it goes into benefits, as well, you know. We have to pay for the benefits, you know. Everybody gets sick.

Man: Do you get life insurance in this business?

(laughter)

Bob Walsh: No, no life insurance.

Man: You can't, right?

01:06:03

Bob Walsh: No, what we have is an annuity fund. And that was started by a fellow by the name of Ray Corbett. I mentioned his name before. He was, he was really ahead of his time. He started off at a dime an hour. We have fellows with over two million dollars in their annuity fund now, thank God, you know? Thank God for people like Ray Corbett, you know, that got us those benefits, you know? And, and we try to do our best with the wages and to try to increase them.

01:06:28

And we get along with our contractors. And by getting along with the contractors, we work well for them, you know, and they in turn give us. You know, that's... we do very well. Let's be honest, you know? But it's very hard work, very dangerous. You never know if you're going to be coming home at night. Like, I was 11 years old, my father was killed in this

business. And my son was almost killed, as well. So it's... you know... you have to think of the risks...

Man: Statistically, it's probably number-one most dangerous occupation?

01:07:02

Lindsay LeBorgne: We're in the top ten. We're not number one, though.

Bob Walsh: Yeah. We're even, we're even probably in the top five, I'd say, you know?

Lindsay LeBorgne: Yeah, yeah.

Bob Walsh: I think carpenters are a, a big risk, also, because of the saw, the saws they use and everything like that. That's the way insurance companies looked at it, you know?

Lindsay LeBorgne: How many injuries.

Bob Walsh: This guy has this saw all day long, and they'd be cutting fingers off, and that's what happens. But when we get hurt, we really get hurt, because, you know... we were talking about a young fellow that got hurt on one of the buildings over here just before. A beam rolled over on him, and he was... The, one of the fellows called me on the phone. They said they didn't think he was going to make it, and thank God he did make it, you know, so... Our business is very rough. It's, it's tough, you know? It's, it's a hard business. But it's great.

01:07:44

Amy Weinstein: You know...

Lindsay LeBorgne: His career only lasted, like, two years. He was an apprentice.



Bob Walsh: Yeah, he was an apprentice.

Lindsay LeBorgne: He can never work again.

Bob Walsh: Yeah.

Lindsay LeBorgne: Hip surgeries, leg surgeries, internal. He really hurt badly.

Bob Walsh: Yeah.

Man: Is there, like, a waiting list, people trying to break in?

Bob Walsh: Well, I'll tell you this, when we have our apprenticeship openings, we have over 4,000 applicants for our school, which, we probable only take about 190 to 200.

Lindsay LeBorgne: And then that gets weeded out as the three years go by.

01:08:13

Bob Walsh: Yeah, it gets weeded out. They take a test, you know? They have to take a physical, aptitude test, and then at the end of it, they take a drug test, you know? And we try to, we're trying to clean up our business, you know? And, and we're doing a good job at it, I think, I'll be honest-- not praising myself, but all the locals are doing the same thing, you know? And it was implemented by our international, and I have to give them credit, as well, that they started the drug programs, you know.

01:08:38

Amy Weinstein: That's great.

Bob Walsh: Yeah.

Amy Weinstein: That's, I'm very glad to hear that. I guess we're just about out of time. I just want to give Melissa, to see if there's anything you would like to add, to say one last thing about the portraits or working with Bob and Lindsay to create this portfolio of work?

01:08:54

Melissa Cacciola: Mostly just to express my gratitude for, you know, for the Mohawk, for trusting me to, you know, with, with their image, which is such an important, such an important thing. And for allowing me to, you know, to do this, this work and, and, and share their culture and tell their story.

01:09:24

And, and to Bob, who, you know, I... You, you need somebody to champion your, your cause. I mean, no matter how determined you are, if you can't find people to photograph and find a way to tell a story, it's not going to happen. And, you know, I, I made one phone call. Bob got on the phone with me, didn't know me, and he said, "What do you need?" I don't think anyone has ever, ever said that, you know, to me.

Bob Walsh: Well, you did a great job, anyway. I'll say that for you, Melissa.

01:09:57

Amy Weinstein: All right, well, thank you, thank all three of you. And thank you also for being here.

(applause)