

# A visit with author of 'Faces Of A Reservation'

Thirty years after *Faces of a Reservation* was published, author and former Warm Springs resident Cynthia Stowell decided to bring her portrait of the reservation back into the public eye. *Faces*, which received an Oregon Book Award in 1988, is out of print and can be hard to find.

Now the book's several dozen black-and-white photographs have been given a new digital life at: [faces-of-a-reservation.com](http://faces-of-a-reservation.com)

Cynthia created the website to attract a wider and perhaps younger audience to the little-seen photos.

New captions capture the spirit of the original written profiles of the book, and a background page describes *Faces* and the reservation.

"This website is a tribute to the people of Warm Springs, who were so generous with their time, their images, and their thoughts," said Cynthia. "I hope the community will be proud to have these photographs preserved on the Internet."

Scrolling through the online gallery is like taking a virtual trip back to Warm Springs in the 1970s and 1980s. Cynthia noted that the photographs provide a historical record and may turn out to be a valuable education and resource tool.

"To Warm Springers, though, I hope the website feels like a family photo album full of loved ones present and past."

Cynthia lived in Warm Springs



Spilyay journalist, CDS.

from 1975 to 1982 and visited often from Portland while preparing *Faces*. She agreed to talk to Spilyay long-distance and reflect on her time on the reservation, as well as what she's been up to since then.

Using the byline she used while working at the Spilyay, 'CDS,' Cynthia answers some questions about her experiences in Warm Springs:

*How did you happen to come to Warm Springs... and from where?*

**CDS:** When I got here in late 1975, people called me "Bushtn" and it was very fitting—I really did come to Warm Springs from Boston, where I went to college.

I had taken a number of classes in Indian history and culture, and had taught myself to write and photograph at the same time, so I



Cynthia with son Gus and husband John.



## FACES OF A RESERVATION

Portraits from the Warm Springs Indian Reservation

WELCOME PHOTOGRAPHS BACKGROUND CONTACT

Photos courtesy of CDS

Now available at [faces-of-a-reservation.com](http://faces-of-a-reservation.com)

thought I would turn my hand to communicating some truths about Indian Country to non-Indians who generally don't have a clue.

*But why Warm Springs in particular?*

**CDS:** Warm Springs wasn't on my radar when I headed west with a 'Yakima or Bust' sign in the rear window of my red Ford Falcon. But on the road I met some Portland campers who told me what Warm Springs had accomplished in the tourism and timber industries, and I knew I wanted to come here first and have a look.

You see, I naively thought I was going to do a book about all the tribes in the Northwest! I didn't yet realize how many tribes there were, and like many white people, I didn't know coastal culture from Plateau culture. Plateau was plenty fine for me, so I just stayed in Warm Springs.

*How did you support yourself?*

**CDS:** At first I waited tables at Alice's Restaurant (now Eagle Crossing). Alice Florendo introduced me to a range of people, which led to a job as a tutor at the grade school.

Sid Miller was starting up the newspaper at the same time, and he needed someone to put together a darkroom and take pictures, so he hired me away from the school. And I spent the next three and a half years living and breathing Spilyay Tymoo.

*When did you get started on Faces and what was your method?*

**CDS:** Some of the photos in the book were taken while I was working for Spilyay, but I didn't have a plan for the book until I'd left behind the hectic biweekly deadlines of the paper in 1979.

Spilyay was such an excellent introduction to and immersion in Warm Springs, and I'll forever be thankful to Sid for giving me that opportunity. The book took me even deeper into the community, partly because I chose to tell the story of Warm Springs through individuals, a collaborative process that was very personal.

*Did you have the blessing of Tribal Council for the project?*

**CDS:** The Council and I agreed that I would get approval in writing from each individual I photographed and wrote about, and in

return I would give each participant a copy of the book. Otherwise I was left to my own devices.

The tribes' lawyer Owen Panner reviewed the manuscript and wrote a foreword, which was a kind of seal of approval.

*Did Faces sell well?*

**CDS:** It was a pretty limited printing by the Oregon Historical Society—1,500 hardcover and 2,500 soft cover—and they all sold, so I guess that's a mark of success!

Kah-Nee-Ta and the museum probably sold the most copies. At one point I heard that the tribal administration was giving it to new employees as an orientation, which pleased me.

*Can Faces still be found anywhere?*

**CDS:** Copies do show up on Amazon and at used-book stores like Powell's. And you can find it in many libraries around the country.

*Things have changed a lot since 1987, and many of the people in the book have passed on. Will you ever update and republish Faces?*

**CDS:** This is something I've mulled over for years, but I'm pretty sure the answer is no. *Faces* is a snapshot of a certain moment in time on the reservation and it would be a completely different book if it were done now. I'll let somebody else tackle that—there are some super talented photographers on the rez! It's been suggested by a few people that I add the text of the book to the website, and I may do that someday.

*What have you done with yourself since Faces was published?*

**CDS:** While I was still working on the book I moved over to the mountains and edited the Portland State University alumni magazine for five years. In 1988 I traveled for a few months in England and France, then came back and worked briefly at the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission.

I was 38 by then and figured it was about time to start a family, so I married John Miller (no relation to Sid!) and we had our son Gus in 1990. I joke that that's when I retired from my career, but I have done some freelancing through the years, along with a ton of school volunteering.

*Did you ever write another book?*

**CDS:** I spent many of Gus's schooltime hours (and years!) writing a novel, which I finally published last year as an e-book. It's called *New Old World*, and it's the semi-autobiographical story of a young independent woman discovering the importance of family. It's available at Amazon, under the author name C. D. Stowell.

*Does the reservation show up in your novel?*

**CDS:** Just a little. I plan to write a kind of prequel to *New Old World* that has more to do with my years in Warm Springs.

*Did you enjoy your time here?*

**CDS:** It would be an understatement to say that it was the richest period of my life, both culturally and artistically. The reservation felt like another world at first, but then the people and the landscape got completely under my skin.

There were ways I could never fit in, of course, and it was sometimes challenging to live in a small town I didn't grow up in, but I almost always felt respected and often indulged. And I made lifelong friends who feel like family.

How do I thank folks who not only shared their community with me but helped me grow into an adult?

Please see **CDS** on page 10



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