

American Indian Lee Tiger talks about the history of his tribe, the Miccosukees, at the International Tourism Fair in Berlin. March 8, 2006.

File leetiger.mp3

(Words that could not be identified are marked “???”)

Lee Tiger: It's a beautiful book. And I am glad that I was born and raised in Miami, Florida, I went to high school in the ??? area. We have a lot of Indian names for towns, for example our town that we came from is actually in Tallahassee, the Miccosukee tribe, we were in Tallahassee, the state capital of Florida. And for one, very near downtown Tallahassee is lake with water. A big lake, called Lake Miccosukee. Micco means town, Sukee is hog. So we used to collect and we ranched - like in America people ranch horses and cattle and things like this. But back years ago, in Miccosukee, people, our people, my family, we raised the pigs, the hogs. So we were the top hog keepers. This was good, because we could feed ourselves, help our families and friends to have food. We also grew – we would have to do farming, so we was growing potatoes and pumpkins and natural food many years ago. And that's why I wanted to start from the beginning to tell how I got here and how I got like the family ??? Lake Miccosukee in Tallahassee, the capital of Florida, and during the deportation of Andrew Jackson's removal efforts to move native people out to Oklahoma and to reservations in Mississippi. Sometimes they did not go to those areas. They stayed in the Florida area and later retreated in Florida Everglades. So people like my grandfather and his father before him actually fought in what they call the Seminole wars. So we were able to exist by retreating and hiding in the Florida Everglades, and that is where we are today. The Miccosukee is one of the few tribes in Florida. Does anybody know any other tribe? I bet you do! I mean, somebody most know another tribe in Florida, it's a bigger one than us. The Florida-- There you go, there are the Seminoles. So there's three tribes that stayed in Florida. The Seminoles which is the largest tribe, they number about 3500, and the Miccosukees, we number about 620. And we're very probably one of the last tribes and one of the smallest tribes in the United States.

And I really had the opportunity years ago to be over here in 1980. I went to Stuttgart, and in Stuttgart I brought big top American Indian dances. Symbol dyes and their really very cruel outfits that were like two or three hundred years old. I mean, the real stuff. And this woman came to me. She came up, a young lady, she says: I want to go to America, because I want to meet Winnetou. [laughter] So I said, who's Winnetou? She said: Apache chief. I said, well, my father is a Chief, Buffalo Tiger, (inaudible) President Ford and also President Nixon, who is a good president for the Indian people. But anyway, she says: 'I'm going to meet – I want to meet Winnetou, so can you help me?' I say: 'I don't know who Winnetou is'. And she says, 'Well, Karl May wrote the books about

him'. I said: 'Who's Karl May? I never heard of Karl May' [laughter] And as an answer she says: 'Well, he's famous, he has written many books, and they have even a television show on him and...!', I said, 'I'm sorry, but I don't think he's a real Indian. I think he's probably some writer that made up these stories', so, but I wasn't sure. I really was not sure myself, because maybe he was. Maybe there was a Karl May that was Indian.

In America there are still first Americans, and I think those who remember their past, who remember their language, like I said, we have our own language, and there was ??? when I said hello to you that means hello, and when you say ??? to somebody that is Miccosukee, and they will say back to you ???. (inaudible) And if I'm ??? or bad, then I'll say ???.

So this is the way we dance. And over the years now things have changed and we find ourselves, we adapt and change. I think also the world, the whole world is going to do a lot of adaptation, especially since 9/11 I know in America. And we call ourselves Americans, too. We're proud to be Americans, and maybe there were a First American, a Second American and Third American generations, but I think we're all proud that we are what we are, with the country we are and we've been for a long time, we have a lot to share and we do. You read about the increase now among the Native American people, some special agreements that now they are getting involved with gaming, so they have hotels and are able to build museums and invest in – a lot of the tribes did invest in the Indian Museum in Washington. So if you come to America and maybe come to Washington, they can learn more about the Native People of America and the tribes. Even about South America, there is some information about them. So, I am going to cut this, as I'm talking to myself anyway. But if you have any questions, I'll be glad to answer them, and what (inaudible). I am in booth two to six, and you can ask your questions later, if you want to, come to my booth, we have information. I have a project I'm working on now, it will be up and running. It's called 'Discover Native America', DNA. So, DNA is a .com, it's discovernativeamerica.com. If you go to that site and click on the map, you'll be able to find out all the 560 tribes, you can find out information on where they are and how you're getting there, if you're coming to America and going to, whether it's the Southwest or the Carolinas or whatever other areas, you'll be able to find them.