



Jerimiah Bonifer Oral History Interview, November 22, 2014

Title

“Growing Up on the Reservation and Attending OSU Online”

Date

November 22, 2014

Location

Nixyáawii Governance Center, Pendleton, Oregon.

Summary

The first half of the interview is devoted to a detailed description of Bonifer's upbringing as a member of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation. In discussing his background as a tribal member, Bonifer notes his ancestry, the importance of fishing to his family (historically and to this day), and the practice of scaffold fishing. He also shares his insight on the tribal tradition of living by the seasons, gathering traditional foods, and celebrating these foods at seasonal feasts. He recalls some of his favorite hunting and fishing stories, speaks to the importance of horses to the tribal community, and remarks on pow-wows, the Pendleton Round-Up, and life in the Round-Up's tipi village. From there, Bonifer discusses aspects of family naming ceremonies, Washat religious practices, storytelling in the home, and sweat lodge culture. Bonifer also remarks on social problems on the reservation.

The interview then moves into a narrative account of Bonifer's life, including his school experience growing up, his attendance at Blue Mountain Community College, his work on a commercial fishing boat in Alaska, and his marrying and becoming a father.

The session next focuses on a lengthy discussion of Bonifer's undergraduate studies in Fisheries and Wildlife as a participant in the OSU Extended Campus (Ecampus) online degree program. He provides an overview of how his program was structured, including lectures and laboratories, and remarks on the interplay between what he was learning and his continuing work as a fisheries technician for the tribal government. He also speaks of the community of students enrolled in his classes, impactful professors and courses, the strong support that he received from the Ecampus staff, and his participation in the 2014 commencement exercises.

The interview concludes with a discussion of Bonifer's professional work in fisheries, his goals for the future, and his thoughts on community developments, both on the reservation and in the city of Pendleton.

Interviewee

Jerimiah Bonifer

Interviewer

Chris Petersen

Website

<http://scarc.library.oregonstate.edu/oh150/bonifer/>

Transcript

Chris Petersen: Okay Jerimiah, if you could please introduce yourself with your name, our location and today's date?

Jerimiah Bonifer: Yep. Today's date is November 22nd, my name's Jerimiah Bonifer, here at the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation in Pendleton, Oregon.

CP: Yeah. So, we will talk a lot about your upbringing and your OSU experience, we'll talk a lot about a lot about sort of what's going on in the region right now. But we'll begin at the beginning. You were born where?

JB: Here in Pendleton, born and raised.

CP: So, you were raised on and off the reservation?

JB: Yeah, mostly on. I lived for a couple years in Pendleton, but the remainder of it's been out here, and now I do have a home in Pendleton.

CP: What is your tribal identification?

JB: I'm Umatilla, Walla Walla, Cayuse; I'm a little bit of all.

CP: Okay. And are those the three tribes that are a part of the Confederation?

JB: They are, yep.

CP: Okay, good, good. Tell me about your family background.

JB: My family's been here for quite a while, both on my dad's side and my mom's side. On my dad's side they were actually French-Canadian trappers that came down, married into the tribal population, native population. On my grandma's side, my mom's side, they've been here, you know, I couldn't even tell you how long, since time immemorial, so my grandma's family is the Quampts family. They've lived here on Meacham Creek, which is a tributary upriver, forever. So, got deep roots here, right here in the area of the reservation.

CP: You mentioned that fishing has been a big deal for your grandfather and your uncle, will you tell me a little more about that?

JB: Yeah. My grandpa worked for the railroad. When he retired he took up fishing down in Cascade Locks as a supplemental income and he did a lot of time fishing down there, stayed down there, fished the scaffolds and the locks right there. There's some scaffolds that some relations have and they allowed him to use one of the scaffolds. The Brigham family, actually, and he spent the majority of his time down at Cascade Locks whenever the fish were running. He had a little camper he'd put on the back of his little blue Toyota and he stayed down there. He'd also fish hook and line right at the locks and became pretty well known for being able to produce fish. My uncle, growing up, has always been big into fishing. I don't know if he—I think he got that from my grandpa, but he spends a lot of his time fishing down at Cascade Locks or fly fishing or anything like that when the fish were running, but he also got into fishing in Alaska and ended up buying a commercial boat up there, commercial gill net up there, so he spent quite a few years up there as well. Fishing's been a huge part of my family's life, not only for subsistence but also for a source of income. But, it's definitely something that's impacted my entire family.

CP: Did your grandfather tell you about the scaffold fishing?

JB: I spent a lot of time there with him, actually. We would go down, 4th of July was always big in Cascade Locks with the fireworks over the water, but we spend a lot of time going down to visit him and stuff. My mom would help him on the scaffold. We would, you know, bring him anything he needed, if he needed something to fix a net or anything like that. But we spent a lot of time down in Cascade Locks actually, fishing with him.

CP: Tell me about that actual practice of scaffold fishing.

JB: We were using big, well my grandpa was using big hoop nets, and so you'd have a big, a hoop net that you would set down in the water off of the scaffold, and he would sit there and you could hold the line and you could feel the fish bump into the net and you could haul them up. And they didn't really like the idea of me being on the scaffold because when I was younger, right there in the Locks it's pretty swift and so most of my time was spent hauling the fish. So, there was a bucket with a rope, because he would have to climb a ladder over the fence to go down the scaffold, fish the scaffold, he'd load the fish in the bucket, I would haul the bucket up, take it to the ice chest. It was a lot of fun. We spent a lot of time down there. It was a lot of fun. I've also got some family members that have scaffolds on Stevenson side, so we would go down and fish off those scaffolds and you know, some of my favorite memories are from down there. Pitch sleeping bags on the scaffolds and spend the whole night and get fish for the weekend and come home, even if it was just a weekend trip.

CP: Is this specifically a native practice, the scaffold fishing?

JB: Yes, yeah.

CP: So, what are your parents', what's their story?

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JB: Both of them were raised here in the Pendleton area. My dad was, both of them were actually raised in the Athena Weston area. So, you know, they grew up out in Weston, Athena, and they've got ties here in Pendleton too, because they lived so close and everything, but mainly those areas. My dad grew up in Weston; my mom grew up in Meacham Creek. My family received an allotment up there and so my great grandpa built the house there and my grandma still tells me stories about they used to stay in—they stayed in tipis across Meacham creek while her dad built their house and it's still actually there. My cousin Eric Quaempts actually lives in that house. His dad lived there before him and then he lived there and my grandma's house is just up the driveway from his. My aunt's house, which used to be her father's, is just up the other side of the driveway from him. So, it's a nice little area where we've all got ties to and the majority of my family on my mother's side was raised.

CP: Wow. Well, we spoke on the phone a while ago in preparation for this interview and we talked a little bit about your upbringing. I'd like to dial into some of those bullet points that we got into over the phone a little bit more in this interview here. One of the things you mentioned was something that was strongly prevalent in your upbringing was living by the seasons. Want to talk about that a little bit?

JB: Yeah. Living here in the tribal community, you really get a sense, and I think that's held over from older times, is you see a lot of living by the seasons, you know. In the fall we hunt for meat, to prepare for the winter. Through the winter, once spring's here, spring is a huge time of the year for us, spring and summer. We still, a lot of families, go out and gather our traditional foods or go there waiting for the return of the salmon, and you see that a lot in the community and it just becomes a part of you. You just, we don't really, I wouldn't say, you know, people talk about fall, winter, spring, summer, it's like "oh here comes hunting season, here comes, time to start picking roots and here comes the spring salmon and, in the summer, here are the huckleberries and the choke cherries" and it's, I don't know, it's hard to kind of put into words because you just, you feel it more than anything. And with talking with people and engaging with people here in the tribal community, it's how we, it's kind of how we measure our year, it seems like you're just waiting for this next, I guess not really harvest opportunity but this next sequence of events, getting ready. Like everybody right now, we're all getting our meat and everything for the winter and for the rest of the year, so everybody's doing a lot of hunting this time of year, out with families, and a lot of people are hunting for family members or people that don't go out and hunt themselves so they get their meat. There's still that community feel about seasons, you know. We go out and people gather roots and we have our root feast in the spring, that's a big deal, and everybody gathers there and you get, you know, the women's foods, the roots and the berries and we celebrate those and then get the salmon and later in spring and into the summer and it's, and then in the fall you get your elk and your deer, so it's a, like I said, sometimes it's hard to put it into words because it's more of just a feeling. You just, you feel it.

CP: Is the root feast the main feast?

JB: Here it is. It's one of the bigger ones. And it's something that everybody looks forward to and it's a great gathering. It's more to celebrate the promise that the foods gave to us and our reciprocal promise to take care of them and it's getting harder and harder and the tribe's doing a lot of work to try to make sure that these opportunities for us to gather these traditional foods remains for future generations. But with the change in just the environment and access and everything, it gets sometime—it's been harder and harder to gather these traditional foods, so it seems more and more it becomes a bigger and bigger deal that we still get to have them and still try to incorporate those into our lives.

CP: Yeah. What are the specific roots?

JB: One of the main ones is cous.

CP: Cous?

JB: Yeah. Common name for it is biscuit root. You'll see it, it will cover the hillsides, you'll see the little yellow flowers everywhere. There's camas, there's bitterroot, and a lot of these, you know, the cous we'll use in sweat lodges for sweats and so it got multiple uses but they're a big deal and the tribe's been doing a lot as far as mapping past areas where gathering was done so that we can try to keep those areas protected or so we don't lose that knowledge, because a lot of traditional knowledge is oral. There's not really any written, it was just passed down, passed down, so they're trying to focus on getting that oral knowledge and oral history together and cataloged so that we don't lose it, because a lot of that knowledge—well not a lot of it, all of it—is passed down from our elders. And you know, they're one of our number one, they are our number one resource for this past knowledge and helping continuing that cultural aspect of our lives. So, we rely heavily on our elders to try to pass that knowledge on. Keep it going.

CP: Yeah. I've read that there is sort of a formal first foods program now?

JB: Yeah, yeah. It was put together by our DNR director Eric Quaempts, I want to say in 2009 but I'm not sure if that's accurate. But I know it was incorporated a while back and it's actually really the first of its kind where it's taking cultural knowledge and combining it with scientific data to try to manage our traditional foods in a manner that gets sustainable harvest opportunities to future generations. You know, that's the main of goal of it, is to protect those first foods and it's based on this Seven Drums religion and the creation story of where these foods and animals promised themselves to the people and they promised themselves to take care of the people and provide for the people and we've got reciprocal responsibility to then take care of the foods.

CP: That's really interesting. Well, you mentioned that the family depended on hunting and fishing for most if not all of your meat. Tell me about sort of some of your first memories of hunting and fishing.

JB: Oh man, well growing up on—we spent a lot of time at my grandma's house at Meacham Creek. My uncle took us out fishing all the time, just on Meacham Creek, trout, steelhead, stuff like that, but hunting, we did a of hunting around the family property up there. Boston Canyon was a big one up there and I can remember you know—it's kind of funny here in the community you'll hear a lot when there's something that needs to be done that not a lot of people really are too excited about, you'll hear them say "youngest," and so the youngest has to go and do it. And that was us; we'd get something down on the bottom of the canyon. I know we have this big, long like spool of like a mile of cable and it was my job to run down the hill and attach it to an elk or something if we got it at the bottom of the canyon so they could drag it out. And yeah, then you'd have to keep pace with the animal as they're dragging it up the hill so you could keep it from hanging up and stuff, but you don't trade that kind of stuff for anything. And my grandpa had a meat cooler and a meat cutting shed and all that right there at his house and I can remember hanging meat and getting it all prepared and it was like a family deal. Get all the meat and—it's something we still do. Now it's kind of my job for the family, is provide, and so I go out and do the hunting and the butchering. And there's other people that do it, it's not just solely me, but you know, as far as my family I'm the main meat provider and now you know, that same meat grinder that was at my grandpa's is now at my house and we still do it, even my family. My wife's not a tribal member but we still live by those ways. We provide our own meat, we try to for the majority of the year, really, and we still process our own meat and we still give meat to family members that can't go out and get their own and that's the way it is in our community. We help each other out. We provide for those, that's the sort of responsibility of the hunters of the community, is you provide for the community, so if somebody can't make it out and get their meat, you'll see a lot of the hunters going out and getting that meat and processing it themselves and then turning around and just giving it away to make sure that everybody gets what

they need. It's everybody's. It's everybody's opportunity to go out and get those, that meat and to have that for subsistence and you definitely see everybody making sure that everybody gets that opportunity.

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CP: Did you ever do much bow hunting?

JB: I do. I actually got into traditional archery. I had a compound for a little bit but it's so fun to shoot a recurve bow that I just, I ended up getting rid of it because just it's so fun to shoot with a recurve. And I've only been into it for about five or six years. So, it's pretty limited. I've been getting—I got a black bear with it and small game. I've yet to get an elk or a deer with it. Just trying to get in close enough. But it's—I love just to shoot. I mean, I've got targets set up in my backyard and I'll just go out and shoot every day for ten, fifteen minutes just to shoot. It's fun.

CP: Yeah. Yeah, that must be a very satisfying experience to stalk game and hunt with a bow.

JB: It is. Yeah, it is, it's quiet, I mean you get right in there, up and personal and you know, it's just, it's really neat. And you know, it's not so much different from a rifle when we're subsistence hunting. People have a lot of respect for the animals here. It's not something we take lightly; it's not something we do for the thrill. We feel for the animals that give themselves you know, and that's what they're doing, they're giving themselves to us. We're not harvesting them, they're giving themselves to us, so we've got a lot of respect for the foods, for what they do for us.

CP: Yeah. And I'm sure that the whole animal is used.

JB: Oh yeah, absolutely. The whole animal and a lot of the hides and stuff are used for regalia and stuff. Not always but you know, when we can, we do.

CP: Were horses important to you growing up?

JB: They were, you know, I used to ride when I was a kid and my dad rodeo-ed and horses are still a big part of his life and my brother and I rode up and through high school we had horses and you know, my great grandma, or my great grandpa and them, the horses were important to them. They used to harvest wheat with horses. My grandma, we used to have a lot of horses on my grandma's side. Not so much when I was growing up. We just had a few, but I know to my family they were an important asset. My grandma tells me stories about the men out harvesting wheat or tending the fields that they had and said my great-grandma, my grandma Annie Quaempts would get up, make them breakfast before they go, and then she would start working on lunch and then she'd have to bag up all the lunch, basket it up, get on her horse, ride it out to the men, and then she'd ride out there, drop it off, get back to us in time to make dinner for everybody. And so yeah, those horses kept her going I think.

CP: Another thing we talked about over the phone were pow-wows.

JB: Yeah, I used to do it when I was younger. Not so much anymore and—but they're big events for the community and it's important, you know. I feel bad that I lost touch with that a little bit but I'm trying to get my kids back into it. I'm trying to attend more myself and just get that so that aspect isn't lost. I've still got all my full regalia, I've still got regalia from when I was a kid that fit my kids now. But yeah, they used to—they're still a big deal and they're still fun to go to. They're a gathering. You get to see people from all over. You get to hang out and you can't beat the music, the music and the drums. It's hard not to feel it and be excited about it.

CP: Is that sort of the focal point of the pow-wow, is the music and the dancing and the drumming?

JB: Yeah, and it's a gathering for people to get together and show off their regalia and show their skills and dancing. A lot of them still have contests, even, oh say at the Pendleton Round-Up when they've got their intermission and they're out dancing, people are out there showing their regalia, showing their skills and then they've got the judges out there and everything, so that's, yeah.

[0:19:59]

CP: Well, that brings us to Round-Up, which was my next topic. Tell me about sort of your experience at the Pendleton Round-Up.

JB: Well, in Pendleton, I don't think you can grow up in Pendleton without having a little experience with the Round-Up. But you know, it's a great opportunity to gather and see people that you don't normally get to see very often, is the way I look at it. It's a big part of the community, too. It brings in a lot of funds for the community. But, after you've lived here for a while and you see it every year, it becomes more about seeing the people that come into town to, you know, you get friends and family that this might be one of the only times they come in to town for the year, so you get to get together. We still have family tipis down in the village that we set up every year and that's another important thing. There's the Happy Canyon show that for the longest time, when I was a kid, I was a part of, all through high school. And it's a, you know, you get to be a part of Round-Up and experience it but it's more now, I think, as you get older it's more about getting to see the people more than getting to see the rodeo or anything like that.

CP: What's it like in the tipi village?

JB: It's nice, you walk around, you see all these families and you see everybody, you walk through and you might stop here and talk for a little bit. You're on your way through but you're—you'll stop here, visit for—might want to just stop and say hi and it ends up you sit down, there's a half hour. Walking down a little bit, you see the next person, you sit down, hi, it's great. Everybody's seeing everybody and that's a great feeling. Everybody's kind of clustered at theirs, so you get to see a ton of people at a time.

CP: I have a couple other things specific to Round-Up. I'm interested in the Indian relay race. Do you know any of these guys?

JB: I think I've known one, that's about it, and that was just somebody local and I just happened to know who it was. I didn't really know him.

CP: Is that a big topic of conversation in the village? Are these races—I mean it's extremely exciting to watch?

JB: Is it exciting to watch. You know, I have very little experience with or talked little about it.

CP: Did you participate in the parades?

JB: Yeah, a few times, just walking through and stuff like that. It's a long walk. So, once you do it once or twice, you're pretty good, you're set on that. But no, it's nice. It's a chance; everybody gets to see regalia and stuff. A lot of people, you know the beadwork and regalia that people have, some of it's been passed on for generations. And the newer stuff that's come out is still just as intricate and beautiful as some of the older stuff. And it's exciting to get to see all of that in one place. There's no other word than that regalia is just beautiful.

CP: Did you have family that were involved in crafting regalia?

JB: Yeah, my grandma did a lot of ours. And a lot of family members, I couldn't even tell you how many family members are involved with that. And I think it's probably the same for a lot of families around here. Everybody kind of chips in. Because it's a lot of work and takes a lot of time, but my grandma, for our family, did a lot of our beadwork, made a lot of our regalia. My mom did a lot of the sewing.

CP: You mentioned you were part of Happy Canyon which is, for people who don't know, a very old and sort of remarkable production that happens every night and tells a story of—it's sort of half and half, the native story of the area and the coming of the settlers. And it's all volunteer, too.

JB: Yeah. You get, the tribal members actually get passes passed down through family members and you get—so you get your card and you would go out and participate. Now, the majority of mine was spent dressing in regalia. Through junior high and high school it was fun for friends and all of us. We'd get excited, go down and get ready and go on there. You know, when I was a little, little kid, it was mainly I'd walk with my mom and my brother and we'd just kind of, we were kind of extras but still, being part of it was fun.

CP: Yeah. And as people grow up they inherit different roles.

JB: Yeah, that's what's cool.

CP: Something else we've talked about on the phone was the family naming ceremonies. Can you tell me about that?

JB: Yeah. A lot of tribal members out here have their Indian names and it's a big deal. You know, as an example, I have a friend that he just got his man's name, so he had another name and he just had a ceremony to get his man's name, and it's a big deal. They're at the longhouse, there are ceremonies, there's giveaways, there's eating feasts, you have all these families, and it's something that people take a lot pride in with those names. It's who they are and some of them are passed down from generation to generation. So, it's a real honor to be able to have those.

[0:25:29]

CP: And this is a name that's given by an elder?

JB: Yeah, usually a family member.

CP: When does the man's name occur, about at what age?

JB: You know, it really depends. I don't know if there's any set rule. I know my friend was—I believe he's twenty-seven.

CP: Religious observances, Washat religion, can you tell me a little bit more about that?

JB: Yeah. My main experience with that would have to do with funerals. You know, and I'm not exactly sure how much I can talk about it or divulge.

CP: That's fine.

JB: But you know, it's something that we, as a tribal community, want to keep going and want to make sure that it doesn't die out and we want to keep those practices alive and so the participation in those by the younger generation and more generations is becoming more and more important to make sure that that cultural aspect stays alive, because it's hard to keep those going, especially with today's fast paced lives where, you know, it's not hard to travel out to leave the community and be somewhere else and you lose that. So, trying to keep that alive with the people we have here is important.

CP: Is your sense that the younger generation is buying into that?

JB: Yeah, they are. There's—the younger generation takes a lot of great pride in trying to continue these cultural aspects and, for instance, the Nixyaawii charter school that we have here, they don't do foreign language; they have native language classes to keep that native language alive, because we don't have many tribal members that speak the native languages, and trying to keep that alive because once it's lost, it's gone. And so, the younger generation takes a lot of pride in all of this.

CP: Yeah. That seems to be, along with the first foods, that seems to be another major point of emphasis right now, is the language piece.

JB: Yeah, absolutely. And with the younger generation, they've got—we've got our language instructors and you don't just have to attend the school to be able to take language classes. They've got other opportunities. And the younger generation is taking those opportunities and they're taking pride in it.

CP: Tell me about, we've mentioned the importance of oral history, the—kind of the idea of storytelling. Was that something that would happen in a sort of formal way, with the elders, or was it, I assume it was pretty regular that the children would gather around. That's what I've read, anyway, and grandma would tell stories.

JB: Yeah, you know, and it still happens, and it happens at a lot at family gatherings, but once you get a grandma or a grandpa or an uncle or—telling stories, it's hard, you just—it's hard not to just sit there and listen. I mean, you'll see

people just start moving in. And I think it's important to tribal members because they want—it's a part of who they are, so they want to hear those stories. A lot of my stor—my grandma's stories are about our family and what they used to do and how things used to be in this area. And so, it gives you a—I don't know if it gives you a sense, but it kind of provides a sense of where we come from. And that's, I think, one of the key aspects off that oral history, is it helps explain who we are as a people and where we come from and where we can go in the future and still save that aspect of who we are from the past.

CP: You mentioned briefly the sweat lodges. What is the importance of the sweat lodge?

JB: Oh, a lot of it's used for cleansing and prayer. It's just as much spiritual as it is physical cleansing. And it's an important part of keeping our bodies and our spirituality cleansed. And a lot of people turn to that when in times of need or when they feel they need some spiritual cleansing and be able to be in touch with that.

CP: And the root is part of that?

JB: The cous? Yeah. A lot of people make soap out of it or mix it with the water that goes onto the rocks, yeah.

[0:30:25]

CP: Well, the reservation has had its problems over the years too; I would presume that you've seen some of that, growing up. You want to talk a little about some of the kind of social issues that have been around?

JB: Yeah, it's hard, some of the social issues, as far as maybe a little bit of poverty and stuff like that, is that what you mean?

CP: Yeah.

JB: Well, you know, our tribal government really is fairly young and if you look back, we're just a few generations off from where families were being broken up and sent to boarding schools and separated and you know it's, some people might say "oh, well they're just telling a sob story," but you know, my grandma remembers going to boarding school and that's just two generations away from me. My great grandparents experienced, you know, my great grandparents, great-great grandparents, they experienced the early life of reservation life, when they, you know, the missionaries were trying to force this other religion on them and everything, so it—we're only a few generations off from where our complete way of life was altered and I think struggling to try to catch up with I guess modern life. Modern life and stuff has given us a slight disadvantage, but we're moving forward. Our tribal government is amazing, what we've done to structure ourselves and to try to, you know, one of the main focuses of our tribal government and the work we do here at the government center is to get tribal members educated, get tribal members working for the tribe, get tribal members in management positions so that they can take charge of their own, you know, our own future, our own departments. We want to take responsibility for own tribal government, for running our tribal entities and we want tribal members involved with that and we want tribal members getting educated and being able to be in positions where some of this social instability goes away and we become more stable as a tribe and as a community.

CP: Well, you've mentioned the fact that this is a confederation of tribes. Is—do you, I mean you have a background of all three of the tribes that are part of the confederation. Do you see differences between those groups of people? Do they, do people get along pretty well?

JB: Yeah, I don't see any differences. And to us, we're all CTUIR, you know, Cay-Uma-Wa. You'll hear Cay-Uma-Wa at lot; Cayuse, Umatilla and Walla Walla, we're a community, you know. We don't walk around looking at each other different because of our background. We're a tight-knit community, so I don't see that.

CP: Yeah. We'll, getting back to you a little bit more, I just am interested in other things that were important to you growing up as a boy, things that you enjoyed doing or cared about.

JB: I am totally outdoors. I mean growing up I've always wanted to work in the fisheries department here. I mean that was huge for me and it was a huge part of my family's life and it was huge for me. I mean just recreationally I love to fish. I mean, you could ask anybody that knows me and you know, if I could pick anything to do for the rest of my life, it

would be fish. And so, going to OSU I got my degree in fisheries and wildlife science and was able to—and I work here in the fisheries department, which has been a lifelong dream of mine. I always, you know, some people think they want to do something growing up and then it changes as they get older, but for me it was always "I want to work in fisheries." So, that was a great opportunity. But outdoors, anything outdoors. Living around here in eastern Oregon there's so many opportunities. Later this afternoon my brother and I are going feather hunting all day and planning hunting trips with my brother for next weekend or taking the kids camping or getting out in the outdoors hiking, anything. It's hard to grow up here and not want to be outdoors. So, I know that's been a huge part of my life, is the outdoors and recreation and the fisheries and hunting. That's a—it's what I think's helped shape me into being who I am.

[0:35:14]

CP: Yeah. Is there a defined hunting season on the reservation?

JB: There is. With the white tail population the way it is, they've opened up a year-round white tail hunting on the reservation. Off reservation it's from August first to December thirty-first and that goes for rocky mountain elk and mule deer. Those are only from August first to December thirty-first seasons. And the rocky mountain elk, their season's from August, I think it's August first to August twenty-fourth, you can hunt any animal and then it's closed until October, I think fifteenth. And then from October fifteenth to November thirtieth you can hunt any elk and it's closed again for elk antler bulls, so you can only shoot spikes and cows and calves and it's more—you know a lot of people, you don't see trophy hunting around here. Its subsistence and so those, you know, when they close it down, when you can't hunt branch elder bulls, it doesn't really matter. And they close them for those certain periods just to make sure that the breeding opportunities for those animals occur. But you know, white tail and mule deer, you hunt bucks and does and you'll see a lot of people just hunting does and it's subsistence. It's not you know, here everybody, it doesn't matter how long you boil those horns, you can't eat them. So we've also got opportunities for antelope. We've got opportunities for Rocky Mountain goat and bighorn sheep. The tribe in recent years, I think in like the last five years, they've—might be a little bit longer than that, but they've created opportunities where we can go to Montana also and hunt for buffalo. And I believe that season opens in March, so you'll see a lot of families now and it's a fairly intensive trip, but you'll get a group of eight to ten guys and they'll go up to Montana and bring back buffalo, and you'll see a lot of that buffalo getting distributed throughout the community for people that don't have the opportunity to go.

CP: Yeah. Have you done that?

JB: I haven't done it yet. I haven't had the opportunity. I've been asked to go, I just graduated so it was always I had so much school going on that there wasn't the opportunity, but this year I would definitely like to go.

CP: What was school like for you growing up?

JB: I think it was probably pretty typical of most people. I went to grade school in Pendleton up through junior high and then I actually went to high school in Pilot Rock, which was pretty cool because I made a bunch of new friends in Pilot Rock but I kept everybody, all my friends from Pendleton. It's a small community, Pilot Rock's only twelve miles away from Pendleton, so I would say, you know, there's nothing I could really say about school that probably hasn't been fairly typical for most people.

CP: What made you decide to go to Pilot Rock?

JB: We lived kind of halfway between Pendleton and Pilot Rock and—

CP: Just closer.

JB: Yeah.

CP: Did it feel sort of like going between two different worlds, going into town to go to school and coming back living on the reservation?

JB: Not really, you know, because it is kind of—my bus ride when I went to Pendleton was like an hour and a half long because I was, yeah, I was like the second person to get picked up, my brother and I, my brothers and sisters. And then we

traveled throughout the reservation area picking people up and it was relatively the same going to Pilot Rock. We just had to drive to the bus, get dropped off, and it was still like a forty-five minute ride and it wasn't any different going into town and coming back out here. You kind of hang out with the same friends. Most of my friends were from the bus route and it's kind of crazy living out where I live. My nearest friend was probably about a mile away and so a lot of that time we'd get to see each other at school, that was the easy part, but when we wanted to hang out we would cut across the wheat fields, meet in the middle and then we would decide "well, do you want to go back to my house or do you want to go back to your house?" So you know, there wasn't much difference. We still had chances to hang out. The only difference is that—and it's only about a ten minute drive from Pendleton—but growing up it was well, who's parent was going to run who to which house. If you wanted to hang out we either got our licenses or bikes. Bikes made it easier, just because everybody's kind of spread out out here. Down here and closer to the mission area, it's a lot, the homes are a lot closer and you can just walk around and stuff.

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So, if we came down here to hang out with friends you could just kind of walk around everywhere. I live about four miles south of here, four or five miles, or I grew up about four or five miles south of here. And it's fairly wide open. The road in front of my house wasn't paved until like six or seven years ago. It was all still gravel out there. Just the pavement basically just clean dead-ended, you know, you hear stories about the end of the pavement. So, we're still really rural around here and I think a lot of people, that's what draws them here and that's why a lot of people want to stay around here, because we still have that atmosphere.

CP: Yeah. Well, what happened after high school graduation?

JB: After high school graduation I started attending Blue Mountain Community College and working a little bit, stayed with my parents, and then after graduating from Blue Mountain I took some time off just to work and did some things, like I went and worked on my uncle's commercial fishing boat up in Alaska, did that for a couple summers, that was pretty cool just to get that experience, see a different part of the country. I mean, who doesn't want to see Alaska, for one, but just to see it, it's different up there. Different fishing and it was commercial fishing, it wasn't subsistence fishing, so you get to see that aspect and everything.

CP: Was it like what you see on TV? Was it really intense?

JB: Not like, it wasn't like "Deadliest Catch" or anything. But yeah, you know, it is intense up there and you get a lot of, up there, you get a lot of Russian fishermen too, which to me, it was crazy, and the captains and the fisheries out there can be pretty cutthroat. You've got people laying nets out and then guys laying out nets here and here and then people get mad because they think they're getting cut off and they're buzzing you with boats and you've got airplanes flying around that are trying to spot schools of fish to radio into fishermen and everything. Yeah, it was, it wasn't relaxing. It was pretty crazy. But it was a good experience. Then Oregon State started their Ecampus program and up until then my only option was really—and my stepdad went to Oregon State and we've been a big Oregon State family, just huge. We've always, Oregon State was our college and that was always where I planned on it and it doesn't hurt that Oregon State's number one. Their fisheries and wildlife program is like the top of the nation, number one for wildlife, number two for fisheries, so you definitely can't be upset with a local college that's going like that, and already liking it.

So, I met my wife and we got married in 2008. I had—we had our son Hayden, he was six months when we got married, and it's hard to try to move your family down to be in that college atmosphere. And seeing that they had their online degree program where you get the exact same education, I mean you interact with the exact same instructors, you're getting the exact same course material, it was a no-brainer to take that opportunity and so I jumped right in and started going full time, working full time, taking that degree program.

CP: Wow. When did you start?

JB: Let's see, I started in, I think, 2009 and then I took a little break, not very long, and so I just graduated this September.

CP: So, you're working fulltime and you're taking a full load of classes as well?

JB: Yep.

CP: So, I'm interested, Ecampus is relatively new to me, anyway, just give me a sort of a sense of how it works.

JB: Basically how it works is you, there's a Blackboard portal that you sign into and that's where you get all your course work. So, you register exactly the same as if you were attending the school. They're just denoted as Ecampus classes. And so, you sign up for your courses, you get a course schedule from your instructor, syllabus, everything is basically the same as going to a class, the only difference is there's a lot more flexibility in where you do the lectures and there's a little bit of flexibility in the due dates. But you know, you can call the instructors and talk to the instructors, you can set up meetings with phone conversations with the instructors. You're getting all the same course material; you're using the same books that the students at the campus are taking. There's no real difference in what you're getting out of it aside from the fact that you're not sitting in a classroom. And it was tough. When you take—when you're working full time and you've got kids and you're taking a full course load, you know there's some nights that, I'm not going to say it's not—that it was any easier.

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It's actually, I think it would be easier just to go to campus and take the courses, but there's nights when you're staying up one to four o'clock in the morning, getting up and going to work just so you can get stuff done, because you know, you don't want to get home from work, eat dinner and then go right away and start doing your homework and not, you know, you still want to get that family time. So, I would say for somebody going to take Ecampus, make sure that you're dedicated. But that's what it's designed for, too, and you don't have to take a full course load, but it's designed to give you that flexibility to where you're still able to attend school and get your family time and work full time but be able to get that degree to where you can move up in wherever you're at in your field of work. If you want to get that degree so that you can move up or lend more credibility to the experience and knowledge that you already have, that's opportunities there, where before it was like well, either you move to campus and you get a part time job or something or you take out a bunch of loans to go to school. And it's been amazing, it's definitely helped me get where I am. I don't know if I would have moved and attended college down there, you know, that's a big commitment.

CP: Yeah, for sure. So, the lectures themselves, I gather that the physical class meets and the lectures are recorded and then you're watching them?

JB: Some of the classes were created like that. Some of them the instructors do video lectures where they just create a lecture specifically for Ecampus. A lot of lectures are presented in PowerPoint form, which was amazing for note-taking. Sometimes in class you're just like, you're not really soaking stuff in because you're trying to write so fast, to get everything, and so that was probably one of another aspects of Ecampus that was great, is you could take those lectures and break them down into a timeframe that allowed you to get through the material, really soak it up, you could scroll back on the PowerPoints or rewind the video lectures and get that information that you were trying to get. The video lectures were an amazing resource because it was almost like you were getting a one-on-one with the instructor, because you could get close-ups of materials. As an example, I took a systematics of animals class and the instructor created these video lectures where he's showing, say, pelts and skulls of these mammals and the camera's zooming in and you're getting this close hand look at these specimens and he's explaining them in great detail, he's able to show you these key features to help you sort out these genres, and species and if you're sitting, I don't know if you were sitting in a classroom if you could get that and see, in all honesty. He might have it up on the table up there but you're not getting this close-up view, and so some of the video lectures and stuff I thought were amazing and I would almost prefer them over the classroom setting. It's a really, it's cool, it's a really neat experience and it's really cool and it's amazing that you're getting that quality of an education on those online courses. And the resources, I mean, and I'm sure it's the way with a lot of departments, but the Fish and Wildlife Department, I can call up my instructors, I can email my instructors. My advisor, who was available almost any time if you needed assistance, talking with the department head if you needed assistance, I mean they were—you didn't lack any communication or any resources taking the Ecampus. It was amazing.

CP: Yeah. Just have to make sure your internet connection is stable.

JB: Yeah, yeah. That was the one thing; the internet connections, power outages, sometimes Blackboard would go down, but they're—the flexibility, the inherent flexibility at Ecampus program helped you deal with those. I mean, the instructors were highly aware that when you're dealing with a technology-based program and learning atmosphere that there's going

to be those technical difficulties. And I never had an issue with instructors or anything, not wanting to help you work that stuff out.

CP: Yeah. Was there a laboratory or field work component to your study?

JB: Yeah. I had a, a couple of my classes. I had a fish physiology class where you actually bought a lab kit sent to you, came with a fish to dissect and everything. It was really cool and the way you would just, you would take pictures as you go, to submit your assignment so the instructor saw you going. My camp trailer actually turned into my laboratory for several classes, much to the dismay of my wife. But I think she'd rather have me out there than in the house, especially with those fish that just reeked of formaldehyde. But then there was another soil science class that I took that I think, and what was really neat about that was I think it was actually the first soil science class in the nation that actually provided a soil science lab. So, you were able to do this lab and it came with all the equipment and the cool thing about it is I had a couple problems with the lab where I thought I was missing something or was having difficulty performing this lab out in the field myself, so I called up the department and I got to speak with the instructor that put the whole lab, designed the whole lab kit up.

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That was the kind of resources you had. It wasn't like you bought this lab, generic lab kit from somebody, like he set that up so he's like "oh yeah, you can do this or substitute that" or "oh, I designed this with this in mind." I had a fish and wildlife sampling class where I designed kind of a mock—or not a mock study but just kind of a simple study where I went out and observed animals, recorded data. So yeah, you still get those field experiences and the lab experiences that you would get at the campus. So, it's really neat how they set that up.

CP: Yeah. I'm wondering, in your particular case, too, about sort of the interplay between your job and the school, if you were able to apply some of the things you were working on, that you learned.

JB: Oh absolutely, I absolutely was. And you know, a lot of my field experience and work experience here was huge for the classroom setting because I already had that experience with the types of protocols that we were using for, as examples in the classes. So, it was directly applicable to what I was doing both at work and in the classroom.

CP: Was there a community of students, Ecampus students with which you were interacting?

JB: Yeah, that was, it was called a discussion board and usually we had a couple mandatory that you would participate in each week and basically, what my understanding was, is it was supposed to give you that kind of classroom feel where you were still getting to be able to interact with the students in there. And it was huge for a lot of the schoolwork, to be able to bounce ideas off of your classmates. So, you don't lose, you didn't lose that at all. You still have that classroom atmosphere and you were able to go through all these dialogues with your classmates and it was, even though everybody's got different schedules, you were still able to get that interaction and it worked out really well.

CP: Was there anybody around here who was also part of Ecampus?

JB: There was a couple and I was able to, in fact there's another tribal member here that's doing the Ecampus program and we try to schedule a couple classes to where we were taking the same course so you could kind of help each other out and do that. We were kind of different-paced, different levels, so there was only a couple classes we could take at the same time, but yeah. And you know, usually the first week of class you would introduce yourself, where you're from, kind of your background, why you're taking that class and stuff, so every once in a while you'd see somebody from the local area: "oh hey, how's it going?" you know, and so that was pretty cool.

CP: Yeah.

JB: It didn't happen very often, but it did happen.

CP: Were there any professors or classes that made a particular impact on you?

JB: Yeah, there was. One of the classes was a keystone class and it was Problem Solving in Fisheries and Wildlife. I think it's Fish and Wildlife 488 and it was kind of their capstone. They had two capstone classes, courses for this fish and wildlife program, and this course basically looked at real life fish and wildlife issues that are going on right now and you kind of tried to go through steps to—you would look at each side of the problem, you're trying to help mitigate the problem more, try to help understand why the issues, and it applied to the real world so much that it was hard not to love that class, because you know, I was already working in the real world field of fisheries and seeing some of these issues and understanding the environmental aspects, the political aspects, the social aspects. Actually having someone show you how to better understand those and apply those to your work, that was, of all the courses, it was probably my favorite.

CP: And any professors?

[0:54:38]

JB: Oh man, going to put me on the spot here. Dave Paoletti was one of my favorite. I did wildlife biology, or a wildlife behavioral class that he had. Dr. Sidlauskas. I took his ichthyology class. He was awesome. His video lectures were the best, I thought. And his personality and the humor he could put into the course and his willingness to talk to you about different stuff. I went to, well I've only actually been to campus three times, that's the crazy thing. The one time was for a work conference, a passage, fisheries passage conference, and it was during summer term so I got to actually go meet a few of the professors in person, but most of the staff was out for the summer. And then another time, the second time I visited the campus was for graduation and so got to see most of the staff there, especially the fisheries department, put on a graduation party. And then the last time I went, I just went to a football game last weekend, but Dr. Sid, I had my kids with me, my seven year old boy and four year old daughter and my wife and we got to see him and he took us down into their fish collection and he's just like what do you want to see, what do you—and you know, he's showing the kids all this stuff and that's just kind of the atmosphere you have with the staff there at Oregon State, I mean they're just, they're just as interested in showing you what you have to offer as you are in finding out what they have to offer. Dr. Sid was probably one of my favorite. Just as far as staff members, my advisor Rebecca Goggans, she was huge in my success. I couldn't express how much she was part of my success. We had some difficult family times. My grandpa was diagnosed with dementia and in the tribal community, you know, a lot of responsibility will fall on the oldest male in the family. I'm the oldest out of my siblings and so I took care, took a lot of care of some of the stuff that arose from that, and so for a while my schooling struggled a little bit and Rebecca was just right there to keep me moving forward. We literally talked every week throughout my—every Wednesday, and if we missed a Wednesday it would be earlier in the week or later in the week. We literally talked every week throughout my schooling and we, even now that I'm graduated, I just graduated a little bit ago, but we still talk. We still correspond with each other. And she's more than my advisor, she was a friend, she was, she kept my confidence up, she kept me moving forward, and she understood those cultural responsibilities and helped me communicate that with my instructor so they understood some of the stuff that I was dealing with. And yeah, she by far, out of everybody, is my favorite.

CP: Yeah. It really strikes me the level of commitment that the Ecampus is making to its students. It's pretty amazing.

JB: Yeah, absolutely. They're—its beyond committed, I mean they're all in and that's the only way you can put it; they are all in and they want you to succeed.

CP: Yeah. What was it like at graduation?

JB: It was cool. I'd been to campus once before but you know, they start, when you're standing there waiting and the drums start playing and you're marching into Reser Stadium and the atmosphere and you're seeing all these people dressed in their cap and gowns and everybody's jacked and pumped, you know, we're graduating. It was awesome. I had actually considered just not going, not really going, and Rebecca and my wife and you know, why wouldn't you? You worked this hard. And I wouldn't miss it for the world. It was one of the greatest experiences of my life. It was amazing.

CP: Yeah, I'm sure your family's very proud of you.

JB: Yeah you know, all the family members went down. Yeah, and there's a lot of support from family members and from the tribal community for my education. The education department, I received scholarships every term from them that paid for half of my schooling. I mean, that's huge. The level of commitment from the fisheries department, from the tribal

government; I received education leave that allowed me to perform some of my schooling here at work, on work time. They paid me, essentially paid me a couple hours a day to go to school. That's the level of commitment that the tribal government and the tribal community has for getting our tribal members educated so that they can come back and be the decision makers and the policy makers for our community and so that we truly do have ownership of what we are about, where we want to go and who we want to be in the future.

CP: Well, tell me about your job here. I gather it's changed a little bit over the years?

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JB: Yeah. When I applied here, I've always wanted to work in fisheries and I saw a fisheries job posted and I put in my application and I got an interview and I was so excited, told my wife it was, you know, just getting the interview is like winning the lottery for me, because this is what I wanted. And I was brought on in 2009 as a Fisheries Tech II and it started out mostly just field work doing rotary screw traps where we capture juvenile salmonids and we put passive integrated transponders, PIT tags, we call them. We inject them with that and those, there's different PIT tag arrays throughout the Columbia Basin, down the main stem, and it kind of shows, keeps track of those fish. Spawning ground surveys, where we're going out into spawning habitat and cataloging spawning adult salmonids; how many reds, working up carcasses for biological sampling and data, and then I moved more into a field supervisory role, incorporated more data analyses. I write our age and growth chapter for our annual report, so I collect some of the samples, I take some of the samples collected, scale samples from our different projects that we do within our own project, be it we'll go collect scale samples from spawning, when they're spawning, for the hatchery program, we'll collect scale samples off of juveniles when we're doing electroshocking or bio monitoring, we'll collect scale samples off carcasses, and so I take those, I mount them and I read them so that I can get the age and growth data off that. I analyze that data and then I write up the report for us and submit that for our annual report. Also, for the majority of my first three to four years, I was doing a radio telemetry study on adult steelhead. The Umatilla River here has a lot of irrigation dams along the main stem of the Umatilla and so our study was to, we would radio tag captured adult steelhead at Three Mile Falls, which is about three and a half miles in from the mouth, and then we had receivers that we set up at various locations. Some of them were in between irrigation facilities, some of them were right out the facilities and we wanted to monitor passage, look for any issues with passage, because at some of these facilities they had done major improvements that were designed to facilitate passage in adult salmonids and so we did passage time though the system upward, they're furthest upward location where they spawned. We would go out and recover the tags. Some of them kelted, so we would get information. We would fly in an airplane sometimes, down the Columbia, and we would find steelhead that we tagged in the Umatilla kelting out and find them down in Hood River. Really cool study.

CP: Yeah. Your great-grandparents would have been, I mean I'm sure their minds would be spinning hearing you talk about this.

JB: Yeah.

CP: The changes in fisheries over a few generations, but it's been necessary, obviously.

JB: Yeah, and you know, we're getting runs that are better and better and we were seeing there for a while that we didn't have any salmon in the river. We went from—my grandma tells me stories that her parents used to tell her where the men could ride down the streams on horseback clubbing salmon and the women would come up behind them and pick them up. You know, you hear stories where you could walk across the river on the backs of salmon, there were so many. And the lamprey, our lamprey are overlooked, or get overshadowed a lot by the salmon and steelhead, but they're another major resource that the tribe is trying to bring back in our fisheries program, it's focus, it has focuses on. And I hear stories of just when my grandpa was younger, they could go pick them off rocks at the Umatilla River, and you rarely see them there now. You know, he said "you could pick them by the hundreds." So, we're just a, I think that's one of the things that's most interesting to me, is we're just a few generations off from where these things thrived and then we're like another generation off from where everything kind of disappeared and now during our generation we're seeing everything come back. So, it's pretty cool to be a part of that.

CP: So, what's your goal from here for yourself?

JB: My goal from here is to continue my work in fisheries to make sure that I'm providing a sustainable harvest opportunity and opportunities for future generations and I want to, you know, I'm going to continue my education so that hopefully I can move up within our fisheries department to be part of the policy and to decision making process. You know, my role right now is gathering data and providing the data so that we can back up what we're doing and show that what we're doing is working or not working or what we can improve upon or what's working for us so that we can follow that. I mean, in science-based management, you're always getting that, you know, you never really know what's going to happen in a biological system, but our first foods program and following that mission statement and combining our cultural knowledge with scientific knowledge to create a management system that provides these opportunities is revolutionary. It's new and it's exciting and being a part of that and moving forward with that, I would like to be in a position that I can make a bigger impact and leave my mark on it to where I can say I helped the community out and I did my best to provide the proper things that were needed to insure those future harvest opportunities and just provide those opportunities for future generations to even get to see the fish and to be a part of that.

CP: So, there's more school in your future?

JB: Yeah, yeah definitely. I don't think I want to stop.

CP: Yeah. Well, I want to kind of conclude with just some more general thoughts on the community here and the area. We can't talk about the reservation here without talking about the casino. That's been a major, major piece of what's happened in the last couple of decades.

JB: Yeah, it has. It's created a lot of opportunity, it's a major revenue source, for sure, and it's a major sense of pride. My mom was actually on the committee that originally built that or came up with the design and they started that whole process, and to see it grow, it not only gives me a sense of pride knowing that my mom was a part of that and my stepdad, but also that our community was able to make that happen. And now it is a major sense of pride. We've got the cultural institute that stemmed off from that. We've got the casino, we've got a new hotel, we've got the Cineplex, we've got the golf course, and it's provided a source of revenue for us that we can start doing other things. We've got Cayuse Technologies up there. We bought and rebuilt the Arrowhead Travel Plaza up there, you know. We've got this brand new government center that's only a few years old. It's put us into a position where now we've got the money to back up the things we want to do for our community and for our tribal government.

CP: Yeah, it seems that they've been very smart about how they're reinvesting this money and diversifying the sort of economic foundation up there.

JB: Yeah, and that's what it is, we're building up our economic foundation to where we have, we're creating our own opportunities to where we can advance ourselves. We can stand on our own and that's our goal, we want to stand on our own, we want to be able to show that we're—we want to take the responsibility of our tribal government and our tribal community and we want to put that back into our hands and we want to own it.

CP: And there's the high school here now, too.

JB: Yeah, the Nixyaawii charter school. And that's another great opportunity. And like I was discussing earlier you know, they're creating not only educational opportunities for tribal members and being able to provide our students with that tight-knit community atmosphere of being, you know, we have our own tribal school but they're also doing, providing cultural aspects; intertwining the cultural aspects and the cultural knowledge into the curriculum to provide means of continuing that knowledge into the next generation.

CP: One thing that strikes me whenever I come back to Pendleton is seeing how the focus of this area seems to have shifted more and more out here and Pendleton itself continues to kind of struggle a little bit. Is that your sense as well?

JB: As far as Pendleton is still trying to hold on to their?

CP: Well, the economy is stagnant.

[1:09:37]

JB: Yeah, it's hard. You know, Pendleton's a tight-knit community, everybody knows pretty much everybody and we like our small community and it's hard to, I think, in my opinion, this is just my opinion, I think it's hard to hold onto that small community without—and still grow. You know, we love our small community and we want to keep it that way but economically speaking it's hard not to grow and try to—you still want to prosper, and so finding things where you don't change that small rural community but yet you're keeping up with that economy and you're keeping up with growing to a point that you're sustaining your economy, it is hard. You struggle, you know, and there's a lot of small business in Pendleton and you know, like I was saying earlier, Round-Up is one of our biggest—it is the biggest time for those business to make money and carry on through the rest of the year. And so, trying to find the ability to keep your economy thriving in those times when it's down, it has been tough. And you see you know, changes in the structures of what businesses are open and closing and you know, you're like oh my gosh, they've been open forever, I can always remember those, they're gone now. So, yeah, that is tough to see that but you can't stop change, I don't think, and Pendleton is changing but they're still holding onto that rural community atmosphere.

CP: Yeah. Well Jerimiah, I want to thank you very much for all of this, it's been fascinating for me and I really appreciate you spending the time to give us your perspective on a couple of different fronts; life out here and also your Ecampus experiences. Really very meaningful, I appreciate it.

JB: Well, thank you for the opportunity. [1:11:36]