



## Tana Atchley Oral History Interview, September 15, 2015

### **Title**

“A Role Model for Oregon's Tribal Youth”

### **Date**

September 15, 2015

### **Location**

Offices of the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission, Portland, Oregon.

### **Summary**

In the interview, Atchley describes her family background and upbringing in Sprague River, Oregon. In this, she details her experience of tribal traditions growing up on what was once the Klamath Indian Reservation. She discusses the importance of first foods to the tribal community, shares her thoughts on the impact of agricultural practices in the Klamath Basin, and reflects on the social, cultural and economic impact made on the Klamath Tribes by their termination in 1954. Atchley likewise reflects on her experience of school growing up - including a year where she was homeschooled due to county budget cuts - and the importance of the Underrepresented Minorities Achievement Scholarship that funded her during college.

The session then turns to Atchley's years as an undergraduate journalism major at the University of Oregon, her work in the years that immediately followed her graduation from the U of O, and her decision to return to school as a graduate student in the Oregon State University College Student Services Administration program. In recalling her OSU experience, Atchley notes a collection of individuals who were important to her, and comments on the rivalry between OSU and the U of O.

The remainder of the interview focuses on Atchley's work activities in academia and elsewhere. She describes her years at Portland State University as a counselor and advisor, details her involvement with salmon camps and other youth outreach, and outlines her move to the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission and her duties as its tribal workforce development and outreach coordinator. She also notes her recreational involvement with the Jammin' Salmon dragon boat team. The session concludes with Atchley's thoughts on the role that education has played in her life and the role that it might continue to play for Native American communities in Oregon and elsewhere.

### **Interviewee**

Tana Atchley

### **Interviewer**

Janice Dilg

### **Website**

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

## Transcript

**Janice Dilg:** Today is September 15th, 2015, my name is Janice Dilg, I am the oral history interviewer for the Oregon State University Sesquicentennial Oral History Project. I am here at the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission. And if you would introduce yourself please, Tana.

**Tana Atchley:** Yeah, my name is Tana Atchley and I am Modoc and Paiute from the Klamath Tribes in southern Oregon, and I work here for the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission as their tribal workforce development and outreach coordinator.

**JD:** If you would start with a little family history – where you're from here in Oregon and some of your family origins.

**TA:** Sure. I was born and raised in Klamath County. I was born in Klamath Falls and my dad's side of the family, that's where we're from. I grew up in Sprague River, which is about an hour outside, northeast of Klamath Falls, on the former Klamath Indian Reservation. It's a very tiny little town, it's unincorporated and has maybe a hundred residents all spread throughout. I went to school in Chiloquin, which is about thirty miles west of Sprague River, so it was a long thirty-minute – or well, it was about an hour commute to and from school. Chiloquin has about 750 residents in it. I think the only year I didn't go to school in Chiloquin was in '86, when I was in third grade, we moved to Klamath Falls that year, so I went to school at Ferguson Elementary.

**JD:** Can you talk a little bit more about what some of your family traditions were? Or your tribal traditions that you grew up with that were part of your life and community?

**TA:** Yeah. I never really thought that much about it when I was growing up, just because I grew up in a really small community with my tribal family all around me. So the street that I grew up on, my great-grandma lived at the end of the road, my grandparents lived right next to her, and then we lived next to them. And then I had aunties and uncles and cousins all down the road too, so we were very close-knit. Our property had roots that grew on it, so it was never anything that thought about as being different or being traditional or anything until I was away in college, honestly. When it was time to go dig *apios*, that's just what you do, and they were right in our back yard, and so it was just normal for me. But the work that I do now surrounding first foods and everything, I recognize how important and unique, I guess, in terms of a lot of other people's experiences, that that is. So I still go dig roots with my dad when I go home in the summertime.

My dad was a hunter, so we grew up with deer meat and elk meat; antelope on occasion, but I'm not the biggest fan. Our tribe used to be really big fish eaters – so prior to the dams along the Klamath River, there were salmon, there were a lot of *c'waam* which is a Lost River sucker fish. And those were pretty much staple foods in the tribe, but the last time that there were salmon in the river, my great grandma was a kid, so that would have been over a hundred years ago now. And as a result of the dams, they impacted a lot of our traditions just in terms of access to what we had in terms of food sources. So my granny actually doesn't even like to eat fish; if you ask her if she wants fish, she'll wrinkle up her nose and say no.

For me growing up, we didn't have access to a lot of it, so whenever I did get a chance to eat salmon, I always loved it. So it's interesting to see, generationally, how access to food had impacted not just our traditions and what we do, but also our health. I know my granny has diabetes. So yeah, I think access to food has definitely been impacted by the dams. And the agricultural community in Klamath County, there's a lot of irrigation and stuff that happens.

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My family has been really active politically within the tribes. When my dad was born, the after is when the Klamath tribes were terminated. And so, as a result, our reservation was turned into national forestland, and a lot of it was logged, and we were not considered tribal people anymore in the eyes of the federal government. So access to any services and stuff that were agreed upon through our treaties were taken away. And so my dad's entire lifetime, we were considered not native. And in 1986 we were granted federal recognition again, but one of the stipulations of that was that we didn't receive a land base back. So the Klamath tribes were the second tribe in the country that were terminated, and so the termination policy was during an era when the federal government was looking at ways to kind of get out of treaty obligations. And at the

time, the Klamath tribes were one of the richest tribes in the country. We maintained our own roadways. Because we had so much timber, we were managing our forests and had mills and lots of tribal members were employed.

The federal government looked at that and said, "oh look, they've successfully assimilated into white culture and they don't need to have all of these treaty benefits any longer." So when that happened, tribal members had never had to pay property taxes, because they lived on the reservation. And so after that happened, a lot of tribal members lost property, which was really sad. And there's a lot of really negative things that happened socially within the community. I was able to participate in some research projects when I was an undergraduate, interviewing tribal members about that experience. It deeply, deeply impacted our community in a lot of negative ways. So when restoration happened in '86 and we didn't get a land base back, I think it still impacts our ability to manage our treaty rights, because we do still maintain our hunting and fishing and gathering rights. So our access to those spaces to gather, to hunt, or to fish, are still impacted. We have to ask permission from private land owners to go on to their land to practice those things.

And with a lot of the things that happened in Klamath County with regard to water rights, it's very controversial. And in Sprague River, where I grew up, if you go down to Bly, where the head of the river is, where it's bubbling out of the earth and it's clean and it's clear and it's a healthy water system, you see lots of plant coverage and everything – it's a healthy habitat. And then when you follow the river into the valley to where I grew up, it looks like an irrigation ditch. And that's because of years and years of mismanagement. There's areas where my great grandma used to go swimming as a kid, where her grandma would take her to go swim. And where I used to go growing up, my dad would take us swimming, and at one point the ranching community built fences up so you couldn't get to it anymore. And then, of course, we'd ride our bikes and we'd go in anyway. And then they bulldozed the river. They literally plowed dirt into the river so the cows could cross it.

So when you're changing waterways like that – they also will pump water 24/7, and with whatever pesticides and fertilizers and stuff that they have on their plants, that runoff goes into the irrigation ditches and back into the rivers. So then you have an overabundance of nutrients in the rivers, and in the summertime that turns into huge algae blooms, which means there's no oxygen in the water, which means we have dead fish floating in the rivers. Which means, who can eat that? So those are very real impacts that happen today. I think this summer we had super blue-green algae warnings, not to get into the water, not to drink the water, not to have your animals around the water, because they would get sick. And that's a regular occurrence and those things never used to happen in the past.

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So when I think about our cultures and our traditions, a lot of those things are being impacted by outside forces. And a lot of that's impacted because we don't have our land base, so we're not managing those spaces.

**JD:** Was it uncommon for tribal recognition in the '80s – which happened to several other tribes in Oregon – to not be returned any land base?

**TA:** Most of the tribes who got recognized after termination received some sort of a land base, although a lot of them had – I know that every tribe, their situation was different. With Siletz, I believe that they don't have a lot of their treaty rights intact as a result of getting their federal recognition back. So I know every tribe's situation was different. I know that the Klamath tribes lost the largest land base through the termination era, and clearly it's still lost; we never received a land base back.

After we started our casino we were able to get a little bit more of an economic foothold, and so we were able to purchase back certain areas in the Chiloquin area so that we have some tribal housing for elders and for some tribal members, and we also have a health medical and dental clinic area. We're building a childcare center, we also have our governance center which for me, when I was growing up, our tribal headquarters were basically modulars in front of the Jeld-Wen factory on 97. So that was our tribal headquarters. And we had a couple of modulars for our dental facility, so that's where I would go to get my teeth cleaned, you'd just walk down to the little trailer house. And now there's actually been a lot of growth since then and it's exciting to see. I know that when I was still in high school we had purchased a building in Klamath Falls for a pharmacy and for the tribal health programs. And they also have a commodity building in Klamath Falls too.

It's been really slow, really slow. It's almost been thirty years since restoration. It was really fast, the taking away of resources and everything, which had a really long-term impact, not just economically but also socially, and in terms of what it did to people's spirits. I think it hurt people deeply. And then there was a lot of racism in the community, a lot of violence in the community as well.

**JD:** Did I understand correctly that there's been an active language school to keep the language going?

**TA:** Not super active. We do have some tribal members who are working on their degrees in linguistics to do some language revitalization. And there are some language classes happening in Chiloquin and in Klamath Falls right now. When I was growing up, there really weren't many. There were people who were working on creating dictionaries and books and everything, but the access to the general tribal membership was pretty limited.

**JD:** You mentioned going out and digging roots with their father, can explain perhaps what the root is, for those of us who don't know, and just a little about what you remember about learning how to dig roots.

**TA:** Yeah. It's interesting because digging roots, I think, is traditionally more of a female role. But my mom isn't tribal, my dad is. So my dad would be like, "oh, let's go dig some Indian potatoes," is what he used to always call them. But they're called *apios*, but our word for them is *cwas*, and they're actually like a sweet potato, like a wild sweet potato, but they look more like an almond, about like that size. They're really dark and you peel the skin off them and they're kind of white, but they're really crunchy, kind of like carrot. They're sweet, they're really sweet, like carrots.

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But during mid-summer is when the plant comes up and you want to dig them up right before they start to flower, because the land is really rough – it's hard, hard work. And so it's really good to go like after a nice rain, because the ground is a lot softer to get to. For me anymore, it's like when I get down there – so it's usually like Fourth of July – so it's just going to be tough and rocky and dirty and dusty.

But yeah, my dad was always like, "let's go, let's go dig some roots," so I'd go with him, and as I got older it kind of became a tradition between me and him. It's really hard work. I don't have an *umdeth* [?], which I really need to get, which is one of our traditional digging sticks. So usually my dad will take a little shovel and kind of dig it, and then I'll go through and sift through and get the roots. It's always kind of fun because whenever I dig the roots, he's always trying to get one so that we have the whole plant intact, so you can see the plant and the flower and the root at the bottom, so that I can bring it up to Portland or to Eugene or wherever it was that I was living, to show people. Let them taste it. Or if there's people from home, then I can share it with them too.

**JD:** Did you or your family participate in some of the first food ceremonies? Was that part of your community and your family?

**TA:** I think that when a lot of stuff happened with termination, I think that a lot of those traditions stopped being practiced in a lot of families. So my family doesn't really do real traditional ceremonial types of things. I think we recognize first foods. There's a lot of traditions in terms of providing deer meat and things like that. So like when my brothers turned thirteen, they got rifles and got their first kills, so there's traditions and stuff associated with that; the rites of passage for them as young men.

But in terms of what I've seen with other tribes that I've worked with, we don't have anything that's like that specific. Like we'll go to the *c'waam* ceremony, which is for the sucker fish, which is our first fish that comes back, and so I will participate in that ceremony as a part of the community. And I'll go to that with family members, but that's the only one that the tribe really holds. We don't do ones for huckleberries or for choke cherries or for deer or anything else, or salmon even. Yeah, it's just the *c'waam*.

**JD:** You mentioned going to small schools and long rides there and back, what do you remember about school and subjects you liked or didn't like?

**TA:** Yeah, so I'm the oldest in my generation. So I mentioned that, in my family, all my aunts and uncles and cousins and everything, in my family there were four of us in terms of siblings. So I'm the oldest of four growing up, and there's

a fifth one of us now. And then I had all of my cousins, and all of my cousins are boys. So there was about ten boys and then me and my sister, so I had two brothers and then me and my sister. It was always interesting going to school and being the oldest was tough because I had to do it all by myself. I was also one of the youngest people in my class, so I was like five when I started first grade. I remember my first day of school, my mom and dad took me to Chiloquin and I was all excited until I realized they were leaving me, and I was like, "that's not cool." Because my mom was like, "do you want to go to school this year? Or do you want to wait and go next year?" Because I was kind of right on that cusp where you could decide which one. And I was like, "well, no, I'll go."

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And after they left me I was like, "ok, mom, I think I'm just going to stay home this year." And she was like, "no, we already got you your school clothes and your backpack and everything, so you're going to have to go to school." So I was really mad at her. So we would walk down the road to the bus stop. So my second day of school consisted of my mom and my granny pushing me into the school bus and the bus driver pulling me in and my like this [makes a bracing motion with arms] in the doorway. So that was my second day of school, and I think probably toward the later part of that week I was pouting and walking to the school bus, and my papa was outside, and he was like, "hey baby doll, how do you like school?" And I was like, "school's gross!" It got me all teared up and I went to school.

So at first I don't think I liked school very much, but my dad's sister – my auntie Darcelle [?] – she was a school teacher and she taught first grade at the time too, so she was always trying to encourage me to focus on school and to like school. So she used to give me her workbooks and stickers and that type of stuff, and then I started playing school a lot with my siblings. Of course I was the teacher and had to make them homework and everything. I think I started liking school around fourth grade. I don't know if it was the letter grades or if it was a little bit more challenging, but I started liking school around the fourth grade and always got straight-A's or as close to straight-A's as I could get. And my grandparents were always really encouraging of that. Of course my parents were too, but my grandparents were always just like, it was the first thing they would ask, "how are you doing in school?"

I would walk by their house every day to get to the school bus, so when it was cold in the morning we'd stop at their house and stand by the fireplace and get warmed up. And if it was a really snowy winter – which we used to get, not so much anymore – but when it was a really snowy cold day, my papa would be like, "nope, you guys are staying home." He was like, "that's a whole generation wiped out if that bus goes off the side of the road." So he was like, "nope, you guys are staying home today." So even as much as they pushed education, safety was always a priority.

But because we lived so far away, I wasn't able to participate in extracurricular activities or things after school or sports or anything like that, because there were no buses to bring me back after practice. So once school was over, if you missed that bus, you have no ride home. And when I was in the eighth grade was the year that Ballot Measure 5 passed, and that was when the education funding structure in Oregon changed from property taxes to income taxes. That was also the same year that the spotted owl was put on the endangered species list. And so my family were loggers – my dad, my grandpa, my uncle. My mom stayed at home. So our income went to zero. We were a family of six. So it was really rough that year.

Klamath County also had a similar ballot that passed, which eliminated school buses for county schools. Not for city schools, so if you lived two miles away from school you still had a bus. But if you lived thirty miles away from school, you were out of luck. And so because my dad wasn't working, we didn't have gas money to drive back and forth, twice a day, five times a week, to take me and my siblings to school. So we were home schooled, which was really rough. Most of my friends lived in Chiloquin, so yeah, it was a really isolating year. I was also in pre-algebra, so neither of my parents could explain to me what a variable was, so it was very confusing to try and figure that out on my own. So I struggled in math. But the rest of it was just, it was really boring. It was a really boring year. I used to help my siblings a lot with their work.

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But the next year was high school. So when I got to go back to school, I was so thankful. I missed my friends, I missed my teachers, I missed learning, I missed being challenged. And I think that experience really shaped a lot of the way that I think about education, because I think in this country a lot of people think that education is an inherent right that we have. That it's something that everybody should have access to. And ideally, yes, that's true. But realistically, in this country,

that's not the reality. And my experience is a clear example of that. Our parents were very concerned about our lack of access to education at the time and all that we go were a lot of very opportunistic people preying on need. There were a lot of religious organizations that came in and were like, "oh, for a hundred dollars a kid per month, we can tutor you," and families didn't have money like that. We just didn't.

But that year my mom was so creative with commodities – she made granola, she made homemade pies or dough, just to make food out of. Obviously my dad was a subsistence hunter, so we had deer meat and things like. But gosh, you don't even understand how excited we would be if we got bacon or pork chops or chicken, because it was meat that came from a grocery store. It's so ironic, because now I'm totally the opposite. If I can get some of our traditional foods, I'm like, "ohhhh." It's like the best thing ever.

But yeah, just having that opportunity and not taking it for granted. I knew that I was behind my peers and I knew Chiloquin was not one of the best schools in the state. It's still not. If you look at the rankings of the schools, Chiloquin is down at the bottom as one of those red flag schools. And we knew it; as kids, we knew it. We knew that we were part of the state that didn't matter. We knew that we weren't going to get any funding. We knew that if we wanted something that it had to be on us to get it. So I worked really hard, I tried my best, I always took the most challenging classes that I could in Chiloquin. It's not like we had AP classes; we didn't have any of these classes where you could get college credit. We did have a partnership with OIT where you could get Writing 121 credit your senior year. So I did that. But that was like the most challenging kind of course that you could take. But otherwise, I took all four years of math and science and everything that I could. But you know that it's still not going to be enough, because you're going to be competing against the kids from Portland or Salem or school districts that had a lot more. I mean, it was like during Measure 5 they lost their Scandinavian language program. I'm like, "boo hoo, I didn't get to go to school." You know? It's like apples and oranges.

**JD:** A completely different scale.

**TA:** Yeah. And I understand that those schools lost a lot also, but it was like, they still got to go to school. So the differences were pretty stark. I knew I had to work really hard to get scholarships, because there was no way my family had any resources. They had a lot of support – my parents and my grandparents, my auntie and an uncle, everybody was like, "where are you going to school? What are you doing?"

**JD:** So it was kind of a given that you should go on to college?

**TA:** I think it was a necessity. In our community there is a lot of negativity. That year that I didn't go to school, a good chunk of my classmates dropped out from junior high and did not come back to high school. I was making baby blankets for classmates who got pregnant in junior high, and then there were a few more that happened in high school. Like I said, most of my friends were in Chiloquin, so my family kept me very isolated. So I was in a little tiny town thirty miles away from all of my friends, and I was babysitting my siblings and my cousins. Which was good, in hindsight. But at the time it was like, "this sucks."

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But at the same time, like I said, I grew up with my great grandma and my grandparents right down the road too, and they were always asking what my plans were. My papa was always like, "don't ever let a man get you like this." And it was always, "you need to go to school." It wasn't a matter of if you were going to school, it was where you're going to school. And then the big question was, "how are you going to pay for it?" Because they weren't going to be able to afford it. So I knew I had to get scholarships.

I was very lucky to be a recipient of the Underrepresented Minorities Achievement Scholarship at U of O, which was a scholarship that the OUS system had at the time. Actually, I don't think it was OUS at the time – was it OSSHE? I can't remember what the acronym was. Oregon State System of Higher Education; that's what it used to be called. And it allowed you to get free tuition for up to five years. That scholarship, I believe, after a year at the starting institution, you could transfer to another of the schools in the system. But yeah, that was my ticket to college.

And later, I think, there was a court case that came from an Asian American student – because the Asian American students were not underrepresented in the state system – challenged it, and it became kind of an open diversity scholarship

that the schools have now. And it doesn't have the portability to transfer to other institutions anymore, and unfortunately, if you look at the numbers of students of color who receive that scholarship, it's gone down significantly. Native American students are less represented now that they were back then. And it's sad, it's really sad. I think some schools do better jobs about recruiting underrepresented minority students to apply for that scholarship. But I used to read for that scholarship at one point, and you would have students who were diverse because they were left-handers. Or students who were twins and thought that somehow made them special and unique in the world. Which, you know, everybody's special and unique in the world, but you have to look at what those scholarships were created for and what inequities they're trying to balance out. So I don't think that it's necessarily doing the job as well as it could.

**JD:** How did you decide on your major that you earned at U of O?

**TA:** In Klamath County, there were very few positive stories told about small towns and tribal communities. So whether it was in the *Herald and News*, or on KOTI, KOVI-TV, we would see stories about really negative things in our community. We'd see things related to violence or to vandalism, always something negative. And just seeing how we were perceived in the community as tribal people, I wasn't happy with it, because I was like, "look at these kids over here, they're doing all these great things and nobody ever tells any stories about it. Why is that?" And you would read stories about the kids in Medford or you would read stories about kids in Klamath, there's always this hierarchy in small towns and when you were at the bottom of that hierarchy, it really makes you want to say, "there's good here." Because you're constantly being told you're bad or you're less than. And having younger siblings and cousins growing up with you, who are constantly receiving those messages and are starting to believe it, you want to change that story.

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So I decided I wanted to go into journalism, my senior year. I think most of my life I wanted to be a teacher because of my auntie. Because my granny had gone to Oregon State for a couple of years in a counseling program and she had worked for the Employment Department getting tribal people get jobs in Klamath County. And just the way that education was just so valued and important in my family, so I always thought I was going to go down the education route. But then when I started thinking about representation and image, I really got fascinated with journalism and I kind of felt I had been doing the teacher thing my whole life anyway, because I was always playing teacher and always mentoring and working with my sibling and cousins. So I was looking for something fresh and new and different, and U of O, at the time, had one of the top journalism programs in the country. And even knowing that I was from a school that was one of those bottom of the rung/less than places, in myself I always knew that, "I can do that. I'm better than that. I'll have to try really hard, but I know that I can do that." And I did. So I guess I always just had a lot of people supporting me and also telling me that I could do it, or maybe just believing that I could do it too. So I know that that definitely influenced it.

So yeah, I went to the J-School at the U of O, and I chose the electronic media track. Initially I wanted to be an on-screen reporter and go out and do the field reporting and anchoring and stuff. But when I was a pre-J student - you have two years to take all of the coursework before you actually get to do the real stuff - and then I was taking the classes where you do the real stuff, I was like, "I am so not comfortable." I was like, "I feel like I'm just playing reporter; I'm not comfortable with it." But I really liked the craft of storytelling and looking at documentary film to really tell a story in depth, and helping other people's stories get heard.

I was able to work for Tom Ball, who was working on his doctorate at the time at U of O. And he's a former chairman of the Klamath tribes, so I went to school with his kids. He hired me as, I had numerous jobs with him, at the Oregon Social Learning Center. I worked in the library, because they had a Native American research team. So I would find copies of articles and journals and stuff like that, that had to do with Native mental health issues, post-traumatic stress disorder. We were looking a lot at historical trauma. So I learned a lot. And then he had me do a lot of research on termination, which was interesting because I already had an interest in it, so I had spent a lot of time at the U of O library - which ironically has more information on our tribe than we even have on ourselves back home, which was always irritating to me. But how can people who are in this privileged space have access to things that are ours, but we don't have access to these things? And that always bothered me.

But I was there and so I took advantage of it, and I would take copies of microfiche. It was really neat because I found these old tribal newsletters that my granny's brother had poetry in it, or there were pictures of my auntie. I would call my granny up all the time and be like, "granny, I found this today!" And I was like, "tell me more about what it was like

during that time." So it was really neat because you don't think of your family members as anything more than your family members – my granny is my granny. But when I started to learn more about her role in restoration, helping the tribe get federal recognition, or her work within the community, it was totally inspiring. It was like, "gosh, that's my granny!" I would meet people who knew her in those roles, in those capacities, so that was always really exciting to me, to get to know her on that level instead of just as my granny.

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**JD:** What sparked your decision to go on to get a graduate degree?

**TA:** During my time at the U of O as an undergrad, I was really involved in student leadership. And so I had been involved with the Native American Student Union as well as the Multicultural Center, and part of that work required representing your community to prospective students. So we knew, as students of color at a predominantly white institution, that we needed each other in order to get through, and having that support system, not just as students, but looking for faculty and staff. And so as student ambassadors in a lot of ways, we would be asked to sit on panels with the Admissions Office, to talk to prospective students. People from back home would bring groups of high school kids up to the university and you're, by default, a role model, because you're there and you're doing it. And so I would hang out with them and go to the movies or go grab dinner with them.

So kind of just being placed into that role, I fell into a job right after I graduated. So I had been doing all this journalism work and working on these Indian family wellness projects, and doing film and everything, but when our grant was finished and wrapped up, I was done with school and I didn't have a job. And Allison Davis-White Eyes, who is now at Oregon State, used to work at University of Oregon. In fact, she's the person who recruited me to go to U of O, so I've known her since I was about fifteen years old, because she would come out to Chiloquin and talk to all of the tribal kids about going to U of O. Which, ironically, was the only institution that would go to our school outside of the military, to talk about options after high school. So obviously I went to U of O.

So when I was getting ready to graduate, Allison had accepted a position at Oregon State, in the Indian Education Office. So she had done Native American recruitment there for the university, and Patty Lopez, who was also going off to go to graduate school, she was the multicultural recruiter. So U of O was looking for somebody to step in and do that work, and they kind of needed somebody right away, so it was like an emergency hire. So they hired me on as – I got hired off of a phone interview. [laughs] And so I started off as an admissions counselor, so I was on the road for weeks at a time and was able to visit a lot of different high schools and talk to kids about entrance requirements and scholarships. And so I did that for my first year and then I moved home, I got the same position at OIT down in Klamath Falls. So I was able to move home and I think that was the year that the Enron stuff happened, so there were a lot of budget cuts and my position was eliminated.

So I was like, "OK, now I'm on unemployment, what am I going to do?" And part of me at the time, with the recruitment stuff, as much as I enjoyed going out into communities and meeting people and helping them through the process of getting admitted to school, I really felt like the relationship-building piece was lacking, because you do establish this trust and rapport with counselors and with teachers and with families, but once that student is there on campus, you have to hand them over to your colleagues who are there on campus all the time. And they get to be there with them and watch them grow and develop and graduated. And you're on the road recruiting the next group. And for me, I was like, "I want to be with them, though. I want to watch them go through this process." So I was like, "I really probably need to shift my focus away from recruitment and start looking at retention programs and start looking at student affairs."

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So I talked a lot with my former supervisor at OIT and some of my former supervisors at U of O, and then obviously with Allie and James Florendo who was my advisor at U of O who is now at Lane Community College. And they were very encouraging. So I applied for the College Student Services Administration program at Oregon State. I had also looked at the PACE program at Portland State, but I felt like OSU's program was a better fit because I liked the cohort-based model, I liked that there were assistantships associated with it, so you were getting practical hands-on experience. Plus the assistantships paid for your tuition, so that wasn't a bad deal.

So I applied and I met one of my best friends at the interviews for the program. It was not a very diverse group of folks in the application process, so when I was standing outside to do my interview – I was in a hallway in the Education building – and my friend Isabel Sanchez, she comes up to me and she's like, "I know you don't know me, but you don't know how happy I am to see you." And I was like, "I know!" So we just gave each other this big hug. And I was looking at a map of the Northwest and so we started talking and I was like, "so this is where I'm from, on Highway 97," and she was like, "well, this is where *I'm* from on Highway 97," because she's from Omak, Washington. So we just cracked up and laughed, and we were like, "you know, they better accept both of us and we better both get assistantships. They don't know what they're missing." And so, lo and behold, we were both accepted and we both got assistantships. I worked in EOP as an academic advisor and she had a position in Diversity Development, where she was advising the cultural centers. And so we had a really great time at OSU.

It was a quick two years, but just amazing people that I got to work with. And I think having the experience that I had at U of O where, through trial and error, you learned where you could find support and you learned where the pockets of people who you need to be successful are, I already knew that. So when I made it to Oregon State, I already knew where to go. So it was really easy to feel like I was getting what I needed. I was also commuting, so I still lived in Eugene the whole time I was at OSU. So I would drive back and forth, which in a way was really good because it helped me with balance. When I was an undergrad I lived right next to campus, so I was there on campus 24/7 and felt like I needed to be at everything all of the time. And so having that distance allowed me to be like, "ok, while I'm here this is what I'm doing. I'm very focused on it. But ok, I've got to go now, so I'm going to head home." So it made me really more cognizant of how I spent my time and be more intentional.

**JD:** And there's sometimes considered to be a bit of a rivalry between those two institutions.

**TA:** Yeah, I guess you could say that.

**JD:** How does one straddle and accommodate that?

**TA:** You know, I had good experiences at both places and I can be critical of both institutions as well. I think I'm probably a little bit more a Duck when it comes to, like, football, but I was there for five years as an undergrad, I worked there for a year, and I lived there for the two years that I went to Oregon State. With OSU, my experience was as a graduate student, it was only for two years, I didn't live on campus. So I think my relationship with the institution is a little bit different, but it was all positive. And the people who I worked with were all faculty and staff who, a lot of them are still there. So it's more about those relationships as it is with the school colors or the sports teams. That's just kind of stuff that's there, but it's the relationships that I have with people that are more valuable.

**JD:** Were there particularly memorable courses or practica or professors from your master's program that jump out?

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**TA:** My major professor was Rich Shintaku, and Rich was amazing. He was just a fun happy person, very positive, kind of a problem-solving guy. I took some classes with him too, he taught one on multiculturalism in student affairs. Because at the time, those weren't even required courses for the program, they were just electives. So had been kind of pushing, "no, everybody needs to take this class, it needs to be a requirement." Because when you're looking at the changing landscape of higher ed, you want to be able to serve all students. You've got to have people who can anticipate the issues that students might struggle with, and do that in a respectful way, regardless of their background. And Rich was just really great about having those conversations and keeping you focused.

Larry Roper was also another. I remember a class we took from him – I can't even remember the name of it – but I remember the conversation we had about how institutions...I was concerned because a person who is very close to me was not being treated well at the institution he was working for, and was barely making more than an admin when they had a terminal degree. And I remember mentioning that in a conversation in class, and Larry kind of stopped me and was like, "you know, institutions don't take care of people." He says, "people take care of people." And that's always stuck with me. I was like, "it's true." You have to just work for good people. You can't be like, "oh, the university is treating me bad or the institution is doing x, y, or z." Its like, "no, you're just working for bad people who aren't advocating for you." I think I've taken that with me a lot too, just in terms of, if I get into a management or director-type of position and I'm in charge or

responsible for staff, making sure that you're taking of them. It's not just taking care of your students that you're working for, but making sure that your staff is taken care of.

**JD:** While you're off at college, both undergraduate and graduate, there were a lot of major issues going on back in your home area around the drought and water rationing. How much of that were you caught up in or aware of, even though you weren't necessarily living at home during that time period?

**TA:** My family is all at home; I'm the only one who has left, except for my auntie who is a teacher, she lives in Wyoming. So I'm very aware of what's going on at home. But I also know that it's very political. So that year that I did move home and I worked at OIT, my first day at work – so that was right when the fish kill happened on the Klamath River.

**JD:** So this was in 2001?

**TA:** So my first day at work, my supervisor asked me what I think about it. I don't know his family background or his political beliefs, I don't know if he's from a ranching community or not. So I just played dumb. "I've been gone for a number of years, I really haven't kept up." Which was probably a good response, because he and I had lots of conversations about other social issues that he is very conservative about. It was a hard place to work, it was a really hard place to work. Our staff retreats were at his church – this is a state school – and I'm the only one who thinks it's weird. There's Christian music coming from the admin's desk in the waiting reception area. I put up a "safe space" sticker on my door and I would get weird looks for doing that. It's Klamath though, it's a very conservative community, so I guess I should have expected that or, I don't know. After being gone and in a more liberal place, you become more open to a lot more ideas and more accepting of lots of different people. So it was tough to go back to and feel like you couldn't express that as much.

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So when it came to a lot of the political issues going on at home, you know what's going on, but when you're at that level of commitment in your academic study, you can't focus on it as much. You know it's there, you know it's never going to go away, it's just going to get more complicated and twisted. So while I was still a student, I would go home for *c'waam* ceremony, I always go home for Restoration Celebration, which is our big pow wow during the summertime. So I would participate in those ways, but not so much politically.

When I was working at Portland State in '07 – no it wasn't '07, it was '09 – I did our tribal salmon camp, which was from all of the Klamath River tribes. So I was hired as the coordinator, so I supervised the counselors from Karuk and Yuroc and Hoopa. And so each of the four tribes brought four to five kids from each community, and we spent four to five days in each tribal community. So we started off in Chiloquin, we got to take the kids to Crater Lake and to the lava beds, and we got to go canoeing and gather wocus, which is a water lily that grows on the Klamath Lake, which is one of our staple starches, which I had never done before. So I got exposed to things from my own home, but then I got to follow the river down. So we stopped with the Karuk, and I'm actually part Karuk from my great grandma's side, and had never really been there. And people knew our family.

So that was part validating but it was also just neat to be there and to learn – the tribes that are down river still have access to fish and how much of a part of their way of life it is. Where we're at, there's four dams between us and the salmon, and so having that cut off, I was really able to just see that impact. You ask the tribes down river what happened if there's no more salmon, and they'll tell you, point blank, it's the end of the world. So we've been living post-apocalyptic for a century. I mean, if you think about it that way, our end of the world happened a hundred years ago. And so culturally we are still here, we're still surviving, but we're in a different world. And so our relationship to those fish is very different.

And so like today, the stuff that were doing with trying to get the dams down and looking forward, we're preparing habitat for them to come back to. We're working with land owners, even though we don't manage those lands anymore, we're trying to develop relationships with land owners to create a healthy habitat for fish to return to; to have a spawning ground. It's crazy, I got this from spending two weeks with high school kids from our tribes. And that always stuck with me. My initial reason for wanting to go and do that was to learn more about it, but also knowing my background and education and being able to encourage these tribal youth to go to school, to look at natural resource management as a potential career path, and honestly I think I got more out of it than they did. Because it did, it stuck with me for a really

long time. I took two weeks of my vacation time and I did that camp, and when I came back, it kind of really shook me in terms of, professionally, what I wanted to be doing.

I enjoyed my work a lot at Portland State. I was an advisor to the multicultural and international student clubs and organizations which, I always said, "who said you can't make a career out of being NASU co-director?" because essentially that's what I was doing. Because as a student leader, I basically became the person who showed student leaders how to do their jobs. And so I really enjoyed the work and everything, but I was like, "gosh, you really like pre-college stuff," the out of the classroom, hands-on learning. And so I had started looking for that type of work, but honestly, we were going through a recession and there were very few jobs available. So I stayed at PSU through 2013, so it was quite a bit longer.

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But I still kept up with the camps and then I started doing – so they had that funding for one year to do that salmon camp, so it wasn't a continuous thing. Otherwise, I would have probably done it again. But I did the Bridge of the Gods Summer Academy that U of O and Lane Community College have. James Florendo, who was my academic advisor at U of O, is now the head of the Native American programs at Lane, and then Tom Ball, who was my old boss when I was an undergrad, was working for the President's Office at U of O. So they developed that program and then they brought me in as one of the instructors for college prep kind of stuff, and then I was kind of like the head female resident and so I supervised the counselors and stuff. And then a couple years later, I was the director for the program, and I still do that camp.

**JD:** Talk a little bit more about that camp and what that academy, what the goals are.

**TA:** That one is very different from salmon camp, it's not kind of like an out of the classroom experiential type of thing. That one is pre-college bootcamp. It's for Native high school kids who want to go to college, and it gives them a taste of what it would be like. So it's very stressful for them. It's two weeks long, they live in the residence halls, they have roommates, they go to class, they have finals and tests. But they also have a lot of support around them, so that's kind of our role. I taught the college success classes or like how to apply to schools and look for scholarships and that type of thing. But it's also about how to cope with homesickness or how do you deal with racism on campus? But it's in this really safe environment. So the instructors are not always tribal, but they are teaching tribal subjects. So they had literature classes, they're reading tribal literature, they're reading Sherman Alexie, they're writing poetry.

They're taking science – they took a biology class from Kat, what's her last name? I can't think of her last name. She just left to Alaska. Milligan – Kat Milligan. She's Alaska Native and has her doctorate, and she was doing all this amazing research on your gut, the microbes and stuff. But she's teaching them classes about how diseases are passed on and so they're doing all these tests and they're swabbing things and they're in their lab coats. But they're also having conversations about not just what they're learning in class, but how diseases are spread. And the start talking about smallpox blankets. So everything's tied together.

They take classes at U of O and Lane, and I think that's just a unique space anyway, because I don't know any other town in the country that has a university and a community college that both have longhouses, right next to each other, and that are in partnership with one another. So I think that's a real special unique thing. We talk about that too in terms of looking for colleges. Is that important for you that you have a longhouse or that you have a cultural space that you can go to on campus that is just for tribal students? That you have tribal staff and faculty there that will support you? Because we have kids who have got – one of our kids is in North Carolina now and she's in her first month of college. And going through that struggle and finding your place and keeping your identity intact. So yeah, we have lots of good conversations with our students about how to find the right school for them. It's an amazing program; I gladly do it every year.

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But I've also done Konaway Nika Tillicum, which is Southern Oregon University's program, which James was actually part of the creation of that program too – his brother Brent Florendo and David West run that one at Southern. And that one is more for middle school and high school students, so it's less academically intensive and has a little more of the cultural components in it. And it's more of a family model, so there are elders and grandparents who are there, and

parents. So it's a little bit different, but it's still super fun. They're both very different experiences. Conaway is like – you go to the Conaway first to kind of ease into "college is fun and cool, and now I'm on a college campus. There's people like me here." And then you go to BOGSA to be like, "if I'm going to go do this college thing, I need to be successful and this is where I can learn some skills to make that happen."

**JD:** You mentioned 2013 briefly and that was when you came to CRITFC, where you are now. Just talk about how that happened and the things that you do now.

**TA:** So this is my first non-university job. I would have never looked to work at a fish commission, but I had met one of my predecessors in this role, who was at the Oregon Indian Education Association meeting and she was talking about her programs and how she was running a salmon camp with middle school kids. And I was like, "what? How did I miss this job?" Because here I am looking for jobs that would allow me to work with pre-college youth, ideally tribal kids, and here there was one right in front of me and I never even saw it. And so when she left the position, I was on it. Because I had been paddling with Jammin' Salmon, which is affiliated with CRITFC, and nobody mentioned anything.

**JD:** Maybe talk a little about Jammin' Salmon, while you're on that topic.

**TA:** Jammin' Salmon is a dragonboat team that CRITFC staff started about fifteen years ago. And so they practice every spring and participate in the Portland Rose Festival dragonboat races. I got started with them about five years ago because there were a group of us at Portland State who wanted to try it out. And we'd heard, "oh, there's a CRITFC team, so there will be other tribal people, so we can all go together." So some staff and some other students at PSU all joined on and it was so much fun. And for me at PSU, I would stay in my office way past 5:00 because who wants to sit on the freeway for an hour just to get home? So this was a really good excuse to leave the office at 5:00 because I'd just walk down to the river on the waterfront and go work out, and then by the time I got back to campus, there was no traffic. So I got a workout, I got to socialize with community folks, I got to hang out with my students, so it was like the perfect, best of all worlds.

So when I found out about the position here, I was super excited about it because it allowed me to do a lot of different things that I had been wanting to do on more of a full-time basis. And so this position – it's a long title – it's called Tribal Workforce and Outreach Coordinator, and it's the only position in the organization that is education focused. All of our other staff are primarily scientists or lawyers and then we have our publicity folks, and they do some outreach education programming stuff too. But the four member tribes had a vision when they created CRITFC that they wanted to support tribal sovereignty and part of that it self-determination and being able to manage your own affairs. And when you look at the staff that the tribes have and that CRITFC has in terms of management positions or biologist positions, or even in our policy department, you'll see that the majority of those staff are non-tribal. And as wonderful as those people are and as committed as they are to helping the tribes to be successful, the true mark of the tribes being successful is tribal members in those positions, and being able to advocate at that level.

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And so my job's task is to create pathways for tribal members to assume those positions, long-term. So it's a long visionary kind of a position and it's at every level. So I've been tasked with writing grants, which I had minimal experience with prior. And it's exciting because I can be very creative with it. I can decide, "what do I think is the best path to get there?" So right now I have our salmon camp, which is a five-day middle school program. So we take five youth from each of our member tribes, so twenty middle schoolers, and each year we rotate our location in terms of where the camp is hosted. So this last summer, Nez Perce hosted our camp, so we were all out in Idaho and had so much fun. And it's cool because they're middle school, so it can't be like classroom lecture time. So we went on jetboat rides, we went to fish hatcheries, they got to go snorkeling. They did so much stuff.

And then I also have an undergraduate internship program. So I've got two different programs – one is a research-based one where, during the academic year, they can partner with a staff member from their tribe and a faculty member to make sure that their research is kind of on point. But they get a \$2,000 stipend, basically, to conduct their own research and prepare a report. So my goal with that is that they are increasing their interaction with faculty, which we all know is a good thing. That they are connecting to their home community and producing research that will be beneficial to their tribe. Not all students have a really strong relationship with their natural resources or fisheries department, so this gives them an

opportunity to be known by them and mentored by them, which could potentially lead to jobs down the road. And it gives them an opportunity to have a strong writing piece that they can use for submission to graduate school, for publication, presentation at conferences. So it's all kind of professional development oriented for that one.

And then I have a summer orientation program for undergrads to really get hands-on field experience. So those are what I have right now. My big pocket is high school, so I need to start a high school program, but that's based on funding and capacity, because it's just me running the programs.

**JD:** I thought perhaps cloning yourself. [laughs]

**TA:** Well, you know, we do have geneticists on staff. [laughs] If only, if only.

But then I'm also looking at expanding our internship programs to graduate students and maybe potentially having some funding for them. But then we're also looking at professional staff and looking at our Fish Tech 1's and getting training so they can become Fish Tech 3's. So then looking at partnerships with community colleges to do some job based training programs.

And then the other part of the job too is really creating partnerships with educational institutions. And so we have a really strong partnership with the University of Idaho, we've got some stuff going on with Heritage University up in Topenish, which is up on the Yakama reservation. OSU-Cascades has been really big with Warm Springs, I've had several of my interns go through those programs. I've had a few at the main campus. And then Walla Walla Community College. I've got some stuff with University of Washington, I'm having some conversations with U of O. It's kind of all over. Mt. Hood Community College has got some good fisheries programs too.

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It's really actually pretty amazing to see on this side of things, because when I was working on campus - on various campuses - it's really difficult to get upper administration to get to the table and be like, "yes, let's work with tribes." Because I don't know that administration always get it. I've had different presidents be like, "oh, well, if I do these meetings with you all, then I have to do them with all these minority groups." And I'm like, "we're not a minority group really. We're sovereign nations. There are treaty rights involved and tribes have access to education. So if you're a state school, you kind of fall into that responsibility. So let's get you on board." But on this side of things, we've had presidents, vice-provosts, tribal liaisons come schedule meetings to meet with us to talk about how their institutions can serve our tribal members and meet our goals of having tribal members step into these management positions. And that's been really encouraging. So I've really enjoyed that part of the work.

I miss the daily contact with students; that's the hard part for me. The camps are so fun, but it's so quick and it's a lot of prep work just to get them off the ground. But looking at the long-term benefits of what's going on, we've got students who are graduating who have been interns and who are now working for their tribes in natural resources. I can't take credit for all of it, obviously, because the tribes have been mentoring and working with those students for a long time, but we played a role in it. We helped them get some of the professional experience that they needed that maybe made their resume a little bit more competitive. And we're working with some younger students now - we had an intern this summer who had changed his major like five or six times, and was starting his sophomore year, and was thinking maybe education, and was doing some work in fisheries. I think he decided he does want to stay on the education track, but to me these internships, the worst case scenario is somebody learns a little bit more about their natural resources and their first foods. Worst case scenario. That's not a bad worst case.

The same thing with salmon camp, with our kids, with the young ones. We do have some who are definitely like, "oh yeah, I'm going to be a fisheries biologist." And a lot of them come from families where they do have family members who are in those fields and they're kind of exposed to it anyway, or they want to learn more about what mom or dad does. And some of them are like, "yeah, I definitely want to go learn more about the lamprey or I want to learn more about how dams are impacting fish passage." It's kind of cool to hear them and how they think about it.

And there are others who are like, "yeah, you know, this was fun, but I want to be..." I've got some future NFL stars. And they're in middle school and they're going to change a lot of their ideas of what they want for their future, but some of

them hunt and fish already and they care about their first foods and they want to see them protected. Some of them haven't really been exposed to a lot of their traditions either, and I can certainly relate to that growing up in my home community and not having had a lot of that exposure growing up. And for them to have that opportunity to talk to their elders and talk to their tribal specialists in those fields, to learn more. Yeah, worst case scenario, they learn more about their first foods and about how they can take care of their homelands. Best case scenario – fish biologist.

**JD:** A final question that's kind of an overview as you think about your life path to where you are now and the education that you received and your master's degree at OSU. Perhaps a little final thought about the role of education and perhaps even ways that you imagine some place like OSU might factor into your on-going work and the generations that are coming behind you. Big question.

[1:20:24]

**TA:** Big question. In terms of my work and what I do, it's been a fun ride. Every place I've been, I've been exposed to amazing students and good people who care. I guess my vision is, whether I'm working natural resource focused things, I think for me a lot of it is just that our youth are able to follow their own path, but that it's not a selfish path. I encounter a lot of youth who are extremely talented, very creative, and sometimes that creativity can get sidetracked in a way that's more Hollywood and self-serving, than it is about reflecting their community and who they are, and service-based. For me, that's my wish, is that our youth are able to take their talents and channel it in a way that's going to benefit more than just themselves.

I hope that they learn to be good citizens - learn to be good tribal citizens - that they know their histories, that they know their treaties, that they know their role within it. That's something that I think a lot of youth struggle with is knowing where they fit or how they fit, whether they're enrolled or not in their tribe, but that they're a part of it and that they can contribute. And when they look at that path, how education can play a role in it. I've always seen education as – I don't know what the best word is for it – but if there's a magic wand, that's it. And we know that not everybody has access to it, so if you can have access to it, take it and do the best that you can with it, and share that with others.

That's one of the lessons we have in our salmon camp. Within a month of salmon camp, I'll go back out to each community. And while they're at camp, they do these posters, and they have to write down what they learned and what they want to share. The lesson in that is that not everybody gets this opportunity, but because you did, it's your responsibility to share what you learned with your family and your community. And that's how I feel about education. When I look at my own family, not everybody had the opportunities that I got, but it's my responsibility to take that back home. So when I look at institutions – institutions have so many responsibilities and I think a big part of it is making it affordable and accessible. That's the biggest barrier.

I wonder how the landscape is going to change with this free community college thing, which I have lots of concerns with, when I look at the fact that such a small percentage of kids who actually start off at community colleges have that opportunity to transfer to a four year school. I don't know. I've read a lot of research about how if you start off at remedial stuff, that you're kind of just going to stay and it's going to take longer. You might struggle and it might be tough, but if you throw somebody in to where they just suck it up, you're going to have to get tutoring and get the help you're going to get there. I think about my experience, I knew that I came from a "lesser than" school, I knew I wasn't prepared when I got there, but it didn't stop me. And I struggled. But I think that if you find the right support, that you will be successful. So I think it's the responsibility of those institutions to make sure you have that support system there in place, because people are going to fall and you need to be able to catch them and help them get back up. So I think those are really big things for institutions to think about.

And then just developing those relationships with tribal communities to make sure that they're not assuming what it is that they need and actually hearing from the tribes what it is that they want and what they need, and how they can partner. I think it's a relationship that's not all one-way, where it's like, "oh, we're providing you with this service, because we think this is what you need." And I think that's kind of been a model that's been thrust upon and forced upon tribal communities for a long time. And so, I think by just, "what can we do? How can we partner? How can we provide resources or services that will benefit your community?" And then asking them what it is that they want.

**JD:** Well, you've provided wonderful recollections and thank you so much for sharing them.

**TA:** Thank you.

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