

Voices of the River: The Confluence Story Gathering Interview Collection

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Voices of the River

The Confluence Story Gathering Interview Collection

RESEARCH FILES

by Lily Hart

"We know something everybody else doesn't know — we're never leaving. Our people have an intestinal fortitude that nobody else has because this is our country. You can't get us out of here." — Roberta "Bobbie" Conner¹

ROBERTA "BOBBIE" Conner (Umatilla/Cayuse/Nez Perce) shared this perspective in an interview arranged by the Confluence Project as part of the Confluence Story Gathering Collection, which has recorded interviews with Indigenous elders, leaders, artists, and educators who, like their ancestors, live along the Columbia River. Collectively, their story is one of resilience.

The history of the Pacific Northwest, and especially of the Columbia River, is often centered on the events of the Lewis and Clark Expedition and the pioneers who arrived via the Oregon Trail. By collecting Indigenous stories, the project organizers aim to present a broader, more holistic story. Written primary sources from two-hundred years ago provide valuable evidence regarding the Pacific Northwest, yet they were not authored directly by Indigenous people. That perspective is needed. Through personal narrative, these interviews provide a window into understanding the cultures and

ecology of the Columbia River system.

Since its beginning in 2011, the Story Gathering project has conducted interviews with forty-one Indigenous people of the Columbia River and, so far, has made available to the public sixty-five excerpts from those interviews, now uploaded to a digital archive, the Plateau Peoples' Portal at Washington State University (plateauportal.libraries.wsu.edu), with more excerpts being continuously added. (Some interviews in 2016 were assisted by this author, currently on staff with the Confluence Project.) Although the recordings fit the definition of oral histories provided by Valerie Yow — "recording of personal testimony delivered in oral form" — Confluence refers to them as "Story Gathering Interviews," because of a discussion with the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs Cultural Committee.² Members of the committee explained that oral histories within Tribes are often stories related to a particular place or event and are told by tradition keep-



Courtesy of Confluence, photograph by Chris Lonigro

JEFFERSON GREENE (Warm Springs), Allen Pinkham, Sr. (Nez Perce), and Thomas Morning Owl (Umatilla) participate in a Confluence Story Gathering at Chief Timothy Park in Asotin County, Washington.

ers. What Confluence was doing, they pointed out, was gathering personal stories, like roots at harvest.

Confluence also hosts public events, Story Gathering panels, that feature interview excerpts as well as discussion among a panel of Indigenous thinkers, writers, and leaders before a live audience. The Story Gathering events have a double meaning: people gather together to gather stories. The region that Confluence covers, which is part of the Columbia River ecosystem, stretches from eastern Washington at the Idaho state line to the mouth of the Columbia River at Astoria and Ilwaco. Confluence has completed five art installations on the Columbia River, all designed by the artist Maya Lin, and the Confluence

Story Gathering collection consists of interviews with Indigenous people who have ties to those artwork sites. In organizing the panels, Confluence staff selected interview excerpts that reflected a set of themes that the panelists could discuss: Celilo Falls, an important spiritual and economic site; lifeways, such as traditions and culture; fishing rights on the Columbia River; the violence of government-to-government relations; treaties and sovereignty, which includes the effects of termination and federal recognition; and the resilience of Indigenous people. Several stories from the collection are offered here, and we also invite readers to visit the Washington State University (WSU) portal and hear the original recordings.

Bobbie Conner has been the director of the Tamástslíkt Cultural Institute in Pendleton, Oregon, since 1998. In her interview, Conner recounted stories learned from her relative Nettie Queahpama Showaway, emphasized

store and gave birth in the shopkeeper's house. "She had the baby, Nettie — and she hated her name, Nettie — had the baby and they wrapped her in an old dress and her mother rode home with the baby," Conner related. "And [took] the kerosene, back to Simnasho."⁴

NW Documentary



BOBBIE CONNER, stands to the left of her mother Leah Conner, both interviewed by Confluence. Leah passed away in November 2018. Confluence is thankful for her participation and to have had the opportunity to document her story.

the importance of oral traditions, and gave her perspective on the importance of Celilo.

Showaway was born near the beginning of the twentieth century and was the daughter of Chief Frank Queahpama of Warm Springs. He inherited the role of chief from his brother Patana-shut.³ Showaway's parents lived in Simnasho. As Conner told the story, Showaway's mother rode on horseback from Simnasho to the Warm Springs general store. She went in labor in the

As a little girl, Showaway was sent to boarding schools at both Warm Springs and Chemawa, which were two very different experiences. The Warm Springs Agency Boarding School was established in the late nineteenth century and, like many Indian boarding schools, promoted assimilation.⁵ While there, she was whipped, which resulted in scars. Showaway told Conner how much she liked Chemawa Indian School (originally United States Indian Industrial and Training School), especially working the kitchens. She wanted to stay and work there, but her father said she needed to come home.

Sometime after she had arrived home, Showaway rejected a marriage proposal. One morning she was coming out of the sweathouse when she saw a man and her father talking. The man came bearing horses and Pendleton blankets, but Showaway did not know him and did not want to marry him. In front of her father, she rejected the man's proposal. She worried she had shamed her father, and so, she traveled to Simnasho, where she lived with Conner's grandmother. Showaway told Conner stories about Conner's grandmother and was also

able to inform Conner about the original bearer of Conner's Native name. When she died in 2003 at age 102, Showaway was the oldest member of the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs.⁶

Conner is Umatilla, Cayuse, and Nez Perce and grew up on the Umatilla Indian Reservation. She recalled that, in high school, she and her peers started the "first Indian high school club."⁷ At the University of Oregon (UO), she was president of the Native American Student Union and involved in UO's student politics. She obtained her degree in journalism and began working with nonprofit organizations, including as a volunteer with a Seattle-based nonprofit called Indians Into Communications, where she was involved in a Native newspaper, radio show, and TV show. While in Seattle, she was also part of a Native American dance troupe. After living in Seattle for five years, she attended Willamette University and earned a master's degree in Management, then worked for thirteen years in small business. After living away from home in various cities for twenty-four years, Conner decided she wanted to come home. In April 1998, she became the director of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation's Tamástslikt Cultural Center. "I didn't realize," she said, "until I had been in the job for about five or six years that this was the kind of work I had probably always wanted to do."⁸ That work has made Conner a 2007 recipient of the Ecotrust Indigenous Leadership Award, and she was inducted into UO's School of Journalism and Communications Hall of Achievement in 2013.

In her interview, Conner related a story from Maya Lin's visit with a committee of Native elders to discuss one of the art installations, the Sacagawea Story Circles in Sacajawea State Park. Lin asked why the elders were not angrier when sharing difficult stories of loss along the river. Conner recalled explaining to Lin: "Most people don't understand how much injustice and hardship our people have endured already. And we haven't left. We're still here. The attempts to evacuate people, annihilate people, assimilate people, have been experiments that have somewhat failed, thank God. And we know something everybody else doesn't know — we're never leaving."⁹

THE STORIES OF THE COLUMBIA RIVER ECOSYSTEM

The epicenter of the 1,243-mile-long Columbia River is Celilo Falls, which is located near The Dalles, Oregon, and is the focus in many of the Story Gathering interviews. Celilo Falls was both an economic hub and a deeply spiritual place that has been continually inhabited for thousands of years. During the fishing season, there was a rush of activity. More water flowed over Celilo Falls during spring flooding than Niagara Falls, creating a sound that many of the interviewees remember.¹⁰ That water was the foundation for the Wyam people. As Wilbur Slockish, an elder of the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation, said, "Water is the giver of life. If we don't have any water we have no life."¹¹ Louie Pitt Jr., the Director of Governmental Affairs for the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, described the sound of



JOHNNY JACKSON, an elder of the Yakama Nation, was photographed during a May 2016 interview with Confluence.

the falls: “You could hear the growl, the groaning of the river. You could hear it from probably a quarter mile away, just really rumbled and the smell, you could smell fish.”¹² On March 10, 1957, The Dalles Dam’s gates were closed, inundating the falls and silencing their roar.¹³

Johnny Jackson is a respected elder and honorary Columbia River Chief representing the Klickitat Cascades Band. He served in the U.S. Army in the 1950s and has been a fisherman for many years. Currently, he serves as a Yakama Commissioner for the Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission (CRITFC). Jackson described his time at Celilo Falls, when the water was so thick and the fish so strong that it took two men to pull them up with a pole. It was wartime and the kids at Celilo compared the powerful fish jumping over the falls to torpedoes. “The Falls made them strong” he said. “The struggle and struggle and all the fighting going back up to Columbia.”¹⁴

The water was so fierce that falling into the river could result in death or a narrow escape, which is what Aurelia Stacona experienced and spoke about in her interview.¹⁵ Stacona is an elder of the Wyam people, enrolled with the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs. She grew up going to Celilo Falls every summer and fall. Throughout her life, she has been a dancer and beadworker and has attended pow-wows nationally. She also opened a church and ran a twelve-step program on the Warm Springs Reservation. Stacona described the cultural importance of Celilo: “We all originated along the Columbia. And when Celilo was there it was good, we did that. But just the river itself still means a lot to us because we are a part of that connection to that water. And we consider ourselves from the Wyam which is the Columbia. To us it’s called Wyam.”¹⁶ The Wyam people were historically the permanent residents of Celilo Village, a bustling place

visited by people who traveled far distances. Meriwether Lewis and William Clark recorded between 7,200 and 10,400 Indigenous people in that area, between The Dalles and the Cascade Rapids.¹⁷

Celilo was a center of widespread trading for thousands of years. Chief William Yallup, Jr., described Celilo as the “Wall Street of the West.” Yallup is Columbia River Chief, an honorary title that is connected to fishing rights. He is also a direct descendant of treaty signer Wish-Och-Kmpits and is related to the chiefs Kamiakin and Skloom, who also signed the June 9, 1855, Yakama Treaty council.¹⁸ Yallup is an advocate for treaty rights as well as a keeper of treaty-related oral histories. In his interview, he pointed to the vast trade network that centered on Celilo. Tribes from today’s Canada came to Celilo to obtain vital fish for their ceremonies. “Maybe you can understand it as like a sacrament. Like wine and bread — a sacrament,” Yallup said. “Well these people lived way in Canada and they have no salmon, no eels, no smelt. But those are part of their sacraments. They have to have those things. They came here and got those things and take them back as part of their ceremonies.”¹⁹

On March 10, 1957, the gates on The Dalles Dam were lowered, and in less than five hours, Celilo Falls was flooded.²⁰ Virginia Beavert, an elder from the Yakama Nation who holds a Ph.D. in linguistics, said, “I think a lot of the Indian elders died with a broken heart losing Celilo. And

the compensation they received, some of them wouldn’t even accept it. A lot of it was turned away. They said this does not make up for what we’re losing.”²¹ While the compensation amount was around \$3,000 per person — it varied by Tribe — the money was not always received and did not provide much economic security. State and county welfare offices would often get involved in the disbursements and tried to dictate how the Tribes used their money. Many lost their welfare benefits because of having the compensation, which they then had to use for basic needs.²²

Among those who refused compensation was the leader of the Wyam people at the time, Chief Tommy Kuni Thompson. He said that accepting the \$3,750 he was offered would be signing away the salmon.²³ The great-nephew of one of the 1855 treaty signers, Chief Stock-etley, Thompson had been chief since the late nineteenth century.²⁴ His granddaughter, Linda Meanus, described the importance of salmon to her grandfather, who “became chief when he was 20 and lived to be a 114



AURELIA STACONA is an elder of the Wyam people and is pictured here during a 2016 interview.



WILBUR SLOCKISH, an elder of the Confederated Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Indian Nation, is pictured here in 2016 during a Story Gathering interview.

when he died. But he lived on salmon everyday so that was the importance of trying to keep our Celilo Falls, was because of our salmon, because it was our way of life. It was our survival.”²⁵ Her grandfather, Meanus said, died of a broken heart.²⁶

Fishing rights have long been a struggle for the Columbia River people. Wilbur Slockish was born on September 19, 1944, in Wapato, Washington, and, as an adult, spent three years in prison for exercising his fishing rights. As a boy, he went to Celilo Falls with his family and assisted the fishermen, being too young for the platforms. In his

interview, Slockish recalled the sound of Celilo Falls as being something he will never forget. In 1981, he was arrested (with several other men, including David Sohappy) for “poaching” fish, in what became known as “Salmonscam.” Seventy-five Indigenous people were arrested for fishing along the Columbia River, despite the fact that their ancestors had negotiated treaties that reserved the right to fish at “usual and accustomed places.”²⁷ Federal and state governments and Tribes had long had disputes over tribal members’ rights to fish at off-reservation sites and without permits. In 1969, the Oregon courts determined that Tribes would be entitled to a “fair and equitable share” of the salmon runs. Nevertheless, Slockish was sentenced to three years’ jail time for fishing without state permits and violating the Lacey

Act.²⁸ Slockish recalled telling the judge that until the judge laid his “tax dollars, your license fees, your rules and regulations . . . on the table” Slockish would “exercise the rights given to me by my creator.”²⁹

Violence inflicted onto the people by the U.S. government is a common theme in the interviews. Wilfred Scott and Bessie Scott relate an incident of the 1877 Nez Perce War, when Bessie Scott’s great-grandmother’s village was attacked by the U.S. militia. Wilfred is a Nez Perce elder and veteran who served on the Nez Perce Tribal Executive Committee, and Bessie is a Nez

Perce elder who is involved in the Nez Perce language program. The war took place when the Nez Perce refused to be forced to move to an Idaho reservation, because the removal violated the June 11, 1855, Treaty with the Nez Perce, which reserved for them 7.5 million acres of land in the Washington and Oregon Territories.³⁰ At the time of the Battle of Big Hole in August 1877, they were trying to escape to Canada to join Sitting Bull and some members of the Lakota Tribe. The U.S. Army, led by Col. John Gibbon, caught up to the band and launched an early morning attack on the encampment near Wisdom, Montana.³¹ During the battle, Bessie's great-grandmother took her young daughter and ran for the riverbank, but the little girl was shot.

And she [the great-grandmother] went down to the willows, took her baby with her. Just like she was, no blankets, no

nothing. Just right out of bed they got. And she was in the river, that's where they had to get to hide under the bank, where the willows were leaning over the bank, she was trying to hide under there. And there were other children, and she was gathering these kids. Trying to keep them warm and quiet. And she had seen a little boy laying on the sandbar right across from them. He was laying there, and he was dead. These are the things that she experienced and witnessed.³²

Two days after the battle, the daughter died. Bessie's great-grandmother and great-grandfather journeyed to Canada, where they stayed with Sitting Bull for a while before going home. While forty-two Nez Perce individuals were listed as fatalities of the Battle of Big Hole, the actual deaths are likely more in the range of sixty to ninety.³³ Many of the children, such as the little girl killed that day, were not identified.

This was not the only instance of violent attacks on Tribes. Leah Con-



Courtesy of Thomas Robinson, photograph by Percy Kramer

NATIVE PEOPLE fishing at Celilo Falls ride on carts from the mainland to the islands. This activity is recalled in many interviews conducted by Confluence.



IN A 2016 INTERVIEW conducted by the Confluence Project, Wilfred Scott and Bessie Scott, both Nez Perce elders, relate stories of violence the U.S. government inflicted on their families during the 1877 Nez Perce War.

ner, an elder of Umatilla, Cayuse, and Nez Perce ancestry who holds three degrees in education and the fine arts, related a story of how her grandmother escaped the militia in The Dalles by paddling up the river in a canoe.³⁴ Leah Conner's grandmother "was born on a island there and her parents were killed during the attack. And they wanted to get rid of the Indians so the militia came and threw all their food in the river. And her mother and father were killed."³⁵ This likely occurred sometime in the 1870s.

Fort Vancouver, the site of the Confluence Land Bridge, was home to the captivity of the thirty-three-member Nez Perce Band of Chief Redheart. General O.O. Howard ordered the capture and imprisonment of band, which mostly included old men, women, and some children.³⁶ They were captured on July 1, 1877, then marched to Fort Vancouver,

where they arrived on August 7 and were held until April 22, 1878. During their captivity, an infant boy died.³⁷ Every year in April, Wilfred Scott leads the Chief Redheart Memorial Ceremony at Fort Vancouver. Of the memorial he said, "I tell them, you know, when we honor them, we honor ourselves. I remind the people of that."³⁸

Interviewees have emphasized that despite the violence and trauma, the people have maintained and adapted their culture. Mike Iyall, who is the chair of the Cowlitz Indian Tribe's education committee, recalled how cultural knowledge, such as basketry and other visual patterns, were lost due to the high percentage of his people who died from disease, yet there is revitalizing of the basketry today. The Cowlitz Tribe was devastated by disease in the nineteenth century, with more than 80 percent of the people lost.³⁹ They preserved their

culture and lands by utilizing, as Tanna Engdahl explained, “the white man’s tools in such a way that benefitted us.”⁴⁰ Engdahl is a Cowlitz spiritual leader. She explained that the Tribe “learned to write, keep records, write testimonies, affidavits. That became quite valuable in the years to come when we had to come back and fight for our standing, a thing called recognition.”⁴¹ Because the Cowlitz chose not to sign the treaty relocating them from their land to reservations, they were not acknowledged by the United States government as a Tribe. The Cowlitz began a case for federal recognition, using the written documents and testimonies Engdahl referred to, and successfully obtained recognition in 2000.⁴²

In Oregon, the Western Oregon Indian Termination Act of 1954 ended the relationship between Tribes and the federal government, destroying

tribal sovereignty and liquidating reservations. In the case of many Tribes, including the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, this was done without tribal approval.⁴³ Although termination was not unique to Oregon, with sixty-one Tribes affected, the state had the highest number of terminations.⁴⁴ Before treaties, the Tribes of Western Oregon held a total of 14 million acres — the Grand Ronde then had a 61,440 acre reservation. The Dawes Act slowly reduced the reservation to about 600 acres in the 1950s prior to termination. After termination, they only had one cemetery.⁴⁵ “But all we ended up with at that point in time was just our tribal cemetery, which was just under five acres,” Greg Archuleta, who is an artist and educator that is enrolled in the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde, recalled. He went on to say how, as a child, he would go with his family to



Bruce Foster

THIS AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH shows the Vancouver Land Bridge, dedicated in August 2008 and the second of six planned public art installations designed, as Confluence explains, to “create reflective moments that can shape the Columbia River system.”



GREG ARCHULETA is an educator with the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde.

clean the graves.⁴⁶ Conner described how the government “continued to try to break down the fabric of our social structure,” first through reservations and shared ownership, then through relocation and termination during the 1950s.⁴⁷ Tribes, including the Grand Ronde and Klamath, fought for and won restoration of their sovereign status.

The Chinook Indian Nation, headquartered in Bay Center, Washington, is currently in the process of fighting for federal recognition, although this is not due to termination.⁴⁸ The Chinook signed the Tansey Point Treaties in 1851; however, Congress never ratified the agreement.⁴⁹ Tony Johnson, the tribal chairman for the Chinook Indian Nation and Education Program Director for the Shoalwater Bay Tribe, explained that “all across the country there are

communities that do not have clear recognition . . . or acknowledgment by the federal government.”⁵⁰

One example of how lack of federal recognition affects Tribes is that it keeps them from having legal rights to fish in traditional places. *United States v. Washington*, 384 F. Supp. 312, better known as the Boldt Decision, reaffirmed that Washington Tribes could fish in “usual and accustomed grounds.”⁵¹ Despite the rights outlined in the 1854, 1855, and 1856 treaties, non-Native commercial fishermen had been taking over the fishing sites. Tribes responded during the 1960s by staging “fish-ins,” and many were arrested for “illegally” fishing. In 1970, the U.S. Attorney filed a complaint against the State of Washington on the basis that

Washington had violated Native treaty rights. In 1974, George Boldt, the Senior Federal District Judge for the state, held a six-day trial during which he interviewed forty-nine people, including tribal members. He concluded that federally recognized treaty Tribes had the right to 50 percent of the annual catch.⁵²

This ability to use new systems of law to continue old traditions is reflected in an interview statement by Greg Archuleta: “I think one of the important things is that we were never a stagnant people. We were always continually changing, adopting.”⁵³ He described how Tribes adapted copper brought by traders for other uses and how today one might make a wallet out of cedar in addition to making a traditional basket.⁵⁴ As an artist and educator, Archuleta maintains the culture

of the Confederated Tribes of Grand Ronde through education. He teaches ethnobotany, carving, cedar hat making, Native art design, and basketry.

As Euro-Americans began to arrive in the Pacific Northwest during the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, Tribes incorporated new trade items, such as the copper mentioned by Archuleta, into their longstanding networks. Iyall recounted how the current I-5 highway follows an Indigenous trading trail. The trading network extended all the way to the Mohegan Tribe, in what is now Connecticut. “The Mohegan have spiral flute dentalia on their tribal regalia,” said Iyall, “and that’s really awesome because spiral flute dentalia comes from [two places] in the world — northern Vancouver Island and the Queen Charlottes. Those shells in Connecticut would have passed through our hands. That’s just mind blowing. It shows to me how interconnected native peoples were.”⁵⁵ During his interview, Iyall also discussed the history of “high Chief” Scanewa, Cowlitz marriage traditions, federal recognition, tribal sovereignty, traditional village structure, the role of the headmen and matriarch, the Lewis and Clark Expedition, Native art, and the multilingual tradition of the Cowlitz.⁵⁶

Language had a significant role in trade, of course, and it has emerged as an important theme in the Confluence Story Gathering Collection. Many of the interviewees both discussed their Native language and spoke it for a portion of their interviews. Often discussed was Chinook Wawa, or Chinook Jargon, which was the *lingua franca* of Pacific Northwest traders, both Native

and non-Native. It was so widely used that there were at least five dictionaries written on it between 1863 and 1913.⁵⁷ Johnson discussed its history: “So that language [Chinook Wawa], according to my elders, was here long before the fur trade or anything else. It was just a reduced form of our language. And it was just again to bare bones communicate with somebody that came into your territory.”⁵⁸ Today, Chinook Wawa is used and taught by the Chinook Nation in Washington and the Confederated Tribes of the Grande Ronde in Oregon.⁵⁹ When the U.S. government forced western Oregon tribal people on to the reservation, there were eight different dialects present amongst the people.⁶⁰ Chinuk Wawa proved to be a uniting factor.

Bessie Scott, who is Nez Perce, teaches Niimi’ipuutímt, a Sahaptin language of the Nez Perce Tribe. She is among a group of elders in the Nez Perce Tribe who compiled a language book. Scott described in her interview how learning their Native language builds confidence in children. “That song was in there, and it’s ‘I am special,’ *’iin wees hete’ew. ’iim ’ee wees hete’ew.* You are special. So we started singing that, and that became a song we sang every day. And that’s what I would tell them, you know, if you’re feeling bad, you just sit down and you think, you say that word, I am special, *iin wees hete’ew.*”⁶¹

Virginia Beavert teaches her native language, Ichishkíin Sínwit, and in addition to talking about her family, the river, and her time at Celilo, she discussed the importance of language in her interview. She completed her



VIRGINIA BEAVERT, an elder of the Yakama Nation who holds a Ph.D. in Linguistics, is pictured here during a Confluence interview.

Ph.D. in Linguistics at the University of Oregon, where she wrote a dissertation on two points, one, on the academic research surrounding Ichishkin and two, her language and culture.⁶² In her interview with Confluence Beavert recalled her time as translator with Margaret 'Kit' Kendell, who was doing interviews and research on the river people.⁶³ Beavert was assigned by the tribal council to act as translator, since she knew multiple languages. She grew up learning Nez Perce as well as Klickitat, Umatilla, and Yakama dialects of Sahaptin. In her interview with Confluence, she speaks in Ichishkíin Si nwiit about her language and kinship ties.

Ashkú wa palaláay xítwayma Nixyáwipa.

I have many relatives at Umatilla.

Kushxí íkwna Lápuwaypa inmíknik ttáwaxtknik kushxí anakwmák pawá.

And also at Lapuwai, Idaho from my paternal side and also from those that Palusknik.

Anakúsh nash wa xítwayma t'áaxwkan miin, íkushxí.

Warm Springpa, are from the Lower Snake River Palouse. I have relatives everywhere, at Warm Springs, Klickitatpa.

Áwknik minik kush áyknxaash Ichishkíin sînwityaw. Áwktáaw nash chaw and Klickitat.

From these places, I've listened to stories in their Indian language. However I do not

nash áshukwaasha si nwiitan. Anakúsh nash míshkin awkú chaw áshukwaana.

claim to be fluent in all those languages.⁶⁴

Beavert has used her knowledge of these languages to write dictionaries and linguistics studies on Ichishkíin

Sínwit and other Sahaptin languages. She continued on in her interview to emphasize the importance of preserving language for future generations. Brittny Parnham, one of Beavert's students at the UO's Northwest Indian Language Institute, worked on the translation for this excerpt.

shapáshukwaasha túyay awkú kunkínk íchi iwá shapáwach'akísí nwit kushjííchi

I am informing or explaining, recording my words in the native language, and on

kwínk video anakúsh wapíitatya myánashmaman anakwmák chaw tun

the video to help the children, and those who did not have (the younger generation)

pashukwáasha kushjí tíxwat imamanák amkwpínk paysh álaaksha kuunák.

the privilege of learning from their elders, or they have forgotten the teachings.⁶⁵

Here, Beavert emphasized to the importance of recording her language for the children. The knowledge held by Beavert and other Indigenous elders and leaders is key in understanding the Columbia River and its tributaries. By recording their individual voices, each unique in how it relates to the Columbia River ecosystem, Confluence hopes to preserve them for future generations.

THE TECHNICAL PROCESS

The Confluence Story Gathering Collection has been made possible through partnerships with NW Documentary, the WSU Plateau Peoples' Portal, Tule Films, and the interview-

ees themselves. The process started in 2011, with a purpose of gathering interviews for the Confluence website, which was to be an educational resource. The interviewers were Donna Sinclair and Leslie Miller, who traveled to tribal headquarters and studios to conduct the interviews. An advisory committee, comprising tribal members and academics, identified individuals interviewees and topic areas.

The second phase started in 2016, with a partnership with NW Documentary. The aim was to conduct interviews and then turn them into excerpts that could be used at events or in classrooms. The questions were prepared by Colin Fogarty, Executive Director of Confluence, Meaghan Stetzik, the Project Manager at the time, and Ian McCluskey of NW Documentary. As before, an advisory committee of tribal members and academics identified people to interview. Confluence also worked with formal tribal cultural committees, which then contacted and identified individuals who should be interviewed. Cultural committees also received the questions so they could provide for feedback before interviews. Interview question lists and interest forms were sent out to potential interviewees, whose responses gave Confluence an idea of what the interviewee would like to discuss. The most recent interviews, with Chief Delvis Heath and Shirley Stahi-Heath, were conducted in partnership with Woodrow Hunt of Tule Films. During the summer of 2016, when I was one of two interns involved in the project, we would often travel to the interviewees' homeland or a site that was important to them. We interviewed



TWO VIEWS of Washington State University's Plateau Peoples' Web Portal, including the home page and collections search page, are pictured above.

Stacona at the Warm Springs Museum, for example, and interviewed Archuleta once at the Sandy River Delta and later at the Grande Ronde Portland office. This approach emphasized the connection to place that is present in the interviews.

In searching for a place for these recordings to be archived, Confluence looked for digital preservation software or a website that would both allow for excerpts intended for public audiences and provide interviewees with control over their recordings and excerpts. In 2006, Protocols for Native American Archival Materials were developed by

a group of fifteen Indigenous and four non-Indigenous archivists, museum curators, librarians, historians, and anthropologists. The group emphasized that Tribes are sovereign governments and therefore have rights and laws that need to be respected by archivists.⁶⁶ What is deemed culturally sensitive impacts the restrictions placed on materials and varies by Tribes and bands; archives — and organizations such as Confluence — need to allow for this difference.

These considerations resulted in Confluence's decision to use WSU's Plateau Peoples' Portal, which is designed

to hold Indigenous materials through a software called Mukurtu. Mukurtu has built-in protocols that were designed to protect content created by and for tribal communities. It allows for each item in the Plateau Peoples' Portal to be restricted in various ways, allowing access only, for example, for a specific Tribe, a specific family, or elders.⁶⁷ Kim Christen, a professor at WSU, and Craig Dietrich of Occidental College, created the software with the Warumungu tribe of Australia.⁶⁸ "Our goal," Christen wrote "with the Plateau Peoples' Web Portal project was to undo these privileging practices and, in their place, to establish a set of standards that allows for multiple voices, layered context, diverse forms of metadata, and the expansion of the archival record."⁶⁹ Historically, archives have not protected Indigenous materials under the argument of public access, but many of the materials used in archives are deeply private. The Mukurtu software allows the materials to be stored and maintained and also for Tribes and families to have control over these holdings. Mukurtu provides a way for Indigenous material to be archived in an ethical and respectful manner. While all of the Confluence excerpts are currently set to public access, if the interviewee requests it, protocols will be changed to restrict the interview. The full interviews and transcripts are housed at the Confluence office library and eventually will be stored in WSU's physical archive. The Plateau Peoples' Portal is not an archive but, rather, an educational site. Excerpts allow viewers to find and listen to a story easily, rather than searching through an hour-long video.

The excerpts were and are determined through various processes. The transcribers (myself and another intern at the time) went through the transcripts and identified stories that emerged. The staff then decided which stories to prioritize. I am currently the staff member mostly responsible for the Story Gathering Collection, and I select new excerpts to upload. The Plateau Peoples' Portal has been the destination for the excerpts since the beginning of the phase 2 of the project, so interviewees are aware of where the excerpts will live. Confluence is currently in the process of contacting the phase 1 interviewees to gain permission for uploading those to the Portal, since the Portal was not part of the plans back in 2011. These decisions are guided in part by themes that often occur during Story Gathering Panels, such as resilience, and themes that the Portal has identified as important, such as lifeways. The Portal, which is a collaborative effort between Tribes and WSU, identifies these themes through a detailed process with Tribes.⁷⁰

The collection is easily accessible and searchable. Researchers can simply go to browse, click on the Confluence Collection, and filter by tags, such as Natural Resources, or search for keywords, such as *trade*. It is Confluence's hope that these excerpts will enhance the work of researchers and educators and that they will be utilized in a respectful manner. Personal narratives enrich the landscape of source material, providing perspective that is often lost in the historical record. Written sources and personal interviews can

be combined to create an accurate, thoughtful, and respectful research project. Interviews should also be used with care. These are people's personal stories, and telling them can

be an emotional process. Confluence is honored and grateful to our interviewees for granting us the privilege of conducting these interviews and sharing these stories.

NOTES

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23. Barber, *Death of Celilo Falls*, 153.

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