

Spring 6-15-2023

Doings with Land: Process and Participation through Indigenous-Led, Experiential Education in saqáanpa (the Snake River in Hells Canyon)

Clark Shimeall
Portland State University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/honorsthesis>



Part of the [Indigenous Studies Commons](#), and the [Social and Cultural Anthropology Commons](#)

Let us know how access to this document benefits you.

Recommended Citation

Shimeall, Clark, "Doings with Land: Process and Participation through Indigenous-Led, Experiential Education in saqáanpa (the Snake River in Hells Canyon)" (2023). *University Honors Theses*. Paper 1348. <https://doi.org/10.15760/honors.1377>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access. It has been accepted for inclusion in University Honors Theses by an authorized administrator of PDXScholar. Please contact us if we can make this document more accessible: pdxscholar@pdx.edu.

**Doings with Land: Process and Participation through Indigenous-Led, Experiential
Education in saqáanpa (the Snake River in Hells Canyon)**

**by
Clark Shimeall**

**An undergraduate honors thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Science**

**in
University Honors
and
Geography**

**Thesis Advisers
Dr. Hannah Gosnell
Dr. Nancee Hunter**

Portland State University

2023

Abstract

In our rapidly unraveling world, the re-centering of Indigenous ways of being and knowing is more important than ever. This re-centering is based in cultural revitalization and transmission within Indigenous communities, and these processes are intimately tied to relationship with Land. This writing describes the “doing” of an Indigenous-led experiential educational program for Nez Perce and Cayuse descended youth -- the Saqáanma School -- which was conducted via whitewater raft on **pik'uunin** (the Snake River) through **saqáanpa** (Hells Canyon) in July 2021. The complex exchanges between people, culture, and Land embodied in this project are examined through Barker and Pickerill's (2020) approach to ‘doing’ geographic research as a continuous, action-based “commitment to a place and people”. ‘Doing’ geography differently manifests in this work through a unique mechanism, whitewater rafting, as well as participatory methods, centering of Indigenous ontologies, and consideration of the ‘before’ and ‘after’ of this project as one contribution to a long chain of past, present, and future labor spanning generations. My positionality and shifts in perspective, methodology, and research objective over the course of the investigation are also detailed. This writing illustrates one approach to ‘doing’ collaborative, culturally informed, and Land-based experiential learning, explores the successes and failures of our particular ‘doing’-based approach, and critiques the ways in which it promotes and sustains Indigenous value systems.

Acknowledgements

First thanks must go to the educators whose time and teachings form the core of this **xeleeyn tim'neepkinix**, heartwork: Tiyana Blackeagle, Doug Marconi, Andrew Wildbill, and Josiah Blackeagle. Without their vision and work, neither this project nor this paper would exist, and without their guidance in my roles as convener, student, and researcher, I can barely imagine where I'd be. Thanks especially to Josiah Blackeagle for sharing parts of his incredibly wide and deep knowledge of Nez Perce culture and history, and for his time as a reviewer and editor of this paper. **qe'ci'yew'yew**.

Deep thanks as well to the partners at Nez Perce Wallowa Homeland who enabled this program to occur. Particular thanks goes to Angela Harvey, former Executive Director of the Homeland Project, for her leadership as a grantwriter, convener, and manager.

Thank you to my thesis advisors, Dr. Hannah Gosnell and Dr. Nancee Hunter, for their support throughout this process and their incredible patience and grace as this writing languished for more than a year after its expected date of completion.

Thanks as well to the other academics who provided feedback or guidance throughout this research process, from navigating the IRB to methodology to theory. Dr. Kelsey Emard at Oregon State University and my friend Dr. Joseph Dupris at CU Boulder were particularly helpful. Thanks to the faculty and staff of the PSU Honors College for their financial and moral support, not to mention their patience as I dragged my feet to finish this paper.

Thanks to all my dear friends at Winding Waters for their brilliance as guides and their willingness to lend their knowledge, skill, and passion into doing this work on-Land. Particular thanks to Paul Arentsen for donating river trips for our programming and for his willingness to entertain my endless ideas and projects.

Thanks to the Nez Perce Tribe, the Confederated Tribe of the Umatilla Indian Reservation, and the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Indian Reservation for allowing this research to occur.

qe'ci'yew'yew 'oykaloo to all of the people who have built and shaped my understanding of Plateau people and culture outside of the bounds of this particular research: Louis Reuben, Jeremy and Althea Wolf, Allen Pinkham Sr, Rich Wandschneider, Roger Amerman, and everyone in the Wallowa and Nixyaawii longhouses, among many others. Their contributions may not be quoted in this paper but they have helped shape my worldview and approach to this work.

Final thanks goes to **saqáanpa** and all of this vast Plateau country that we are privileged to know and love; these Lands have borne their peoples safely through the millennia and to be on them is to be in the presence of great power. **qe'ci'yew'yew**.

Contents

Introduction	4
Literature Review	7
Indigenous and Decolonial Geographies.....	7
The More-than-Human World, Place Agency, and Phenomenological Approaches.....	9
Doings with the Land.....	11
I. Before	13
siseqiy mex̣ (The Seven Devils).....	13
Situating the Land and its People.....	14
Situating the Research(er).....	19
Methods.....	19
Situating the Project.....	21
II. During	23
“I like being in the water, because you can feel its power”.....	23
Land as Teacher.....	25
Land, Identity, and Knowledge.....	26
Future Elders: Cultural Revitalization, Responsibility, and Survival.....	28
III After	29
Leaving saqáanpa	29
Limitations.....	29
Beyond Research.....	31
Conclusion	33
Sources Cited	34
Appendix A: Interview Transcripts	37
A1. Doug Marconi, Josiah Blackeagle, Tiyana Blackeagle.....	37
A2. Andrew Wildbill.....	44
A3. Josiah Blackeagle, Tiyana Blackeagle.....	54

Introduction

Contemporary people are increasingly alienated from the living world around them, with disastrous consequences to our environment, our society, and our collective well-being. Nowhere is this loss more acute, or is there more to be gained, than within contemporary Indigenous communities, whose ancestral cultures operate on a set of epistemologies and ontologies that have very different implications than settler ways of knowing and being, and whose connections to Land have on the whole been much more recently disrupted. In exploring a particular instance of Indigenous youth experiential education via whitewater raft, this research asks: *how can this rafting-based method of 'doing' support and reflect Indigenous ways of knowing and being? What are its benefits and pitfalls?*

Story is a way to bring the world into being, and I will tell two intertwined stories, flowing chronologically downstream and centered around the 3.5-day period of doings-with-Land in **saqáanpa**. One story details and contextualizes the experiences of Native participants of the Saqáanma School program, through the words of the adult educators who led it. The other is auto-ethnographic and details my experience both as a trip organizer, participant, and researcher. These two stories are connected by “doings,” in our shared experience on Land itself- everything comes from the Land.

The particular Land this article speaks to is **saqáanpa** - known to settlers as Hells Canyon -- the deepest river canyon in North America and part of the homelands and use areas of the **nimiipuu**, or Nez Perce, and other Indigenous peoples since time immemorial. In July 2021, a collaborative program we call the Saqáanma School brought 11 youth and 4 adult educators, all of Nez Perce or Cayuse descent, onto this ancestral landscape for a four-day educational program, delivered in the canyon via whitewater raft. My participation in this project was multi-level: I was a trip organizer and convening partner, a raft guide on the river, and most peripherally, a researcher.

This research was initially focused on investigating participant experiences in the Saqáanma School using standard social science mixed-methods and oriented by the sense of place geographic literature, with the goal of answering a discrete question: *how does this Land-based program affect youth participants' sense of place?*. As the investigation deepened (especially during and after what I considered to be the most direct “doing” stage of the research, while the trip was run on-Land), the incongruity of this approach became increasingly clear. Culturally, thematically, and methodologically, a typical investigation was simply not appropriate in the context of this project, and the sense of place literature, which I'd become interested in as a geography student, did not seem to be equipped to guide me through what I was learning and doing. My writing floundered; I became increasingly disinterested and disenchanted by the process of academic research even as I simultaneously became more invested and engaged in the larger political and cultural projects that it supported.

Referral to the Indigenous and decolonial geographic literature by Dr. Kelsey Emard, a geographer at Oregon State University, resuscitated both this research and my motivation to complete it; if my initial framework and methods were clearly not working or representing reality, why stick to them? The themes within this literature immediately resonated with my experience; concepts like dissolving boundaries between researcher and research, the critical importance of context, and the ontological failure of traditional academic approaches to meet Indigenous value-systems head on all made tremendous, intuitive sense, a sharp contrast to the more orthodox, staid social science approaches I'd understood "research" as necessarily entailing. Exposure to this literature and re-orienting my approach led to a new research question, better in line with the lived experience of the research: *how can this rafting-based method of 'doing' support and reflect Indigenous ways of knowing and being? What are its benefits and pitfalls?*

Seeking to act in a way that felt right, reciprocal, and respectful, my Indigenous partners and I (in my roles as program convener and whitewater river guide, less as a researcher) had intuitively made choices throughout our collaboration process that matched many of the methodological approaches detailed within Indigenous and decolonial literature. An especially resonant recent product of this discourse community is Barker and Pickerill's 2020 framing of "doings in place"- because shared doings on Land have been the core of what has made our collaborative work successful, this action-oriented approach to 'doing' serves as a core connection between academic conceptualization and lived experience. This conception of 'doing' also connects the two stories within this writing: my autoethnographic narrative and the qualitative interview data. All of us are co-participants, joined together by our doings both on, and with, Land. Barker and Pickerill's approach to 'doing' is further explored in the literature review.

This research is also informed by feminist approaches to doing geography. Feminist perspectives make explicit the positionality and biases of the researcher. Throughout this article, I [Clark] will use personal pronouns during the auto-ethnographic components of this writing, as well as anytime it seems necessary to re-emphasize to the reader that I speak as a **soyapo**- an outsider- and not an authority on Indigenous identity or culture. Autoethnographic and self-reflexive approaches run the risk of indulgence-especially in the case of a white outsider centering himself over the Indigenous voices he's collaborating with- but in the particular context and limitations of this academic work, auto-ethnography insured that I, and this piece of writing, would not mis-represent my collaborator's voices or experiences.

My Indigenous partners have provided input, support, and content at varying points throughout the process, but it would be disingenuous to use the term we in my writing-although this paper seeks to contribute to a far greater collaborative effort, it is undeniably a product of my own positionality. I owe much of its existence and any value it generates to the contributions and **xeleeyn tim'neepkinix**, work from the heart, of my partners, and I bear primary responsibility for its failures.

Furthermore, a first-hand account of my transition in perspective/orientation will hopefully provide valuable insights for others in academia seeking more grounded,

representative, and- crucially- *useful* modes of engaging with Indigenous communities and decolonial work.

Throughout the course of this article, I will refer to cultural concepts and place names in **nimiipuutímt**, the language of the **nimiipuu**- the Nez Perce people. The Cayuse people (Líksiyu in Cayuse, Wáylatpuum in Cayuse Nez Perce, **weyíletpuu** in Nez Perce) previously spoke Old Cayuse, a language isolate with an unclear relationship to the greater Plateau Penutian language group (Karson 2016). Also within that family are **nimiipuutímt** and **'Ichishkíin** (more broadly known as Sahaptin, which some speakers now consider to be an offensive term). There was, and continues to be, a high degree of cultural overlap, exchange, and kinship between the Nez Perce and Cayuse peoples, one result of which was the gradual adoption of the Nez Perce language by their western neighbors. At the 1855 treaty negotiations Cayuse signatories spoke what linguists refer to as Lower Nez Perce (either as a trade language or as their mother tongue), and today, contemporary Cayuse language revitalization within the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation is focused on **Nuumiipuutímt**, the form of Cayuse Nez Perce that varies, but is mutually intelligible, with the **nimiipuutímt** of the Nez Perce Tribe (Hunn, et al. 2015). The distinction between the two (sometimes framed as Up-River vs Down-River dialects, the boundary of which would have been **tukeeywewiy**, the Tucannon River [J. Blackeagle, personal communication, 5/16/2023]) is not always enforced (Appendix A2; Hunn, et al. 2015), because language, like all culture, operates on a gradient rather than binary divides.

Language comes from place and (with proper guidance/permission) it is important to honor places and plant and animal people with their traditional names. As such, I use **nimiipuutímt** to refer to cultural topics (such as **nimiipuu** as a cultural group) or place names (such as **saqáanpa**) and anglophone, non-Indigenous names when their political context is important (such as the Nez Perce as a contemporary tribe), or when cultural names are missing or were not shared with me. Naming things is inherently political and assigning names to things invariably privileges one group over others. I found that **nimiipuutímt** names best fit this project both as an expression of aboriginal territory and of the reality that the majority of my primary collaborators are **nimiipuutímt** speakers. As such, place and animal names used are sourced from the Nez Perce Tribe's language glossary (Sobotta et al, 2003; Sonneck and Sobotta 2004) or directly from my collaborator Josiah Blackeagle. Indigenous language terms are bolded to emphasize their importance. Asides from this, stylistic conventions for **nimiipuutímt** terms follow guidelines set by the Nez Perce Tribe's language program, and **'Ichishkíin** and Cayuse Nez Perce terms, which occur mostly in the interview transcripts, follow conventions set by the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR)'s language program. Other stylistic choices include the capitalization of Land as a proper noun, such as when referring to "doings-with-Land;" this convention is common in the Indigenous literature and is intended to reinforce the role of Land as an animate and active part of the world. This convention is similarly utilized in reference to Water when it is important to acknowledge it as an agent; for the purposes of this writing I consider Land to be a blanket term for all geographic phenomena like rivers, mountains, forests, etc, though other writings could pay more attention could be paid to the nuances and traits of different types of Land.

Ultimately, this article still engages with place, my original research objective, but it does so on terms grounded in the context of Saqáanma School participants' experience with **pik'uunin** and **saqáanpa** and informed by a very different literature- an ontological approach that considers sense of place to be formed out of a dialogue *with* place, as well as with ancestral culture, instead of being formed from the subject's perception of a static cartesian world. I seek, then, to examine the role that 'doings on Land' play in fostering or reinforcing Indigenous interpretations of agential place less as an isolated "object of study" than "an ever-present member of a wider, more-than-human community" (Barker and Pickerill 2020).

The writing that follows defies easy categorization; it is neither a typical research paper nor is it only a narrative story. Its focus and its tone meander like the riverbed. Based on the academic orientation I began this research with, it is a methodological failure. It rejects many of the assumptions of the typical research process but remains tightly bound to others. It strives to push ontological and academic barriers but is embedded within, and produced by, that same academic system. It is a paper on the experiences of Indigenous people primarily written by a white **soyapo**, and despite the depth of collaboration required to make it, it is indubitably shaped by my hand and my perspective.

Most importantly, though, it speaks to an amazing collaboration and the heartwork of countless incredible people. It is centered and driven by the strength of our shared experiences in an incredibly special place; the dialogues of our bodies with the Land. This writing does not attempt to categorize, define, or pretend to fully understand; instead it merely seeks to honor a sacred landscape and a sensitive cultural relationship with Land 16,000 years or more in the making.

Literature Review

Indigenous and Decolonial Geographies

While there has been long-time awareness of the deep ties between Geography as an academic discipline and historical processes of colonialism (indeed, these ties are almost impossible to ignore), it is only recently that there has been a widespread movement to confront the way in which the ontological foundations of the discipline affect the means of, and purpose for, knowledge production today. It has been all-too-easy for geographers to engage with Indigenous communities and knowledges in an extractive way- primarily in service to the academic institution they represent, or to lofty ideals of the grander 'discourse community'. Also damaging is a tendency to tokenize Indigenous values and ways of knowing into a single monolith, diametrically opposed to Western systems of value and knowledge. While this oppositional discourse is sometimes asserted by contemporary Indigenous people themselves, and there are certain values and themes that tend to appear again and again in traditional, land-based cultural systems, the world's Indigenous people, and their ways of being and knowing, are incredibly diverse (Smith 1999, Larsen and Johnson 2012). Indigenous scholarship, therefore, seeks a balance between acknowledging individual cultural heterogeneity and avoiding contributing to the tokenization of Indigenous people while still constructing a generalized set of values and parameters as a discipline, a contrast which

engenders a good deal of porosity. Despite this porosity, a recognizable discourse community of Indigenous scholarship has emerged. The more progressive edge of geography is one academic discipline that has been at least somewhat receptive to these ideas.

Indigenous and decolonial geographies are actively shaped in resistance to dominant academic paradigms- they are directly political and action-oriented (or at least imply themselves to be). Put another way, while “many geographers seek to understand colonialism, few commit to supporting decolonisation, to putting their scholarly labor in the service of Indigenous communities” (Barker and Pickerill 2020). Ultimately, decolonizing methodologies seek to flip the process of doing research on its head, changing it from being “*on and for* Aboriginal peoples to research conducted *by and with* Aboriginal peoples,” (Larsen and Johnson 2012, emphasis added) with the ultimate impact changing from benefits to the researcher, academic institution, and ‘discourse community’ to individual and collective self-determination (Smith 1999).

This paper draws on Indigenous and decolonial methodologies because I found them to be the main discourse communities within my field of study that actively recognize and attempt to engage with the fact that settler and Indigenous ontologies (systems of value) and epistemologies (ways of knowing) are vastly and fundamentally different. It is very important to note that this does not mean this paper endorses all of the conclusions of decolonial methodology. Josiah Blackeagle, my main cultural advisor for this project, was very clear in his hesitancy to engage with decolonial frameworks, the finger-pointing (and settler hand-wringing and self-flagellation) of which he saw as “problematic in application to everyday life” in the sense that it reinforced victim mentalities and created “self-imposed boundaries on our agency” that “become an excuse not to take action” (personal communication 5/16/2023). As an author, I sympathize with both his perspective and with the aims of decolonial work, and throughout this paper attempt to balance them by recognizing the immense trauma and change as the result of colonization without fixating on it, and also without shirking responsibility and assigning blame where it is due. What some readers might perceive as a lack of a sufficiently critical/de-colonial lens in this writing stems from the desire to have this writing reflect the primary perspectives and values of my partners and our collaboration. Based on my embodied experience with these communities, critical political perspectives are still valued, but less centralized than in academic and other critically-inclined communities. More focus is put towards culture; a set of values and cultural practices that endured and evolved with the Land over the course of 16,000 years or longer- and will hopefully sustain their people through another 16,000 and beyond.

To do work that actively centers Indigenous ontologies and mechanisms of knowledge construction, new Indigenous geographies aspire to “unsettle remaining binaries” in the discipline; in this way, “ethics becomes method; data become life; landscape becomes author; participants become family” (Coombes, Johnson, & Howitt 2014). Questions of authorship and participation play a major role in this work, with focuses on developing relationships external to the research process (Leeuw, Cameron, & Greenwood 2012), acknowledging Land as formal co-author (Bawaraka Country et al 2016, Wright et al 2012),

and treating Indigenous value systems as factual basis for investigation, not as an anthropological curiosity, all featuring prominently in the emerging praxes of the discipline. Uncertainty is also identified as a primary characteristic of Indigenous research- engagements between academia and Indigenous communities -and academic and Indigenous ontologies- unsurprisingly tend to involve a fundamental tension. Larsen and Johnson characterize Indigenous research as full of “inevitable false starts, uncertainties and insecurities, turns of relationship... unforeseen events, conflicts, and troubling occurrences, observations that go forever unexplained,” but suggest there is a spiritual component as well, research can also be full of “ecstatic experiences” and “the euphoria of insight into human and non-human collectivity” (2012). This seesawing between uncertainty and insecurity, euphoria and connectedness, and back again speaks true to my experience as a researcher.

Most of the recent Indigenous literature acknowledges that there is no “pre-determined, singular, or authorized” approach to these new methods, but as held by Coombes, Johnson, & Howitt, they are crucially all “approaches to *being-in-the world*” (2014, emphasis added). The concept of *being-on-the-land* as a central component of Indigenous geography occurs and reoccurs throughout the literature; it is, first and foremost, an acknowledgement of the reciprocal relationality between two agential beings- person and Land.

“Being and place are conceptually linked. This is an Indigenous principle and, therefore, is maintained as such within Indigenous cultural philosophy and expressed in the most common or ordinary way” (Ortiz 2007, as cited in Johnson 2012).

The More-than-Human World, Place Agency, and Phenomenological Approaches

Popularized by ecologist David Abram in 1996, the “more-than-human world” is simply a recognition of a concept of Land relation that has been present throughout many Indigenous- what Abrams calls traditional-- cultures for thousands of years. The term reinforces an existing ontological stance, animism, held by traditional cultures throughout the world: that humans are not the only agency-possessing beings. Instead, agency is a characteristic shared by more-than-human beings throughout the world, from plant and animal relatives to the Land itself (Abrams 1996). In this tradition, ““place” typically denotes a holistic reality in which myriad human and non-human beings are interconnected via genealogies contained within a landscape” (Larsen and Johnson 2012); we share a living, animate world with countless other beings, all of whom have independent value, motivations, and agency, and all of whom must be respected as kin. One conclusion of this line of thought is that animism itself- this “acting with non-human entities” is what distinguishes Indigenous from non-Indigenous theory (Barker and Bickerill 2020, from Hall 2014). Although beyond the scope of this paper and my training to explore, it is important to note that the Plateau Native conception of *taʔáx*, the “spiritual energy” which “enlivens things,” rendering them animate, fits clearly within a general framework of animism (J.B., Appendix A3), suggesting this literature does provide a good match for Southern Plateau culture.

These animistic, Indigenous approaches can be constructively contrasted with Western ontological approaches that set uniquely privileged humans apart from the inanimate world

around us, a cultural value Abrams traces to the development of the non-representational writing systems that undergird the Western tradition. Like the discipline in general, conceptions of place in academic geography tend to be deeply informed by this thinking, which emphasizes “a binary logic of objectivity and subjectivity,” and which has foundational implications for how we tend to think about place- through the lens of the “Cartesian conceptualization of a thinking subject separated from the world (i.e., objects) of its reflection” (Larsen 2012). Interpretations of place in applied geographic research reviewed for this paper tended to be informed by this separatism, even when the subjects were Indigenous people and culture. For example, a series of papers working with American Indian and Alaska Native undergraduates, one of the few examples of an effort within the field to assess place meaning and attachment for Native participants, still engage with and attempt to measure sense of place as a subjective, individual experience (Semken 2005, 2008). Within the Indigenous and decolonial literature, there has been an increasing push towards re-imagining place and place-agency, where Indigenous approaches are not just recognized but treated as ontologically valid basis for validation. “More-than-human methodologies” like acknowledging Place’s role through co-authorship (Country, et al 2016, Wright, et al 2012) or considering it to be an active agent in investigation (Di Giminiani 2013) seek to emphasize and integrate an Indigenous conception of place into research.

One other notable contribution to these alternative approaches to thinking about place and being was a mid-nineties push to integrate phenomenology- a philosophical discipline that draws ontological meaning from lived experience- with Indigenous research practices. A major theme of Abram’s 1996 work is tracing the arc of phenomenological thought in the Western tradition and drawing parallels between it and Indigenous modes of thinking, and more importantly, modes of being. This is not to say that phenomenological approaches are Indigenous, or that Indigenous approaches are inherently phenomenological, but both schools of thought are united in holding “lived experience as a place-based phenomenon,” (Larsen and Johnson 2012). Both Indigenous and phenomenological ways of knowing are foundationally action-based, as the world “becomes known through doing and movement,” wherein subjects embark on “journeys of ontological discovery” in order to understand a “living, dynamic, changing environment” (Barker and Pickerill 2020). Knowledge is directed by culture but invariably comes through the body’s contact with the living world all around them (note lack of an appropriate animate English-language pronoun to refer to the body, this is explored in the following section).

This paper privileges Indigenous scholarship over an explicitly phenomenological approach but the cross-fertilization between the disciplines is worth honoring- both center on the building of knowledge through interaction with the living world around us over knowledge formed through abstract or logical thought. In this sense, Indigenous research is an “empathetic, relational way of knowing” fully “grounded in the nexus of *being-on-the-land*” [added emphasis] (Larsen and Johnson 2012). This focus on being and doing forms a foundational aspect of the approach of this paper.

Doings with the Land

For the academic, one of the most important aspects of a phenomenological and Indigenous orientation is the research process itself- research is a way of experiencing the world which takes place through constant “encounter and relationship” (Larsen and Johnson 2012), with both research subjects and with the living, breathing place that ties everyone together both physically and metaphorically. Ultimately, Indigenous research is predicated on doing, just like all other modes of being; phenomenologically, “knowledge, emotions, feelings and intuition only come into being through the doings of the body with other bodies, places, and objects, including non-humans” (Barker and Pickerill 2020).

This ontological principle of Indigenous approaches manifests itself in many aspects of culture, one of the most fundamental of which being language structure: Indigenous languages tend to be predominantly verb-based, in contrast with English, which is predominantly noun-based, (S. Matsaw, personal communication, 4/18/2023, Norton-Smith 2010, Kimmerer 2013, discussion of language and Land in Appendix A1). The centrality of verbs in many Indigenous languages attests to the ways in which phenomena tend to be defined relationally in traditional cultures, through actions (*doing*, and other *-ing* verbs) between different entities, as opposed to through categorical judgements that fracture phenomena into disparate parts. In this sense doings are epistemology; epistemology is a “practical doing in and with the environment” (Robertson 2016).

nimiipuuutímt holds true to this pattern; it is on the verbal end of the spectrum between verb-based and nominal-based language, it focuses more on actions, movement and relationships between things. From the perspective of Josiah, a **nimiipuuutímt** speaker, this contrasts with English because “when you're focused on labeling stuff and categorizing it for manipulation, there's a different acknowledgement of power and agency in that perception than if you're watching and participating in movement” (J. Blackeagle, personal communication 5/16/2023). Language structure organizes our approach to reality, and English's tendency towards static classification biases it towards manipulation. **nimiipuuutímt** and other Indigenous languages open the speaker toward “observing and participating in divine movement,” as a result, “you're a bit more cautious about your perception of reality, at least how you organize your perception of reality” (J. Blackeagle, personal communication, 5/16/2023). Relation and movement are paramount.

This foregrounding of the ‘verb-world,’ --of this relationality formed through active engagement with the world- felt increasingly important as the project developed and my research orientation evolved. Our project as land-based experiential education was fundamentally based in doing; doings-with-Land together is what motivated the work and what facilitated our collaboration and trust-building, and it's clear centrality in the context of the work meant an academic approach that did not acknowledge it felt disingenuous, if not downright wrong. As a researcher, I needed to find a way to engage with verbs, not nouns; as framed by Josiah Blackeagle, “a focus on movement and relationship, not stuff” (personal communication, 5/26/2023).

The Indigenous and decolonial geographic literature provides many examples of research orientations that matched the tenor and reality of our work, none more so than Barker and Pickerill's 2020 paper "Doings with the land and sea: Decolonising geographies, Indigeneity, and enacting place-agency." The authors follow existing calls for centering place, positionality and action in Indigenous research but are noteworthy in how explicitly they focus on 'doings with land'- in terms of both the phenomenological "embodied practices" referenced in the previous section and as political actions "that have significance beyond their material movements and impacts."

In this way, 'doing' decolonial geography centers research as a process of interaction, not extraction; a continuous, localized "commitment to a place and people" (Barker and Pickerill 2020, from Coombes et al. 2014) that strives to challenge dominant settler values. These authors are academics and are concerned primarily with reforming and expanding the researcher role, but I would argue that this "commitment to people and place" transcends temporal and disciplinary boundaries; as a governing philosophy and politics it can and should be applied to other positions of settler engagement with Indigenous communities. In the case of this particular project and collaboration, the other roles I sometimes occupied were that of a facilitator (through work as a river guide) and convener (through my work as a grantwriter and program lead), as well as that of learner (as a co-participant in our shared experience with Land)). A 'commitment to people and place' sustained across space and time seems to be a necessary element of ethically occupying any of these roles. This paper explores ways in which I have attempted to foster this commitment within and beyond the scope of this research, and some of the challenges in doing so.

Barker and Pickerill bring up a variety of instances of doings-with-Land; Aboriginal digging yams and walking songlines in Australia, Haudenosaunee thanksgiving addresses in the Great Lakes. These types of traditional doings are common in Plateau culture- hunting, gathering, and longhouse ceremony stand out as particularly rich, culturally-informed methods of doing on this landscape, and are commonly framed as vital to cultural continuity (Appendix A1, A2, A3). As an 'embodied practice', River-based methods of doing, and specifically whitewater rafting, have not been rarely explored in the geographic or decolonial literature. Rafting is commonly viewed as an artifact of a particular white culture of outdoor recreation and is obviously not culturally informed in the way other doings are, but it has immense potential as a medium of experience. I already knew intuitively through my years of work as a guide that whitewater rafting as a vehicle can be a powerful form of doing with Land- one that encourages deep, embodied contact with daunting landscapes, in a surprisingly accessible way. What makes our particular approach to doing-with-Land unique is the mixing of this mechanism of doing with Indigenous cultural teachings and guidance; to my knowledge this form of doing is not represented in the literature and even examples in reality are rare. In this sense, whitewater rafting represented a unique and potentially powerful mechanism for Indigenous young people to build a relationship with *saqáanpa*, a very powerful place.

I. Before

siseqiyমেখ (The Seven Devils)

Long, long ago when the world was very young, seven giant brothers lived in the Blue Mountains. The giant monsters were taller than the tallest pines and stronger than the strongest oaks.

The ancient people feared these brothers greatly because they ate children. Each year the brothers traveled eastward and devoured all the little ones they could find. Mothers fled with their children and hid them, but still many were seized by the giants. The headmen in the villages feared that the tribe would soon be wiped out. But no one was big enough and strong enough to fight with seven giants at a time.

At last the headmen of the tribe decided to ask Coyote to help them. "Coyote is our friend," they said. "He has defeated other monsters. He will free us from the seven giants."

So they sent a messenger to Coyote. "Yes, I will help you," he promised. "I will free you from the seven giants."

But Coyote really did not know what to do. He had fought with giants. He had fought with the monsters of the lakes and the rivers. But he knew he could not defeat seven giants at one time. So he asked his good friend Fox for advice.

"We will first dig seven holes," said his good friend Fox. "We will dig them very deep, in a place the giants always pass over when they travel to the east. Then we will fill the holes with boiling liquid."

So Coyote called together all the animals with claws-the beavers, the whistling marmots, the cougars, the bears, and even the rats and mice and moles-to dig seven deep holes. Then Coyote filled each hole with a reddish-yellow liquid. His good friend Fox helped him keep the liquid boiling by dropping hot rocks into it.

Soon the time came for the giants' journey eastward. They marched along, all seven of them, their heads held high in the air. They were sure that no one dared attack them. Coyote and Fox watched from behind some rocks and shrubs.

Down, down, down the seven giants went into the seven deep holes of boiling liquid. They struggled and struggled to get out, but the holes were very deep. They fumed and roared and splashed. As they struggled, they scattered the reddish liquid around them as far as a man can travel in a day.

Then Coyote came out from his hiding place. The seven giants stood still. They knew Coyote.

"You are being punished for your wickedness," Coyote said to the seven giants. "I will punish you even more by changing you into seven mountains. I will make you very high, so that everyone can see you. You will stand here forever, to remind people that punishment comes from wrongdoing."

"And I will make a deep gash in the earth here, so that no more of your family can get across to trouble my people."

Coyote caused the seven giants to grow taller, and then he changed them into seven mountain peaks. He struck the earth a hard blow and so opened up a deep canyon at the feet of the giant peaks.

Today the mountain peaks are called the Seven Devils. The deep gorge at their feet is known as Hell's Canyon of the Snake River. And the copper scattered by the splashing of the seven giants is still being mined.

Caleb Whitman

Nez Perce Tribal Member

August 1950

Story courtesy of Josiah Blackeagle, from *Indian Legends of the Pacific Northwest* (Clark, 1953).

Situating the Land and its People

East of the rain-smothered Cascade Mountains is a great stretch of drier country-- sagebrush steppe, rolling bunchgrass prairies, and thickets of ponderosa pine tucked into the north-facing draws-- that these days is called the Columbia Plateau. Only one sea-level gap runs through the Western border of these lands: **xuyelp** (the Columbia River), the immense artery of this region, which draws water to **'eteyekuus** (big water, the Pacific) and rich runs of anadromous fish like **nacó'x̂** (chinook), **q'óyx̂c** (sockeye), **héeyey** (steelhead) and **héesu** (lamprey) back up into its tributaries, farrowing the Land and its peoples with the wealth of the ocean since time immemorial. Like the life-giving salmon that sustained- and still sustains- them and the Land, the original inhabitants of this landscape moved with the seasons, wintering low in the canyonlands and ascending to the high country for the bountiful fruits of summer. The Plateau Peoples, as classified by anthropologists, encompass four distinct language families and a vast swath of the interior Pacific Northwest, but this writing deals primarily with a particular place and people: **wal'áawa**, the Wallowa country, **saqáanpa**, Hells Canyon, to the immediate East and the descendants of its **nimiipuu** (Nez Perce) inhabitants and their western Cayuse neighbors.

wal'áawa, a high-altitude valley bounded by three rivers and a mountain range, is situated in what is now called Wallowa Country, the NE corner of Oregon. Its eastern edge-- both naturally and in contemporary political organization-- is **pik'uunin**, the Snake River, the Columbia's largest tributary, which winds 1,078 miles from its headwaters in **tiweniispe** (place of flatulence, Yellowstone) (Kammerer, 1990) and serves as the state line between Oregon and Idaho. The eastern edge of **wal'áawa**, **pik'uunin** cuts a jagged canyon-- **saqáanpa** (Hells Canyon) some 10 miles wide and almost 8,000 feet deep as measured from the summits of the **siseqiy mex̂** (Seven Devils Range) that jut out along the canyon's east rim. To the west, each drop of water given by **wal'wáamax̂s** (the Wallowa Mountains) finds its way to **pik'uunin** as well, carried by a multitude of rivers and streams that transect the high country and plunge into the canyon.

This landscape is the homeland of the **wal'wáama** and **saqaanma** band of **nimiipuu**. The entirety of which is reserved lands of the Nez Perce via the Treaty with the Nez Percés in 1855. While outside the ceded lands of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Reservation, it is a traditional use-land of the Umatilla and Cayuse people, parts of whose usual and accustomed areas lie immediately to the West, in the Blue Mountains. There is an ongoing

inter-Tribal debate regarding territorial rights and control that exists far beyond the scope of this writing and writer. All I am able to contribute on the matter as an outsider and ally is that there is a well-documented and sustained history of close cross-cultural exchange, cooperation, and intermarriage between the Nez Perce and Cayuse, and that prior to the Reservation era groups of Indigenous people would construe themselves very differently as a polity- on the basis of their band and the areas they spent the seasons in rather than on the basis of the rigid Tribal divisions of the contemporary era. There is much more that they agree on than that upon which they disagree.

The band was the primary social structure among Plateau societies and individual bands frequently intermixed and used one another's territories (J. Blackeagle, personal communication, 5/16/2023). A brief discussion of the autonomous, mobile nature of band structure is warranted to help contextualize this paper. For example when 'elelimyeteqenin' (Looking Glass), a prominent war chief during the Nez Perce War of 1877, traveled to buffalo country, he was joined by *nimiipuu* from a variety of bands, including the *wal'waama*. Bands used one another's territories, something which was not only tolerated but encouraged (J. Blackeagle, personal communication, 5/16/2023). Seasonal movement played a large role, as bands moved up and down the elevation gradient of the region following foods. Group sizes could swell to hundreds during the fertile summer months and might reduce to a single family group in the winter where resources were scarcer. The *wal'waama* spent their summers in the uplands and their winters in the vicinity of *enetoyn* (Anatone, WA), during which they would have had contact with the *saqáanma*, the band most closely associated with *saqáanpa* and whose name we honor in the Saqáanma School title. The *saqáanma*, respectively, would have spent summers in higher, ecologically productive country like *yawwinma* ('cold water from the mountains', Rapid River), a tributary of *naco'x kuus* (Salmon River) or up the *qapqápnim wéele* (Grand Ronde River) and its valleys. For an individual familiar with the geography of this place, this speaks to a striking degree of mobility over the course of the seasons. This social structure did not lend itself to hierarchy, central authority, or clear divisions in territory in ways conceptualized by Anglo-Americans. This would have major implications for many interactions between Anglos and Natives, particularly treaties.

The United States Government signed two primary treaties with the Nez Perce people, the first in Walla-Walla in 1855 in conjunction with other Plateau Peoples (CTUIR and the Yakama Indian Reservation were created by separate treaties signed there within weeks of each other). The 1855 treaty council was widely attended and supported and the treaty was signed by 56 different band representatives from across Nez Perce country; the Nez Perce ceded roughly half of their aboriginal lands- an estimated 6,932,270 acres- in exchange for significant concessions from the government and official recognition of their reserved rights to practice important subsistence activities throughout the entirety of their traditional use areas (Joseph 1965). In the following years, settlers began to pour into the area, especially after 1860, when gold was discovered in the region. Lewiston, Idaho's first territorial capital, was established the following year within the protected 1855 boundaries of the Nez Perce reservation, speaking to a broad disregard for treaty boundaries by individual settlers and a deliberate failure to honor treaty agreements by the State. The exponentially growing body of settlers- an estimated 20,000 by 1862- in the region lobbied for a reduction in Nez Perce territory and political power, and in 1863, the US government negotiated another treaty

with a subset of **nimiipuu** to reduce the Nez Perce reservation to its current boundaries, a nearly 90% reduction in territory (Josephy 1965). The 1863 treaty was rejected by a broad swath of **nimiipuu** bands whose lands lay outside of its boundaries and whose trust in the US government was steadily eroding. These “non-treaty” bands reasoned that since they had not signed the new treaty they were not bound by its terms, while the United States considered the Nez Perce to be a unified polity under one particular chief- a gross misrepresentation of political and social arrangements of the **nimiipuu**.

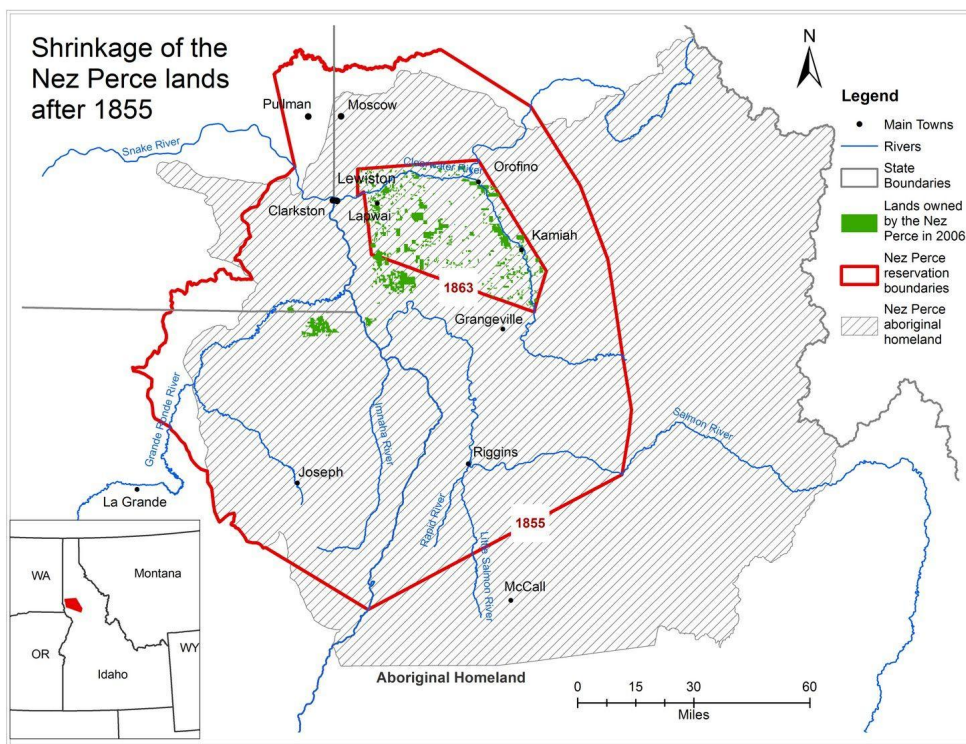


Fig 2. Map of treaty borders (1855 and 1863) as well as estimated aboriginal range of the Nez Perce at the time of the treaties. Map provided courtesy of Nez Perce National Historical Park.

The story of Indigenous displacement from **wal'áawa** is far from unique, but it stands out in its prominence in the popular iconography of the American West- specifically the story of **hinmatóowyahtq̓it**, popularly known by his Christianized name Joseph¹, who lead the **wal'wáama** (Wallowa, also referred to as Chief Joseph Band Nez Perce) in conjunction with other bands of Nez Perce and Palouse during their forced removal from **wal'áawa** and subsequent persecution by the encroaching United States army in 1877, following a steady influx in settlers and increase in regional tensions after the 1863 treaty. After a valiant and storied retreat **hinmatóowyahtq̓it** and surviving members of the group were captured near the Canadian border, and following a period of brutal resettlement in Kansas and Oklahoma at the hands of the United States government, Joseph and many of the remaining **wal'wáama** still under his leadership came to live permanently as members of the Confederated tribes of the Colville Indian Reservation (CCT), in NE Washington. Like many federally-recognized

¹ Which he would go on to renounce along with Christianity; I use the name in this context only because it is more recognizable and commonly used.

tribes, CCT is an amalgamation of multiple resettled tribes- 12 in total (<https://www.colvilletribes.com/>). Today, there are many Native people across multiple reservations that claim descent from Chief Joseph or the **wal'wáama**.

As exhibited by the story of the **wal'wáama**, the Reservation period was a time of great upheaval, and the legacies of forced displacement and the systematic repression of Indigenous language and cultural knowledge at the hands of the State mean that many contemporary tribal people have complicated ethnic histories, or can struggle to trace them altogether. Along with the CCT, the Nez Perce Tribe (whose contemporary Reservation boundaries were established in the 1863 treaty that dispossessed the **wal'wáama**) and Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR, a confederated tribe composed of the Cayuse, as well as the Umatilla and Walla-Walla ethnic groups) saw their originally-chartered reservation lands (already substantially reduced relative to their traditional use areas) carved apart by a series of executive orders and “re-negotiated” treaties and in some cases opened up to white settlers. Furthermore, the tribal system encouraged the structuration of discrete political boundaries in a way inconsistent with Indigenous understandings of territory- especially after the Congressional settlement for the inundation of **silayloo** (Celilo Falls) on the Columbia River in 1957, which effectively ended dual enrollment, tribes and tribal citizens were increasingly forced to compete for dwindling resources being destroyed by the US state (A. Wildbill, personal interview 2021). This is certainly not to characterize the reservation system as wholly detrimental for Native people- reservations were produced by treaty negotiations between two polities, and despite the US government’s consistent failure to uphold them, exercising treaty rights plays a major role in tribal self-determination (Nez Perce Tribe, 2003). This is especially true for the Stevens Treaty tribes of the inner Plateau, whose federal treaties reinforce their right to perform traditional subsistence activities on State and Federal lands in ‘usual and accustomed places’ across the West.

In addition to making great gains in tribal sovereignty (especially in the last 30 years), Plateau tribes, like many North American Native peoples, are in the middle of a major wave of cultural revitalization. with a particular focus on aspects of culture like language, first foods, and youth development. This work is done formally, through tribally-affiliated organizations such as the Nez Perce Tribe’s Department of Cultural Resources, and through non-governmental organizations such as Nez Perce Wallowa Homeland, which will be discussed below. Crucially, it is done informally as well: Indigenous people have carried hereditary cultural knowledge since time immemorial and through 400 years of colonization, and still pass it down through structures of family, community, and Tribe at-large. It is thanks to the sustained efforts of these countless many, now and through the generations, that the Saqáanma School program is possible.

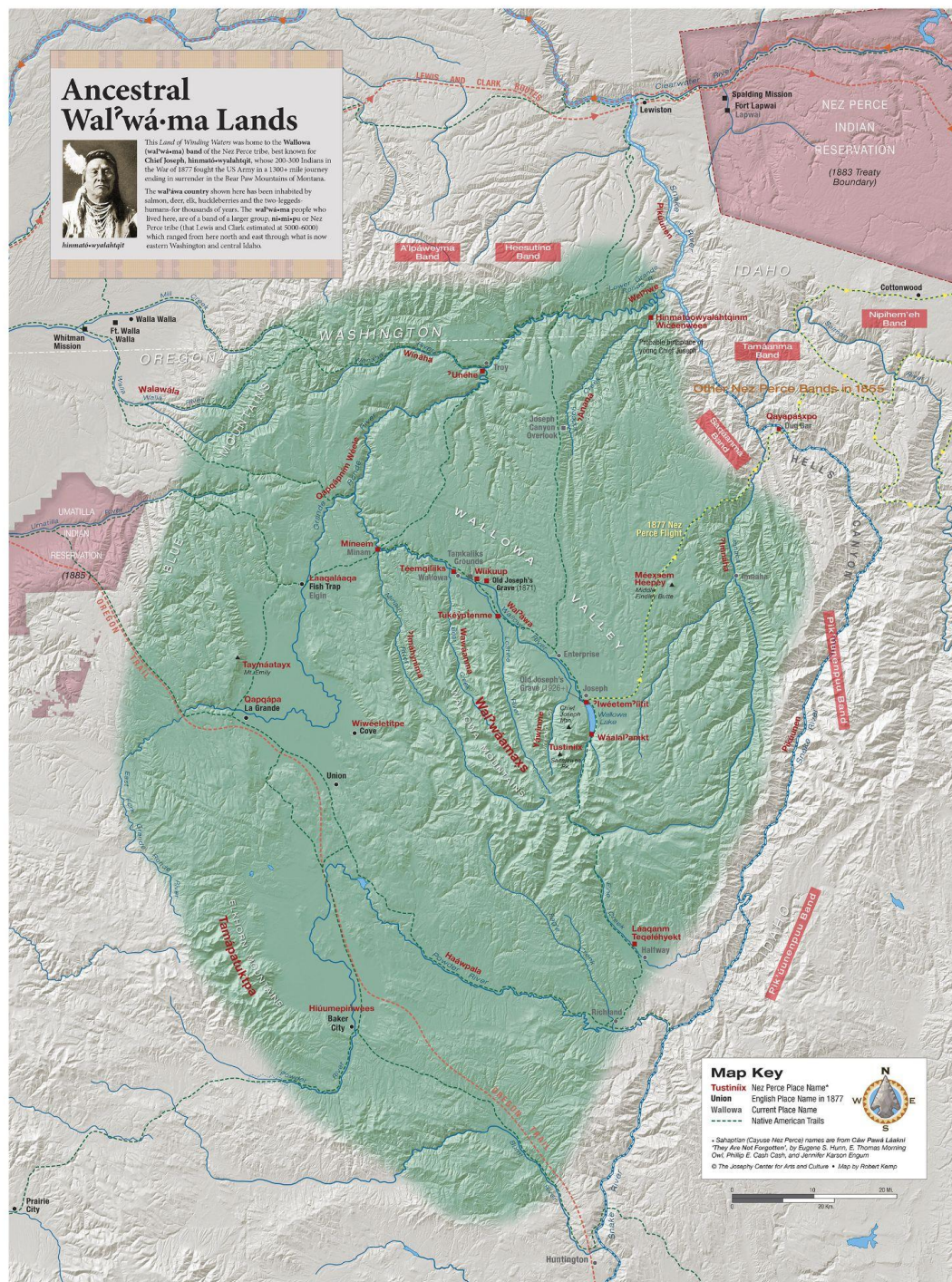


Fig 2. Representation of wal'wá-ma homelands in what is now the NE corner of Oregon. Note contemporary Nez Perce and Umatilla Reservation boundaries, and saqáanpa as the immediate Eastern boundary (on map as Hells Canyon). Presentation of place names follows modern linguistic conventions and varies from styling used in this paper. Map provided courtesy of: The Joseph Center: Caw Pawa Laakni: Sahaptian Place Names, by Hunn, Morning Owl, Cash Cash, and Karson Engum, and cartographer Rob Kemp.

Situating the Research(er)

“We are marked by the landscapes we inhabit, and they inevitably follow us into our interactions with others” -Jay Johnson and Soren Larsen, A Deeper Sense of Place: Stories and Journeys of Academic-Indigenous Collaboration (2013).

My name is Clark Shimeall. I was born and bred in the Willamette Valley, where it is almost always green. I am 24 years old, a white man, born into a comfortably middle-class family. I know little of my ancestors, and my family claims no ethnic heritage in particular. Like many other Anglo-Americans lacking tangible cultural inheritance, my family sought new stories, finding guidance in a recreational relationship with the outdoors and the white wilderness ethic- we do not know where we come from, but we are outdoorsy. Although inherently limited, I can credit those cultural approaches for facilitating a childhood spent interacting with Land and early comfort and proficiency in the backcountry.

I came to intimately know the Upper Columbia Plateau, east of the Cascade Mountains that deflect water to my home, in the beginning of my adult life through my seasonal work as a whitewater rafting guide.

As I came to know these lands and their rich cultural histories better- especially the Wallowa country, where I live and work seasonally- I became increasingly aware of the absence of contemporary Native people on the landscape, and the details of their displacement 150 years prior. I had the vague idea that other work was being done to address this discrepancy, and hoped to contribute within my sphere of influence, but was hamstrung by the fact that I was simply not connected to Indigenous communities- I lacked the proper context. No work is done in isolation, least of all community work of this nature, and fortunately, there are a great many people whose contributions over a great period of time we were able to build on.

This research came later: I needed to perform a research project for my undergraduate thesis and lost in a contextless sea of COVID-19 zoom meetings, desperately wanted to focus on applied work. I reasoned that perhaps my academic work could be in service to the project. I am proud to say that my role as a researcher always came last; although I sought to fulfill the obligations of all my various roles, I never had any doubt that my primary allegiance would be to the project and to my partners.

Methods

As mentioned, the initial intention of this research was to use a social science mixed-methods approach: qualitative interviews of adult educators (n=4) and quantitative, anonymous surveys of youth participants (n=11), as well as participant observation recorded throughout the trip. Ultimately, youth surveys were discarded due to concerns around youth privacy, limited utility due to sample size, and incompatibility with the transition towards a more positional, less traditional academic approach that occurred midway through the research process. Despite my initial discomfort with the idea, auto-ethnography was critical to this study: as a participant in the experience, I was immersed in the same territory as the Indigenous members of our trip, and auto-ethnography became increasingly important as my methods and orientation shifted throughout the research process.

The study's methodology was vetted by Portland State University's IRB board and by Native partners involved in the project. Emphasis was put on obtaining tribal research permits as well, an important part of respecting tribal sovereignty (Harding et al 2012). Although all three tribes with citizens represented in the study were contacted, only the Nez Perce Tribe indicated a need for a research permit, which was submitted to the tribe's Cultural Resources department. Despite the initial focus of this study being on youth, educator concerns about privacy and power related to a large academic institution (well-justified based on the historical track record of academia's engagement with Indigenous people) led to the development of a anonymized, Likert-scale survey based on the sense of place assessment for youth in lieu of in-depth interviews. The survey was further amended for relevance based on educator review. The educators found the questions about sense of place to be repetitive and not constructive, so they were reduced in favor of more focus on other cultural topics. This survey was built around the original sense of place research question and methodologically emulated other quantitative sense of place research, most notably the work of Semken (2005) and Semken and Freeman (2008), so after my pivot away from these literatures, survey relevance was limited. Independent of content, the survey could not yield statistically significant results, due to a limited sample size and non-random sample. Given these limitations, I chose not to draw on survey data in this paper, focusing instead on my own notes and experience and the richer qualitative content that was gathered through semi-structured interviews with educators, who had a clearer understanding than youth participants of the context in which they were providing information.

Long-form interviews with adult educators were semi-structured and lasted for up to three hours. Interviews were initially planned over the course of the trip while on the river; when it became clear that formal interview sessions would cut into educator time with youth, these plans were largely abandoned in favor of less formal conversations after students were in bed. One extended interview was recorded on the river and subsequent interviews were recorded near educator's homes (outside of Lenore, ID and in Pendleton, OR). Transcriptions were generated for all recorded content and shared with interview participants for feedback and to verify Indigenous words and concepts used were interpreted correctly. Transcriptions were reviewed using non-quantitative thematic analysis to identify exemplar quotes and major themes. Appendixes A1-A3 include full interview transcripts I will cite throughout this paper. Individual quoted citations include the initials of the speaking individual if not otherwise noted in the text.

Participant observation and auto-ethnography also played major roles as I took notes throughout the process and was myself a participant, and in certain contexts a facilitator, of the experience. I took notes nightly as well as whenever there were opportunities; this proved challenging in the context of my role as a guide, which took precedence, so my recorded notes from the trip were relatively limited. I'd initially hoped to avoid auto-ethnography as a method in order to avoid diverting research focus from the Indigenous participants, but as my research orientation shifted and some of my earlier aspirations towards co-produced research met with reality, it became increasingly clear auto-ethnography was not only necessary but probably the preferred method to approach such a complicated topic as an outsider. I

ultimately decided that it was better to limit this research by tying it to my experience than to risk mis-representing its authorship or the authority of its conclusions.

The study's IRB through PSU was amended once; amendments allowed for an additional post-trip interview and gave adult participants the option to waive their confidentiality protections and be directly recognized for what they had shared.

Situating the Project

There were a number of entities involved in the initial Saqáanma School project -- the stewarding non-profit organization, Nez Perce Wallowa Homeland (NPWH), the project's adult educators representing the three primary tribes NPWH serves, and a regional whitewater-rafting company, Winding Waters River Expeditions (WWRE), represented in this collaboration by me in my capacity as a professional river guide.

The Nez Perce Wallowa Homeland, commonly referred to as the Homeland Project, is a non-profit organization in **wal'áawa** which serves as a physical and conceptual convening space for Native people in Wallowa county. NPWH has a particular focus on the **wal'wáama** and their localized story of displacement, but the organization adopts a "big-tent" approach to homeland, and today serves both Nez Perce peoples without direct **wal'wáama** heritage and Cayuse peoples, most of whom today are enrolled members of the Confederated tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation (CTUIR). As a result, NPWH works predominantly with citizens of three federally recognized tribes: the Nez Perce Tribe (NPT), the previously-mentioned CTUIR, and the Confederated tribes of the Colville Indian Reservation (CCT). In addition to maintaining a tract of land and facilities outside of Wallowa, OR, NPWH runs a variety of events and educational programs for both Native people and non-Native visitors, most significantly the **tamkaliks** celebration, a major summer gathering for the diaspora.

Winding Waters River Expeditions (WWRE) is a family owned and operated rafting outfitter based in Wallowa County. WWRE holds commercial permits on the **qapqápnim wéele** (Grande Ronde), **naco'x kuus** (Salmon), and **pik'uunin** (Snake) rivers, all of which comprise traditional **nimiipuu** homeland. Although cognizant of Nez Perce history in the region- the company name is derived from a famous quote of **hinmatóowyahtq̄it** (Young Chief Joseph)- WWRE's actual engagement with Nez Perce people and culture had been limited prior to our participation in the Saqáanma School. Like many of our guides, I became increasingly bothered by the absence of authentic Nez Perce representation in our work and in the culture of Wallowa County at large; like most of the outdoor recreation industry, WWRE clients tend to be upper-middle class white people from wealthy urban centers, and while Indigenous people was all but absent- a common theme of Wallowa County, which in contemporary times has next to no Indigenous residents despite its historical and cultural significance and relative geographic proximity to both the Nez Perce and Umatilla reservations. I approached WWRE's owner/operators with the idea of contributing an at-cost river trip for Native people, which they enthusiastically pledged to support.

I initially approached the Homeland Project in the fall of 2020 simply looking to become better educated, but it became quickly apparent that we had a mutual interest in helping facilitate Indigenous return to dispossessed land through youth programming. Initial grant writing for the Saqáanma School was performed in collaboration between Angela Harvey, the Homeland Project's non-Native executive director, and me. Out of respect for their time and energy, Native partners were only moderately engaged until funding- grants from Gray Family Foundation and the Oregon Community Foundation- had been secured in the early spring of 2021. From that point onward, Native educators- Doug Marconi (Chief Joseph Band Nez Perce, CCT), Tiyana Blackeagle (Nez Perce, based on the Nez Perce Reservation), and Andrew Wildbill (Cayuse, CTUIR)- representing each of the three tribes served by the Homeland Project played a central role in trip planning and program development. Due to the last-minute cancellations of a few youth participants, an additional slot opened up for Josiah Blackeagle (Nez Perce), who became the trip's fourth educator. All four educators were affiliated with Nez Perce Wallowa Homeland- all have previously served or are actively serving on its board. All educators play important roles in their respective communities and are deeply involved with cultural, ecological, and youth work in various respects.

Over the course of spring 2021, a number of meetings were convened during which curriculum and trip logistics were developed and trip goals were clarified. These meetings were facilitated by Angela Harvey and attended by all three educators and me (in my capacity as a river guide). This convening period was also one of the first tangible examples of dissonance between settler and Indigenous approaches to doing- educators identified shared goals and priorities for the trip but opted not to create explicit curriculum, which was at odds with the demands for structure and clarity in the common non-profit funding world. As is addressed later on, **saqáanpa** itself would provide all of the structure the educators needed to run a transformative and deeply impactful educational program, but during our planning stage, attitudes toward curriculum development were a visible point of differentiation between Native and non-Native partners.

These initial spring meetings were also where I introduced the possibility of performing research on the program to the educators, and entered the project as a researcher. Given the timeline necessary to secure IRB permissions and create the study, I had no option but to pitch my research early on in our process. At this point, none of us had met in person- simply collaborating already entailed a great deal of trust, and as a group the educators were justifiably cautious when it came to involving an outside academic institution. As such, this convening period was a time of insecurity, uncertainty, and transition for me, especially in my role as a researcher, full of the “inevitable false starts” and “turns of relationship” detailed by Johnson and Larsen as consistent parts of doing Indigenous geography (2012). I felt pinned between the need to establish credibility and trust at a natural pace with my new collaborators and the timebound, rigid framework of the academic process- it was only with careful consideration, considerable discomfort, and of course the willingness of my partners to trust and engage me that I was able to navigate this balance and initiate the research process.

Following our initial planning meetings and with a set date identified, educators began student recruitment. Initial program goals called for fifteen middle-school aged youth, with an even split between the three tribal populations NPWH focuses on. Program recruitment strategies varied between tribal populations and were carried out by a mix of local youth organizations and the educators themselves. The passing of two community members shortly before the trip- an all too common occurrence in Indian Country-- led to a number of youth to drop out of the program in order to care for their families and participate in funeral ceremonies, an important part of Plateau culture. Ultimately eleven youth were successfully recruited from the three represented tribal populations, ranging in age from 11 to 15. All youth identified as having Nez Perce, Cayuse, or (most commonly) mixed heritage.

II. During

“I like being in the water, because you can feel its power”

(Paraphrased from student participant, T.B., Appendix A1)

It’s our first day on the river. Our youth and educators had arrived in Wallowa the night before from their various home reservations, participating in some opening icebreakers and language lessons in the longhouse, and early that morning caravanned down the winding 3-hour drive from the high country into the belly of **saqáanpa**, whose craggy canyon walls of tortured, ancient rock tower over us. The rest of my guide crew was waiting, ready, with our 16-ft rafts filled with gear and supplies. We put the rafts in the water at the foot of the monstrous Hells Canyon Dam, which, lacking fish passage infrastructure, marks the absolute upstream limit on the Snake of any migrating Salmon navigating the eight massive dams that straddle the river between us and the ocean. Few make it this far. A negative encounter with a group of white jet boating tourists at the boat ramp- a stark reminder of the contested politics of this space- is quickly forgotten as we focus on the students and on the River. The educators make an offering, a prayer, a water song, and the dam and hostile jetboaters slip silently from view and from consciousness. After months of planning, we have finally arrived.

Rapids are formed when rocks tumble down from above and become obstacles, or else when the canyon restricts the river into a tight, rushing channel or it plunges down a steep section of riverbed. The largest, most ferocious rapids are formed by a combination of all of these conditions, and with its considerable volume of water, the Snake has two standouts-class IVs on a scale of I (barely disturbed water) to V (waterfall), both of which are encountered in the first few river miles. Our small fleet of rafts has already navigated Wild Sheep, the first IV, and were preparing for Granite Creek, which is anchored by a huge hole (a feature where the water plunges over a rock steeply enough that it falls back on itself upstream; it quite literally presents as a sunken hole) that spans half the river. The flow of water from the dam is constantly fluctuating, and in a special range of flow, the Granite hole becomes a smooth wave. You plunge down into the belly of the hole, vanishing completely from the sight of any boats that are following, and instead of facing a massive, boat-flipping, crashing wall of water, a smooth green tongue shoots you up, between two laterally curling waves still breaking on the flanks of the obstacle, and over its downstream side. The Green Room, as river guides call it, is rarely “open,” as the conditions need to be perfect, and

although those conditions are produced by a scheduled volume of release from the dam to meet a specific threshold of power generation, the Green Room's presence that day still felt like a sign. Though our crew of white river guides has lacked the cultural guidance, immersion with the river means guides tend to more easily see the animacy around us in the canyon, and the Green Room demands respect- after a summer in the Canyon, it is irrefutable alive.

Large rapids are generally scouted for safety, and we spent an extended time on the trail above the rapid— **saqáanpa** is dotted with pictograph and pit-house sites, with some of the best examples positioned under a rock overhang directly above Granite rapid. The educators related a lesson on the cultural significance of pictographs as the rapid crashed and surged below us. At one point, another tourist jetboat motored past. "If you look on your left, you'll see a group of real-life Indians," joked Josiah as the jetboat passengers craned their heads to look up at the group of mostly brown, braided figures above them. When they think about them at all, many settlers in our region are more comfortable and familiar thinking of Indigenous people as relics of the past, not as members of a living, vibrant culture enjoying and engaging with the same spaces they do.

After scouting the rapid, we checked lifejackets and helmets and pushed off. I was rowing sweep, the last position, and watched as our lead guide entered the rapid, her 16-ft raft vanishing into the Green Room's maw- farther to the left than our normal line. The raft reappeared on the far side of the hole, cocked diagonally, and I watched petrified as the looming left flank wave picked up one of its tubes and tossed it, and several of its passengers, into the maelstrom of whitewater. Our middle boat, following close behind, bucked wildly as well as it too was engulfed by the left-breaking wave. I didn't have any more time to focus on the situation downstream, as we were rapidly approaching the Green Room ourselves. I stood for more power on the oars, pushing wildly as we approached the hole, determined to maximize momentum, surface upright and provide a rescue. The eighteen foot raft's nose dipped into the abyss and the rest of us followed, plunging down. We sat suspended at the bottom for a brief moment- green and white walls of water surrounding us on all sides- before rocketing through smoothly, the Green Room granting us safe passage.

By the time we exited Granite, there was no rescue to perform- the lead boat hadn't flipped as I'd feared, and the jettisoned passengers from both rafts had all resurfaced and been pulled back into their respective crafts. The two I'd seen tumbling out of the lead boat were Tiyana, one of our educators, and the youngest, smallest student on the trip. An unexpected whitewater swim can be intense for anyone, much less an 11-year-old who'd never been rafting, and I was worried that it might sour the trip ahead. As we approached the raft, however, it became clear the swim hadn't been too traumatic- the student was beaming, excitedly relating the experience to the rest of the boat. I'd later learn another, older student had been ejected in the same rapid, and while shaken by his longer immersion, still framed his experience positively.

We made camp shortly below, and the students fanned out to explore our home for the night. Granite rapid and the Green Room featured prominently in that night's circle, the

intensity of the experience seeming to serve as a threshold- we were here, together, carried by an unfathomably powerful place (Appendix A3). Very few of our youth participants had any river experience, and none of them had been in **saqáanpa** or another river canyon of its scale before, and I wasn't sure how they'd respond to such an intense and unfamiliar environment. As such, I was both relieved and very impressed to see the speed and ability with which they introduced themselves to the Land- days on the water were spent full of swimming, wrestling, and other play, and every stop on the side of the river was an opportunity to bury themselves, often quite literally, in every nook and cranny of the landscape. Educators led cultural and ecological lessons at a variety of sites along the 33 miles of river we traversed, covering pictographs, water, plants, animals, and place stories. Each evening youth and educators took private space away from the guides to circle up, talk about culturally sensitive subjects, and process the day with 'roses and thorns.' Nights were spent listening to coyote stories underneath **likuup'siimey** (the North Star). On the third day on the water, we pulled into our takeout at **tuléhnenweespe** (Pittsburgh Landing), an opening in the otherwise-impenetrable canyon that would have given itself to use as a thoroughfare for millenia. The youth participants didn't want to leave- even while still on the water, they were asking about next year's trip. Reluctantly, we said intense goodbyes and loaded into our respective vehicles, preparing for long drives back home.

In educator interviews (performed on the river and afterwards), a number of core themes around the relationship between doings-with-Land and Indigenous ways of being and knowing emerged in relation to the research question. Especially prominent were the role of agential Land as a teacher and guide, the intersection between Land and cultural identity, and the role of cultural education in revitalization, responsibility, and survival.

Land as Teacher

One of the deepest and most recurring themes that came up throughout the trip and our interview sessions was Land acting as a teacher and guide. Josiah framed their cultural teachings and history as a "beyond encyclopedic knowledge, and that's all out there. It's written in this landscape, and we carry it in our genetics" (Appendix A3). In this context, relying on the Land as a teacher was not just preferential, but necessary. Referencing the responsibility of inheriting this land-relationship, Doug was firm one simply "cannot teach that in the classroom. There's no sort of academic standard that can really measure that. So this [the Land] is the classroom and this is where we practice" (Appendix A1).

Educators deliberately eschewed a pre-planned, formal curriculum, a choice which caused no small amount of anxiety among the white partners helping convene the trip but ultimately left us open to "let the Land do that for us, just going to let things play out as they happen... this is our teacher" (D.M., Appendix A1). Things seemed to come together perfectly, spontaneously. One educator, Tiyana, facilitated an impromptu first-foods ceremony with various canned meats and roots she'd brought to address her own autoimmune struggles with settler foods, plus huckleberries picked by the guide crew on their way to the dam two days prior, and springwater gathered that day. Afterwards she reflected that she felt "just so incredibly blessed to have the knowledge and the opportunity to take care of so many foods.

Just being in that place together and having it all in one place... worked out so naturally, perfectly, really.”

Doug framed his most important role not as being a teacher himself but as introducing the young people to the Land, “by just bringing them down to the longhouse and just bringing them down to the river, we’ve already accomplished that...as we’re all seeing, it’s playing out by each of these places we’re stopping” (Appendix A1). Doing-with-Land in this particular way “takes these kids out of their norm... they won’t get this same experience at home, they’re not going to get it in the classroom, it’s got to be out there. That’s where they grow” (J.B., Appendix A3). Particular places prompted particular actions and teachings; taking water from a spring led to a water song, passing a particular creek drainage to a story of a battle with raiding Bannocks, a pictograph site to a discussion of *wéeyekin*- tutelary spirit- and ancestral spiritual practices.

kuus (water) was particularly prominent as a teacher and agent- the ‘out of boat experience’ (as one member of our river crew refers to an unexpected swim) in the Green Room was framed by Tiyana as a highlight of the trip for her and A., the youth who swam. That night in the group session, which I did not observe, A. said, “my thorn was being out of the water, and then following that was, I like being in the water, because you can feel its power” (T.B., Appendix A1). Water’s centrality was unequivocal. For her, “our animal people, plant people, the full spectrum of everything relies on water. That landscape is completely moved by water” (T.B., Appendix A3). Water as a food was also honored: a stop at a spring led to an impromptu offering of song and a lesson for the youth, and that springwater was consumed before anything else in the first foods ceremony that evening. Water’s role as a teacher was not reserved for Indigenous participants of the trip- after my confrontation with the jetboaters at the start of my trip, I was advised, “you’ve gotta return to the water, return to those sources to help ground yourself” (T.B., Appendix A1), and I did, diving into the eddy at the boat ramp and letting the cool current strip away my anger.

Land, Identity, and Knowledge

Outside of its role as an active teacher, Land was also engaged as a core element of identity, both symbolically and very concretely. Identity comes from place; “geographically, a person has to orient themselves in a place from which they grow into the rest of the world,” and for Indigenous youth, the clear place to orient themselves from is Homeland. What white recreationists consider wilderness is for Indigenous people “our first home for us... The wild, the untamed, but you know, this is who we are right here” (J.B., Appendix A3).

As framed by Josiah, contact with Land helps Indigenous youth “understand their resilience in a harsh landscape like [*saqáanpa*]... to prepare themselves for the challenges that lie before them in life. You know, they can look back on the vast history of their people being in an area like that. For me, it’s empowering to think about the thousands of generations of people that struggled to carve out that lifestyle, and that language and that land relationship to put us here” (Appendix A3).

Identity is grounded within Land but also builds off of it; “it’s also language, it’s land relationships, it’s plants, it’s animals, it’s family.” Josiah acknowledges that processing and understanding *tamáalwit*, their “Divine Law” isn’t easy, even for Natives, rather, it “it’s really

complex. It's not easy to be 13 years old and have all of that laid out before you and not know what's out there.” (J.B., Appendix A3). *tamáalwit* permeates the living world, it's “in the grass, it's in the deer, it's in the trees, the water, it's in the very air that we breathe, that spiritual power, and the more that you're aware of it, the more empowering it is”.

Although interviews centered on the particular value of doings in *saqáanpa*, educators did not limit their association of identity and place to the canyon or river. Place at varying scales and varying degrees of corporeality was referenced, with a recurring focus on the longhouse- a center of spiritual activity and the “first home that people gathered within” (J.B., Appendix A3) that is designed to include the entire Plateau cosmology, from the earth (the wash) to the heavens (the triangular roof) to the plant and animal relatives (first foods) who are reverentially consumed there. Other places tied into identity were reservations and the Plateau at large, as well as specific types of landscapes (creeks, prairies, forests). Just as it was specifically recognized in its role as a teacher, *kuus* also was identified as a pivotal part of identity. Tiyana, a gatherer, asked, “without Water, who are we, what are we? As well as our foods” (Appendix A3). Staple traditional foods of roots and fish, as well as game, were all intrinsically linked to water, and *kuus* is honored in ceremonies as the first of all foods, preceding even salmon.

The relationship between particular ‘doings’ and the type and depth of knowledge those doings built was also discussed. Andrew brought up the example of an old man, a lifelong fisherman, who could “catch ten salmon and just by looking at them he could tell you where those salmon were going, where their headwaters were. He just knew by their little distinct look which rivers they were going to.” The shifts in Land-relationships from a reduction in fishing, hunting, and gathering were acknowledged; “that kind of knowledge is gone. We use microsatellite DNA to figure that shit out now. But that old man, he knew where all those fish were going.” These dynamics were not treated as damning. Rather they lent further urgency and importance to exposing young people to these lifeways and landscapes (A.W., Appendix A2). By perpetuating ancestral ways of doing, educators perpetuate their culture and history. Speaking as a gatherer about the first foods ceremony she performed, Tiyana held, “for myself to be sharing these foods, knowing the adversities that my ancestors faced, for their survival and the sacrifices that they made for my survival, there's a lot of reciprocity that needs to be acknowledged” (T.B., Appendix A3). In this way, doings-with-Land and the knowledges they support bridge the past, present, and future.

These Indigenous ontologies- ways of knowing and doing- are described by Josiah as “a sensitive relationship with the landscape,” a complex, ancient value system that Indigenous cultures “have been working on for a long time” (Appendix A3). Acknowledging that some extraction of resources is okay and one “can pull things from the world,” Josiah continues, “what's too much, and what's not enough? There's got to be a balance there. I'm not one to say that we shouldn't be using the wilderness- which is not wilderness to us, that's our home- but how do we do that sensitively? So that we can still take down trees and have paper, but not jeopardize air quality, or contribute to erosion more than we should. All that's deserving of attention, and it's the Indigenous populations that step up and say hey, that's too much, or

this is making us uncomfortable. There's a happy medium in there that's been sought out, honed, for generations by these Indigenous populations, and it's a very complex value hierarchy" (J.B., Appendix A3).

Future Elders: Cultural Revitalization, Responsibility, and Survival

The educators considered the link between Land and identity to be especially important for the youth participants, who they framed as coping with the dual pressures of figuring out who they are both as young adults and as Indigenous people. For all the educators, culture and Land are the foundations on which young people need to build in order to live successful, principled lives. Youth were referred to as 'future elders,' both as a sign of respect and as an indication of the responsibility they are inheriting.

Elderhood was the primary way that educators looked to the future, including for themselves; although much of the work is "planting seeds that we probably will never see," elderhood is a revered time when they can reflect on and share a life of accumulated knowledge and experience. Tiwana aims to be "that elder where kids will come up, and they will shake my hand, they will give me hugs, they might call me grandma," testament to the emphasis that is placed on respecting ancestors. Young people were frequently framed in terms of their future eldership; reflecting on the benefit of the impromptu first-foods ceremony Tiwana performed on the river, Josiah thought towards a time when the youth will be "50 years old, 60 years old. They're gonna be elders, and they're gonna remember that." By stewarding their relationship with *saqáanpa*, youth "could maybe even someday bring their grandchildren there and share that piece of history that they learned, so that they can continue those planned relationships. You know, once we bring our young people out there, they understand that piece of their history, they become a part of the land" (J.B., Appendix A3). In this way, culture is sustained and revitalized through time- a direct response to the lands and learnings lost over the past 200 years of settler contact.

Respect for land and history and the responsibility of carrying those relationships forward was also of central importance. Doug said in relation to his role as a trip leader and educator, "when I got the call I was very humbled because as I've shared before, [there are] so many other knowledge keepers, so many other people that've been doing this work for much longer, and who am I to participate, who am I to share?" This awareness of those who came before settled as a feeling of responsibility: "as we've been telling these kids, as you recognize these things that are growing inside of you then you have that kind of responsibility. By the end of the trip they're gonna have... that responsibility" (D.M., Appendix A1).

Responsibility was a major theme and was contrasted with rights. Treaty rights and sovereignty within the federal system, while important, are "merely a vessel for this sacred substance called responsibility and that's where I try to take the attention of my young people, to get them to think about what their responsibilities are. A right has a sense of entitlement, that something is supposed to flow towards you, but a responsibility is the other way around" (J.B., Appendix A1). Again, these considerations circle back to future elderhood, wherein youth are made to understand their inheritance through exposure to "that idea about

being a future ancestor, or asking them, what kind of elder are you going to be? That puts their mind off into the future, so that they're always thinking forward" (J.B., Appendix A1). This contrast of rights versus responsibilities can be useful when thinking about one's role as a caretaker of land and culture, where young people should ask themselves, "what does that mean when you're on the water, what does it mean to actually help keep the water clean and cold, what does it mean to speak for the salmon and the other insects on the water, and on the land?" For Doug, responsibility to Land "supersedes" and "precedes" colonial history and federal agreements, which prompts a constant struggle to "remind those policymakers there's a whole ancient history that is not in your policy decisions" (D.M., Appendix A1).

None of these statements negate the importance of contemporary tribal sovereignty and Treaty-ensured rights, but they do speak to the length of perspective the educators work to carry; land-relationships were being fostered long before the contemporary system came to be and will endure longer after it is gone. Young people are "knuckling up and they're face to the wind... empowered to do whatever it takes to keep surviving, because that's what this is all about" (J.B., Appendix A3). Contemporary Native people are still here because of the work of countless generations of ancestors, and for youth, "your responsibility is after you gain awareness and figur[e] that out, then you take up that work, and you suffer through it for your life. So that you can pass that on." In this sense, responsibility to people, culture, and Land boils down to survival, which is "what this is all about. It's all about survival. I think that's what makes us powerful" (J.B., Appendix A3).

III After

Leaving saqáanpa

At our **tuléhnenweespe** (Pittsburgh Landing) takeout, educators loaded youth into their vehicles and started the long drive home— as much as six hours for the CCT tribal members returning to Nespelem. Our guide crew loaded our boats and supplies up and followed them. As our truck and trailer laboriously ground up the switchbacks and crested over the ridge (the northern tail of the **siseqiy mex̄**, between **pik'uunin** and **naco'x kuus**), I had one last chance to look back at the upper reaches of saqáanpa, which had borne us through its depths and nurtured our hearts, minds, and bodies. I gave one last silent thanks. The river glinted bright blue in the afternoon sun, and then we were gone.

Limitations

Any discussion of the limitations of work of this nature must recognize that it transfers an embodied, phenomenological experience of living reality into abstraction. As referenced in the literature review, non-symbolic writing arguably marks a core shift away from animistic worldviews and into our disembodied contemporary state of being. Writing can function as one more degree of separation, while storytelling is a more embodied form of doing than writing and reading, and thus closer to the lived experience of the plants, animals, and other people featured in the stories. This theory appears to accurately reflect Plateau culture: put more concisely, "the elders say, if you write something down, you kill it" (J. Blackeagle, personal communication). This implies that writing and publishing adds a sense of finality to

research that shouldn't really exist- stories are living and as a researcher, your "mind and heart are going to go on for bigger and greater challenges, gonna add to this body of knowledge.. you'll look back in 5, 10, 30 years and think man, what was I thinking? That's a symptom of growth. That's what those old people meant" (J. Blackeagle, personal communication, 5/16/2023).

In this sense research is an active, iterative process of doing, in order to "take these old bones and breathe life back into them... the responsibility is as things go on, you revive it by conversation, giving life to it. Things aren't set in stone. it's kind of a primordial phrase, but in essence you're speaking to generations of people that will come to this, and give it a little time, clarity, and depth" (J. Blackeagle, personal communication, 5/16/2023). This dynamic and responsibility is especially clear to me as a newcomer to this place's cultures and histories; my perspective has continually developed and I know for a fact there will be information in this paper that is incorrect or framed poorly. In light of this, any writing produced is inherently limited. In lieu of sharing through action, a different and likely preferable way to speak to the magic that is this project would be an oral story.

The river trip as the core medium of doing-on-Land, while incredible, also presents certain limitations. These principally relate to temporality- while an immersive multi-day rafting trip is more than most can hope to enjoy, and it allowed us to build strong trust and connection rapidly (both between youth and educators from different reservations and between Natives and our white guide crew), we were ultimately only together for a brief period of time. As a researcher, this meant that collaborator buy-in was very high on the river and immediately following the trip, but as time stretched out on either side of the river, it became increasingly hard to engage the educators. I'd hoped to create a paper that was genuinely co-produced, but due to limitations in collaborator time and buy-in after the fact (not to mention my own struggles with focus and direction as a researcher) I had to settle for an auto-ethnography that sought to center the qualitative interview data I had been privileged to collect. In this respect the research does not fully clear Larsen and Johnson's call for a pivot towards research "conducted by and with Aboriginal peoples," while this research certainly was performed *with* Indigenous partners, it cannot be truly construed as being done *by* them. For similar reasons, this research cannot be considered participatory action research, although the non-academic collaboration certainly fits into many of those paradigms and it does exceed the standards of participatory research.

While a very rich form of doing, the river trip was also limited by simply being so short- from a phenomenological perspective, it gave youth glimpses into an ancestral Landscape, but did not permit the duration nor depth of contact that educators referenced when discussing the old ways (Appendix A1, A2, A3). This is not specifically a limitation of the medium, but rather of contemporary existence more generally- for educators and knowledge holders within Native communities, it is an ongoing conundrum to address this thematic, temporal, and geographic gap between ancestral ways of doing and the ways of doing pervasive throughout modern life.

Recreational rafting today is undeniably a product of a contemporary white culture that is deeply associated with value systems of wilderness, outdoor recreation, and public land. This culture (which I come from) is not without its merits, but the value systems that

support it have erased Native people and Indigenous ways of knowing and being from the landscape and reduced complex Land-relationships to a single bourgeois value of ‘recreation.’ Contemporary rafting in the United States is an overwhelmingly white, privileged endeavor, as it has been from its inception. This presents potential issues for Native people accessing the river and certainly informed the way our program guides showed up for the work. This paper does not spend much time discussing this potential cultural tension because it is less concerned with rafting as a subculture of recreation and more with rafting *as a tool*. In this regard, rafting is simply another technology, and Nez Perce culture is full of examples of adaptive use of outside technology, from the horse to the rifle to the ribbon shirt. Native people are not frozen in time, nor monolithic, and Native adoption of these technologies has always been framed as a positive, adaptive behavior by my partners. Rafting, to the extent we explicitly discussed it in these terms, was considered similarly adaptive.

Of course there is one other principle limitation of this paper- my position as a **soyapo** or an outsider, and especially at the time of the research my relative lack of prior knowledge or experience with Native cultures. It is certain that specific nuances, language, and events were lost on me given my inexperience, a process that certainly is still ongoing in other cultural engagements. I feel luckier than most non-Native academics in my position in that research participants and I got to connect over a very powerful method of shared doing-with-Land, but regardless of its efficacy, I am still me, and this paper is still subject to my biases and limitations in understanding. Representation and power play directly into the other key limitation of this paper- as construed initially, it was intended to focus predominantly on the youth, through their own voices and survey data. As mentioned in the methods section, there was justifiable reluctance of the educators to expose their young people to someone who at that time was a complete stranger working for an outside academic institution, and ultimately we decided not to pursue any kind of open-ended research with youth. Future research that engages more directly with youth perspectives and ideas would greatly enrich this work.

Beyond Research

A principal reason I struggled to finish this writing was the explosion of other doings following the first Saqáanma School. Leaving the trip, all of us- educators, students, guides- were struck by the importance of what we’d just experienced. Using a tool of the outdoor recreation community as a medium and guidance by Indigenous perspectives and values as a **lukuup’siimey** (‘to be without movement,’ North Star), we’d created an extremely powerful form of doing-with-Land. It was immediately clear to me that this was a heartwork I wanted to build and invest myself into, and the educators seemed to feel the same. I remained in particularly close contact with Tiyana and Josiah and after spending the fall considering different mechanisms, we decided to co-found a nonprofit dedicated to perpetuating this work. The Pandion Institute is named in honor of **sáaxsax** (Osprey, *Pandion haliaetus*), a river bird we all respect and admire. Recognizing the potential applications of this mechanism of doing in different cultural and geographical areas, we sought a name that was not based in any specific Indigenous language. Pandion’s mission speaks directly to the learnings from this first project:

The Pandion Institute brings together diverse partners to facilitate (re)connection of people and place through embodied experiences with Land. These educational trips center Indigenous voices, vision, and values, and provide place-based cultural, ecological, and outdoor skills-training education for Indigenous youth: our future elders.

We incorporated the nonprofit in December 2021 and are now approaching our second summer of programming- in 2022, Pandion worked with partner organizations National Geographic Photo Camps and Center for Geography Education in Oregon to run a photography camp for young people in wal'áawa and a rafting-based training on Indigenous geographies for Oregon K-12 teachers on qapqápnim wéele (the Grand Ronde River), in addition to a second year of Saqáanma School with core leadership from Nez Perce Wallowa Homeland. Saqáanma School continues- that summer we built an expanded program with an updated focus on water and a slight change in educators (Andrew Wildbill could not make the trip due to a new position so a new educator, Jeremy Wolf, joined as representing the Cayuse). We are currently convening and preparing for the third annual Saqáanma School, which will take place in July 2023 and continue to refine our educational methodology and focus. At Pandion, we are currently building out administrative and organizational systems to make sure this work can continue long into the future; we are proud to have an 80% Native board of directors, and to be transitioning towards an Indigenous executive director or co-director as soon as the table is set.

What started for me as little more than a nagging feeling of absence as I guided upper-middle-class, white clientele downriver has blossomed into a core part of my life and my heartwork. My gut, not theory, has chiefly informed these changes and this work, but Barker and Pickerill's call for a 'continuous commitment to a place and people' does describe my transition from stinky river-guide-researcher to partner (I still maintain identity as a stinky river guide) in this nonprofit work. The confluence Pandion operates at is not an easy or simple one: we are a collaboration between different Tribes and Native cultures as well as non-Natives like myself, and relationships can require constant, active work to upkeep. The process can be fraught and the road can feel narrow and untraveled, but my partners and I always come back to the Land. Shared doings-with-Land are what enabled this work and are what continues to animate it. The world is made, and re-made, through doing, and without doing-with-Land, we cannot hope to learn its teachings, nor the teachings of those who carry forward sensitive Land relationships.

Conclusion

Indigenous culture-bearers are fighting battles against both time, which claims elders and the attention of their young people, and our dominant cultural paradigm, which does not honor the Indigenous systems of values that create a sensitive relationship with the Land even as our lack of guidance sends us spiraling towards changes we cannot conceptualize. Implementation of Indigenous value-hierarchies will help sensitize Land relationships for everyone, and this implementation must stem from, and be guided by, our contemporary Indigenous communities.

This paper echoes many other voices in making the case that doings-with-Land are an essential aspect of building and maintaining Indigenous ways of being and knowing, a theme that occurred time and again on the river and through adult educator interviews. Doings-with-Land allows participants to be taught by Land, helps structure identity and an understanding of cultural heritage, and impresses upon participants the responsibility they carry as ‘future elders’ to generations past, present and future. Within the context of doings, whitewater rafting informed by Indigenous culture is a unique and powerful medium of doing-with-Land. Rafting facilitated embodied experience in *saqáanpa* and for many students, the most memorable aspects of the trip were directly tied to rafting, particularly the relationship with animate water that was built adventuring through the rapids. Shared doings-with-Land also enabled the cross-cultural collaboration and trust-building necessary to not only make this project successful but to facilitate the sustained ‘commitment to place and people’ that any work of this nature should ultimately involve. Collaboration outside of shared doings-with-Land has proven to be less rewarding and effective, although it is unlikely that this is a function of centering shared experience with Land; rather it is the norm of cross-cultural collaboration between Indigenous communities and outsiders, and doings-with-Land provide a powerful tool for bridging these barriers and bringing us together.

Re-establishing a sensitive relationship with Land requires doings with and on it, and localized Indigenous systems of being and knowing provide the guidance necessary to navigate these relationships. Healthy landscapes support strong, sensitive cultures, which steward and maintain healthy landscapes. Although this work should begin with and center Indigenous people, it is crucial for all people. Without major adjustments to our collective ways of being and knowing, we set ourselves, the plant and animal people, and the Land that cradles all of us on a path towards disaster.

Sources Cited

1. Abram, D. (1996). *The spell of the sensuous: Perception and language in a more-than-human world*. Vintage.
2. Ashurst, D. H. (2009). *Promoting sense of place and culture in science: a study of the effectiveness of a cross-cultural, marine science curriculum through experiential exploration* (Doctoral dissertation).
3. Barker, Adam J., and Jenny Pickerill. "Doings with the land and sea: Decolonising geographies, Indigeneity, and enacting place-agency." *Progress in Human Geography* 44.4 (2020): 640-662.
4. Bernholz, C. D., & Weiner Jr, R. J. (2008). The Palmer and Stevens "Usual and Accustomed Places" treaties in the opinions of the courts. *Government Information Quarterly*, 25(4), 778-795.
5. Brown, G., & Raymond, C. (2007). The relationship between place attachment and landscape values: Toward mapping place attachment. *Applied geography*, 27(2), 89-111.
6. Clark, Ella E. (1953). *Indian Legends of the Pacific Northwest*. University of California Press, Berkeley, CA.
7. Coombes, B., Johnson, J. T., & Howitt, R. (2014). Indigenous geographies III: Methodological innovation and the unsettling of participatory research. *Progress in Human Geography*, 38(6), 845-854.
8. Country, B., Wright, S., Suchet-Pearson, S., Lloyd, K., Burarrwanga, L., Ganambarr, R., ... & Sweeney, J. (2016). Co-becoming Bawaka: Towards a relational understanding of place/space. *Progress in human geography*, 40(4), 455-475.
9. Deloria, V., & Wildcat, D. R. (2001). *Power and place: Indian education in America*. Fulcrum Publishing.
10. Di Giminiani, P. (2013). The contested rewe: sacred sites, misunderstandings, and ontological pluralism in Mapuche land negotiations. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 19(3), 527-544.
11. Fabian, J. (1991). Dilemmas of critical anthropology. *Constructing knowledge: authority and critique in social science*, 180-202.
12. Harding, A., Harper, B., Stone, D., O'Neill, C., Berger, P., Harris, S., & Donatuto, J. (2012). Conducting research with tribal communities: Sovereignty, ethics, and data-sharing issues. *Environmental health perspectives*, 120(1), 6-10.
13. Hunn, E. S., Owl, E. T. M., Cash, P. C., Engum, J. K., Haug, D. B., Conner, R., ... & Minthorn, M. J. (2015). *Čáw Pawá Láakni*. Tamastsiikt Cultural Institute.
14. Johnson, J. T. (2012). Place-based learning and knowing: Critical pedagogies grounded in Indigeneity. *GeoJournal*, 77(6), 829-836.
15. Josephy, A. M. (1965). *The Nez Perce Indians and the opening of the Northwest*. Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.
16. Kammerer, J.C. (1990). "Largest Rivers in the United States". *United States Geological Survey*.

17. Karson, J. (Ed.). (2015). *Wiyaxayxt/Wiyaakaa'awn/As Days Go By: Our History, Our Land, Our People--The Cayuse, Umatilla, and Walla Walla*. University of Washington Press.
18. Kimmerer, R. (2013). *Braiding sweetgrass: Indigenous wisdom, scientific knowledge and the teachings of plants*. Milkweed editions.
19. Larsen, S. C., & Johnson, J. T. (2012). *In between worlds: place, experience, and research in Indigenous geography*. *Journal of Cultural Geography*, 29(1), 1-13.
20. Leeuw, S. D., Cameron, E. S., & Greenwood, M. L. (2012). Participatory and community-based research, Indigenous geographies, and the spaces of friendship: A critical engagement. *The Canadian Geographer/Le Géographe canadien*, 56(2), 180-194.
21. Martin, K., & Mirraboopa, B. (2003). Ways of knowing, being and doing: A theoretical framework and methods for indigenous and indigenist re-search. *Journal of Australian studies*, 27(76), 203-214.
22. Norton-Smith, T. M. (2010). *The dance of person and place: One interpretation of American Indian philosophy*. Suny Press.
23. O'Connor, K. B. (2009). Northern exposures: Models of experiential learning in Indigenous education. *Journal of Experiential Education*, 31(3), 415-419.
24. Ortiz, S. (2007). Indigenous language consciousness: Being, place, and sovereignty. *Sovereign bones: new native American writing*, 135-148.
25. Simon-Smolinski, C. (2014). *Hells Canyon and the middle Snake River: a story of the land and its people*. Confluence Press.
26. Smith L. S. (1999). *Decolonising methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples*. New York: Zed Books.
27. Robertson S (2016) 'Thinking of the land in that way': Indigenous sovereignty and the spatial politics of attentiveness at Skwelkwel'welt. *Social & Cultural Geography* 18(2): 178-200.
28. Semken, S. (2005). Sense of place and place-based introductory geoscience teaching for American Indian and Alaska Native undergraduates. *Journal of Geoscience Education*, 53(2), 149-157.
29. Semken, S., & Freeman, C. B. (2008). Sense of place in the practice and assessment of place-based science teaching. *Science Education*, 92(6), 1042-1057.
30. Smith, L. T. (1999). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and indigenous peoples*. Zed Books Ltd..
31. Sobotta, A., Sonneck, V., and Scott, B. (2003). "Nimipuutímt Volume 3." *Nez Perce Tribe Language Program*.
32. Sonneck, V., and Sobotta, A. (2004). "Nimipuutímt Volume 4." *Nez Perce Tribe Language Program*.
33. Johnson, Jay, and S. Larsen. "A deeper sense of place." *Stories and Journeys of Indigenous-Academic Collaboration* (2013).
34. Watson, A., & Huntington, O. H. (2008). They're here—I can feel them: the epistemic spaces of Indigenous and Western Knowledges. *Social & Cultural Geography*, 9(3), 257-281.

35. Williams, D. R., & Vaske, J. J. (2003). The measurement of place attachment: Validity and generalizability of a psychometric approach. *Forest science*, 49(6), 830-840.
36. Wright, S., Lloyd, K., Suchet-Pearson, S., Burarrwanga, L., Tofa, M., & Country, B. (2012). Telling stories in, through and with Country: engaging with Indigenous and more-than-human methodologies at Bawaka, NE Australia. *Journal of cultural geography*, 29(1), 39-60.

Appendix A: Interview Transcripts

A1. Doug Marconi, Josiah Blackeagle, Tiyana Blackeagle 07/21/2021, Hells Canyon, Oregon

Clark: The research, for me, I think the more that we just talked about stuff, the more I was like, really it [the research] should serve the trip, that participatory model. It should be about the goals of the trip and the group. We talked about the sense of the seasonal round and all the other educational objectives that you guys had.

Josiah: What were the objectives that you guys discussed?

Tiyana: it was mostly just for them [trip participants] to understand the importance of water- healthy, cold, clean water- and introduce them to the seasonal round and explore their understanding of it and reconnect them with relationships to the land. Mostly seasonal round but really we're open to anything that came up since this was all of our first times out here. So this is like the pilot and now we're going to start refining our objectives and really hone in on something that would be really tangible for future programming.

C: mhm. We talked about this all last night, but what aspects of being out here have seemed to be the most effective for the kids, or you know... what's been working?

T: yeah, what really came up was how- I really like what [the youngest student] said about the power of the water and how his thorn of the day was being out of the water. I thought that was really adorable. They really love being out here. They're moved by it and they're humbled by it. So even though there were some terrifying moments yesterday with the Green Room everyone that mentioned something about it- I noticed that one of the kids mentioned that it [the green room] is both my thorn of the day and my rose, I overcame it and I survived it. It was scary and shocking

C: it's pretty crazy to see the change from seeing the kids arrive at the homeland the other night- seeing the awkward conversations and the pauses, you know-

T: they're still there **laughter** but definitely breaking shells and forming new friendships. I noticed that some new friendships were forming. I think that's just wonderful. That's another reason I wanted to get kids out here from multiple communities that are all related to this landscape because it's important for us to have these inter-tribal relationships that are strong, healthy, strong relationships.

J: I think one of the really powerful connections that we've made on this trip are having some of our elders, our language speakers, together with these young people in settings that are tied to who they are. In particular, I think that it's really appropriate to have the beginning of this at the longhouse because that's the first home that people gathered under, gathered within, so to kick it off like that is pretty cool. And then from there, coming out here is a

good reminder of where their true home is. I think that's one difference- this is wilderness to outsiders, but this is our first home for us.

T: That's well put. It's like wilderness others.

J: The wild, the untamed, but you know, this is who we are right here. This is why kids are sent out by themselves to places like this, they're reconnecting with who they are, humbling themselves.

C: You can really see that the relationship to land, water, place- even just facilitating that- they just dive right in. That was one thing- [the youngest student], you know how you had to drag him out of bed, Doug?

T: Yeah and that first day right here he wasn't comfortable being on that boat [the 16], he started out on the paddle raft, and now he's riding solo on a kayak. That's incredible.

Doug: Yeah, I think about going back to the planning ideas and objectives, you know you mentioned that, and I think we've already accomplished that just by having kids down here. Getting kids like [the youngest student]- he's never been to Oregon and he's never been here. So that idea that we could bring kids from different reservations, from different homelands to this homeland and this place. And so by just bringing them down to the longhouse and just bringing them down to the river we've already accomplished that. And that sort of started the work, and as we're all seeing, it's playing out by each of these places we're stopping. Each of these place names we've spent a lot of time talking about that with some of our first zoom calls, thinking about, "so what is it about place?" and we all agree that it's about place-names, too. When we can identify those on the land and we go to those places, then that's where we build that kind of relationship. For these kids, it's going to be their first time in this place. Sort of planting that seed so that its gonna grow within them and then they're gonna want to come back. That's what we're seeing the whole time. Build that relationship.

T: [a student] actually said that- she was like, are you guys doing this next year?

J: Yup.

D: Already, already wanting to come back. I think too, some of the early discussions we had as a group, when I got the call I was very humbled because as I've shared before so many other knowledge keepers, so many other people that've been doing this work for much longer, and who am I to participate, who am I to share? But as we've been telling these kids, as you recognize these things that are growing inside of you then you have that kind of responsibility. By the end of the trip they're gonna have that thing that says I have that responsibility.

J: Yeah.

T: Yup, exactly.

D: That's so powerful and you cannot teach that in the classroom. There's no sort of academic standard that can really measure that. So this [the land] is the classroom and this is where we practice.

T: And then they're going to teach their grandchildren, their children their relationship to this place. Both their own experience and everything that they learned. They're going to come back to these places with their children and tell them what they learned about that spring.

C: On what Josiah said -an attitude that I think you guys all share- about future ancestors, and making those investments for the sake of the culture and the people, that's really got me thinking too. Thinking about home and family culture and that stuff. It's cool.

J: One of the approaches that I always try to take with my young people is I try not to use the term right. We're a treaty Tribe and this area, the Nez Perce people gave this to the United States in exchange for recognition of our inherent sovereign right to govern ourselves, to take care of ourselves. But that right is merely a vessel for this sacred substance called responsibility and that's where I try to take the attention of my young people, to get them to think about what their responsibilities are. A right has a sense of entitlement, that something is supposed to flow towards you, but a responsibility is the other way around. And that's what I try to get these young people to understand. So that idea about being a future ancestor, or asking them, what kind of elder are you going to be? That puts their mind off into the future, so that they're always thinking forward. I want them to grow into people like Doug here, where he steps up and he has a responsibility to do something for the young people. They'll be there, you know?

D: That's a common theme for us too, back home, too, because back home is not part of a treaty. Executive order. Even within our band, Palouse people as well, they didn't sign a treaty, so within the conflict- that intertribal conflict that's already been mentioned- I think when we're out here and were talking about that kind of responsibility and not a right in that way that you said, that goes a long way in beginning to really understand: what does that mean when you're on the water, what does it mean to actually help keep the water clean and cold, what does it mean to speak for the salmon and the other insects on the water, and on the land. We're not bound by a paper, then. We're not bound by some agreement with the federal government. It sort of supersedes that, precedes that, and I think that reminder in these contexts where it is sort of wild- if you want to use that term wild, but not in the way that we do- at the end of the day having to really understand that, and for us, really bring that home, as we go back home to our reservations, to our places, having to remind those policymakers there's a whole ancient history that is not in your policy decisions. How can that be improved, so that we're teaching our kids that too?

C: **points out suicide point and the hominy eddy**

J: See that little saddle? *Sahpots Sahpots* (phoenetic transcription of **sapo'saapó's**)

T: In '*Ichishkíin*, it's *Sahpoh Sapoh* (phonetic transcription)

J: Look at the depth of that canyon there. There's always this affinity for the color blue. Nez Perces are really big on blue. Pink too, but blue in particular because when you're standing at the crest of the Bitterroots and you look out at that green, it's like everything fades to blue. Scientifically blue is one of the strongest colors because it's able to permeate the atmosphere.

T: It's the color that reflects off of water.

J: Yeah, it's the color of water.

C: Why do the Nez Perce have an affinity for pink?

J: Pink? I think it has to do with the early morning and the evening. Because that's the more noteworthy or noticeable points of the day, you know? Because that's when the big change is occurring. Daylight, you can't really rationalize it or absorb it in the same way as you can transitioning from- when you get up really early and it's really dark, and you see those colors start to change, that's a powerful transition.

C: Yeah. Speaking of powerful transitions, that's a strong eddy. I really like this feature, this eddy- this big bend curves around that way and hits this huge wall and then bends around the corner again. You can see how fast this water is moving, almost as fast as the main current, but upstream. At high water, this whole gravel bar that's exposed here floods. It's this huge recirculating eddy the size of this whole space, and it- **the raft is spun by the current back into the eddy** might have to just go with it. **laughter**

D: Did you say feature or did you say teacher?

C: I said feature, but teacher would be appropriate too. Getting taught right now.

J: Yeah, just go with it.

D: That's something I was telling my son last night because he was getting frustrated. Well, you were taught something today, and it's trying to teach you something. And he was just really frustrated or upset- he was almost angry- about going under, not being able to really control where he was going.

There's so many times on this trip- as we were planning this, you know, what are we going to teach, what are we going to talk about? One of the approaches we said was just gonna let the land do that for us, just going to let things play out as they happen.

T: This is our teacher.

C: It's cool that you found those clams, you know, I knew they were here, but I've never had the time **pulled into eddy by side current a second time** shit, well, I guess we can do another lap **laughter**.

D: I'm in no hurry.

J: Go with it, go with it!

C: Go with it. Yeah. I know there's lots of clams in the river because this beaches specifically, there's a high water line type of thing that's just covered in these bleached clamshells. Years and years and years of clamshells.

T: Probably eaten then.

J: Shell midden. They call that a shell midden

C: There's really no other place on this stretch of river like that that I'm aware of, and I think it's because of this crazy water feature here and the high water, the way it works.

C: That's all that was needed, one more pull at the right time.

T: I mean we've had so many teachable moments out here, from good experiences we've been able to celebrate, and then talking through the bad experiences.

All: yeah.

T: Everybody's thorns that were brought up. The people we encountered before we launched. All the people that are out here. You look at them and they're either white families or people from other countries who have a lot of money. They [the kids] bring that stuff up, they're observant.

C: Yeah. The kids are talking about that?

T: We had a discussion about privilege and our relationship to Homeland. We've had good conversations with them, taking every moment as they come and making a lesson out of them.

C: That was a good reminder for me, that whole jet boat incident, that just- I like to joke, because a lot of people choose to not engage with it- that, "oh yeah, the river's an apolitical space". But truly... it is a political thing to have native bodies out here. I think it really is meaningful. And that pushback... I don't know, that just really...

D: **laughs** I guess that's part of the argument for us Clark, though, that's not a new thing.

T: Yeah.

D: That's not a new- we're not really surprised by that.

T: We experience that all the time.

C: That's what got me thinking, I need to not be so upset about this.

T: it's good for you to address it too, and to take that as a teachable moment as well. What are you learning from it and how can you address it better next time. Be an advocate, if we have young people out here-

D: Yeah and I could see you, when that was playing out, how you came to the defense rather quickly, and then when you got pushback, when you got friction, and she held her ground- and something you didn't see, but I actually was hanging around waiting for everyone to leave and there was a couple more folks that came up and she was sort of almost bragging to her friends about what she did. That's what triggered me to say something. But that whole mindset and that concept and that way that they even approached the table in a group, yeah man, it's been around for a couple hundred years. Varying scales, varying kinds of intensities. But very much heartbreaking for me to be so close to the water and then for that to happen so early in our trip.

T: both of the girls that were sitting next to where that happened, they both came to me and said that was their thorn for the day.

D: yeah, unprompted.

C: That was my thorn, for sure. Later thinking about, thinking about getting so upset, and how I could have conducted myself better- or not even that, but just about the nature of getting so upset- and thinking about your guys' experience, how that's the norm in a lot of engagements with white culture. It made me think about how insular... my perspective is in that. I got so triggered because I haven't had to confront that so viscerally a whole lot in my life. I come from a space that's so white, it's buried.

T: Honestly for me- and I'm sure this is true for any Indigenous person- it gets exhausting. You have to pick and choose your battles. Just let it brush off **laughs** I mean, as an Indigenous person on social media and other plant medicine gathering groups, I monitor some of this stuff and it's an immediate trigger for people.. I'll have these very neutral, non-offending, I'm just gonna bring something up that you should understand, and it's immediate. I know I exhaust myself by standing up to the challenge. I'm learning better as I get older to pick and choose my battles very wisely. At that moment I should have said something because we had all these young people here.

C: Is there anything in the way I conducted myself that you guys would have me do differently in that situation?

T: I wasn't able to listen to what all was said but in that situation, with COVID being a thing, the number one concern is safety. We don't know who these people are, what their home life is like, what their lifestyle is like.

D: I guess what I thought, Clark, was there was a space for you to stop what you were doing immediately and go somewhere else. But then I recognize we're very limited on space. But that was a conflict, and that's why that conflict was there. We were literally fighting for real estate.

T: Everybody was fighting for real estate.

D: She didn't ask to share, she took

T: Exactly, she took.

D: There is that opportunity and a challenge then to either find somewhere new or try to do some kind of engagement. As you said, it gets very tiring and you learn to choose your battles. And we learn that too from some of our elders and past generations. Federal policy was put in place for so many generations to keep us down. So many of our folks have just learned to turn the other cheek, go the other way.

T: My energy was supposed to be with the kids. I think that's why I didn't step up and say something. I was preparing to pray. I just had to let that run off me so that I could help welcome these kids and put protections on people the way that I do.

C: That's why I didn't keep pushing when she said no. I talked to them afterwards, after I heard you [Doug] say something. I knew that you guys were aware but that was just a reminder.

T: I think how I could've changed the situation a little bit was to actually see who was coming to the table. I noticed they were elderly and disabled and I was getting peeved out until I saw the gentleman come up with the crutches in both hands. That's when I felt like I needed to move around to this side. They are old people and they were getting off their boat on their little trip, and privilege or no privilege, they were not comfortable. I would've rather just got everybody back into that circle where we started before just moving back.

C: Yeah, that makes sense. Like you said, that's a good learning experience.

T: That's when I just let it go. I'm like- looks like Clark is letting it go, he's like pshh, there you go. And that's good. You've gotta return to the water, return to those sources to help ground yourself.

A2. Andrew Wildbill**10/18/21, Pendleton, Oregon**

C: That's cool that you have that history accessible to- you said- your grandparents?

A: Great grandparents.

C: So when was that? When were those interviews made?

A: Probably in the 80s. Early 80s. It had to be like late 70s and early 80s

C: Did they have a lot of language?

A: Something like language on my rez- we only have like 5 fluent speakers left.

C: Thought it was around that number. Is there revitalization work in the same way that- I talked to Louis and his son, some other Nez Perce folks about how they're trying to work it into the school curriculum. Is it kind of that same deal?

A: So, we have three languages- Cayuse language basically wasn't spoken for a very long time. I don't know- I was told that Cayuse only taught Cayuse our language. And then as we became closer with Nez Perce people, with a lot of intermarriage, we started to use the Nez Perce language more than the Cayuse language. So our- we have a different dialect of Nez Perce on our reservation that my grandparents grew up with. And out of, so my grandparents, my grandma's generation, they all had grown up speaking Cayuse. In my generation, he has like 41 cousins, there was only one of them that was raised with their language. And he just

recently passed. But what's crazy, he was the only grandchild to my grandparents that was taught our language out of all of those grandkids. I didn't even know he was a speaker- Cayuse was his first language- and I didn't even know he was a speaker until after he passed. No one ever told me anything.

C: That was one thing I definitely wanted to talk about, partially because you could explain it better without me fumbling around, is the relationship between the Cayuse and the Nez Perce. Why you've decided to be involved with the Homeland Project, all of that.

A: Well, I moved back to Pendleton in 2016 because I was spending so much- I lived in the Dalles for four, five years. And I drove home probably like, thirty five to forty fucking weekends a year.

C: That's brutal.

A: Yeah. I would drive home on a Friday and stay until Sunday to help with community stuff. So my family and I spent so much time in Pendleton I was like, I need to move home. Because I have stuff to do every other weekend. So I moved home in Sixteen and while I was home, my uncle Andy asked me to help with a few things over in Wallowa, so I started participating in the longhouse meetings, and then I basically from there just kept helping out and became a board member. I just became a member of the executive committee a few months back.

C: Chairman of the board! **laughter**

A: Cayuse and Nez Perce people really used the Wallowas and that's something that's really not shared very well. So the people in the Wallowa valley think that that's just Nez Perce territory. The juxtaposition of the CTUIR- the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation- their juxtaposition puts them in the middle of the Yakima, Nez Perce, and Warm Springs with everything. So there's a lot of shared territory.

C: Totally, especially having multiple different ethnic groups form one federal Tribe.

A: Yeah. Cayuse people a lot of the Minam area and going back to my great grandpa Philip Geyer's *[phonetic spelling]* generation. His uncle actually spent a lot of time there. So like my great great uncle spent a lot of time in the Minam and Lostine. There's a lot of old history that people don't talk about.

C: I honestly didn't know that.

A: So, since I've been on the board I've tried to get the board to acknowledge and be open minded about including Cayuse in the Nez Perce homeland project. Because that's something that was forgotten. And actually to credit the founders of the homeland project are from Pendleton- the Connors. They're from Pendleton. The Connor family, they got to know the elders of this community and they actually interviewed a lot of them. A lot of the people

around here told them about that area being Cayuse territory. When they started the homeland, the vision of it, they excluded Cayuse from that discussion and stuck to just Nez Perce.

C: Do you know why that is?

A: Just- I don't know, actually, honestly. And just to be blunt about it, the people of the Wallowa valley- the current white occupiers of that land, they really grasp on to that Nez Perce story.

C: yeah, Chief Joseph, all that being iconic.

A: It is very iconic and so the white people of the area grasp onto that and they go with it and so do the Nez Perce Tribe. They don't like us over there. They don't like seeing Cayuse people in the Wallawas, that's just bluntly true. And so me as being on the board of the Homeland Project, I've always wanted that inclusiveness of basically, when you go to Tamkaliks Powwow and there's a lot of people from Umatilla, probably fifty to sixty percent of people who show up are from Pendleton. Some Nez Perce people don't like that. They just want to see just Nez Perce people there. But that's something they forget- our people lived there too.

It's been held up in court- it's called the Mason Trilogy. It's a fishing court cases.

C: We talked about this a bit on the trip, I think.

A: Yesh. So in these mason court cases, the state was trying to tell us we don't belong further east, they tried to exclude us from the Imnaha, but through these court cases we established we do have rights in that area. So the Minam, Lostine, grand ronde basin. And the Imnaha.

C: Even all the way to the Imnaha.

A: Yeah, so we have fishing rights in the Imnaha. Basically, there's so many things going on in the Wallawas that are outside of the state and local governments but from a tribal perspective, we use that area a lot. It's just something that we need to reestablish. We still hunt and fish over there. We fish on the Imnaha on an annual basis with Nez Perce people. There's times where they don't like us over there. There's definitely going to be some arguments. They don't like to see us on the Looking Glass [camp]. The truth is, the Grand Ronde basin was actually in our original treaty negotiations. My Cayuse people, during the treaty negotiations, were trying to- our reservation wasn't going to be on the Umatilla basin. They wanted it to be the Grande Ronde basin. And so when the Nez Perce signed their treaty in 1855 it actually included us. We maybe talked about this too.

C: I think we didn't. So the Cayuse were actually included in-

A: the Nez Perce treaty of 1855. In section 2. So there's, I don't remember how many sections, but in section 2 of their treaty it says the Cayuse, Umatilla, and Walla Walla will occupy the Grande Ronde basin from the grand ronde basin actually all the way to the Snake and up to the Bitterroots. So pretty much we could stay on their entire reservations as tribal people. This was because my forefathers were negotiating at that time for us to live in the Grande Ronde basin. The entire Wallowa area- that whole drainage goes into the Grande Ronde.

C: The Wallowa, the lake, everything west of the Imnaha. That's really interesting, I didn't know that at all.

A: So in their actual 1855 treaty, it has Cayuse, Umatilla, and Walla Walla. That's what people tend to forget. With that all going down then, and us trying to move forward and keep helping each other out, it really boils down to resource management. Fisheries are limited, the hunting can be limited, but really it's fishing. Tribes butt heads when it's like well, you didn't put enough money into this fishery, you don't deserve to fish it. But that's not the mindset of the old people. It's a shared resource.

C: The Stevens Treaty Tribes basically can hunt and gather across the west in general, right? I was talking to some Nez Perce friend about them going out to buffalo hunt outside of Yellowstone. Historically, all of those peoples were so mobile that- what are the effective limits of that range for you guys?

A: I guess it's not- I don't know. There's just not., We have a huge range. We have, right now, three different maps that we use. Our original reservation boundary which was 600,000 acres. Within 30 years of that original reservation boundary being ratified by congress, it was reduced down to 200,000 acres. Now we have our diminished political boundary. With the Stevens Treaty Tribes, you have usual and accustomed places, which was really large. We were so mobile with our horses. Nez Perce and Cayuse people had the most horses per capita vs any other plateau and plains Tribe. We literally had hundreds of horses, so we were very mobile. We were both very well known for our horses and ponies.

C: Like the Appaloosa...

A: And the Cayuse pony. A very sought after horse that Cayuse raised they weren't very big like an Appaloosa, but they were very strong and they had very high stamina, they were known to run for several days. They were short with big heads. And we actually had tribal people from the plains come here to raid our ponies and take them home.

C: Out of curiosity, have there been breeding programs like the way the Nez Perce Tribe has tried with the appaloosa?

A: No, because we really lost- when we were told we couldn't have horses anymore, they canned all of our horses. They shot and killed all of our horses. That breed that we had developed over a couple centuries is all gone.

C: Man.

A: So you have a usual and accustomed boundary and then you have your very own specific exclusive area. But it's your usual and accustomed area that has a lot of overlap.

That's what we all consider joint use areas. My people from Seattle, they went to British Columbia, into Canada, down to northern California and parts of Nevada, all over Oregon, parts of Idaho, and Western Montana. We were very mobile with our resources, whether we were trading or hunting or fishing.

C: I'm curious with that context- that was super helpful. I kind of understood that about the Cayuse but wanted to talk to you to grasp it. I noticed on the trip that you guys as an educator team representing a pretty wide geographical space and different groups of people who all had that overlapping shared territory. You guys didn't talk about specific history, we didn't talk about Chief Joseph at all, any of that stuff.

I'm curious how you walk that line between being Cayuse and wanting to represent Cayuse people and being a Columbia Plateau Native person more largely- how you find that space in between?

A: There's a lot of stuff that Nez Perce people don't do a lot of. We're all part of this Columbia Plateau Tribes where we- there was a lot of intermarriage, a lot of trade going on. Something that the Nez Perce and Cayuse people don't have is a lot of commercial fishermen that fish.

There's all these different political boundaries. There's like this Zone 6 tribal fishing boundary that's commercial that's from Bonneville Dam to McNary dam, that's Zone 6. We don't have a lot of tribal fishermen that fish that commercially. It's like a 22 million dollar, 25 million dollar industry. Tribal Columbia River salmon sales.

C: Wow.

A: yeah, twenty-something million dollars a year. Of that, the Nez Perce Tribe and CTUIR, those two Tribes only make up about 2 million dollars in fish sales. The other 19 or 20 million in fish sales is either Yakima fisherman or Warm Springs fisherman.

So we have all these political agreements and all these traditional use areas that have a lot of overlap. So for me to represent and teach youth about these different things. Me as a Cayuse guy, fishing down in the Dalles, people didn't like me being down there. I didn't grow up fishing there. I grew up in Cascade Locks fishing with all the other Umatillas. Not being from the Dalles and wanting to fish there, people who lived there their whole life, they didn't like it. They didn't like seeing a Cayuse guy show up and build a scaffold. I had to meet and make family to be accepted, and that was one of my only ways to be able to set up a scaffold and fish down there for my family. It was to show people that that place means just as much to me as it does to them. The problem that people have on the river is that it [fishing] is their

livelihood. So the people that fish down there, as much as possible, that's how they make their money. As far as Cayuse and Nez Perce, I have a lot of Nez Perce family. That intermarriage between the two Tribes goes back quite a few generations. Chief Joseph, he's Cayuse. His dad was half Cayuse. So old Joseph was half Cayuse. Sometimes that's a talking point when Nez Perce people are getting upset about us fishing or hunting in their area. It's like, well, you know, the leader on your flag is Cayuse too. I don't know if that's very.. helpful.
chuckles

The Tribes are close, very closely related. Cayuse and Nez Perce people.

C: how much of those tensions do you think are the result of those longer term cultural differences versus just the Federal Tribe system that exists now, where you're a Umatilla, versus the Nez Perce Tribe.

A: That's a good question, because it's totally a result of federal regulation. My grandparents and a lot of people's grandparents- it's all about money. Prior to Celilo being inundated with water, the four Tribes- you could actually be dually enrolled. My great grandfather was actually enrolled Nez Perce and Cayuse. He had land in Nez Perce country that he inherited from his mom. Basically, when this money came about, the federal government said you can't get this money as both a Nez Perce and a Umatilla, or a Umatilla and a Cayuse. You have to be one or the other. That's where that line was drawn.

Also as resources became very limited- the states mismanaged game, fish and game, really really bad. They poisoned a lot of rivers to stock fish. That was messed up. That's the very first part of our identity- water and fish,. So the states, Washington, Oregon, Idaho, all started poisoning rivers to stock sport fish. As soon as that started happening the fish weren't coming back. As the result of that, there was limited resources. Each Tribe is trying to go back to their own traditional fishing areas. The Imnaha's a good example. Those fish have struggled for a long time. They're big, nice fish. There's stories of our people from here going to the Imnaha and actually gaffing fish from horseback. They would go over there and camp out in the high mountains and on a daily basis they would ride down to the Imnaha and gaff fish from horses. And then they'd pack those out after they were done and go up top and take care of them. They'd dry them out right there, and that was a very common thing. And then as the state started misnaming all these resources, that basically put the Tribes against each other. Not only did we have to argue with the state, we had to argue with the other Tribes that use the same resource. When there's only 100 salmon when there used to be thousands, that's not good for anybody. It's the dogfight, you know? You stay out of my bowl of food.

C: It gets so complicated when it's coming from a culture, a set of cultures, with that kind of mobility that you talked about. Those firm borders are kind of arbitrary, the result of the US and colonialism. I feel like that makes it more complicated to resolve those tensions when everyone kind of was everywhere, and arguably has a right to everywhere.

A: Yeah, it definitely makes things more complicated. That's something that we kind of didn't- I wanted to talk to the kids about- was resource management and mis-management, but we

just didn't get there. There's definitely a lot of things that we could have done on that trip that we didn't get to, but I'm totally fine on trying to work on getting things better for the next trip.

C: Yeah. Yeah, I'd like that.

A: So, there's a lot of stuff about dams we could've covered and we didn't. There's- we didn't talk about dams. We could have talked about fish. We talked a little bit about water, but we definitely could have done a lot more. I'm not saying we did a bad job, but we definitely could've added some in.

C: Next year, so I talked to Paul and I think we'll- Angela will get the grant money we need- so I've locked in that same set of dates. The launch date of the 26th. We can decide how long we want that to go. I was thinking maybe a 4 day trip to Pittsburgh would be cool, just to pace stuff better or do a layover day. Really have that rich time to get into stuff. I think there's some pacing stuff that we could change for sure.

A: We didn't get to fish, we were too busy having fun. I think a four day trip would really be helpful. We could go a little slower, just chill out, and have a little bit more discussion.

C: Totally. I wanted to get your perspective on why you think it's important for these kids to have this experience in place, in land in general. What that connection- like, why getting them out on the land and on the water is valuable.

A: I really think that a lot of tribal kids don't get to have that experience in nature at all. Here at my home, we- my friends and my family and my community, there's not very many hunters. There's not a lot of interest in hunting. There's 3500 or 3800 tribal members here and probably at the most, we have 125 hunters. And out of that 125 there might only be like 65 avid hunters, who harvest more than one elk and one deer a year. And when you get down to fishing, there's way less fishermen. I could ask our Creeler how many fishermen, how many different tribal fishermen, he interviews in a salmon season, and it's definitely less than 80.

C: What does a Creeler do?

A: A fisheries Creeler? Basically he does interviews with fishermen about their hours and their catch to try to basically figure out what the total escapement of the fishery was. So I could ask our creeler and I bet he intervirews the same 50 people a year because there isn't any other fishermen.

We have very low hunters and very low fishermen. There just isn't a lot of people teaching that anymore.

C: Would it be the same thing for gathering, for digging?

A: Yeah, gathering- a lot of people go and pick huckleberries, but there just isn't a lot of people that go gather on a regular basis. You can see that in a lot of ceremonies. It seems like our gatherers are always from the same few families. Sometimes we have 10 or 15 new gatherers and sometimes it's 5 or 6. With that, I think getting youth out into nature on the river or in a new area is something that they really need. In my personal experience, I try to bring out youth to show them how to hunt as much as possible. My bro Sam and I, we try to train youth hunting.

C: He's the uncle [son of interviewee] goes to?

A: He's one of them. So we'll take out kids from between 10 to 11, 12, and show them how to harvest a deer and how to take care of it. Get them involved with the ceremony side of it. Later on, maybe they'll have an interest to do that and maybe they'll take Sam and I's place. Sam and I hunt a lot for the longhouse and we enjoy that, but it'd be really great to see some youth, someone who wants to pick that up, come join us on a regular basis. There's also traditional fishing methods and hunting methods we do as a group that's always fun. Depending on how you're taught, you- anybody can catch a fish with a gillnet. But to actually be in the water and chase fish around with a dipnet or a gaff is the method I was taught, how you're supposed to catch your first salmon. But there aren't a lot of kids interested in that. The handful of us on my reservation that do do that, we all are interested in getting more youth, younger people out there to gaff and dipnet fish, On the Nez Perce reservation, they have a lot of good opportunities to do that, and so do we, but we just don't have enough interest. Or we're not providing the kids with a good enough opportunity to be outside and be on the Imanaha, or even on the big river.

Like I said earlier, we don't really have a lot of commercial fishermen. There's not a lot of people on my reservation that know how to do that kind of fishing. They don't know how to build a scaffold or put a net together to fish off a scaffold. They don't know how to make a dipnet or even just how to gaff. There just isn't a lot of... interest or opportunity.

The same goes for hunting. The methods we like to use for hunting.. I was taught that anybody can shoot a gun or kill a deer, harvest an elk, but doing it as a group like my grandparents taught us is something that's kind of a lost- not a lost art, but a lost method of harvesting. We do a lot of drives, drives or pushes, when we have a deer camp or elk camp. There's maybe ten or fifteen of us who all camp out for a week. We've learned over time how these elk or deer move when you push em around, so your learn their escape routes-

C: some of you will flush them one way, and then.. Cool.

A: yeah, so that kind of hunting is not very common. A lot of people just cruise the roads and shoot what's on the road, or they walk down the road and wait for something to cross. This old way of hunting is not very common. There's only a handful of us on the reservation that actually do drives anymore. We try to pick up two or three young men a year to come help us out, learn, and maybe they'll get the bite and keep doing it.

C: Talking about how a lot of kids don't have that perspective or exposure, or desire, it seemed like a lot of the kids on the trip were from revitalization, culture-heavy families. Is that perception accurate?

A: I couldn't really say. The kids from here were pretty- I don't know, it just depends I guess.

C: I'm just thinking about, especially if we're going to be running this for years and years, how do you widen the net. How do we widen the net and spread that experience to more kids? Kids who don't find it as appealing maybe.

A: I think that going forward we should try to do some recruitment, some different recruitment. Here at home, there was a flier that went out to schools, some of the schools didn't post them, and there were kids who were afraid of water. Maybe they saw rafting and that turned them off, because they're not comfortable in water. I know there were a few families that I talked to about that and tried to reassure them, but the youth didn't want to go. And then, trying to cast a broader net, I think that with youth who have participated, maybe they share their experience and help recruit. As well as the educators- myself, and Doug, Tiyana and Josiah, maybe we work this year on recruiting a little better. And now that we know what to expect, we can tweak our educational materials and recruit more kids. Hopefully we'll be past all of this COVID stuff. I was really surprised we struggled to fill the fifteen spots.

C: Yeah, it's a big enough community there's definitely kids out there. Like you said, I think it's something we'll definitely figure out better over time, and kind of get our shit together.

A: I wouldn't know. My Tribe's education program- DNR, natural resource education, is all through one person. Our whole DNR relies on one person to do outreach and education. They can be really busy. I don't like the way it's set up. In my previous jobs, usually 5 or 10 percent of my salary was outreach and education, so I was committed to spending time with youth. Tribal youth, or even any youth really. I used to go to elementary schools and talk to kids about fish and tribal resources.

C: That's the thing- it's easy for me to say this too, coming from my position as an outsider and a white person- but everyone needs these Indigenous perspectives. Our dominant culture paradigm needs to change, and it will, eventually, one way or another. That's the other thing that's interesting to me about this work. Having this vehicle for education with, I think any time spent outside- any extended time spent outside has the potential to really help facilitate this but rafting's just an easy way. It's cool, it gets you out and it's remote, you drop into can bring all the stuff. Having that as a vehicle and as a base to come up with this kind of educational platform that can change depending on the particular partners involved and what they want to do but... I think that's what really gets me excited. Regardless of who it is, if it's like kids from the inner city or teachers or anyone who's not specifically Native, centers

Native perspectives. It seems like it could be really important because I think those things are important.

That's just something- I want to be tapping in with you on that as this progresses, if this progresses, to make sure that I'm moving in the right direction, and centering the right stuff. That's something I talked to Josiah and Tiyana a lot about when I was out there on the Clearwater with them too. Doing that the right way.

A: So like, resource management, Doug could really say something being a forester, but tribal people have always told the states that they needed to do burns. Their western thinking, they thought they knew better. They didn't want to do prescribed burns, they thought that was bad for centuries. And it wasn't until the last twenty years that they really wanted to embrace that knowledge of- maybe the Indigenous people are right, you know. They used to do that and they just thought we were wrong.

C: Anything.

A: With anything. So with fish, an old man on the Fraser River, BC, he grew up there fishing there his whole life on the Fraser River. He could catch ten salmon and just by looking at them he could tell you where those salmon were going, where their headwaters were. He just knew by their little distinct look which rivers they were going to. That kind of knowledge is gone. We use microsatellite DNA to figure that shit out now. But that old man, he knew where all those fish were going.

It's stuff like that we've either lost or we need to try to remember. Yeah, resource management is really, really important. My big thing that I've always been about is invasive species. For the past 15 years. Invasive species are really fucked up man. They're going to take over everything. People twenty years ago joked about managing for bass on the Columbia River. Twenty years later, that shit could come true. We might not have any salmon in fifty years. And it's just smallmouth bass and walleye. That's serious talk. The more we can influence youth about that stuff, the better off we are. And just like you said, it's not just tribal youth, it's all youth. Sharing that perspective.

C: I think the reason that knowledge is so strong, that guy knowing that and being able to tell that, that's the result of sustained engagement with the land in a way that I don't think pretty much anyone has anymore. Certainly not people living in cities. Clearly we as a society live out of proportion with the world. There's a dissonance there. I think a lot of that has to do with the ways in which we've been able to withdraw from the world, and fill our heads up with all this abstract shit. I think about this a lot having friends in the city, what they think about and what they occupy their time with. It's interesting that you know about this band or you're studying this or whatever, but you don't know shit about the world around you.

A: Yeah. But that's today's society. You're taught from when you're in elementary school, you're gonna be one thing when you grow up. You're going to be a specialist at one thing, all the way through highschool. What's the one thing you're going to go to college for?

C: You're gonna have one skill.

A: One skill, yeah. All of our ancestors had several skills they had to use on a daily basis. That may be common knowledge, but..

C: No, I know. It's such a simple, obvious idea. I think about this a lot and I like to talk about this with people who wouldn't- don't necessarily think about this. It's such a simple, obvious idea but people still don't have it on their radar. You know, how big that shift has been in human experience? I think that getting people outside isn't going to solve everything, but getting people outside, especially when it's for a purpose- not just, whoo, we're going rafting, on vacation- **laughter** Even though that's good. For educational purposes, for cultural revitalization. With intention, I really think that there's a lot of value in that. It's cool to even like, get to be at a point in my life where I got a scholarship to college, I don't have debt, I don't need much money, and I can actually pursue work I want to do. This is what I want to be doing, I want to go for it. I know that's what I want to be doing over the next chunk of my life.

A: That's good.

C: Yeah, yeah. I wanted to share that with you as partners in this trip that we're running, and as an influence and mentor for me in my thinking. As I'm trying to figure this stuff out, I would really value your perspective and your guidance.

A: I'll help out any way I can.

C: Thanks man. And getting that stuff about the Cayuse, that historical context, I think that's really important. It was great- I really, really like Josiah and Tiyana and feel really close to them, and am grateful for them in the same way. But I really wanted to get you and Doug, your perspectives, because little nuances come up. It makes a wholer picture for me, because you guys are my source of knowledge on this more than anything else. Coming from the willamette valley, you know.

**A3. Josiah Blackeagle, Tiyana Blackeagle
9/22/2021, outside of Lenore, Idaho**

J: My name is Josiah Blackeagle Pinkham, I'm a Nez Perce, and I grew up here on our family ranch located on our Nez Perce Indian Reservation. I work in our cultural resources program,

and I have since the nineties, and I do a lot of youth work, also involving elders. You know, projects trying to maintain land-based connections. I also work with federal and state agencies in an educational capacity, protecting sites.

T: My name's Tiyana Casey and I'm the Indigenous relations liaison for the Camas to Condors partnerships. I'm also a board member serving with the Nez Perce Wallowa Homeland project. I kind of specialize in bringing youth and elders together. I'm a major advocate for empowering our young people to tend to the values and responsibilities that we have with our land connections and our culture. That's why I'm inspired to run youth programs.

C: my first question would just be, why did you choose to participate or help out with this program. With the Native River School?

T: I was inspired to spend my time with everyone on the river because first of all it wasn't a part of my homeland I was connected to. I wanted to first of all see what was out there

T: So I was inspired to spend my time with everyone on the river because, first of all, it was a part of my homeland that I wasn't yet connected with at that level. And I wanted to first of all, see what all is out there and see, understand better what I could bring to educating our young people out there, and also share whatever we find with elders, because that area isn't as accessible for our elders. And so with me being a younger person, young and able bodied compared to our elders, you know, I felt that it was my responsibility to be there in their place, being my best elder.

J: So why did I choose to be involved? I chose to be involved because it was a good balance of a lot of different elements that I love doing. Being out there on the landscape with young people and elders is something that I try to be involved in, because I think that where I can be helpful is to facilitate the flow of values from elders to young people, to help bring out awareness of those cultural values that are, I think, the kinds of things that we're struggling to maintain the transfer of.

C: And, you know, can you guys talk a little bit about Pikunin, about the Snake River and what it means, you know, in the context of the homeland, and in the context of Nez Perce history there?

J: Sure, yeah. So what is the significance of the Snake River area that we floated? One of the things that I overlooked is that there's a lot of influence that the **saqáanpa** had on the development of Nez Perce culture and history. And the **saqáanpa** are the band of Nez Percés that lived in that area. And their contributions, along the lines of just our oral history, are significant, because there's a story about the seven giants that ultimately became that which is commonly known as the seven devils. And, you know, Coyote was instrumental in making that happen. Coyote being the cultural hero of the Nez Perce, you know, trickster and

essentially the archetype of human nature. And there's also a creation story that has to do with that area where Coyote kills a huge creature known as *ilsweltzich*, or the inhaler, and ultimately creates the Nez Perce people from the blood of *ilsweltzich*. So, you know, those kinds of things are really instrumental in forming the very perception of our landscape, you know, the Nez Perce people have a unique perception of their landscaping and a unique relationship with their landscape that conveys values from one generation to the next. And I think that's something that's really important to be aware of, and to preserve and pass on.

T: Well, this area, the Snake River, it's a place that like Josiah was saying, our people were there. And it's important for us to be reintroduced to those areas so that we can bring the ancestors- or, you know, the descendants of those ancestors that were removed from that area- back to that place. And so with forced removal, the renegotiation of the boundaries of the reservation that ultimately led to war. You know, there are a lot of reasons, deep seated historic trauma related reasons, why people aren't there anymore. And so to have this opportunity to bring our young people back there and to share that piece of history with them is so crucial in their development, in their understanding of themselves. Our young people, they're struggling to understand themselves, they're struggling with identity, and that's across the board with young people. And so, with the unique needs of Indigenous young people, that's a way that we can help them understand more about who they are, maybe help them understand the adversities that they face, and help them with their family relationships, and maybe even someday bring their grandchildren there and share that piece of history that they learned, so that they can continue those planned relationships. You know, once we bring our young people out there, they understand that piece of their history, they become a part of the land. And so ultimately, they feel that responsibility, they want to go back, and they want to tend to those relationships. And so we want that to be perpetuated, we want those values to continue.

C: That's really well said. Feel free to flow too, especially if you can frame it in a way that, like, provides a little framing for your question. Let's just make this natural, you guys are experts. We're here to talk about something so worthy, just go for it.

J: Okay, I might add another thing. And I brought this up last night. And I think one of the things that's attention worthy is how identity is fostered, both geographically and temporally. And geographically, a person has to orient themselves in a place from which they, you know, grow into the rest of the world. And that part of the Snake River is amazing for doing that, because it's such a beautiful place, but also, it's a very harsh place. It's a place that isn't easy for people to live from, in comparison with other places. But yeah, on the other hand, there's so much they're to relate to, you can see how people can have a sixteen and a half thousand year existence there. Because there's so much I mean, you know, the water, the land itself, the trees, all the animals and the plants and everything that you know, works together to foster the development of a long standing land relationship like that, it's amazing to think about that. And see, the dates keep getting pushed farther and farther back, you know, and now we're at sixteen and a half thousand years, and, you know, they'd even dig all the way down as far as they could when they found that date. And that dig isn't that far from where

we were. And add to that, this idea of young people developing their sense of identity with the assistance of older ones, to help bring out the better side of who they are, to help them understand their resilience in a harsh landscape like that is something that really does help for them to prepare themselves for the challenges that lie before them in life. You know, they can look back on the vast history of their people being in an area like that. For me, it's empowering to think about the thousands of generations of people that struggled to carve out that lifestyle, and that language and that land relationship to put us here, so we can make choices, you know, and it makes me not want to let them down, and I want them to have that sense of responsibility too, because then they're not looking for a way out to make life necessarily easier. But they're knuckling up and they're, you know, face to the wind and they're empowered to, you know, do whatever it takes to keep surviving, because that's what this is all about. It's all about survival. I think that's what makes us powerful, you know. It makes me feel good to be a part of it.

C: How did the kids do on the trip? Talk about their experience on the trip from your guys' view?

T: Well, I think, you know, it was a spectrum. We had some kids that were naturally very open with each other and knew each other. We had kids that didn't know anybody, and were incredibly shy. And this was expected. But with those young people that were shy, that's where I saw the most growth. So, you know, there was a young, really young kid, I think, the youngest

J: Yeah, he was the youngest of the whole group.

T: The youngest of the whole group shows up, he was resistant to begin with, to coming in, because he wasn't sure that he would know anybody. You know, with those responsibilities of being the oldest kid, and having all these little siblings at home, and he's used to taking care of them, helping his mom out, even though he's very young. You know, our native kids, they have incredible responsibility. And I'm thankful that he chose to come despite those responsibilities. So, you know, he grew from not wanting to be on a raft where you had the paddle, to, okay, I'll go on that raft with the paddle, to, okay, I'm gonna be on my own kayak, and I get to choose where I go. And I think with that, with the comfort he experienced out there, being in good company, being in a beautiful place in his own homeland, it really helped him to open up. And so at first he, what he told me, like, I only want to be on this raft, I want to be on this raft with you for the rest of the trip. That's what he told me that first day. And then here, he was that final day in his own kayak. And so that was a pretty cool progression to see him open up like that. And then also in our one on one discussions, and group discussions. He also had a lisp. And so that was difficult for him on his own, you know, his own personal comfort, he didn't want to get teased or bullied. So he's the smallest, he's the youngest, he has a speech impediment, but he, from my perspective, he grew the most. That was obvious to most of the educators after we reflected afterwards. And so he grew the most. And he also shared the most in all of our group discussions. And one of the most powerful things that he shared in the, this was the most, you know, moving quote, of the entire trip was from [the youngest student], and he said, my thorn was being out of the water, and then following that

was, I like being in the water, because you can feel its power. And so with a young person, with everything that he's up against in the world, being able to connect deeply with that landscape and see himself interacting with that and having that deep understanding that, you know, that land is there for him and for him to interact with. And so it was really moving for him to say something so deeply connected. And so it was obvious to me that this was the right decision for him to be with us. At first he was very introverted but yeah, there was a lot of growth with that one. I don't know you could probably articulate it a bit better than that.

J: No, I don't think so. I think that was a little said, perfect. I don't I don't have anything to add to it.

T: See, I'm trying to be mindful of not using kids' names for the sake of their own privacy and so I'm like, I don't know if we choose to see some or include something along the lines of that. Maybe it can be said again, that his name correctly

C: I actually interviewed [the youngest student] on suicide point,

T: really?

C: You know, talk to him first. He was talking about that. So that's really cool because he's right up there on you know, you know, with the cannon behind him when he's talking very naturally he kind of forgot I was taking a video. Oh cool yeah

T:
that's so cute

C:
yeah that's pretty cool so I'll send you I mean I'll show you guys all that of course

T:
that'll be great processing that'd be good yeah

C:
they'd probably good to just have a basic overview of the of the trip like where we where we went and some of the basic things we did one of you guys wants to

J: probably Tiyana, I think. she was probably more involved in the organization of it.

T: Good. An overview of the trip. Okay. Perfect. Yeah. I'm trying to think of even where to start. I mean, there was a lot of planning. So yeah, where do I even start?

C: Maybe you could talk about Nez Perce Wallowa Homeland's role just a little bit and the role of pulling kids from different reservations.

T: Okay, yeah, I guess. Well, maybe you should start because that's like historic context. And I think it would sound better coming from you with the Nez Perce Wallowa Homeland project and how they serve Wallowa Chief Joseph Band people. But you understand the historic context, I think, deeper than I do.

J:

I think he's talking about the general flow of events that the kids were involved in. Like, you know, them coming from different reservations. I mean, I can do that.

C

I think I'm asking about both.

T: Yeah. Oh, okay. So the historic context leading into the justification for the program.

C: I noticed that you guys on the trip, we didn't talk very much at all about the Walwama specifically, which is fine. I don't want Nez Perce Wallowa Homeland's agenda to be... I want what you talk about now to be a reflection of what the trip was.

J: okay. So why three different reservations?

C: Yeah, why three different reservations. Okay. And then yeah, you can get into the flow of the trip a little bit too.

J: Okay, so let's see, where to start. The Nez Perce people are comprised of autonomous bands that are located in different areas of Nez Perce country, which is north central Idaho, southeastern Washington, Northeastern Oregon, and one band are the **saqáanpa**, which are you know, the people from the place of the shadow which is the Hells Canyon. Another band, among many others, are the **walwama**, which are situated in, are known to use the Wallowa mountains. And the war experience in 1877 disbanded a lot of people that ended up on many different reservations, three of which are obviously the Nez Perce reservation, and the Umatilla Indian Reservation and some of them were up in Colville and they're enrolled as such, you know, some some of the numbers descendants are enrolled as Colville. Some of them are enrolled as Umatilla and many are enrolled as Nez Perce. The Wallowa mountains and that area of the Snake River in Hells Canyon are Nez Perce homeland that was ceded. And so that's our area, but yet, we're encouraged and we honor relationships with other tribes. And because the Nez Perce descendants that are enrolled as Umatilla still maintain and want to maintain land relationships with that area, along with the Nez Perce descendants that are enrolled as Colville. We pulled together those three reservations, or youth from those three years reservations to be involved in this event. So we certainly welcome the idea that they want to maintain those land connections but yet, especially for the Colville being an executive order tribe, they don't have off-reservation rights that are recognized like the treaty tribes are. Because the Nez Perce, we can exercise treaty rights down to Columbia

River and well into Montana, we can hunt and fish in all those areas, and the Colville can't, because they have to negotiate for those kinds of privileges. But we do want to continue that work with encouraging them to, you know, come forth and perpetuate those land relationships, and the youth are the best place to start.

C: Why is that kind of pantribal coming-together important?

J: I'll answer that question within the context of the three reservations. One of the things that happened that was the result of the war in 1877, was, you know, people being disbanded and fragmented on to different areas of the Pacific Northwest. And when we come back together like that, oftentimes, identity shifts a little bit from being a Nez Perce to being a Wallowa, or a Walwama, band member or descendant. And that kind of is a healing mechanism. Because when identity shifts like that, you, oftentimes set aside the things that keep you apart, and you focus on the things that bring you together, which is that land, that land is so powerful that it fosters that kind of identity shift. And it's healing, I think. And when that type of healing takes place, I think that it strengthens identity, and doesn't allow dysfunction, or things that might pull you off your path to get too much attention for an individual. So I think that's why that's important for young people.

C: Tiyana, I think you should do an overview of the trip logistics, but for both of you especially Josiah, could you talk a little bit more about, like, the concept of homeland and maybe tamanwit? **mispronounced**

J:
Oh **tamálwit**? Yeah, sure.

C:
tamálwit, excuse me. Yeah, and how you guys chose to share that on the trip.

J:
Okay. I can do that. You wanna give an overview of the trip?

C:
Well, since we're on it, we'll just do another one with you. Okay. Okay, hang on, I can only shoot a half an hour of video. Okay. I'm gonna do one of those. That still looks good. Alright, give me a clap. Excellent.

J: It's difficult to think about where to start in describing Homeland. Because it's so powerful and so vast. I only know that in growing up here on the reservation... The way that I was raised is that you know, you are who you take care of. And that's going to change because you're going to learn more about yourself and the things that support you to make you, you know, who you are, to make it possible for you to be here simply to breathe and to eat and sleep and do all the things that a human does. And so part of life's journey is about discovering that upon which you depend, you know, it's its homeland, but it's also language,

it's land relationships, it's plants, it's animals, it's family. And it's really complex. It's not easy to be 13 years old and have all of that laid out before you and not know what's out there. You need help and that's where family enters as your first support network in helping you to form connections and awareness about those things upon which your ancestors relied. To put you here, and your responsibility is after you gain awareness and figuring that out, then you take up that work, and you suffer through it for your life. So that you can pass that on. See, that's where I'm at now. I'm learning, I'm aware. And I have a lot going on up here that I need to start, you know, focusing on, and I've been doing it focusing on ensuring that those that are behind me are going to take up that same work, and take it even farther. So that's why I'm driven to participate in these types of excursions, especially with young people. I like to say that, you know, the only thing I like more than hanging around young people is hanging around old people, because, you know, I'm kind of in the balance of that, you know, I'm so curious about all of that stuff I just described, that I asked really deep questions of my elders, and then my responsibility is, how do I take that dynamic package, and entice young people to be interested in it, that's a big challenge. And if I can figure out how to do that, and keep doing it, then you know, when my time comes to go, I'll be able to let go of all of this, and, you know, move on, and turn it over to somebody that will take it up. And so my responsibility is train young people, train young people, educate them, you know, make sure that they're curious, and that they're sharp, intelligent. That's the way I want them to be. Because that's what I'm surrounded with, my elders, they're like that. They're sharp people. Because I just think about what they carry in terms of the longevity that I was describing earlier, keeps getting pushed back farther. And that's beyond encyclopedic knowledge, and that's all out there. It's written in this landscape, and we carry it in our genetics. That relationship is, it's just powerful. And it's encompassed by what we call **tamálwit** which is our spiritual law, the best way to describe that is that it's a Divine Principle, you know, what you give to it, you get back. It's just that simple. And that **tamálwit** is something that flows through everything; it's in the grass, it's in the deer, it's in the trees, the water, it's in the very air that we breathe, that spiritual power, and the more that you're aware of it, the more empowering it is. And it's something that, that ore principle is identified in Nez Perce as just simply **taʔáx**, which is spiritual energy. And the reason why that's so important to be aware of is because that enlivens things, you know, and there's a gifting that goes with that. And it's important to understand that because then you understand the power of human movement and choices. And people acting on responsibility. Because, when a man goes out, and he gets a deer, he brings that home, and that spiritual energy goes from that deer into your body. And the women facilitate in making that happen, because they take that and they cook it, and they put their **taʔáx** into it, and then you consume that, and it builds you up. And then, you know, it's the same thing, if women go out and they dig roots, they're doing the same thing. They're gifting that spiritual energy to you. And so that's why our foods are such an important part of that. And that's why we chose to have that as a part of our event, to have the kids sit down and eat with us. That was moving for us. And I think that they're gonna be 50 years old, 60 years old. They're gonna be elders, and they're gonna remember that. The reason why I believe that is because, you know, the same thing happened with me. People took me out on a river and I went rafting, and we did all kinds of cool, fun stuff. That's the stuff that's high impact for our young people, just helps

them to grow. I think that another reason why this event is so powerful and worth repeating is because it takes these kids out of their norm, you know, they're not, they won't get this same experience at home, they're not going to get it in the classroom, it's got to be out there. That's where they grow. You know, I think it's just an amazing thing. So hopefully that kind of describes the more spiritual aspects of the work that we're doing.

C: Can you talk about that first food ceremony you did?

T: With that food ceremony that we were able to put on for those kids, for all the participants, we weren't planning on doing that, it just came to fruition. By chance. I felt incredibly honored, and also very surprised that I ended up having a decent amount of foods for them to try. And a lot of our kids, they tried them for the first time ever. And so when we're talking about high impact, education, high impact just on a young person, and understanding their identity, for an Indigenous young person, that is high impact. Having the opportunity to try and share our traditional foods. That knowledge isn't as accessible as we'd hoped for it to be. And we want to be providing those opportunities for kids as much as possible. For me, as a food gatherer, and somebody that takes care of traditional foods, it's important for me that I'm setting aside a certain amount of those foods for those types of opportunities, and to also take care of our elders. With a lot of my dietary needs right now, I happen to have those foods because it's, it's what's agreeable for my body. And that's epigenetics, down the line. Currently, I have a lot of food allergies, sensitivity sensitivities where the foods that agree with me right now are traditional foods. And I feel just so incredibly blessed to have the knowledge and the opportunity to take care of so many foods. And so, just being in that place together and having it all in one place. It was just by chance that we were able to share that moment with those kids. And it just worked out so naturally, perfectly, really. So you know, I learned that most of the kids had tried something new that day. And those are the types of opportunities we want to be providing, especially in a place so beautiful. And touching to be in this particular part of our homeland, where so many of us were removed. And so a part of my history. You know, my *púx* [*'Ichishkíin* for a great-grandparent]. Her name was Pasah Tinnins, and she lived to be 120 years old. And her original home was in the Wallowa area. And so she left during the war, went and settled downriver and took on new names, and had new family, more family. But she returned up until the 50s, up until she was 115 years old, to continue our ceremonies and memorials, ceremonies like our name giving ceremonies. And so, for myself even to be sharing these foods, knowing the adversities that my ancestors faced, for their survival and the sacrifices that they made for my survival, there's a lot of reciprocity that needs to be acknowledged. And so that's my way of giving back is by sharing those foods because when we're, when we're out there, we're planting seeds that we probably will never see. But they're visible noticeable changes. And I know, like, I'm going to be that elder where kids will come up, and they will shake my hand, they will, you know, they will give me hugs, they might call me grandma. And so it's moving for me. So I do feel moved. I do feel like I have an incredible privilege. If I had a choice of being born somebody else, or being born a different race or somewhere else in the world, I would not want to be somebody else. I love what I do. I love that I'm able to share what I can and what I have with these young people. I want to look back when I'm an elder on

moments like these, where I feel content, that I feel it's okay for when I pass. That when I look back I won't have any regrets. I'm getting all emotional and you should not put that in the video.

C: Money baby! Haha! **extended laughter** Gonna get rich!

J: Mo money, mo money, mo money!

T: so dumb, oh my god.

C: thank you for sharing, thank you.

J: Wish I could cry **laughter**

C: What do you guys want to talk about that we haven't hit yet?

J: I just want to say thank you, *qe'ci'yew'yew*, to you for the idea and pulling it all together. There's a lot of work that went into this, obviously I don't fully understand all the pathways and relationships that had to come together to make this happen. Phenomenal event, and I do appreciate your work in making this happen. I want you to understand that you've made a contribution to something that's special. I think you understand that. But I also want to encourage you to do more, wherever you go, just do more of this kind of thing. Because that's something that really does help the lives of these young people. Helps them to grow and to learn and to be curious, just be well-balanced young humans. Also to everybody that was involved to make this happen, all of the individuals and groups and organizations, all of the people that did everything to make it happen. That's a really cool thing. Just thank you for it all. Just really appreciative of it, really special.

C: Actually on the subject of that, could you talk a little bit about the role of the white guides on the trip, and how those roles were balanced. Maybe the role of allyship, or support, in the work that you're doing, that we're doing.

J: Speak on the role of the guides.

C: And more generally, the role of allies, people like me, in this work.

J: I think it's important to have allies cause it's an event that came together with a variety of expertise. I said this before on the trip, I don't know if I trust my own people to take me down that river. Andrew, of course, he defended himself- he goes, hey now! Don't speak too soon! Because he's got experience. But it's dangerous, we need help. I wouldn't be able to do it, I wouldn't have done it. I just simply wouldn't have taken kids out there like that. I know the power of that water. That's part of the learning experience. But we rely on allies and guides and outsiders, you might say, that have more expertise in traversing that part of the river to help us safely do something like this. When it comes down to it, that really does matter. Safety first, you've got to know what you're doing. So again, that goes into the deep

appreciation that I have for Winding Waters making this happen. When it comes down to having a young person on the water like that, safety and expertise is paramount. All of that other stuff kind of goes by the wayside when you've got a young person in the water. That's important.

T: I think why our allies are really important is because, from my own personal experience, I'm not about to say that I'm an expert in anything that I'm not. For the tribe as a whole, the current infrastructure, it's set up that most of the people that work at the tribe are not native. That's because we don't have Indigenous folks from this immediate community with the skill sets to fill those positions. I think when it comes down to it, we would rather have somebody with that experience that can help us, elevate us, so we are capable of doing solid work and taking care of our homeland, taking care of each other. We have modern responsibilities, we have modern adversities as well. We need the support of formal education, people who graduate with a masters in social services. We need people with strong backgrounds to help us until we're able to do that for ourselves. It's a really sensitive place for a lot of people to be in our tribal communities. It's not easy for a lot of people to acknowledge that. Or acknowledge it, be okay with it, and do something so that they can later on they can fulfill that role. Or help empower their young people to fill those roles. And not just that, not just help our tribes within the infrastructure our tribes operate within, but also to help elevate our voices.

Our young people have loud voices, and one thing I like to share and also to celebrate, is a lot of the movement in the North Dakota Access Pipeline protests happened because of our young people. They want us to have clean, cold water to help our ecosystems and to be able to feed our bodies. We are needing our allies to understand that our young people have voices and not just fill roles we're not able to fill in those moments, but also to empower our young people to feel invested in our homelands, to feel invested in working for their tribes, one of the biggest needs that's come to our attention is we need to be providing more opportunities for natural resource education, so that our kids go, okay, i'm going through highschool, and i think what i want to do after school is go to college and study a natural resource field, so later I can come back and work for my tribe and help preserve these places I feel connected to. So with programs like this, and working with our allies, we are empowering these young people to do that very thing- come back and work for their tribes. Be a part of their community at a deeper level. Our agenda isn't for every one of those kids to get a natural resources degree or something. Just so that they're understanding what their responsibilities are, deep within their core. It's beyond superficial. We can say, oh we need to be preserving our freshwater resources in Antarctica. Yeah, that's a very important topic and we need cold healthy clean water all around the world but what can they do, what differences can they make, within their own homeland and on their own reservation? Like Josiah said earlier explaining our homelands, how we have a connection all up and down **nčī-Wána**, we have a connection all up and down the columbia river, we need to be tending to that, taking care of it. Providing opportunities for these young people to connect to all of these places is ultimately what I'm invested in. I hope that someday we're able to expand this programming not just to being on the water and rafting but to other programs, to hiking and rock climbing

and maybe even feeling challenged to climb a mountain. Hopefully that day will come soon, sooner than later, and I'm here for it.

T: I'm all snotty from getting emotional and I was telling myself I wasn't going to do that. Plugs my sinuses and makes my eyes red.

C: no, this is great. You guys are perfect.

J: I think one thing I would add to the importance of having allies is it's an opportunity for a value transfer. The reason why that's important is because indigenous populations, no matter where they are in the world, they carry humanity's example to have a sensitive relationship with the landscape in these small pockets where they're found. That relationship is conveyed with their Indigenous language, and it's very complex. It's very complex because it's very old, and they've been working on it for a long time. If humanity's going to survive, it's only going to be because they have a sensitive relationship with their landscape. That's important to think about, because you can pull things from the world, but what's too much, and what's not enough? There's got to be a balance there. I'm not one to say that we shouldn't be using the wilderness- which is not wilderness to us, that's our home- but how do we do that sensitively? So that we can still take down trees and have paper, but not jeopardize air quality, or contribute to erosion more than we should. All that's deserving of attention, and it's the Indigenous populations that step up and say hey, that's too much, or this is making us uncomfortable. There's a happy medium in there that's been sought out, honed, for generations by these indigenous populations, and it's a very complex value hierarchy. And outsiders aren't going to learn about it if they're not put in proximity to it. If they're not interested in it, they're not exposed to it. And that's where it's really important because outsiders, allies get the opportunity to at least see it work. And that's why it's important to have young people and elders out there on the land doing these types of activities, and outsiders getting to witness that. It's exposure to something that's really important. So I think it's important to think about how we can involve allies in all of that.

C: I think for me, as an outsider, those values, those core values, are values that everyone needs to have. If we're going to keep going. It's a real gift to learn.

J: It's a structure for sure. A culture's a structure. The reason why it still survives is that it has a certain amount of rigidity to it, but it also has a certain amount of resilience, where it can be tempered by outside stimulation. Language is no different, a human body is no different. There's structure to it that has to be tested. It has to be tested in order to survive. It's also got to change. But it can't change too much, and it can't change too little. It's got to be adaptable.

C: Tiyana, and Josiah, could you talk a little about some of the other lessons besides first foods, some of the other teachings? Pictographs, kuus, springwater?

T: Some of the other education activities that we had out on the water was exactly with our water. Just tying it back around to first foods, water is our first food. Without water, who are we, what are we? As well as our foods. Our animal people, plant people, the full spectrum of everything relies on water. That landscape is completely moved by water. We have core teachings within our culture here on the Columbia River Plateau that water, first of all is our first food and the important of that interaction between the land and our body, to have that fresh cold clean water, is not just important for our bodies to be healthy and our ecosystems to be healthy, but it's also important for our spiritual needs. To have that reciprocity with the land and to have that respect with the land. When we think about water, and let's throw out general percentages of water on this planet, that same percentage exists within our womb when we're carrying a child. It's connected from developing human bodies and having that relationship with your child to us as children of this earth, of this landscape. Water isn't just important for sustaining healthy salmon in returning to the Snake every season, it's important for our spiritual needs. When these kids are coming out to this place, of course we're going to focus on water. We want the water to stay cold. The source water for that area is glacial runoff, it's snowmelt. So that water's supposed to stay cold throughout the entire season. And the water temperatures are drastically becoming warmer and warmer, and the water source is becoming more depleted as each year we have another drought year. With these changing climates and our culture having to adapt to that, our people trying to adapt to that, when we're trying to maintain these intimate, sacred land relationships, how is that affecting the land, how is that affecting our people and culture, how is that affecting our bodies? Water is the core of everything we were working with. While we were out there, we were able to take water samples, and that's where the kids were getting really involved. They wanted to know what the temperature was of the water coming directly out of the spring, what was the temperature as the water was entering the river, what was the temperature farther out, what was the temperature at the deepest point of the river? We saw some pretty incredible temperature differences from a really stable 40, 50 degree Fahrenheit coming out of that ground at the spring to the mid sixties, I think it was 67 degrees in the river. So the largest portion of the mass of the water is so warm compared to the springwater coming out. Thankfully, we have that groundwater resource coming in to help regulate that temperature, but if we're not able to protect those areas and help instill this understanding and sense of responsibility in these young people in caring for their homeland in understanding this system, that it's also healthy enough you can drink from that water right now. I have elders who say when they were little they were able to take a cup and dip it into the Columbia River and drink from that river. We are not able to do that in the Snake. We are not able to do that in most of our river systems, if any. We want to make sure that these kids are having those opportunities to experience that. So maybe when they become elders, if that system, that watershed turns really sour, they'll be saying that too. This seems to be a trend. What can we do, and what changes can we influence, to help the health of that land? Because that ultimately means the health of our bodies and the health of our communities as a whole.