NF: My name is Natalia Fernandez; I am the Oregon Multicultural Librarian, a staff member with OSU’s Special Collections and Archives Research Center. Today’s date is May 23rd, 2013, and I am interviewing Daniel Cárdenas, a staff member of the Native American Longhouse at Oregon State University. So let’s get started with the interview. So we’ll just ask a few questions, just basic interview questions. So what is your name, and please spell it out loud.

DC: Sure, my name is Daniel Cárdenas and it is spelled D-A-N-I-E-L, last name is spelled C-A-R-D-E-N-A-S.

NF: Okay. And what is your hometown, or where is home for you?

DC: Home for me, I suppose is Sacramento, California, actually a suburb of Sacramento, its Fair Oaks, California.

NF: And what is your age, year in school, and major?

DC: I am 27 years old, and three hundred and sixty-four days old [laughs] and I am a first year graduate student within the College Student Services Administration Master’s Degree Program.

NF: And are you affiliated with a particular tribe or tribes?

DC: I am not. I am, multiracial, so I identify as Mexican-American, yeah, Mexican, a little Eastern European as well, and a little Irish thrown in there for good measure.

NF: Okay, so this next set of questions is about your work at the Longhouse. So what is your position at the NAL and what do you do?
DC: So my position, my human resources title is Graduate Teaching Assistant [coughs] – sorry, Graduate Teaching Assistant at the Native American Longhouse. So that encompasses a few things. The first is, um, to supervise the student staff as they’re working in the Longhouse from a facilities perspective and risk management perspective as we’ve opened a new cultural center in January 2013, so for the last five months I’ve really just making sure that things run smoothly, that we can open the building, close the building, things like that. And also, I take a look at and kind of guide the students as they have questions regarding the programming that they’re putting on and the actual cultural programming that they do on a daily basis. And so everything from approving the purchasing of different items to questions in regards to, logistics of performing the programming, cultural sensitivities in regards to is “it appropriate to do particular programming?” and then just answering questions that they might consider, you know, “who is the target audience, what’s the actual – what are the benefits of this type of programming, have we done it before? How can we make it better this time? How are we going to market this type of programming?” Things like that. So both facilities and programming aspects. And then other duties as assigned [laughs], so, hiring, assessment, meetings, meetings, and meetings [laughs] trainings, things like that.

NF: And how long have you worked at the Longhouse?

DC: Um, it’s May 2013 now and so I’ve been working since September 2012, so this is my first year, and the director Victoria Nguyen has recently approved a second year within the GTA position, so I plan to be working through the 2013-2014 academic year, as well.

NF: Great. And have you worked for any of the other cultural centers?

DC: I have not, this is my first one.

NF: So why did you decide to work at the Longhouse, then?

DC: I like to say, in some ways, that the Longhouse kind of chose me [laughs]. I originally, when I was looking into grad schools and looking into Oregon State, I toured the cultural centers during my, like, application process just to come into school here, just to physically see them, but I didn’t actually even know that a GTA position was open and available. I was applying for other positions within student leadership and involvement then, like student activities, MUPC on campus, and so, yeah those were the majority of the programs that I applied for and it wasn’t until after the applications were done that my résumé was forwarded to Victoria Nguyen. And, she actually reached out to me to ask that I would apply, and so I did, and I’m glad I did. To open
up a new cultural center is an honor, and it’s been, a roller coaster ride, but it’s been a lot of fun. And so, um...so yeah.

[00:05:02]

**NF:** So, were your expectations, hopes for your work matched, surpassed, not matched?

**DC:** Um, it’s a good question. I—you know I tried not to have too many expectations, only because my experience working with Native identified students was pretty minimal. I’d worked with, and felt comfortable working with, Latino, Latina students, black students, even Asian students, but I’d really had only worked with a handful of Native identified students in my career. And so I was really just trying to come from a space of respect and you know, ignorance almost, but, I guess “ignorance” isn’t quite the right word, but more just respect and a healthy, naïve [laughs] kind of perspective, and really just trying to learn from the students and from Victoria and from our Native faculty and staff here. And so, the only, the only expectations I had was, I guess from more of a professional development lens and those have been surpassed. I wasn’t expecting to learn as much about budgeting as I have. I wasn’t expecting to learn as much about the marketing side of the University, so when you open a new center they have all of these different kind of events, all the pomp and circumstance they like to put on, and so you work with people that you might only work with once in your career, perhaps, but it’s great to get to know them and get to know their process and how things kind of work behind the scenes.

**NF:** Great. So, can you describe the projects, events, activities, we can start with Fall Term, that were especially meaningful to you, or that you want to talk about?

**DC:** Sure. So during the Fall Term it’s always busy within the Longhouse, because November is Native Heritage Month, and so we basically have programming, some type of an event that’s happening almost, it seems like almost every day but I think we had about three different types of programming per week. And really, I think the one that really sticks out to me, which was also somewhat the most straight-forward, was our Open House; it was the very first kind of event of the year, really kind of kicks of Heritage Month for us, and within our tiny Quonset Hut, we were at capacity, we were probably over capacity, and there was a line out the door, going down 26th [laughs] and like, wrapping around Jefferson just for people to come into the Quonset Hut to grab an Indian taco and, um, kind of hear about the programming that we have, and so I didn’t really know what to expect and how many people to expect. I always kind of have—hope for the best but plan for the worst, you know? That way I’m not disappointed with things. Just my kind of personality, and that—to really see how many people showed up, and to just—I really took a backseat. I was really just watching, I asked, you know
our coordinators and our staff members what they needed me to do and they’re like, “nothing, we got it,” you know, they were all organized and they were all in line and helping students and serving them and those that weren’t serving were walking around, talking to people, making sure that people were comfortable, Alison Davis-White Eyes came in and did a blessing and so, that was, it was a pretty informal event, but it was just great to see so many people pack into such a small space [laughs] and overflowing out into the street, and to start the year off like that was definitely, a really, really great to see, just to kind of see what was—what was ahead of me for the next year. Throughout our Winter Term we didn’t do a whole lot of programming, only because we’re trying to get ready for the spring, and so during December and January we were really moving from the Quonset Hut to the new Longhouse and there were a lot of different facilities kind of speed bumps and headaches and growing pains that we ran into, which is our security system within the building. And so, I’d say eighty percent of my time was just actually talking to non-students and talking with our construction team and our architects and our director Victoria Nguyen and Allison Davis-White Eyes, and just making sure that things were running smoothly and kind of risk management wise, our butts were covered.

[00:10:03]

And so…and…it was a little bit regrettable for me, just feeling like I was always trying to follow up with our students, our students are pretty autonomous for the most part, you know, they don’t need help with the programming, but I feel like from a mentoring perspective, I don’t feel like I was really able to be, um…what I had hoped I can really have been to our students throughout the Winter Term and even the beginning of the Spring Term. It’s only been since April that I’ve really been able to sit down and be able to have one-on-ones and check in with people and even just ask “How are your grades doing,” you know? “How’s your family doing?” If they’re hundreds and hundreds of miles away from family, yeah they can express homesickness and things like that and so…kind of getting of track a little bit ‘cause we’re supposed to talk about programming, [laughs] events, and activities. For the last week, it’s been a little chaotic around here. Last Wednesday we had our annual Salmon Bake, and our estimate is that we saw just under 2,000 people. We had enough food for about 1,200 and we had people come before food, started about a hundred people that came and weren’t served, and then after we ran out of food, they still had another about a half hour or so of people that were coming, and so our estimate is that just over 1,600 but under 2,000. I don’t have the exact number, still doing our tallying, but, so that was last Wednesday, it was out in the MU quad. During the week we had our Traditional Ecological Knowledge Conference here in the Longhouse, and then on Friday we had our Grand Opening here at the Longhouse and then Saturday and Sunday we had our Pow Wow in Gill. But on Saturday morning, before the Pow Wow began, we had a Jim Thorpe 5k
Fun-run that actually started here at the Longhouse. So Wednesday, Thursdays, Friday, Saturday, Sunday we were—I was here, I lived here, I slept here, pretty much, well not literally, but, um...yeah, I lived here for pretty much the week, just making sure that we were open on time, that somebody was here just for risk management wise, there was so much art that was donated to the Longhouse that—make sure it’s safe. And so those were all, um...that was my first Salmon Bake so that was especially powerful for me to see the Pit family at work and to see just that process happen. And though I had been to a Pow Wow previously, this being my first OSU Pow Wow, I really...I volunteered and helped NASA, our Native American Student Association, when I could, but I also took time to sit and enjoy the drumming and the dancing and walk around, talk to the vendors, and try to take off my work hat for a second and put away the business cards and really just have fun and so, I feel like that was powerful for me, just to be able to for the first time kind of enjoy some programming rather than feel responsible for the execution of it. And so...I enjoyed that. I look forward to more things like that [laughs].

NF: Good...so you’ve talked about a few of these, but, what are your challenges working at the Longhouse and how have you overcome them?

DC: I think there are two challenges. The first is that I commute from Newberg Oregon, and so it’s 60 miles away, and so, I don’t come to campus this term on Mondays. I’m here Thursday through Friday, and so, even some Fridays I’m not able to be here, and so, to not physically be able to be here within the building is difficult, especially when things happen at the drop of a hat. I wish I could just say “I’ll be right there,” and, but you know, that’s just not possible, and so, to build relationships with people, from a distance, isn’t easy. It works with some people, but others there’s just—it’s not an option, you kind of need to have a face-to-face, something about eye contact and a personal touch when you’re shaking somebody’s hand, and....and so I think that’s difficult. That has been difficult and it will be next year too and I think the other thing is time management. There are some weeks where this job is a full time job and to be a full time grad student as well, and to be a partner and to be a commuter and kind of throwing all of those things into one just isn’t easy and I feel like that’s something that a lot of grad students and a lot of grad students and a lot of grad students who have a GTA—an assistantship probably experience, even more so if you’re in a committed relationship and so, I don’t think that’s anything that’s necessarily new, but I do feel like there are certain aspects of student affairs that—or even just collegiate life, even as a student that, where...burnout [laughs] is almost expected. It’s like “Oh, it’s part of the job,” that you work more than you’re supposed to, more than you’re being paid to, but, I’m trying to not buy into that. I’m trying to really set boundaries, and that’s difficult. Kind of weighing people’s expectations versus my health is difficult, and so that’s something I’ll probably be working on for the next 50 years [laughs] until I retire.
NF: Probably…so let’s talk about your successes working with the Longhouse.

DC: Um…I’m just, I’m such a critical person of myself sometimes, I feel like it’s difficult for, me to pat myself on the back. You know, I see…just back to my last answer, I kind of base my success on other people’s kind of opinions, which is not always the healthiest thing to do, but, so I check—when I check in with the students and they feel like one of their pieces of programming was a success, then I feel better, and when my boss says, “Good job,” then I feel like I did a good job as well. And so, you know we have two Longhouse staff that have really grown interpersonally this year, to the point where they’re discovering kind of an intersection of their own identity, they’re also multiracial as well, and what they’ve chosen to do is actually apply for other cultural centers next year, within leadership positions within those cultural centers, and they applied to work here as well. So as weird as that sounds, we always want to retain our own staff, it’s actually a success to me that our students are feeling more comfortable with their ethnic or racial identity, to the point where they feel like they want to branch out and kind of collaborate with the other centers to the point where they don’t just want to collaborate, they want to become leaders within those centers, and so that’s actually a success in my eyes, that, it’s not—the programming is going to be a success that our students put on - if they’re healthy, in their own ways, and part of that is being comfortable with themselves, and so I deem that a success, even though of course I’d love to retain our strongest employees, I see that as a success in my eyes. Does that make sense?

NF: It does, yes. Well, that’s part of your mentorship roll that you mentioned earlier, right? So, speaking of potential collaboration with other cultural centers, have you had interactions with the staff of other centers, and if so can you describe what those were like?

DC: Sure, so I’ve—I stop in at the other cultural centers, and at first I tried to do it, once a week, and then that turned into every other week and then, it’s just kind of difficult. I stop into the BCC and 4Cs every week, just because they’re in Snell now and they’re so centrally located that it’s easy to do, and so I’m in there typically every Tuesday, for about a half hour, just going back and forth. APCC’s a little difficult because it’s on the North side of campus, and so it’s kind of tough to get there for me, but I feel like one of the things that the Longhouse, one of our biggest things that we can work on is that—intercultural center collaboration, and I don’t just mean putting on programming, I mean actually going out of our way to attend some of our other centers’ programming, and attend, you know, fundraisers, attend meetings, and perhaps even there might be
meetings that are off the clock...there’s that balance, you have to be a good student, everything else, but to really show our other centers support by going to their events, especially their large annual events; the other centers recognize that and one thing I notice is that I—you know, went out and attend some of the other centers events, especially their large annual programmings that they work really hard on, there wasn’t a lot of Longhouse representation there. And so, understanding kind of our interconnectivity, interconnectedness, I feel like is something that I’d really like to take another step with next year and...yeah, that’s definitely something that we need to improve upon.

[00:20:22]

NF: Okay...So you’ve mentioned this a little bit, the next set of questions is about the new Longhouse and you mentioned the Quonset Hut from last year that you were at capacity, so can you describe what part of the process, you assisted with, with the Longhouse, if, I mean by the time that you came here the design was pretty much done, but can you talk about your role within the new Longhouse?

DC: Yeah, so really was, you know, has been a kind of farcicalities management perspective, which is also kind of my previous experience within student affairs as well, running different buildings on different college campuses, so it’s definitely a strength of mine. I wasn’t a part of the design and kind of decision making process so much, only kind of where furniture might go is kind of where [laughs] —has been my, has been my - has been my contribution, but when we were in the old Quonset Hut, something that had worked for me in previous positions is when you are making move, the communication of what’s going to go where, ‘cause things get lost. I mean, we moved seventy feet [laughs] like from one building to another, literally right next door to each other and you still lose things. It’s amazing how that happens, but it does, and so even just creating a grid that’s color-coded to say that this is our current Quonset Hut and this is our office and everything that’s in our office is going to go into particular boxes that are color-coded yellow [laughs]. And then when we moved into the new building, anything that’s a yellow box is going to go into these spaces and are going to be packed and unpacked by these people. And so that way you have as much of a streamlined process as possible so that two people are in charge of the office, they pack everything up, they unpack everything, so that was the intent. As it turned out, instead of having two people for each area, it was basically two or three people that did everything [laughs]. So that was a little bit difficult, but, so the move was the biggest hurdle and the first hurdle, and then the second hurdle has been, our Hirsch—and I don’t want to, this is being recorded and so I don’t want somebody to say “Oh, Hirsch is bad,” but we’ve had trouble with our Hirsch security system, it’s not so much on Hirsch’s end, it’s kind of a weird term, Hirsch’s end, good luck spelling that one. It was more a
um…um…maybe that’s, maybe we should save that for another interview. Um, making sure that our building is ADA compliant, so making sure that our Hirsch security system works where our students can access it with their ID cards, that we can unlock the building successfully, that we can lock it at the end of the day and at the—all the while our ADA access plans throughout the building are also functional, and so that was probably our biggest kind of headache, you know, for the first couple of months, and now five months and we got it figured out, so hopefully we’ll be okay moving forward. One thing that I’d like to be involved in a little bit more next year is just helping the other GTAs with the process, the—I’ve already communicated with some of the do’s and don’ts and some of the lessons learned from our process, but actually making myself available to them, to say…we’re all pretty autonomous and you know, we want to believe that we know everything or at least give off a feeling that we do and so sometimes you need to actually ask like, “Are you okay?” like, “What do you need help with?” And so I think that’s one thing I’m going to take—and make the point of saying is “What part in the proc—moving process are you in right now?” and then ask, you know, “Would you like my perspective?” and then offer it if they’re willing to kind of take some of the more details and lessons learned, ‘cause I don’t want people to go through what I’ve been through for the last five months, if they can make it an easier process, then…definitely wish that upon them. And anybody who’s listening to this in the future, find my contact information, wherever I am [laughs] at this point of my career, if it’s twenty years later, you don’t want to reinvent the wheel when you’re going through things like that.

[00:25:00]

NF: So, what does the new Longhouse mean to you, especially considering that you got to see the transition and lead the transition from the Quonset Hut to the new Longhouse?

DC: …hmm…So many things. Um...“opportunity” I think is one word, our gathering hall space is square-footage wise as big as the old Longhouse, even bigger, and so just the functionality that our new gathering hall space offers, that it just allows us to do programming that we only dreamed about, or we had to reserve and rent other space throughout campus in order to do those things. So the opportunity of functionality of our space, the opportunity of the people, the types of people and the amount of people that have just walked through this space, from political leaders of Oregon to Native leaders in Oregon, to leaders on our campus, um...so...I’m always on my toes because I meet somebody new every week it seems like, and so, and that allows for different opportunities to pass on to our students. So during the Grand Opening, and this might go into the next section a little bit, but at the Grand Opening, one of the artists, Shirod Younker, was one of the artists for the Longhouse, part of the, um…you’re familiar with
the one-percent, law of, like, anytime within the state of Oregon, anytime a new building is erected or that a building is being um…renovated, that one percent of the construction cost go toward art of some kind, and so Tony Johnson and Shirod Younker were kind of our one percent artists and they did Gathering the People, which is the metal work that’s in the gathering hall, and the metal work, you might be able to see it from your seat on the door that leads into the gathering hall, and Shirod came to our Grand Opening, and I met him, and really, you know, OSU alum, you know, just really kind person and one thing we spoke about briefly was reaching out to him next year and actually having him come back and speak to the Longhouse staff and perhaps with our other students that are interested, not only to know about the process that he went through, but also um…you know, to create the artwork, but to bring that perspective of Native culture, Native art, because I can…do my best to speak to the power of artwork, but actually come from his perspective and could come from an OSU alum, to come from somebody that has such long ties to the cultural center, you know, I can’t…I can’t give that type of perspective, and so he’s…bringing people like that and just based on the opportunities that—that is one opportunity that presents itself with the new center, I guess I should say. It’s kind of a long about way [laughs] to answer that question, sorry [laughs].

**NF:** It’s good…so, as you mentioned, the next set of questions, focus on ideas for the future and sort of the bigger picture of the Longhouse. So, what projects, events, activities, would you like to have seen or would you recommend for the future?

**DC:** Yeah, um…so there are…there are a few. I feel like, in a perfect world, right? [laughs] which we’re striving for, which we don’t live in, there are still these questions that come up, of…with our students…with our student population becoming increasingly diverse, um…“Where’s my cultural center?” You know, “If I don’t identify as, you know, Black or Latino, Native or Asian, or even, you know, within the LGBTQ spectrum or, you know, women’s center, if none of those fit, you know, my identity, then, where’s my center?” And so, um…I think the project, events, activities…regardless of what the project, event, and activity is, having the student staff and graduate staff and fulltime staff you know, training them to have the perspective of honoring intersecting identities within our students and really understanding, kind of taking time to pause and ask that question of, “Okay who, kind of like I mentioned before, who is this kind of geared towards? And is it geared towards just one type of person or could anyone, any Beaver, any member of our OSU community feel comfortable coming to this and be able to take something away from it?”
I think there is programming that is important to say, you know, these are for our Native students, specifically, I don’t want to take anything away from the—we should have those as well, but, I think if our new Native American Longhouse and our other new cultural centers that are going to be opening within the next year, are going to be able to make...these sort of lasting effect and lasting change. It’s not our responsibility to change this campus and become more culturally competent. I think that’s [laughs] you know, not solely our responsibility, but I think, if we were to have—bring that perspective to the work that we do, I think that that would be truly powerful and...if I’d say one type of project...okay, I’m going to say two types of projects. I’m going to say one, to continue an oral history project and to figure out a way to incorporate Native language into that into some way, shape or form, so some type of documentation of Native language, whether it’s going into Media Space on OSU and kind of create a Longhouse channel, where we kind of document either programming or we bring in, you know, Native language speakers and they give a presentation, we film it and we put it onto our media pace, some type of using our technology to like document what we do. And then...another would be some type of collab- collaborate event with all of our cultural centers, and we do that every term, but they’re kind of smaller scale, and so if we had some type of, we do it at the beginning of the year where we go out into the Quad and kind of inform everybody about the programming we’re going to be doing in the upcoming year. We do it every September during Connect Week, if we had some type of, whether it’s highlighting each cultural center every year, kind of do a rotation, or what, to honor that intersectionality and have all the staff kind of come together on one project, I think would be interesting. I don’t know quite what that would look like, but I think that’d be interesting, to pull that off.

NF: Okay. So, what advice would you give a future NAL staff or OSU cultural center staff in general? And this could be for someone in a position like yours or it can be for the staff positions in general, or both.

DC: Um...I’d say Google “Johari’s Window” and take a look at what your blind spots are, in Johari’s Window. And I’m like looking at the recorder as if I’m like talking to it [laughs]. Because I think doing our best to figure out, knowing what we don’t know, um...I think if we can lessen, you know, what we don’t know, kind of lessen what our ignorances are, it kind of increases our competence and also our confidence. Kind of have conversations, whether they’re difficult conversations about race and ethnicity or if they are, you know, engaging and powerful, you know, conversations, whatever it might be. I feel like, just continuing to...to be okay saying that you don’t know something and to ask questions, you know, that’s—I ask our undergraduates questions and students that are ten years younger than me, you know, questions every day. And I
had a hard time with that for the first month, you know? ‘Cause I’m a graduate student and I’m studying how to be a college administration staff member, and so I should know all the answers and I don’t, and so to ask your students questions, it empowers them, and it humbles you, you know, to a certain extent, which I think is also healthy.

NF: So based on working at the Longhouse this past year, what is a take-away that you have gained that you’d like to share with others?

[00:34:50]

DC: Um…So a take-away is…probably how generous our Native community is. Some of them with their time, some of them with their resources, whether it’s salmon or money, how, and our non-Native community, you know I don’t expect this level of generosity year after year, probably [laughs] ’cause we just opened a new center. But we have tens of thousands of dollars of artwork that has been donated to us and I’ve—I’m just take a-back, you know, just original, one-of-a-kind pieces of art from you know, nationally and even world-renowned artists, and so, to be honored with those within the space, I am still trying to kind of wrap my head around that, you know? [laughs] And so, I think that’s something that I really wasn’t expecting.

NF: So what is the biggest issue or, if there are multiple big issues for you, in terms of the purpose of the Longhouse and why it’s important?

DC: …um…you know, I feel like…I feel like this has two different…I think one of the issues…oh my gosh, I don’t know the answer to this one is. So…when I first started working at the Longhouse, people would ask, you know “So how Native do you have to be to use the center?” And I think I was in the Women’s Center when I was asked the question, I was there, you know, attending some programming that the Women’s Center was putting on, and I asked “Well, how much of a woman do I have to use this space?” you know? And like “Oh, you’re welcome here, you’re welcome today, you’re welcome tomorrow,” and I said, you know, it’s the same. Um, sort of. But I think that question was even coming from a woman that identifies as, you know, as part of her identity as Native, but, you know, I think she said, you know, she’s like “I’m 1/36 Navajo”- And I know that there’s, you know, tribal, you know, governances, there’s tribal regulations that say, you know, how Navajo you have to be to receive particular benefits, and so, and different Natives over the last week during our Grand Opening and Pow Wow and everything, I was probably asked that question over a dozen times, you know? And the purposes of this interview, there are reasons why you would ask “Are you affiliated with a particular tribe or tribes,” it’s not “What tribes are you affiliated with,” the question is “Are you affiliated?” So how you ask the question is important. But “What tribe are you from?” I was asked that at least a dozen times over
the last week, and so it’s part of, I think Native culture is, and there’s a certain…um…there’s a certain honor within that as well, and a certain, I think, desire to not let certain pieces of Native culture die. And the importance of kind of keeping, you know, certain bloodlines going for different reasons, as kind of push-back against genocide, and so, I feel like the questions that come from Natives in regards to, “How Native are you?” are also kind of a result of a lot of the acculturation and assimilation and genocide that they’ve seen for hundreds of years, and has a tendency that people have to come in to this center or to partake in Native cultures; I think that involves a lot of things, but I think that they kind of feed off of each other to a certain extent, and so, to actually engage people within some of the programs that we do, I feel like people that don’t identify as Native perhaps are hesitant and people that do identify as Native are perhaps hesitant to also engage people as well. And so that’s—that’s an interesting dynamic, ‘cause we should be doing it, but how do we honor both sides of that story? I think being able to like verbally process it is one [laughs] so I thank you for this opportunity, ‘cause I think I’ve thought about that a lot, but this is probably only the second or third time I’ve verbally expressed that. And so it’s, it’s an interesting dynamic…that I don’t have the answer to.

NF: Well, these next couple of questions kind of stem from your answer. How would you describe the impact of the Longhouse on Native American Students, or students that affiliate with a tribe or tribes?

[00:40:02]

DC: Yeah, I think it’s a spectrum. I think that we have some Native students on campus that probably haven’t even come, like stepped foot in the center, and then zero impact. I think the majority have come in here in some way, shape or form, and how we’ve helped is everything from, you know, a place where they can come to take a nap [laughs] to, I had a student last week, during the Pow Wow, you know, she overheard me say “I’m going to go to the longh—” “we were in Gill, we were in Gill and I was about to walk back to the Longhouse and said, “I’m going to go and run an errand and I’ll be right back” and she said, “Can I come with you? ‘Cause, you know, I left something in the fridge” [laughs]. And I said, “Sure,” so we came over here, and we walked over here, and um, she started crying…and she said, you know, “I’m so glad that we’re having the Pow Wow this year, and I’m so glad that you all built a Longhouse, I’ve been so homesick this term. And I wasn’t as homesick, you know, Fall Term or Winter Term, but I’ve just been so homesick this term, and that’s why I’m in the Longhouse every single day, and why I’m coming, you know, to the Pow Wow Saturday and Sunday, and at the Salmon Bake, you know, I feel like I don’t know what I would do if I can’t just come inside there and study there and listen to music and joke and laugh,” and so, it’s almost like their livelihood [laughs] to a certain extent, you know, for some students. Um…so I think we have kind of run the gamut of our impact.
NF: And how would you describe the impact of the Longhouse on the OSU and local community?

DC: Mhmm, also the gamut. Um…I had a gentleman come in on Tuesday, he and his wife, an older, uh…appeared to me as kind of an older white male and his wife came in, and when he stepped foot, he said…I was about to approach him and say, “Hey, can I answer any questions for you?” and he just looked around and said, “Oh, I c—” what did he say [laughs]...um, “I like the LBCC Longhouse better,” and then just walked out. And I think he was in for approximately six seconds [laughs] and I was like, “Well we have a gathering hall space, we have, you know, a sacred space back there” but, [laughs] and so, it’s everything from that to, during our Grand Opening, people’s jaws were dropping when they saw the totem especially and walking around and like, “Can I touch it?” you know? And just feeling like, even when I say “yes” they can, they don’t really touch it, they kind of—their hand just hovers around it, and so, so yeah I think we run the gamut on that, in that capacity as well. I feel like…it’ll be interesting to see what type of OSU community members and Corvallis community members we can build ally-ship with, so that it doesn’t have to be our Native students that speak to, you know, their experience, that can be tiresome for our students, if they’re just, you know, going over that over and over again, and so...it’ll be interesting to see what type of allies we can form, so that we can have that type of information kind of disseminated, you know, out of the Longhouse and not constantly having to kind of, I don’t want to say reproduce the wheel, but, just have [laughs] you know, the same type of talking points over and over again with people. We’re happy to give them, you know, when they come into the center, so I guess that would be under projects and events also, for the larger picture but [laughs].

NF: Well, and does that, that sort of leads into the next question of do you have any suggestions or ideas for future collaboration with the broader community outside of OSU and Corvallis?

DC: Mhmm, yeah, um...so…Natchee who’s helping with this project, he and I were just talking the other day. He had the idea of actually visiting other longhouses as well, and I think that’s a really good start for the staff, and I think would be really powerful at the beginning of each year. And I don’t know what that looks like necessarily, if it’s just our student leaders or if it’s the entire staff, to head to Grand Ronde next September, before the school year starts, to visit their longhouse. So that when people say, “Oh, well this isn’t a traditional longhouse,” you know, how do students react to that? Do they know what that means? Do they understand and have, you know, a response that they feel
comfortable with? And so I feel like continuing to build the ties within the nine federally recognized tribes of Oregon, I think that that’s the place where we start. And so, I don’t know if that’s once a term we go to a different tribe necessarily, then it takes three years to, you know, eventually visit everyone, or whether we do one a year. I feel like that’s… I feel like that would actually produce the type of impact we’d want to see with building our actual relationships, but, at least two to three trips a year would be great, to reach out. And, I think from there, since I live in Newberg, I actually don’t feel like I know the Corvallis community well enough to say, “this particular, you know, city, you know, political leader, perhaps is the person to go to.” I think I would probably defer to like Allison or Victoria in regards to that, to see if there are community members or actual, specifically people or community groups that are good to build that relationship with.

NF: So can you describe your thoughts on why sharing your stories is important to your identity, if it is?

DC: Yeah, I think, well I think two points ago, when I just kind of alluded to the importance of like verbally processing something [laughs], I think there’s—I think that it’s healthy to do. Especially really complex concepts, which we deal with on a daily basis, kind of complex, you know, racial and ethnic, and you know, gender and sexuality and sexual orientation, uh, you know, these different aspects, you know, religion, spirituality, these different aspects of our identity that are really complex. I feel like talking them out, is a healthy thing to do with others. I think that, learning from our past is something that’s important, and… by sharing our stories we allow others to kind of partake in a small piece of, you know, the Longhouse, history. And so I think that’s important, to kind of know where we come from. I think that—I mentioned Native language a little bit earlier, and not being a Native language speaker, I can’t fully speak to this case, but you know language extinction within Native cultures is happening as we sit here and, and so being able to pass along any type of information, and using technology to document information is important, and I feel like storytelling is… what we’re doing isn’t from a, like…Western anthropological approach [laughs] so much as it is from a, you know, a multicultural lens, I feel like. It’s much more humanistic, I feel. And so, I see that as something that, what you’re doing kind of empowers—is empowering me in my own way. And so, um, I appreciate taking this approach.

NF: Okay… So looking at the broader picture of the idea of, you know, race relations here on campus, can you describe your experiences at OSU pertaining to your racial or ethnic identity and how that’s impacted you this past year?
DC: Um, yeah. I feel like, when I first came to OSU, so last August and September, when I first kind of stepped foot on campus on a regular basis, I think I identified as Mexican-American and then starting to take multicultural classes at a graduate level, you know, for the first time I really…tried to — started to dissect what that meant, and I became very, um…uh…I felt a lot of things [laughs]. I felt embarrassed and even sad to a point, not being able to really speak Spanish, I think was a point of embarrassment for me. I think it always has been to a certain extent, since my dad and my brother and even my little sister can, a little bit. And so, not being able to speak Spanish I think is a part of my identity that I haven’t be able to really wrap my head around, wrap my arms around, wrap my being [laughs] around.

[00:50:12]

And so I think over the last two or three months, I’m starting to come to terms with that, and so I’m starting to…come to a place where I can even consider kind of being at peace with that. Whether or not it means that, you know, what exactly that’s going to look like, I’m not sure. I feel like it’s going to be cyclical. I could have something happen fi— I can come to peace with it next year and then have something five years from now that triggers me to where I go back to the beginning and, and so it’ll be interesting. I feel like the biggest thing about my experience at OSU has been at least having the conversations that allow me to go through that process. ‘Cause it is healthy, even if you feel like you take two steps forward and five steps back [laughs] to racial identity, at least you’re taking steps, at least you’re not stagnant, you know? And so…so yeah. And I think—I think being in the Longhouse has been interesting, ’cause I have—I’m not spending all of my time within the 4Cs. So I, you know, I’m not necessarily, you know, I kind of consider what my, like Mestizo side of me as well, you know, looks like. And I’m, I’m kind of, in a sense saying that’s different than my Mexican-American side, you know, and, and it’s not, you know, those overlap, but I feel like there’s a…like my spiritual side of me is much more…is in tune more with kind of an indigenous perspective than it is a…when I consider my Mexican-American side, I consider like my Catholic side as well, which I don’t identify as Catholic anymore, but I’m still a very spiritual person, and so I feel like that is a little bit more in line with, like…a more like, Native or indigenous identity. Does that make sense?

NF: Mhmm.

DC: And so…so yeah, I feel like my race and ethnicity, as I’ve been moving forward has kind of paralleled a little bit of me understanding what my spiritual identity is. I think I feel like those have gone hand in hand as well, over the last few months. So thanks, OSU.
NF: So, is there anything else that you’d like to share that we have not discussed? Anything that you’d like to go back to and share more, or?

DC: Gosh, how much of your time have I taken so far?

NF: [laughs]

DC: [laughs] Um…you know, I don’t think so. I feel like that’s everything. I feel like um…I feel like I, with some of the – with talking about projects like this with you and Natchee, and talking about the future of the Longhouse, if we can make connections, what would they be, I feel like I always have these grandiose ideas and, and so, for myself as I’m talking this out and for anybody that might happen to read or listen to this later, you know, dreaming and creativity and imagination are the impetus of so many great things in this world and so don’t stop doing them, but also balance that with realism and really balance that with, whether it’s a mentor or a partner or a friend that can bring you back down to Earth, because you do need to have a balance of both in order to kind of execute your dreams and to help others execute theirs. So I feel like that’s not an easy thing to do. Sometimes it can feel like your dreams are being crushed or that you might be crushing someone else’s dreams and so, hate to do that, but it’s, it’s a balance, and so, yeah, keep it up.

NF: Okay, great. Well, thank you so much.

[end 00:55:02]