NB: My name is Natchee Barnd; I am an Assistant Professor of Ethnic Studies and Native American Studies as part of the School of Language, Culture, and Society. Today’s date is May 21, 2013, and I am interviewing Hali’a Parish a staff member of the Native American Longhouse at Oregon State University. So we’ll start with some basic information. Can you tell me your name, and spell it out loud, please.


NB: And what is your hometown, or where is home for you?

HP: My hometown in Kapolei, Hawaii. Umm, it’s located on the island of O’ahu.

NB: And if could you tell me your age, what year in school you are, and your major?

HP: Sure, I’m 20 years old, umm, I am a junior, and my major is Business with a minor in Communications.

NB: Okay. And are you affiliated with a particular tribe or tribe?

HP: I am actually not. I’m native Hawaiian and we don’t have any particular tribes there.

NB: Okay, thanks. Alright, so this set of questions will be about your work at the Longhouse, specifically. And so the first question is, umm, just what is your position at
the Native American Longhouse, and what do you do, and so the follow up is what—how many years have you worked for the NAL?

**HP:** I am an office assistant for the NAL, and my umm, I’ve been working here for a year, so this is my very first time ever working in a cultural center. So what my job entails is basically being an assistant for different events, I am also, uh, I maintain cleanliness within the longhouse, umm, my job is to give tours of people who come in and I also assist students with the computer use and printing usage.

**NB:** Okay. Uh, so have you worked for any other cultural centers? I think you already answered that.

**HP:** Mhmm.

**NB:** And if so when or what positions, and you said “no”, right? This is your first.

**HP:** No. This is my very first year.

**NB:** Okay, so this is the first one. And so, instead of asking that, then why did you decide to work at the Longhouse?

**HP:** Umm, this is actually the first time that I’ve ever worked here on campus, and I think it’s a great thing to work on campus, you feel better connected to OSU, you learn a lot more things, and not only that, you meet people. And, umm, which can also help you to strive at OSU and become successful, because you know a lot of things, you’re aware of things and, umm, just helps you to be more comfortable and retained at Oregon State.

**NB:** So, I mean, I’m a, I just kind of had a sort of follow-up, though, is there a reason why the Longhouse in particular?

**HP:** Oh, okay.

**NB:** ‘Cause that was a good answer in terms of why you want to work on campus and sort of connect them-

**HP:** Yeah.

**NB:** I wonder if—was there something about the Longhouse specifically that drew you to it?
HP: Actually, this is a funny thing, I actually first applied for general, just cultural centers and my main, umm, goal was to work at the Asian-Pacific Cultural Center because of my ethnicity, umm, but then, knowing that our school is about diversity development, I thought that it was a great idea to work at the Native American Longhouse, being that they were looking for more people to hire and not a lot of people were being hire—were applying here. So when I was asked to move onto Native American Longhouse, I thought it was a great idea, especially being a part of the new building that was being built and meeting a lot of different people and learning about the culture, was really exciting too.

NB: Thanks.

HP: Yeah.

NB: So, what were—were your expectations or hopes for your work matched, surpassed, or not matched, in terms of, you know, if you could just sort or describe or explain them, when you come in, what were you expecting, and did they match that or not match it, or they surpassed it?

HP: I think, uh, my experiences here have definitely surpassed what I expected. I thought that my job would be to staple papers and to fill the printer with paper every day, you know, and things like that, but it’s actually a lot more than that. I learn about culture. I mean, I meet people, I actually get to really, um, get engaged into the culture and give people tours and, um, I guess I learn a lot more than just stapling papers and doing, you know, just paperwork all day, and, but I actually get to be engaged with the events that go on here, too. So I think being a part of it is definitely surpassing what I expected, you know.

NB: Yeah. That’s great. Um, can you describe the projects, events, activities, etcetera, during the Fall Term, specifically around Heritage Month, that were especially meaningful to you?

HP: Well, I think—

NB: If you can think back that far now [laughs].

HP: Yeah, that was a while ago [laughs]. Um, but I thought that Heritage Month was really cool. We had so many different activities and we got to learn so many things about all the cultures here. Um, one of our, um, staff members here, Mariah, did a, uh, Alaskan games activity, where she brought her culture and the kind of activities they do, which is very, very unusual for me, because I’ve never seen any of those activities
before. Um, we also did events like dream catchers, creating dream catchers, um, we did buttons for Connect Week. We also made earrings, Native American earrings, so, I mean, being involved in all the artwork that the Native American culture has to offer was really interesting to me, too.

[00:05:23]

**NB:** So, if I can ask you the same question, more or less, but, so I have it here as Fall, Winter and Spring, cause we’re trying to sort of lay out the different, you know, knowing that you were fresh off of Pow-Wow and Salmon Bake, you know, grand opening for the new Longhouse, um, so that, for Fall, in terms of Winter and/or Spring, what would you say were the most meaningful or especially meaningful events for you?

**HP:** The most meaningful event would have to be the Grand Opening that we had right after our Salmon Bake. Um, just seeing all of the people from the community there and excited to see that we have a new Longhouse was, um, I don’t know, I think just made a connection for me that this is not only for OSU, but this is for the community and it means so much to them and people who don’t even go to OSU just, they’re just so happy to have the culture here at OSU and to support the students here. So that was a definitely like a more emotional connection for me, even though I’m not Native American, just to have people there for, you know, minorities of OSU is really, really special.

**NB:** And we should note that that was three days ago, so [laughs].

**HP:** Yeah [laughs] that was.

**NB:** So it’s fresh, especially fresh. Alright, so, what have been your challenges working at the Longhouse, and how do you think you’ve overcome them? So any particular challenges that you can think of?

**HP:** My challenges would definitely have to be, uh, learning the culture, um, even though there’s so many ways to learn the culture here, I feel like, um, I feel like some fallbacks would have to be not being informed of certain things. So, certain things that are sacred I just didn’t know about and I didn’t know if it offend the culture and, uh, a lot of spiritual things, which is very special in the Native American culture, things that I feel like I should have been more aware about before hand, just in case, because it’s very, um, I don’t want to offend any cultures, so that’s been a struggle, um, but in that, yeah. So that’s about it.
NB: So what have been your successes, would you say, working at the Longhouse?

HP: Umm, my successes would definitely be meeting so many people. Um, of all my years here at OSU I’ve never met so many people and made so many connections with people while I’m here, just, you know, hanging out at OSU, and I just meet so many people of different cultures, and other staff members at other cultural centers that we got to bond with, during our retreat. Um, so that is one thing, even though that’s not like my job, to meet people, that’s definitely something that I feel at any job you should definitely be able to connect and network with other people, to feel, you know, at home, so.

NB: Yeah. Well that’s like a personal success in a lot of ways, through the Longhouse. And this is your third year, so?

HP: Third year.

NB: Third year. So. Okay. Um, and you already touched on this just a second ago, but the next question is what have been your interactions with staff from the other cultural centers, so maybe if you elaborate a little bit on that, I know you said the retreats, um, is there any other thing to, that you want to say about that?

HP: Um, well before we started our work in September, I believe it was in September, we went on a retreat, um, and we went to Salem and we went to these cabins and we had all of the staff members from the cultural centers come together and um, I have never met the most nicest people in my life, I mean, especially from so many different cultures. And it was interesting because I, you know, from the Latin American culture, to the Black culture, to Native Hawaiian cultures, and mainly seeing people interested in my culture as well, was really, really cool. Um, I’ve never met so many nice people in my life [laughs]. And it was really, really cool to just bond with them and do activities with them and learn about, you know, their aspirations in school and their culture as well.

NB: Yeah. Okay. So there’s a couple of questions here just about the new Longhouse. So the first one says were you a part of the design process for the new Longhouse, and if so, can you elaborate on that a little bit?

HP: I actually haven’t had input specifically into like a certain design of anything within the longhouse; um, I was asked for my opinion and I honestly just agreed with everything ‘cause I thought it was all great. Um, one thing I don’t like is the lack of storage space [laughs], but other than that, I mean, I think that when it came down to decisions everybody was on the same track and everybody knew what they wanted to do and it was done in a way that I agreed with, so. Um, yeah.
NB: So, yeah, okay. So, what does the new longhouse mean to you then? ‘Cause you also were part of the transition, right? From the old one, down, looking across, out the window at the new one—

HP: Yes, that’s gone.

NB: Yes, that’s no longer there. So what is the new one to you?

[00:10:07]

HP: Um, the new Longhouse to me is a space of comfort, um, I love the fact that we have movies and TVs and video games and I love the Wii system, so, it’s just a place of comfort to relax between classes, and its quiet in here, there’s good people here, there’s always someone who’s willing to help you with anything, you know, that has to do with school. So I think just a place where you can come and relax, and a place of comfort, that’s what it means to me.

NB: Okay, great. Alright, so we have a series of questions that are titled or subtitled, ideas for the future and the larger picture. Hmm. So, first, what projects, events, activities, etcetera, would you have liked to have seen or would you like to recommend for the future, so thinking about moving forward next year and the years beyond?

HP: Yeah, umm. I don’t know if I was the first Native Hawaiian here, but I feel like more Native Hawaiian activities would be greatly implemented here, like that would be really great. I think, um, you know, just getting that idea out there that, you know, we are technically, you know, Native Americans too, as we are proud of American now, umm, even though there’s so many issues with that, like, just getting that awareness out, I feel like people know a lot about the Native American culture, especially like, with Alaska being a part of the Native American culture, I feel like Native Hawaiian is a little different and to just distinguish the, you know, commonalities and differences that they have and making an event about that would be really cool. At least once a year or something like that.

NB: Yeah. Um, so what advice would you give to future Longhouse staff or OSU cultural center staff?

HP: Umm, I would tell them to be open-minded, um, about this whole idea of diversity development, which helps to basically contribute to other people who come in here, not knowing about diversity development. A lot of people come in here and they’re just looking at the longhouse but they’re not looking at what the idea of it is for. Um, so
mainly just first making sure that you’re open minded about things and then going ahead and being comfortable, you know, educating people about that and what the idea of—what these cultural centers stand for, is something I would tell them.

**NB:** Based on your work or working at the Longhouse, what is the take-away that you gained that you would like to share, if it’s different than what you just said? So is there a specific take-away that you feel like you’ve gained from working here?

**HP:** Um, I mean, you gain a lot of experience just being a worker here, just like, as in any other job, um, you know, you gain experience in leadership, you gain experience in, uh, just technology. Sometimes they ask you to do certain things. So, I definitely have grown from those experiences, and I just learned a lot of new things and people showed me how to use different technologies around here and I definitely would take away from that, yeah.

**NB:** Okay. Uh, let’s see, number four here, what is the biggest issue for you in terms of the purpose of the Longhouse, and why is that issue important?

**HP:** Hmm, that’s a tough one [laughs].

**NB:** [Laughs] It’s a big question.

**HP:** Yeah, that is a big one. Umm, yeah. I hope to not offend anyone by answering this question. Umm, but I remember when I was giving a tour once, someone asked me, “So the sacred space, like, is that only for, you know, like elders, is that only for people of the Native American culture? Can anyone go in there? Like, what if they don’t know what to do in there?” And I feel like because we have a sacred space and that’s something very, very special, I feel like that should be open to everyone, and I feel like everyone should know more about it. I know it’s kind of closed off in the back, but I feel like people should be more informed if they are able to use it and what they can use it for. That’s one issue that I think.

**NB:** Okay. Umm, let’s see. Next question: how would you describe the impact of the Longhouse on Native students, specifically?

**HP:** Um, it has a great impact, um, people feel a connection here. I know that, um, my connection to the APCC is definitely there because I know that they’re sharing my culture, and my culture means a lot to me. So, for the Native American culture to be shared here should mean a lot to them and I feel like this should be, if anything, their second home, a place where, this was made for them. Um, and for the community as well, but I feel like this is definitely a connection because this is their culture, this is
made for them and their ancestors had things for them and this is one of them so…yeah.

NB: How would you describe—this is sort of a parallel question, how would you describe the impact of the Longhouse on OSU and the local community? So thinking outside of just the Native students?

HP: Umm, I think it has a great impact, just, honestly being at the Grand Opening showed me that, and I didn’t know that until then and especially at other activities like the Salmon Bake and The Pow Wow. There’s so many people from the community that I’ve never seen before that come and support and it’s because, you know that there’s some reason that they’re excited for this, and I just think, just having it here must mean a lot to them and their culture, so…

NB: Alright. Um, what kind of suggestions or ideas do you have about future collaboration with—so Longhouse collaboration with OSU and the local community, so things that you think might—are good ideas that maybe we’re not doing here, or you would like to see, you mentioned, obviously, the Native Hawaiian stuff, I don’t know if that’s that kind of thing, but…

HP: Yeah, umm, I think that well, connecting with any community or organizations with the Longhouse would definitely bring more awareness and it would pretty much get the name out there, and letting people know that there is a Longhouse here for the community, not only for OSU students, um, and making activities for that, I just, yeah, I think that’s a great idea. Um, we probably don’t do enough, I would say, of that, and that’s important because there’s so many community members that are passionate, and to get—to bring of more of that would be good so, yea.

NB: Um, but any, oh, I guess so there’s a follow up, was there any—did you have any specific ideas of how that might—what it might look like? If, I guess, the last one is like, and you know, this is just me adding a sort of follow up to this, but is there something that you thought “this would have been really cool if we had done this in order to bring that community in” or, like you were talking about to sort of bring that awareness, the Longhouse, I just wasn’t sure if you had a…secret project you’ve been wanting to work on all this time [laughs].

HP: [Laughs] Umm, and you mean just collaborating with…

NB: Either with OSU more generally, so outside of just the Native students who often will come in, or the folks who come in, or the local community, so we can think Corvallis or we can think, you know, even broader than that.
HP: Yeah, well I mean, like the Pow Wow, I mean, the Native American Longhouse supports the Pow Wow which is held by NASA [Native American Student Association], so that’s one collaboration event where we’re collaborating with the student organizations that are here, with clubs that are here, so I feel like, for maybe the Hawaiian events we could probably collaborate with the Polynesian Culture Club or even [organization name??] uh, to, you know, maybe be participate in their annual luau and contributing somehow to that, that would be great, whether its financially or just volunteers or just being there and sending out a message, something about diversity development. That would be a great idea. Yeah, maybe like, all the events that we have here, just sending out letters of, you know, we ask that you join, people from the community, or, I don’t know what other organizations are out there just kind of researching them and inviting them to these things, yeah.

NB: Okay. Um, last question on this section, um, can you describe your thoughts on why sharing your stories in important to your identity? Another big question [laughs].

HP: [Laughs] Yeah, are we talking about sharing it through this project?

NB: Um, it could be for this project, this oral history project, but also just, I think generally about the idea of sharing stories and how that might be important to people’s identity.

HP: Yeah, um, well I mean, I know my ancestors and my grandparents and great grandparents share stories and, um, it helps me to identify who I am and where I came from, so uh, just, I mean, for example, here, sharing my story as an office assistant, as, you know, a Native Hawaiian, I feel like one day there is someone of a different culture who comes in and they feel like “Oh, you know, I don’t know, because I’m a different culture,” I feel like just sharing my story and letting them know like, it’s okay, you know, like you still contribute to this idea of diversity development, and um, you still have a purpose here because, this is what I went through, you know? So I think yeah, that’s definitely important, it contributes to who you can be and like, what you think you should be and what your role is here, so, yeah.

NB: Thanks. Um, so there are two more questions here. One is about just general race relations on campus, so another kind of a big question, but can you describe your experiences at OSU pertaining to racial ethnic identity and/or tribal affiliations?

[00:20:00]

HP: Can you repeat that question? Sorry [laughs].
NB: I can, so can you describe your experiences at OSU pertaining to your racial or ethnic identity and/or tribal affiliations?

HP: I’m trying to put this together in my head [laughs].

NB: So how would you, I guess how would you, generally how would you describe your experiences um, you know, being, you know, a Native Hawaiian individual, how would you describe your experiences at OSU in that context?

HP: Um, to be honest, when, so when I was living back at home in Hawaii, um, I never felt like I was a minority; I mean, I…honestly, like if you’re Native Hawaiian in Hawaii, for some reason you’re put on a—you’re kind of like on a higher level because hey, you’re Native, you know, like that’s cool, um, but coming here I realize that, you know, I’m like this small percentage of a whole set of, group of students, so I think my experiences have changed. Um, I was treated a little differently. Um, in good and in bad ways. So I feel like people were a lot interested in my culture, they thought I was cool, where some people thought I was like, you know, like I didn’t have a house, I lived in a grass shack, it was kind of offending to me [laughs], um, but, yeah, so like I guess being a minority has definitely affected my identity here. I don’t at all, like, put myself to a lower level. I’m still going to be who I am and nothing’s going to change about that, but um, yeah, definitely the way people are in your community, the way they treat you affects what you think about yourself, but I don’t think at all it should change your perception of your identity, yourself.

NB: I wonder, do you think that, and this is your, you know, your own take, do you think that part of that experience is what led you to want to work in diversity development, then led you to APCC and the Longhouse?

HP: Um, it’s actually kind of cool because I never thought about working here for that reason, it just kinda, I worked here, and then it like, clicked, like hey, like, I have something to do with that, so, and I can relate to being a minority, so. Yeah, that’s just how it all kind of fell in place. But I feel like I could get the word out and be like, you know, you as a minority, you can work here. You can definitely contribute to the idea.

NB: Okay. Alright, so we have one last one, which is just an open-ended opportunity for you to add anything, to reflect back on anything you’ve already said, um, just anything else that’s not covered, these are all very specific questions, but this one is “is there anything we have not discussed that you would like to add?” So anything that you—your final words or thing that you thought as we were going along that “Oh, I also wanted to say this” and you didn’t get a chance to?
HP: Um, not much, I would probably just like to add, for anyone who’s listening to this recording, any, you know, future OSU cultural center staff members, um, you know, like don’t worry about, you know, the hierarchy in the cultural centers. If you’re external coordinator, this has power, what has power, I mean, as an office assistant, I feel like, that, uh, I wasn’t, you know, the bottom of the food chain kind of thing where everybody tells me what to do. Here everyone is treated equal no matter what your position is. Even if you’re an office assistant, don’t feel like you can’t contribute to these ideas and these events, you can. And you can definitely, I mean, if course they allow you to, but at the most part I was able to, so I feel like everyone should feel like no matter what position you are you can definitely succeed and help out with these events that are going on and not only staple papers [laughs], put paper in the printer machine, like, no, you can definitely do more and it’s all about what you feel like you wanna do [laughs]. So, yeah, that’s what I would like to add [laughs].

NB: Okay, great. I think that’s it.

HP: Okay, perfect.

NB: Pause it.