



THESIS APPROVAL SHEET

Title of Thesis: A State That Leaves No One Behind? Erasure of Native Peoples in
Maryland & How This Limits Inclusive Environmental & Climate Action

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ABSTRACT

“A State That Leaves No One Behind,” was a bold statement from current Governor Wes Moore when he was campaigning for the governor position. However, his statement did not hold true considering Maryland Tribal communities that are still being left behind. Why? It could be because of their Tribal status. The state of Maryland has no federally recognized Tribes. Out of six Tribes that are ancestral to this region, only three are state-recognized

I had to ask, who are the Tribal Peoples of Maryland? As a graduate student originally from Arizona, I did not know that Tribes that are ancestral to the Chesapeake Bay region were still here and other Tribes have migrated to this region that call it home. I later learned that the main reason why erasure started in the first place. I and others assumed that Tribal Peoples continue to thrive in the Chesapeake Bay region is because of historical documentations from the colonial governments that were purposely biased and did not document the whole truth of the presence of numerous Tribal Nations still residing in colonial state borders of what is now called Maryland. It didn't help that the academia supported their documentations because they have the highest credentials and were historical figures that made progression of this country, the United States.

You might think that Indigenous erasure is a thing of the past and it not currently happening. Wrong. It's still weaving through our societies and systems. For instance, if you Google “Native American” or “Indigenous Peoples” or “Tribal Peoples” in the search engine you will notice that there is a lot of historical information and pictures available but little to no pictures of current Tribal Peoples. Another example are the history books used by our education systems that are told from a Eurocentric perspective and the terminologies they use for Tribal Peoples is past-tense. No present or future tense terminologies or information are included, except in occasional institutional “Land Acknowledgement” statements.

In this thesis, I focus on the work of environmental organizations and those focused on environmental and climate action. In a region where environmental and climate action claims to prioritize inclusion and consider diverse voices, I've noticed that groups in Maryland do not involve or engage with Tribal Peoples in the state.

Title of Document: A State That Leaves No One Behind? Erasure of Native Peoples in Maryland & How This Limits Inclusive Environmental & Climate Action

Autumn M. Powell, M.S., 2024

Directed By: Dr. Margaret B. Holland, Geography & Environmental Systems.

A STATE THAT LEAVES NO ONE BEHIND? ERASURE OF NATIVE PEOPLES IN MARYLAND
& HOW THIS LIMITS INCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENTAL & CLIMATE ACTION

By: Autumn M. Powell

This thesis is submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Maryland-Baltimore County, in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
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2024

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DEDICATION

This dedication is to the Tribal Nations, whose influence has shaped present-day Maryland, enduring centuries of colonial oppression and forced assimilation. Upon arriving in Maryland, I initially only perceived the contemporary Western lifestyle prevalent in the area, overlooking the urban Tribal lifestyle intertwined with it. The strong kinship among Tribal Peoples and their connection to the land and the waters of the Chesapeake Bay region form a resilient and enduring bond.

The Tribal Peoples' way of life remains as vibrant as the waterways they inhabit. The Chesapeake Bay, Pocomoke River, Patuxent River, Potomac River, Nanticoke River, Susquehanna River, Patapsco River, Wicomico River, and other Algonquian-named rivers are not just geographical features; they are living symbols of culture and identity for the modern-day Tribal communities in Maryland.

These waterways serve as vital lifelines, carrying with them the rich heritage and traditions of the Indigenous peoples. They are more than mere bodies of water; they are the veins of the land, pulsating with the essence of Tribal culture. In their environment, the Tribal Peoples are not separate entities but integral parts of the intricate web of life surrounding them.

I undertook this work because *shí kǐ* (my family) instilled in me the values of integrity, standing up for what is right, and seeing tasks through to completion. What initially seemed like a personal endeavor turned out to be much larger in scope. I realized that centuries of colonialism cannot be undone by my two-year project alone. Instead, I see it as a challenge to colonialism, urging people to reassess U.S. history critically.

The significance of this undertaking lies in its connection to my environment in Diné'tah. Being defined as Diné, our culture is deeply rooted in the elements, time, and animals. This project was a reaffirmation of our cultural foundation and an assertion of our identity.

This paper is intended for readers like you to engage in a critical re-examination of the colonial historical narratives that have been ingrained in our education systems, often without question. I encourage you to pose inquiries, draw connections, and challenge the colonial perspectives that have historically marginalized other truths. It's essential to recognize that Indigenous Peoples are not a monolithic or mythical entity; they are human beings who have prioritized their culture as the defining aspect of their existence. Let's explore these narratives with an open mind, acknowledging the diverse experiences and perspectives within Indigenous communities.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am writing to express my deepest gratitude for Dr. Margaret Holland and your unwavering support and guidance throughout my academic journey, particularly in the development of my thesis paper. Your mentorship has been invaluable, guiding me from conceptualization to formatting with dedication. Your support empowered me to turn ideas into reality. Despite challenges, your encouragement fueled my motivation. Working with you enhanced my academic skills and deepened my appreciation for scholarly processes. Thank you, Dr. Holland, for your commitment to excellence. Your influence on my academic journey is indelible.

I want to say a big thank you to my partner mentor, Dr. Ashley Minner Jones. Your unwavering dedication to supporting the Tribal Peoples of Maryland, including your decision to mentor another Native student, is deeply appreciated. Your advocacy and empowerment are truly inspiring. Under your guidance, I've gained invaluable insights into the experiences of Tribal Peoples in urban Maryland, witnessing their resilience and success within their Nations and the state. Your commitment to their well-being shines through everything you do. Thank you, Dr. Minner Jones, for sharing your expertise and passion. Your advocacy has enriched my understanding and inspired me to continue championing the rights and recognition of Tribal Peoples in our community.

During my summer internship with the Indigenous Peoples ' Program, I'm deeply grateful for the invaluable mentorship from my community partner mentors, Maria Day and Megan Craynon from the Maryland State Archives. Their guidance on the *Mayis: Indigenous Records* project provided profound insights into Maryland's Tribal Peoples' history. Their dedication to preserving Indigenous voices is commendable. Their mentorship has significantly impacted my personal and professional growth.

I'm deeply grateful to Dr. Yolanda Valenica and Dr. Joby Taylor for their unwavering support throughout my thesis on Indigenous erasure. Their dedication to representing their Indigenous roots while advocating for a Native student like myself, is truly inspiring. Their insightful feedback and encouragement enriched my academic journey, emphasizing the importance of amplifying Indigenous voices. Their mentorship shaped my perspective on complex societal issues, and I'm profoundly thankful for their commitment to inclusivity and empowerment in academia.

I'm deeply grateful to the National Science Foundation (NSF) for their ongoing support of programs like the Interdisciplinary Consortium for Applied Research in the Environment (ICARE). Through their commitment, I've had the invaluable opportunity to engage in community research, contributing to environmental justice initiatives in Maryland.

Participating in ICARE has been transformative. Collaborating with passionate peers to address environmental challenges has been inspiring. Together, we've advocated for change and promoted sustainability in our communities.

The NSF's investment fosters academic growth and instills a sense of responsibility toward our environment. Their dedication to empowering students as positive change agents is commendable and appreciated.

I'm deeply grateful to the GES department for embracing me and offering opportunities to explore GIS and related fields. Their guidance has expanded my understanding and fueled my passion for these disciplines. Professors within the department have been pivotal in shaping my journey in Maryland and at UMBC. Their mentorship has encouraged me to strive for excellence and to challenge myself continuously. Their commitment to fostering a supportive environment has enriched my academic experience and empowered me to pursue my potential. I'm profoundly thankful for their dedication to nurturing my growth and instilling in me a deep appreciation for geography and environmental systems.

I am deeply thankful to the University of Maryland-Baltimore County (UMBC) for allowing me to be a full-time student and engage in community research advocating for local Tribal and Intertribal Peoples in the Chesapeake Bay region. UMBC's support has been instrumental in facilitating both my academic pursuits and my efforts to support Indigenous communities in the area. I am grateful for UMBC's commitment to inclusivity and its encouragement of social justice initiatives. Being part of a university community that values diversity and community engagement has been a privilege.

I want to express my sincere gratitude to the individuals who participated in the environmental interviews. Their insights and expertise have been invaluable in shaping my understanding of environmental issues. I am deeply appreciative of the time and knowledge shared by representatives from the EPA, Chesapeake Bay Foundation, Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake, Maryland DNR Forest Service, UMBC faculty/retired STAC member, Chesapeake Climate Action Network, and Baltimore Bluewater Water Keeper. Their contributions have enriched my research and advocacy efforts.

I want to express my genuine gratitude to the Tribal interviewees who generously shared their experiences and insights with me. Their willingness to open up about their personal journeys and their roles as citizens of their respective Nations has been both enlightening and inspiring. To the individuals representing the Pocomoke Indian Nation, Choptico Band of Indians - Piscataway Conoy, Nause-Waiwash Band of Indians, Piscataway Indian Nation, Piscataway Conoy Tribe, Lumbee Nation of North Carolina, and Kiowa/Isanti Dakota/Ohkay Owingeh Pueblo, I extend my deepest thanks. Your courage and boldness in sharing your stories have profoundly impacted me. I am committed to continuing to advocate for your rights and for the preservation of your cultures and traditions. Thank you for entrusting me with your experiences, and I will stand with you in the fight for justice and equality.

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Disclaimer

Before delving into the paper, it's important to acknowledge that it's not a finalized or flawless document. While it reflects events and experiences between 2022 and 2024 at UMBC and in Maryland, there may be omissions or events I wasn't aware of, as I still consider myself somewhat of an outsider to the Chesapeake Bay region. I apologize for any topics or details that may not have been covered to the extent some might have expected.

As I continue to learn and process the information that comes my way, I recognize that some of the topics addressed may be heavy and uncomfortable for some readers. However, these are historical events that have already occurred, and altering the narrative to suit the comfort of privileged individuals is not an option.

Racist mascots and the derogatory language used by European colonizers in historical documents, like the Declaration of Independence, persist in our society, upholding systems of white supremacy. This ongoing perpetuation of harmful stereotypes and language directly affects Indigenous elders who are still grappling with the legacy of colonialism, as well as the youth striving to connect with their Native identity in modern-day Maryland. It's crucial to acknowledge the emotional toll that reading about Indigenous narratives can take, evoking feelings of anguish, sadness, frustration, disgust, and shock. Despite the discomfort, it's imperative not to silence these narratives or censor Native literature. Doing so would only further obscure the ongoing injustices faced by Indigenous communities. As advocates for equity and justice, it's our responsibility to amplify these voices and work towards meaningful change.

The individuals I had the privilege of interviewing generously shared their firsthand information, knowledge, and experiences. While it's natural to question the validity of these personal accounts, it's important to recognize that not all experiences are documented in traditional ways. Often, memory serves as the primary form of documentation, especially within Indigenous communities.

It's worth noting that the terminologies used by the interviewees may vary due to factors such as their mother tongue, language, or accents. Metaphors and linguistic nuances are integral parts of Indigenous storytelling traditions, adding richness and depth to their narratives. Thus, understanding and respecting these linguistic differences is essential when interpreting their accounts.

I stand in solidarity with the Tribal Peoples of the Chesapeake Bay and all other Tribal Nations I encounter, now and always.

Chapter 1: Exploring The Historical Events Relating to & of the Tribal Peoples of the Chesapeake Bay

Introduction

Yá'át'ééh shik'éei dóo shidine'é shí éi Autumn Powell yinishyé *Naaki Dine'é* nishłj, *Naahilii* bashishchiin, *Tsi'naajinii* dashicheii *Naahilii* dashinalí. Ákót'éégo diné asdzání Nishłj. Diné Bikéyah déé'Naashá

I'm an Afro-Diné graduate student from Window Rock, Arizona, located in the Navajo Nation. I come from a region where, in the western states, Tribal Peoples have greater access to academic and professional opportunities. Western Tribes actively participate in various sectors, including environmental, political, and economic planning. Moreover, Indigenous arts and fashion are prominently showcased in stores and murals, and non-Indigenous cultures appreciate street Tribal foods. Native scholars lead efforts in Indigenous education, ensuring an authentic portrayal of their culture and history. Additionally, Tribal communities' Rez balls have become popular and well-known all across the country. Despite these advancements, ignorance and discrimination are still taking place, which is halting in achieving equitable representation. The continuous number of gatekeepers standing guard for change. Western Tribes have persistently worked to assert our presence, and visibility is shown, whether they like it or not. We do not plan to go anywhere and will continue to fight to protect our homelands from encroachment.

I graduated from a reservation school named Window Rock High School in Fort Defiance, Arizona. I transitioned to Lawrence, Kansas, to attend Haskell Indian Nations University, a historical Intertribal college for undergraduate students. The Haskell residential boarding school, established in 1884, exemplified a disturbing era in which Native children were forcibly removed from their families to be enrolled in Western education aimed at eradicating their cultural identity. Captain Richard Henry Pratt, who was regarded as a "war hero" for his military actions against Indigenous peoples, founded the Carlisle Indian Industrial School with the goal of "civilizing" Native communities by imposing Western norms. However, these policies were made to wipe out the rich heritage of Native cultures and inflicted enduring trauma on Indigenous individuals and communities (Carlisle Indian School Digital Resource Center, 2024). Pratt's life mission was to eradicate Native children's Indigeneity permanently. He's famous for his assimilation philosophy statement, "Kill the Indian, Save the Man." He failed to do so.

As the years progressed, Haskell transitioned from a boarding industrial school to a high school, a vocational-technical institution, a junior college, and finally, a university. The Tribal College/University (TCU) became a safe haven for Native students to mingle with other Tribal students and faculty who take pride in embracing their Indigeneity at the university. Traditional and contemporary intertribal activities were constantly occurring on and off campus grounds. Intertribal peoples are found throughout the Lawrence community. The kinship at Haskell University was best exemplified by the opportunity it provided for students to embark on a journey toward earning their associate's and bachelor's degrees. Haskell stood out because of its faculty and staff—they were dedicated to ensuring students felt supported and at home, which created this awesome community vibe you couldn't find anywhere else.

During the pandemic, I completed my bachelor's degree at Haskell in 2021 and was accepted into KU's Post-baccalaureate Research Education Program (PREP) in Lawrence, Kansas. The one-year program (funded by NIH) is for recently graduated college students from underrepresented groups who plan to pursue a STEM Ph.D. to gain additional research experience by developing research projects, taking courses, and participating in professional activities to prepare for graduate school. I was working with Dr. Kelly Kindscher to create a historical ethnobotany list of the Umó^hoⁿ (Omaha) Tribe's edible and medicinal plants. Information about the plants will be used for signage at the Lewis and Clark Center of the National Park Service in Omaha, Nebraska. Dr. Kindscher collaborated with the Umó^hoⁿ elders to correct the native plant names in their language and usage and add additional information. The goal is to have an ethnobotany garden at the Lewis and Clark Center for educational purposes. Author Melvin R. Gilmore's book *Uses of Plants by the Indian of the Missouri River Region* recorded native plants' names in scientific names, English common names, and Midwest Tribal language names, in addition to recording plants' edible and medicinal uses in the early 1900s. At the same time, I was also applying to multiple graduate programs throughout the country. I applied to the Interdisciplinary Consortium for Applied Research in the Environment (ICARE) program at the University of Maryland-Baltimore County (UMBC) to advocate for environmental justice and to conduct community research. That program stood out to me the most, and I applied to it. I was later accepted to enroll at UMBC's institution and the ICARE program. When I was getting ready to leave, I asked my Haskell and KU peers if they knew any information about Tribal Peoples in the Chesapeake Bay region. All of them assumed they went extinct or moved westward due to removal. Without thinking too much, I pushed it out of my mind and was excited to transition to a new environment. My sister, Summer, and I drove from

Arizona to Maryland in our beat-up Rez 2004 Chevrolet Malibu car with a road atlas to direct us to Arbutus, Maryland. It took us five days to arrive. As I looked through the atlas, I saw no Tribal reservation lands as we were going eastward. When arriving in Baltimore, it overwhelmed me with how much infrastructure was outside the cities and how little green space was available. It made me question if I could adapt to such an environment.

When I moved into my lodgings, which were within walking distance of the campus, I could not stand the drenched, humid conditions there. My sister and I were complaining the whole time she was here. She soon left to go back home. When school started, I got a feel of the school and learned that there were many international students attending this school. However, I noticed that UMBC's residential housing names sounded Native to me, yet there were no Native American clubs or courses, and I did not see any Native students, nor were there any talks about local Tribal Peoples. Plus, they displayed Columbus Day signs around the campus. I was stunned to see that they were celebrating a white terrorist that was a murderer and rapist. I felt uncomfortable, and it gave me imposter syndrome. I questioned if I should even be here.

My ICARE cohort group was the support group that reassured me to continue my education and fight against UMBC's unconscious colonial biases. I was willing to present ideas that interest me for my potential research project on Tribal Peoples. I became comfortable around each ICARE individual where I'd share about modern Tribal peoples. I captured their attention, and they asked me many follow-up questions. Of course, I'm not the voice of all Tribal Nations and peoples. I only share general information about Tribal Peoples. For instance, how frybread came to be, removal acts, assimilation, Native meme humor, rez sports, beadwork, fashion, advocacy movements, or just talking about my Tribe (Diné) in particular. They absorbed the information I presented to them. I guess for them, it was refreshing. It was concerning that I was the first

person to introduce them to so many snippets of Native life and culture. They were used to the stereotypical Indian everyone tends to believe.

After much thought, I decided to focus research on casting light on the erasure of Chesapeake Bay Tribal Peoples and the related injustices they have experienced. This project aims to amplify their narratives, starting from the earliest experiences of colonial Maryland and continuing to the present day (2024).

I knew that Maryland was not as progressive on diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice (DEIJ) because of their subtle ways of whitewashing history. For instance, Governor Wes Moore is Maryland's first Black governor to represent Maryland, no other racial group was elected governor before. In addition, Governor Moore's administration in Maryland is committed to a progressive agenda, as evidenced by initiatives like Maryland's Climate Pathways Report. This report emphasizes the urgent transition to clean energy, reducing pollution, increasing economic opportunities for Black families, and offering Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice (DEIJ) resources for underprivileged communities (Maryland's Climate Pathways, 2024). Wes Moore gave a speech to all of Maryland during his campaign speech. "Maryland, our time is now. Our time is now to build a state that those who came before us fought for, a state that leaves no one behind. This is not a slogan. It is a fulfillment of hope" Wes Moore (Elliot, 2022). However, there is still a community still being left behind and I questioned why there is no engagement with Tribal Peoples in Maryland. And how is it that Marylanders know so little about their local Tribal neighbors? That was what I questioned by being here. As such, these are the driving questions in this project.

The realization of erasure within the Chesapeake Bay region became apparent during Indigenous Peoples Day on October 14th. Despite dressing in a blend of my Diné traditional and

contemporary regalia, many individuals continued to refer to the day as Columbus Day. My own school, where I will be attending for two years, showed a lack of recognition for Indigenous Peoples' Day. The puzzled reactions from professors and faculty I received were proof enough of the unconscious biases and the pervasive ignorance surrounding Indigenous history and culture on school grounds.

In my last incident, my ICARE colleague, Aiman Raza, recently shared an announcement from the Chesapeake Bay Program's Diversity Workgroup regarding an upcoming event called the "Sovereign Nations of Virginia Conference: Green Economic Development on Tribal Lands," scheduled for September 14, 2023. They asked if this event could be relevant to my work and whether attending would be beneficial. The purpose of this conference is:

“To build cooperative relationships between Virginia’s Tribal Nations and state agencies.”

Learn how tribal management of land is an essential element of climate justice work and how tribes can work together with national and local conservation agencies to acquire and conserve land.

Based on the history of relations with state government and Virginia’s Indigenous population, the annual Sovereignty conference is intended to share critical information needed to build relationships, understanding, and common ground between Tribes and

agencies to better the future for our Virginia Tribal communities and all Virginians”
(Sovereign Nations of Virginia Conference, 2024).

This perplexed me; the state of Virginia is a neighbor to Maryland, and it raised many questions about why there is a huge amount of support for the Tribes in Virginia but none for the Tribes in Maryland. There could be underlying factors that I may not have considered, such as historical, political, and regulatory distinctions, awareness levels, and advocacy efforts I had. Why are more environmental organizations working with Tribes in Virginia Tribes and Tribes in Maryland? Was it due to their Tribal status? Is the relationship between environmental organizations and the Tribal Peoples of Maryland that bad? Or was it something I am not clearly seeing? I had to know what exactly was going on.

The oversight of Tribal Peoples of Maryland in these conversations made me reflect on the broader issue of erasure and exclusion faced by Indigenous communities in the Chesapeake Bay region. It struck me as perplexing and concerning that the voices and perspectives of Tribal Peoples in Maryland were being disregarded in discussions about environmental protocols, especially given their significant presence and contributions in the region.

In contrast to the Western states, the Chesapeake Bay region, particularly Maryland, lacks representation of Tribal Peoples appropriately, where there are more exclusion acts than inclusion actions. Through my research, I wanted to demonstrate my point of view to showcase the evidence of Tribal Peoples being excluded in their own home state and ancestral homelands.

Thesis Structure and Methodology

My approach to this research has been to make use of qualitative methods to explore archival materials, review existing scholarly literature, and interview those working with organizations and initiatives focused on environmental and climate change action. Importantly, this work also centers and uplifts the narratives of Tribal Peoples by including their voices and perspectives in completed interviews and through my own analysis of the connections and unique accounts they have offered me through this engagement.

This thesis is structured into three main chapters, each addressing distinct aspects of the overarching theme of Indigenous erasure and inclusivity in Maryland's environmental and societal contexts.

The first chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the historical and contemporary experiences of Tribal Peoples in Maryland. It examines the legacy of colonization, dispossession, and marginalization faced by Indigenous communities, highlighting the persistent challenges and injustices that continue to impact their lives. Through a review of historical documents, scholarly literature, and personal narratives, this chapter sets the foundation for understanding the colonial/violent context in which Indigenous erasure occurs.

The second chapter of this study delves into the perspectives and insights of Tribal Peoples and environmental agencies in Maryland regarding Indigenous erasure and inclusivity in both environmental and societal contexts. By examining the viewpoints of these two key stakeholders,

this chapter aims to shed light on the challenges faced by Tribal communities in accessing and participating in environmental initiatives, as well as the approaches and attitudes of environmental agencies toward Indigenous inclusion. Through interviews, case studies, and analysis, the chapter seeks to uncover the root causes of Indigenous erasure and the barriers to genuine inclusivity, offering valuable insights for understanding and addressing these complex issues in Maryland's environmental and societal landscapes.

The third chapter consolidates the findings from the initial two chapters to draw conclusions regarding the accessibility of inclusivity for the Tribal community in Maryland. It reflects on the systemic barriers and injustices perpetuating Indigenous erasure, stressing the urgent need for transformative action. Additionally, this chapter provides recommendations for policymakers, environmental agencies, and broader society to address Indigenous erasure and promote genuine inclusion. By presenting actionable steps for change, it aims to contribute to the advancement of equity and justice for Tribal Peoples in Maryland and beyond. The concluding chapter will underscore the pressing need for transformative action to tackle Indigenous erasure and foster genuine inclusion in Maryland, amalgamating these perspectives. It will advocate for tangible steps by policymakers, environmental agencies, and broader society to ensure that the promise of inclusivity is accessible and meaningful for the Tribal community, thereby fostering a more equitable and just society for all inhabitants of Maryland. Additionally, it will incorporate my own personal perspective based on my experiences.

My academic advisor, Dr. Maggie Holland, and I recruited Dr. Ashley Minner Jones as my partner mentor for my thesis project and as part of the ICARE program design. Dr. Ashley, a

Native scholar and a Tribal citizen of the Lumbee Nation of North Carolina, provided significant information on how I could connect with Tribal Peoples in the Maryland area, including specific recommendations on people likely to be willing to participate in an interview.

While researching available literature on Tribal Peoples in the Chesapeake Bay region, I explored various key terms to guide my search for relevant resources shaping the methodology of my project. Specifically, I sought out works addressing themes such as "Indigenous erasure," "environmental justice," and "Indigenous Knowledge" in the context of "Climate Change" using platforms like Google Scholar and JSTOR. To expand my search, I substituted "Tribal" for "Indigenous" and "injustices" for "erasure," and I also utilized Google to find additional literature on Tribal Peoples in Maryland. However, my findings were disappointing, as there was a notable scarcity of recent literature on the Tribal Nations of Maryland in the 21st century. Unable to depend solely on scholarly sources, I turned to Google to search for literature on Tribal Peoples in Maryland, broadening my scope beyond academic databases.

This underscores the urgent need for further research and scholarship, highlighting the systemic neglect of Tribal communities in academic discourse and emphasizing the importance of prioritizing Tribal perspectives and knowledge.

To investigate the changing relationship the state of Maryland has had with Tribal Nations in the Chesapeake region, I visited various centers offering regional intertribal programming events. These included the Baltimore American Indian Center (BAIC), where I participated in weekly cultural classes and attended numerous powwow events. Additionally, I explored offerings at the

Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) and engaged with public cultural events hosted by individual Tribal Nations. These experiences were invaluable in helping me acclimate to and comprehend how Tribal Nations operate within White Westernized urban landscapes, where clear designations of Tribal lands may be absent. To conduct community-engaged research, I held it as a central value that I wanted to connect on a person-to-person basis and avoid the framing of researcher-to-person engagement. As a citizen of a Tribal Nation and simply as a human being, I felt a personal responsibility to engage with my environment using all my senses when exploring the unfamiliar territory of the Chesapeake Bay region.

After reflecting on my time in Maryland and chatting with Maggie and Ashley about shaping how to formulate my project along with my research question: **Do Maryland environmental organizations unknowingly perpetuate the colonial tradition of erasing Indigenous Peoples?** This question stemmed from my own frustrations and curiosity. I couldn't help but wonder why the subtle exclusionary act is not being addressed or seen as undeserved.

Indigenous Terminologies in Contemporary Practice

In the rest of this opening chapter, I'll delve into the concept of "Indigenous" and examine various ways erasure can occur. Using this framework, I'll explore the history and ongoing erasure of Tribal Peoples in present-day Maryland. But before diving in, it's crucial to address the terminology used when referring to Tribal people and nations. It's worth noting that some commonly known Tribal names may not accurately represent the communities they claim to be.

Once again, my search through academic databases yielded little information on Indigenous erasure in the Western context. It became evident that I needed to turn to Indigenous scholars who offer explicit insights into the concept of Indigenous erasure and its enduring impacts on Indigenous Peoples.

For instance, Dr. Daniel Wildcat, a Yuchi citizen of the Muscogee Nation of Oklahoma, released a book in 2010 titled *Red Alert: Saving the Planet through Indigenous Knowledge*. Dr. Wildcat explains that defining Indigenous peoples is interpreted differently by audiences ranging from non-Indigenous, Indigenous, non-scholars, and scholarly people. Dr. Wildcat refers to *Indigenous peoples*, as the term is used here, refers to peoples or “nations who take their tribal identities as members of the human species from the landscapes and seascapes that gave them their unique tribal cultures” (Wildcat, p.32, 2010). Wildcat also addressed that the word Indigenous is a double-edged sword because everyone has a way of defining what it means to be Indigenous, whether they are scholars or not, Native or not, Tribal or not, and the location. This is told from a Tribal perspective with lived experience rather than a non-Native perspective with no lived experience.

Indigenous Peoples are referred to by different names, such as Native Peoples and Tribal Peoples. Depending on the region in which they are located, they can be grouped and referred to as the region they are living in, such as East Coast Tribal Peoples or Chesapeake Tribal Peoples or the name of their Tribe from the community which they are reclaiming. But sometimes, even the specific names that might be now familiar to most don't reflect the accurate and self-identified name of the Tribal nation in question. For example, the Lakota, Dakota, and Nakota

peoples do not identify as Sioux and prefer not to be referred to as such. The term "Sioux" was imposed upon them by the United States. According to the Black Hills Visitor 2017 magazine, the Lakota are reclaiming their ancestral names as part of efforts to combat cultural appropriation.

“The word *nadouessioux* was created by French traders and later adopted by the English as just *sioux*. It is said to come from the Ojibwe word *natowessiwak* meaning “little snakes”, as the Lakota were traditionally enemies of the Ojibwe. The words *Lakota* and *Dakota*, however, are translated to mean “friend” or “ally” and is what they called themselves. Many Lakota people today prefer to be called *Lakota* instead of *Sioux*, as *Sioux* was a disrespectful name given to them by their enemies.” (Black Hills Visitor Magazine, 2017).

Another example of my Tribe in the Western world is commonly known as Navajos, a term used to label us by Spanish conquistadors. However, in our own language, we are the Diné. We are actively reclaiming our actual name from our mother tongue. This also includes other Tribal Nations as well. For this thesis, I will utilize the names of individual tribes when referring to them specifically, use "Tribal nations" when discussing groupings of Tribes and refer to individuals as "Tribal people" or as citizens of their respective Tribal Nations.

Assigning names to Tribal Nations by colonizers was indeed a form of erasure, stripping away their languages and creation stories. Many Tribal Nations are now reclaiming their original names and shedding those imposed by colonizers. Yet, this process is intricate and lengthy,

requiring significant internal work to uproot old colonial mindsets and practices. It's a journey of cleansing and reclaiming identity, demanding dedication and patience from Indigenous communities.

Tribal Peoples of Maryland and Formal

Who are the Tribal Peoples in the Chesapeake Bay region of the United States? This was the question I asked when researching scholarly literature to support my thesis project. However, this task posed difficulties due to the Eurocentric perspective dominating literature about Tribal Peoples in the Chesapeake Bay region. This perspective often includes inaccurate assumptions and lacks current information about the Tribal Peoples's lives in Maryland and the greater Chesapeake Bay region. Moreover, the literature predominantly adopts a past-tense narrative, leaving little room to address the contemporary existence of Tribal Peoples in Maryland and the more significant Chesapeake Bay watershed. However, when Tribal Peoples in the Chesapeake region is not acknowledged by the state, and if the state does not acknowledge Tribes, then the public will not acknowledge Tribal Peoples.

Before European colonization brought devastation, the Chesapeake Bay region was inhabited by numerous Nations from various Tribal communities (Maryland State Arts Council, 2024). Euro-colonialism inflicted genocide, epidemics, land dispossession, wars, environmental exploitation, and other egregious atrocities upon Eastern Tribal Nations. However, it's essential not to view their story through a lens of sympathy but rather as a testament to their resilience in resisting

colonial white supremacy. Living in Maryland, I discovered that wampum shells weren't merely decorative but vital records of Indigenous history and traditions. These intricate artifacts were crucial for preserving stories across generations. Unfortunately, European colonists often disregarded this form of documentation, preferring English-language records instead.

Many historical records between Maryland and Tribal Peoples primarily concern agreements related to land property titles and additional resources. The Mayis: Indigenous Records section contains significant documents in the Maryland State Archives, such as the April 1666 Treaty of Maryland with Multiple Nations and Reparation and the December 1669 Land and Trade Agreements between Maryland and multiple Native Nations. These documents meticulously detail the designated land areas for settlement between English settlers and Chesapeake Bay Tribes, providing comprehensive land titles and descriptions to determine ownership within the region.

The historical circumstances surrounding Tribal Peoples' surrender of their land rights to English colonizers are intricate and prompt questions about the level of voluntariness involved. Although some historical accounts portray these agreements as voluntary, a closer investigation reveals the presence of several coercive factors. These encompass imbalances in power dynamics, the imposition of military threats, deceptive treaties, and cultural misunderstandings. As a result, the extent to which Tribal Peoples truly consented to these land cessions remains a subject of scholarly discussion within Native communities, highlighting the need for a comprehensive reassessment of colonial narratives of U.S. history. What coercive factors may have influenced Tribal Peoples' decisions to cede their land rights to English colonizers?

To answer the previous question, I want to bring attention to the Maryland Manual Online, which provides a comprehensive timeline of Maryland's history, spanning from 10,000 B.C. to 2000 A.D., with particular emphasis on the period from 1600 to 1899 of Tribal Peoples inhabiting the Chesapeake Bay area, Maryland. From 1600 to 1699, English colonizers embarked on exploratory missions to establish permanent settlements in the Chesapeake Bay region. However, they encountered established Indigenous civilizations in the area, revealing a complex and thriving society predating their arrival.

Rather than peacefully coexisting, the colonizers devised strategies to assert dominance and control over the land and its resources. This period marked the genesis of conflict between Indigenous peoples and the colonizers, a chapter often overlooked or understated in historical narratives.

What many fail to acknowledge is the violent and brutal methods employed by the colonizers to achieve their goals. Massacres of Tribal Peoples were tragically common as the colonizers sought to expand their territories and secure access to valuable resources. These atrocities were foundational to the establishment of White supremacy in North America, a legacy that continues to shape social and political dynamics to this day.

Maryland's Historical Timeline

In the 1600s, English colonizers aimed to understand Native Nations while seeking dominance through land acquisition. Found via the Mayis online source, the timeline on the open-access

Maryland Manual Online webpage reveals biased interactions with Native Peoples, highlighting themes of conquest and dominance. Analyzing these records enhances our understanding of Tribal Peoples' historical experiences in Maryland and colonial dynamics.

1608- Cap. John Smith led two voyage expeditions exploring the Chesapeake Bay region.

1634- The colonists arrived at what is now known as St. Clement's Island to establish their settlements. Leonard Calvert and others purchased land from the Yaocomaco Tribe to build a fort at St. Mary's City, considered the capital of Maryland.

1639- Colonist soldiers were tasked to do a military expedition on "Indians of the Eastern Shore" in accordance with the gubernatorial order

1639/40- Governor Leonard Calvert declared war on the Piscataway Nation of Maquantequats

1639/40- The 2nd Baron Baltimore, Cecil Calvert, declared peace with the Patuxent Tribe with protection under the colonists.

1642- Susquehannocks, Wicomisses, and Nanticokes Tribes have been declared "enemies of Province by the gubernatorial proclamation

1642/3- Governor Calvert established a peace treaty with the Tribal Peoples. Later revoked the peace treaty to declare war on the Nanticokes (this was because the Tribal Peoples did not want to be dispossessed from their lands)

1643/4- In 1643, in Patuxent, there was a high number of Tribal Peoples fighting and attacking English settlers. Governor Giles Brent granted the English colonizers the right to shoot or use any violence necessary on Tribal Peoples who would not leave.

1644- Governor Giles Brent declared peace with the Patuxent Tribe and offered protection.

1647- Susquehannocks move from Piscataway Creek to Susquehannock Fort

1647- Governor Thomas Greene tasked the English colonial soldiers to make a military expedition against the Nanticokes and Wicomisses

1652- The Susquehannock Tribe revoked their land rights of Eastern Shore and Western Shore to the English colonizers, except for Kent Island and Palmer's Island. The so-called treaty was signed at Severn River.

1652- Governor William Stone gave order that every man available throughout their territory to serve in a military expedition against Tribal Peoples of Eastern Shore

1659- Col. Edmund Scarborough of Virginia waged war against the Assateague Tribe. This was called the Seaside War

1660- Uttapoingassinem derives from the Piscataway Tribe known as Tayac (emperor or also known as leaders)

1661- Governor Philip Calvert and the Susquehannock Tribe signed a peace treaty at Spesutia Island

1662- Treaty established with the Assateague Tribe and Nanticoke Tribe

1663- The Sundry Complaints Governor Charles Calvert met with the Queen of Portobacks (Tribal leader and the Tribe). They acknowledged that English colonizers encroached on the Tribe's "ancient plantacons" and they could no longer take any land within three miles of Tribal territories.

1644 Governor Charles Calvert declared war on the Seneca Tribe

1665- Governor Calvert ordered that reservation lands be made for the Mattawomen Tribe on their "oulde Habitacons." English colonizer who resides within three miles of their reservation lands will be imprisoned for a year

1667- Wicomisses and other Tribal Peoples are declared enemies of the English colonizers. Justifying their violent behavior toward Tribal Peoples by the gubernatorial proclamation

1668- Treaty was established between the English colonizers and Nanticoke Tribe

1669- Choptank Indian Reservation was established near Cambridge, Maryland (see Figure 1).

1670- The Piscataway Tribe petitioned against the Calverts to renew their peace treaty

1675-1677: Maryland and Virginia colonizers went to war against the Susquehannock Tribe. Massacring the remaining Susquehannock Peoples left.

1678- A treaty was signed between Maryland colonizers and the Emperor (leader) of the Assateague Tribe, Amonugus. This treaty guaranteed that the Assateague Tribe to live on five reservations that were along the Pocomoke River.

1680- The Piscataway Tribe escaped by moving from Piscataway Fort on Piscataway Creek to Zekiah Swamp (Zekiah Fort was established in present-day Waldorf near Piney Branch). They ran from the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) and Susquehannock Tribe's raids. Later, Governor Charles Calvert created that area (Zekiah Fort) to protect the Piscataway Tribe.

1686- "Indian" reservation established at Askiminokonson (near Snow Hill, Worcester County). It was considered the most significant "Indian town" in Maryland.

1686- Tribes affiliated with the Pocomoke, Annemessex, Nassawaddox, Quandanquan, and Aquintica confronted the Council of Maryland about how they established this barren and good-for-nothing land for the Tribes to live in Askiminokonson.

1692- The leader of the Piscataway joined the League of Amity, along with the leader of Mattawomen, leader of the Chaptico, and the leader of the Nanticoke with Governor Copley on behalf of William and Mary of English and their subjects. Lastly, the residents of Maryland and Virginia.

1692/3- The Council of Maryland had ordered English colonizers to construct three forts in three county locations in Anne Arundel, Baltimore, and Charles County. The forts will have ten soldiers stationed there, with a cabin for every fort for the four Tribal leaders. Nanticoke Tribe, Piscataway Tribe, and Chaptico Tribe.

1698- The Nanticoke Indian Reservation is located near Vienna, Dorchester County. During the timeline spanning from 1700 to 1799, the interactions between English colonizers and the Tribal Peoples of Maryland were marked by escalating violence and aggression. The abuse of power and deceitful tactics employed by colonial governors undermined the validity of signed agreements. Battles and wars were frequent, each party fiercely fighting for their interests. While colonizers aimed to seize lands from the Tribes, the Tribal Peoples fought to defend their ancestral territories (“Maryland at a Glance.”, 2024).

Treaty negotiations between Tribes in the Chesapeake Bay region and English colonizers occurred during this period, but conflicts dating back to the 1600s persisted, often erupting into full-scale wars. The English enacted laws and regulations that imposed restrictions on Tribes, further exacerbating tensions.

The US Declaration of Independence itself employed derogatory language, referring to Tribes as "The Merciless Indian Savages," reflecting the prevalent attitudes of the time towards Indigenous peoples. (US, 1776) This discriminatory language underscored the colonial mindset that justified the exploitation and marginalization of Tribal communities.

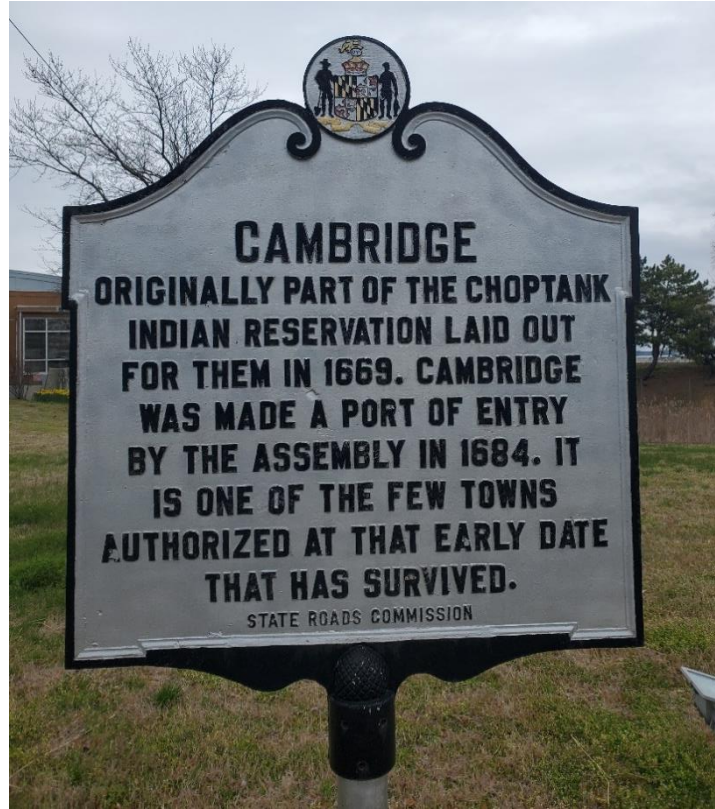


Figure 1. Choptank Indian Reservation

I took pictures of this sign, which was located on the shore of the Choptank River in Cambridge, Maryland, at the Dorchester County Visitor Center and created by the Maryland Department of Transportation (MDOT). As an Indigenous person, finding proof that the land is a reservation territory is a stark reminder of the ongoing theft and dispossession of the Tribal community has endured. It confirms the injustices we've faced, highlighting our struggle for sovereignty and recognition. This fuels our advocacy and activism to reclaim what's rightfully ours and ensure our voices are heard in the fight for justice and equality.

Data erasure emerged as a significant issue during this period, with records and accounts of Tribal presence and resistance being systematically disregarded or omitted. Reservation lands established for Tribes were swiftly encroached upon and seized by colonizers, further exacerbating their dispossession.

Wars were often instigated by the colonial government's relentless pressure on Tribes to sell their lands. Refusal to comply often resulted in violence, massacres, and the forced displacement of Indigenous communities. Let's look at the 1700s timeline from the colonist's perspective on encroachment and massacres toward the Tribal Peoples.

1722- Treaty created with English colonizers and two Tribes: the Assateague and Pocomoke Tribe.

1727- A land deed near Antietam Creek was given to Israel Friend, the Chief of the Five Nations (recorded on Nov. 1730).

1744- Some of the Nanticoke Tribal Peoples left Maryland to merge with the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) Tribe to live a better life. The Nanticoke Tribal Peoples traveled north to Pennsylvania, New York, and Ontario, Canada.

1744- The Tribal chiefs of the Six Nations relinquished their land for the English colonizers to claim them in a treaty. This was the "last time" the Assembly purchased "Indian land" for Maryland.

1755- The French and Tribal Peoples gave fatal wounds to the British Maj. Gen. Edward Braddock. They defeated his army at the Battle of Monongahela near Fort Duquesne. The Tribal Peoples continued to fight against English colonizers. The fighting continues to increase.

1768- The Nanticoke Tribe relinquished their land claims in Maryland. The English colonizers compensated the Tribe.

1799- The General Assembly enacted their authorized power to purchase Choptank Indian Lands in Dorchester County (“Maryland at a Glance.”, 2024).

From the colonists' viewpoint in the 1700s, encroachment onto Tribal lands was deemed essential for colonial expansion and economic gain. Massacres and conflicts with Tribal Peoples were seen as regrettable but inevitable consequences of territorial disputes and perceived threats to colonial settlements. Prejudices and stereotypes painted Indigenous peoples as inferior, justifying mistreatment and violence. Overall, colonial actions were rationalized as necessary for survival, driven by economic motives and cultural biases.

The absence of mentions regarding Tribal Peoples of Maryland in the Maryland Manual Online timeline beyond the 1800s hints at a troubling erasure pattern. This erasure suggests a deliberate overlooking or diminishing of the presence and contributions of Indigenous communities in historical narratives. Despite their significant participation in shaping events, their involvement may have been sidelined or omitted. This oversight underscores broader systemic issues of marginalization and the perpetuation of incomplete historical narratives.

Colonial Biases and Tribal Histories

The inclination of historical information to favor the majority population, driven by their numerical dominance, doesn't always ensure its efficacy. This bias tends to marginalize or erase the perspectives and experiences of minority groups, including Indigenous peoples. Despite their smaller numbers, minority voices hold significant value and offer crucial insights into historical events.

When European settlers encroached upon Tribal territories, seizing their resources and homelands through treaties, Tribal Peoples often found themselves grappling with unfamiliar languages, policies, and ways of life. The portrayal of the Tribal Peoples of Maryland voluntarily relinquishing their land claims to English colonizers is a manipulative tactic aimed at shaping the beliefs of descendants. These narrative employs wordplay to obscure the truth, hiding the reality of multiple conflicts and battles between the two Nations. By presenting this distorted version of events, those in power seek to justify their actions and create a false impression of Indigenous consent, thus perpetuating a narrative that serves their own interests while erasing the violence and coercion inherent in the colonization process.

The mass atrocities inflicted upon the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic Tribes have led to future consequences that led to the erasure of Indigenous Peoples' histories and their livelihoods. To further dispossess Northeast and Mid-Atlantic Tribal Peoples, in 1830, Congress passed the Indian Removal Act, which was signed into law by President Andrew Jackson (The Library of Congress, 2024). This meant "exchanging" lands of Tribal Peoples all along the eastern US for lands west of the Mississippi River (The Library of Congress, 2024). The removal of people was often violent and forced, with many Tribes forced to relocate by walking thousands of miles

during the winter months. One such migration was forced on the Cherokee Tribe during the winter of 1838-1839 and is known as the “Trail of Tears,” with several thousand Cherokee dying along the way (The Library of Congress, 2024). The removal was to satisfy colonial settlers’ greed and acquire more land.

Early forms of "Indian" reservations were established in the Chesapeake Bay region to maintain what was believed to be a mutually beneficial relationship with the colonists and to enable Tribal Nations to continue their eco-cultural lifestyle. However, the colonists' insatiable land greed gradually eroded this relationship, leading to the continual receding of reservation lands until nothing was left. This action resulted in the displacement of Tribal Peoples from the reservation lands established for them in the 1600s, amounting to the theft of their territories. You could even consider this as an early form of gentrification. The consequences were profound, leading to widespread displacement and forced assimilation among Tribal Peoples. Moreover, this marked the beginning of the colonists' expansion of their white supremacy agendas across the American continent.

Due to the absence of federally recognized status, numerous environmental organizations act as gatekeepers, restricting access to natural areas like parks and historical sites for Tribal Peoples. This limitation extends to the free use of waterways and lands traditionally belonging to Tribes, especially since reservation lands are non-existent in Maryland. State and local governance also influence Tribal affairs, potentially hindering reservation establishment. The complexity of Maryland's historical, legal, and socio-geographical context contributes to the lack of reservation

territories among its Tribal Nations. Their narrative epitomizes perseverance and defiance in the face of colonial erasure, and their very existence is a testament to their resilience.

The Pamunkey and Mattaponi have struggled for decades to retain their reservation lands. In 1836, local whites asked the General Assembly of Virginia to sell the Pamunkey Reservation. At that time, Virginia was a slave-holding state with strict racial laws. A number of Virginia lawmakers wanted to expel all American Indians and free African Americans from the state. They accused the Pamunkey of being too different from their Pamunkey ancestors to still have a reservation, and argued that intermarriage with other races had changed them. The Pamunkey petitioned the General Assembly to keep their reservation and eventually won. The case was one of many that the Pamunkey and Mattaponi would have to fight to keep their reservations. [Rountree; Moretti-Langholtz and Waugaman] (Tayac et al., 2006, p. 9)

Nanticoke, and Piscataway peoples who had lost their reservations, churches and schools helped to sustain distinctive communities. [Rountree, 1990] (Tayac et al., 2006, p.10)

Dr. Tayac highlights the prevalence of Tribal names in the Chesapeake Bay region, derived from the mother tongue of various Tribes, despite the public's stereotypical perceptions. She notes how the Pamunkey Tribe faced challenges regarding their authenticity due to intermixing with Black people, questioning how the state government can dictate their "Nativity." This intertwining of communities may have stemmed from historical alliances against white

colonizers. Factors such as intermixing with other racial groups have always existed, raising questions about defining Native identity and the role of state governance in such determinations.

“The people remain and so do many Powhatan, Piscataway, and Nanticoke names on the landscape, evidence of the rich cultures that once inhabited the entire region. The nature of the struggles facing Chesapeake Native peoples today has changed, but they continue to live with the difficult legacy of colonial history” (Tayac et al., 2006, p.6).

In the following section, we'll explore the current endeavors and activities of today's Tribal Peoples. What activities are undertaken by the Tribal Peoples residing in the Chesapeake Bay region? How are they acknowledged in contemporary times?

The Tribal Peoples of Today

According to the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic regions are home to only 24 Federally Recognized Tribes, while numerous state and non-recognized tribes still inhabit the Northwest and Mid-Atlantic regions (Leonard, 2021). In Maryland, only six Tribes with ancestral homelands in the state persist.

Unfortunately, Maryland lacks federally recognized Tribes, although state recognition has been granted to two of these six Tribes. “Today, the issues of identity, tribal recognition, civil rights, cultural revitalization and preservation, as well as land and resource protection remain at the

forefront of that existence” (Tayac et al., 2006, p.6). Like Dr. Tayac said earlier, the Chesapeake Bay region’s environment ties with each Tribal Nation’s Indigeneity cultural revitalization and identity (see Figure 2). But who are the Accohannock Indian Tribe, Assateague Peoples Tribe, Nause-Waiwash Band of Indians, Piscataway Conoy Confederacy and Sub-Tribes, Cedarville Band of Piscataway Indians, Piscataway Indian Nation, Pocomoke Indian Nation, Youghiogheny River Band of Shawnee Indian? Where did these Tribal names exactly come from?

I’ve come to learn that the Algonquian language is commonly used in the Chesapeake region, though each Tribal Nation may have different dialects or languages that fall under the Algonquian language family. Each name describes how they either interacted with their environment or other factors that Tribal citizens may know. Each Tribe within this dialect expresses and interprets it uniquely (see Figure 3).

MARYLAND'S SCENIC AND WILD RIVERS

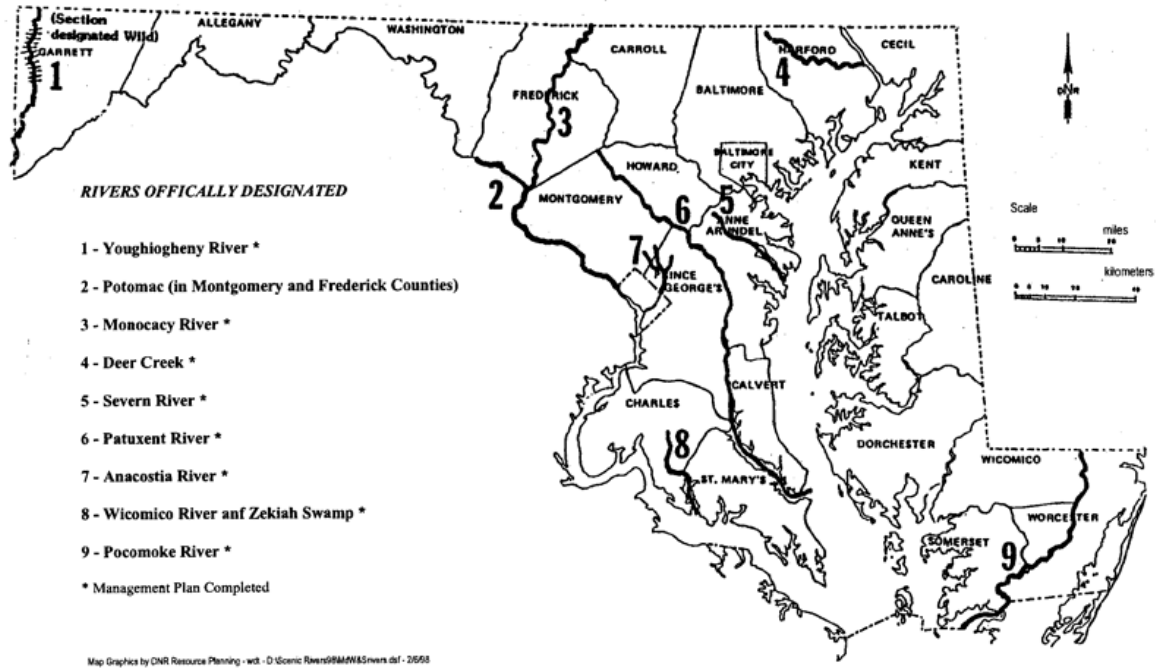


Figure 2. The Algonquian Language Lives in the Waterways

[The Maryland Department of Resources](#) lists major rivers and waterways that run course through the state. The rivers and waterways coursing through Maryland bear names derived from the Algonquian language, reflecting deep cultural and historical connections to the region's Indigenous peoples. These names hold profound meanings rooted in the environment and demonstrate an intimate relationship with the land and its resources. From the Youghiogheny River to the Potomac River, each water body's name carries significant cultural significance, offering insights into their understanding of their surroundings. This linguistic heritage highlights the importance of these waterways within the Chesapeake Bay watershed, emphasizing their integral role in the ecosystem and local communities.



Figure 3. Cultural Preservation

Photo credit: [Edwin Remsberg](#). A Native person in a canoe in the river at Bending Waters Park, Marion Station, Maryland. This demonstrates their continued cultural heritage practice by residing near or on these waterways, where their connection isn't mystical but intrinsic to their Indigenous identity. Being close to these waters isn't just geographical; it symbolizes a tangible link to their ancestors, traditions, and way of life, underscoring the importance of preserving indigenous cultures and their environmental bond for future generations.

Even amid doubts about the existence of Tribes on the East Coast, their persistent advocacy with the slogan "Still Here" speaks volumes. Their profound ties to ancestral homelands affirm the enduring strength of their people and the preservation of community kinship. However, not every Tribal individual is from this area but has settled here as their new home. For instance, Dr. Ashley is from the Lumbee Nation of North Carolina, a Tribal citizen who originates in what is known today as North Carolina but has settled in Maryland, including myself.

The Tribal Peoples that still live in the Chesapeake region narrations are not recognized by Western society, rather they are questioned about their Native legitimacy existence. "Their

perspectives have been overlooked and ignored in exhibitions, the media, educational materials, and most histories of the region” (Tayac & Schupman, pg. 2, 2006). For decades, Indigenous scholars, scientists, activists, and protectors of Mother Earth have been on the front lines, battling various forms of settler colonialism day in and day out, all in the name of protecting their sovereignty and Indigeneity. In this context, sovereignty boils down to a Tribe's right to self-governance, free from interference from non-Tribal governments. As for Indigeneity, it's about how Indigenous or Tribal people identify within their community— whether through connections rooted in clan systems tied to the land, water, or animals. Indigenous identity is often deeply intertwined with the natural world and ancestral traditions. It's an ever-evolving concept, unique to each Tribe and Tribal region. And hey, it's not some mythical notion; it's about living with your environment, plain and simple.

Despite their resilience, Indigenous peoples continue to grapple with the enduring effects of political and historical erasure. This ongoing struggle with erasure manifests in various forms, including the marginalization of Indigenous voices in political processes and the deliberate omission or distortion of Indigenous history in mainstream narratives. These acts of erasure perpetuate a cycle of invisibility and disenfranchisement, further complicating efforts to preserve Indigenous cultures, languages, and traditions. Despite these challenges, Indigenous communities persist in their efforts to reclaim their identities, assert their rights, and resist the erasure of their rich cultural heritage.

In the next section, we're going to tackle the grim reality of Indigenous erasure and its detrimental effects. It's a stark reminder of how generations of students have been conditioned

not to question or critically examine the true history of Indigenous Peoples. Instead, they're fed a distorted narrative filled with colonial biases, perpetuating a cycle of ignorance and injustice. It's a downright disheartening situation where the uncomfortable truths about Indigenous history are buried under layers of misinformation and complacency. But we can't ignore the damage this erasure causes—it's a serious issue that demands our attention and action.

Erasure

What does Indigenous erasure mean? Indigenous erasure is defined as stated, “Indigenous erasure is the process for settler societies to discount and eliminate the presence of American Indian peoples, cultures, and polities. This erasure is part of a larger colonial imperative to diminish the existence of American Indians in order to access land and resources” (de la Rocha, p.6, 2021). The reality of Indigenous erasure is that the narration of the history of the United States has been told from the perspective of the colonists, claiming the history of the United States began with the arrival of European colonists, and they were able to make progress in the current state of this country. Diversity aims to encompass all cultures and perspectives, including those of Tribal Peoples. Excluding them perpetuates erasure and continues white supremacy.

This section will be about the perspective of Tribal Peoples in the Chesapeake Bay region. “The history of the Native Americans of the Chesapeake region is a remarkable story of resilience and survival” (Tayac et al., p.2, 2006). Firstly, I will explain how erasure negatively impacts Tribal Peoples in the year 2024 from experience and literature from scholars. “Scholars have argued that depicting American Indians narrowly, as stagnate or unchanging beings, has continued the

dual colonial processes of nation building and ethnic erasure” (Orr et al., p. 7, 2018). However, the start of the country’s history was before the arrival of colonists in the Eastern Coastal region. Figure 4. Many different Tribal Nations thrived in fully functional societies along the region's waterways and eventually migrated inland. (terrestrial land) during winter when more resources were available (Maryland State Arts Council, 2024). Instead, they faced displacement or outright genocide from their lands along the waterways, were pressured to assimilate into colonial norms and society, and were often overlooked in census counts of Tribal populations.

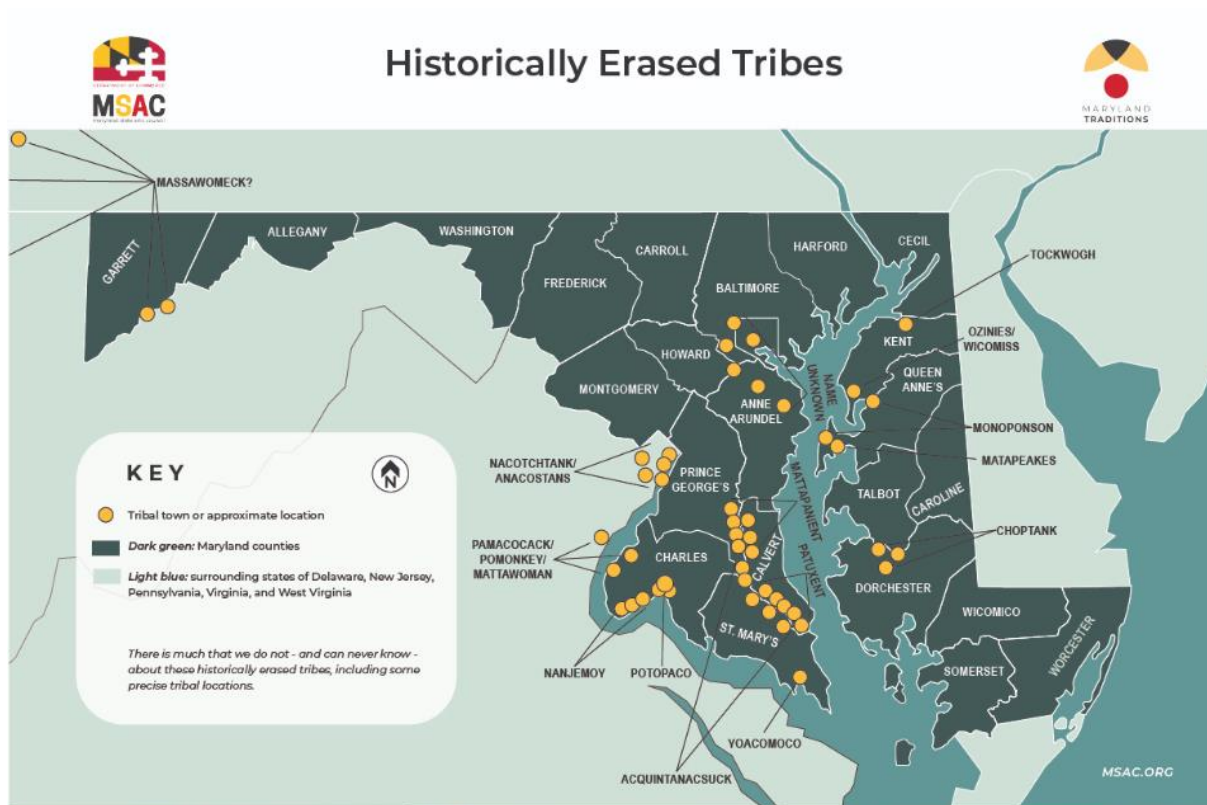


Figure 4. Historically Erased Tribes

While [the Maryland State Arts Council's](#) map of Tribal Nations in Maryland provides valuable information, it's essential to acknowledge its limitations. The map may not encompass all Tribes that existed before European colonization due to factors such as genocide, assimilation, and migration. The surviving Tribes in 2024 are the descendants who have persevered despite historical challenges, and their resilience deserves recognition and support.

Another example of erasure is in Figure 5 below. This map reveals numerous locations across the U.S. bearing names of forts established during periods of military oppression, including enslavement of Black people and conflict against Indigenous tribes for land theft and eradication. These names persist, serving as ongoing tributes to historical figures associated with acts of violence and terror against marginalized communities.

The issue of race remains deeply entrenched, as many individuals continue to glorify white historical figures who perpetrated inhumane acts to serve their own interests. This ongoing glorification reflects a societal reluctance to confront the injustices inflicted upon marginalized communities. Merely offering reparations falls short of addressing the systemic issues at play. True progress necessitates a commitment to comprehensive reforms to rectify historical wrongs, promote equality, and foster genuine reconciliation.



The Decolonial Atlas

@decolonialatlas

Settlers live on a continent full of places named Fort, but refuse to admit that it's stolen land. Like, what do you think all those forts were for?



Figure 5. White Denial on Stolen Land

[Decolonial Atlas](#) is a public website with a collection of maps that challenges colonial cartographers that Western maps are the only perspective. The US continues to deny white supremacy ever existing, whereas the map shows all the fort-based names occupying stolen land nationally, Manifest Destiny.

Dr. Laura Pulido, *Cultural Memory, white innocence, and United States Territory: the 2022 Urban Geography Plenary Lecture* (2022), in Pulido's journal article describes how U.S. National Parks and Landmarks employees deny how historical figures embodied white supremacy to construct the United States to progress in a Eurocentric way. There were four forms of denial, and Dr. Pulido describes each of them explicitly by defining them and explaining the practice of white innocence: erasure, valorization, multiculturalism, and acknowledgment. For each term to functionally work correctly, the dominant culture must first deny the painful history inflicted upon Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC). Dr. Pulido describes erasure in her own words:

“Erasure is defined as complete silence on anything related to race, colonization, or even Indigenous peoples and people of color. They are simply never mentioned, not even in one sentence. There is no acknowledgment of whose land this once was, of the struggles to make it part of the United States, or of the exclusionary, exploitive, or extractive practices associated with the place's history and its large geography” (Pulido, 2022, 9).

A striking pattern emerges in the Chesapeake Bay region as numerous National Historic Sites and National Parks fail to incorporate Indigenous Tribal Peoples into their narratives (Maryland State Arts Council, 2024) (see Figure 6). The absence of any acknowledgment or representation of these communities creates a narrative void, suggesting to the public that Indigenous Peoples never existed or have become extinct. This glaring omission becomes apparent through personal

experiences of visiting these sites, where there is a notable lack of support or recognition for Tribal Peoples. Despite occasional land acknowledgment statements, the institutional support and educational efforts regarding the true history and ongoing presence of Indigenous Peoples remain sorely inadequate.

Tribal Peoples in the Chesapeake Bays' mere existences are being erased from history books, stories, media, and modern societal civilization as we are speaking. Every day is a psychological battle against the dominant culture. They must fight to tell their own stories, histories, sovereignty, and identity to survive in their Nation within a Nation. How does Maryland interpret the term Indigenous? Was it assumed that Tribal Peoples in Chesapeake did not exist because of how they interpreted what and how an Indigenous person looks like?

Educational awareness stands as a vital priority for many Tribes, enabling them to assert their own narratives and share their histories authentically. However, fulfilling this objective necessitates sufficient funding to develop and implement educational initiatives. However, this has not been made possible because the Tribal citizens must pay out of pocket to hold communal or public events.

It's unfair that Maryland federal environmental agencies and organizations are only issued to work directly with federally recognized Tribes. The next available option for non-federally recognized Tribes is applying to a 501(C)(3), which gives them the chance to fund events for the community, but it has strict restrictions on what can be done and limits them to doing Tribal only communal events. Environmental organizations in Maryland know what federal recognition means for the Tribe(s), but again, they usually work with federally recognized Tribes.

In the upcoming section, we'll explore accounts from the 16th and 17th centuries revealing colonists' attempts to portray themselves as the defining figures of the United States while simultaneously working to erase the presence of Tribal Peoples from the continent.



Figure 6. No Acknowledgements on Tribal Lands

Dr. Pulido's map indicates a huge amount National Historic sites that do not acknowledge Indigenous/Tribal Nations in the 21st century. This is an example of how subtle white supremacy continues the colonial legacy of erasure. Workers and administrations even do not acknowledge Tribal presence by saying "they were never here in this area" or "migrated elsewhere". Meaning they validate archeologists' "truths" than Tribal Peoples or Nations that still have ties to the National Historic Site.

Erasure and Treaties

To grasp the impact of erasure on Tribal Peoples in the Chesapeake Bay region, it's essential to recognize their inherent rights to the land and waters. This begins with understanding the legal processing of Tribal treaties within the United States court system and the frequent violations of these agreements by the United States government. These breaches are the foundation of erasure, affecting Tribal Peoples in Maryland.

While each Tribal Nation's experiences and outcomes vary, the legacy of erasure persists for all Tribes striving to exist within the Chesapeake Bay region. We'll begin by examining how White settlers justified their colonial actions against Tribal Peoples and how these justifications continue to impact Tribal Peoples in the Chesapeake Bay region today.

During conquest voyages, the Americas were being invaded by earlier colonizers, by Columbus and his companions, the Spanish conquistadors, to seek riches of gold.

“Columbus’s accidental “discovery” of the “Americas” in 1492 and the subsequent Papal Bulls, which soon after that became the Doctrine of Discovery, opened up the floodgates for explorers, conquistadors, and colonizers from throughout the Western world to colonize lands new to them, yet lands that were already home to the millions of Indigenous people who inhabited them since time immemorial” (Pieratos et al., p.54, 2021).

The use of the Doctrine of Discovery was in the name of God to brutally annihilate the non-Christians and non-Catholics people to claim the lands of Indigenous peoples. The foreign rule's purpose was to create a Christian and Catholic believer society where “free land” was available after massacring Indigenous peoples (Pieratos et al., p.54, 2021).

When settler colonialists established new laws thrust upon Tribal Peoples' functioning society, The Doctrine of Discovery was “a religious and spiritual” (Pieratos et al., p.53, 2021) ideology for colonists to establish legal justification laws to possess lands. This decree was a colonial tactic also known as Manifest Destiny, where the U.S. government forcibly ripped Tribal Peoples away from their homelands to progress westward expansion (Pieratos et al., p.54, 2021) (see Figure 7). This ideology endangered the Tribal People’s sovereignty in Tribal and Western politics.

“The Doctrine of Discovery did not merely justify the brutal enslavement and genocide of Native Nations centuries ago, but it was the foundation of federal Indian policy that continues today, which maintains that tribes are not capable of determining the futures of their own people without the oversight of a colonizing settler government. This history is a part of our past and present as the policies and impacts are ongoing” (Pieratos et al.,p 53-54, 2021).



Figure 7. Manifest Destiny

The Manifest Destiny painting was created by John Gast in 1872 and titled [American Progress](#). Progress during historical periods often favored white settlers at the expense of forcibly displacing Tribal Peoples from their ancestral lands. This disparity persists today, exemplified by instances such as National Parks restricting access for Tribal Peoples to their own cultural sites. This ongoing gatekeeping perpetuates injustices and hinders indigenous communities from accessing and connecting with their heritage and sacred spaces.

Tribal Nations never had a good relationship with the U.S. federal government due to the ill-treatments being inflicted upon Tribal Peoples since the first arrival of European settlers. Treaties between Tribal Nations and the U.S. Federal government were created as a “peace treaty” between the two enemies. The document guaranteed that Tribal Nations would reap the benefits if they “behaved” and did not have war break out against them. “The new United States government was thus free to acquire Native American lands by treaty or force. Resistance from the tribes stopped the encroachment of settlers, at least for a while” (National Geographic Society, 2023). “In general, the treaties were to define the boundaries of Native American lands and to compensate for the taking of lands. Often, however, the treaties were not ratified by the

Senate, and thus were not necessarily deemed enforceable by the U.S. government, leaving issues unresolved” (National Geographic Society, 2023).

Still in the Treaty era, former U.S. President Andrew Jackson proposed to persuade Congress to ensure the act is law-abiding rule “the removal and resettlement of Native American tribes. A primary target was the Cherokee, Creek, Choctaw, Chickasaw, and Seminole from Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, and Florida. Although the removal and resettlement were supposed to be voluntary, ultimately, this resulted in the series of forcible removals known as the Trail of Tears” (National Geographic Society, 2023). This law was known as the Removal Act of 1830. This act also targeted other Tribal Nations that were forcibly removed from their ancestral lands to death concentration camps.

In 1871, it was the end of treaty making, and the “promises” the treaty was supposed to make between the two Nations were overturned countless times by the Supreme Court. This caused the “For most of the middle part of the 19th century, the U.S. government pursued a policy known as “allotment and assimilation” (National Geographic Society, 2023). Tribes were often subjected to treaties that imposed the division of common reservation lands among individual families. The General Allotment (Dawes) Act of 1887 further institutionalized this approach, significantly depleting reservation territories.

Former President Franklin D. Roosevelt introduced the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 as part of his New Deal initiatives to halt the allotment of Native lands and prohibit the further sale of Tribal Peoples' territories (National Geographic Society, 2023).

Figure 8. Colonial Violent Tactics of Blood Quantum

Photo Credit: [Emma Hodges & Oregon Humanities](#) The federal government's implementation of blood quantum criteria during the Dawes Act era represents a harmful construct imposed on Tribal Peoples. By establishing arbitrary standards for tribal identity, this system effectively grants non-Native entities the authority to determine the legitimacy of indigenous individuals and communities. This practice perpetuates colonial attitudes and undermines the inherent sovereignty and self-determination of Tribal Peoples, further exacerbating historical injustices.

That was how the U.S. government saw Tribal Peoples, as livestock, a number to identify their legitimate Tribal status and acknowledge you in their governmental system. “All in all, blood quantum limits the holistic meaning of what it means to be Native American. If tribal communities continue to uphold colonial erasure tactics, it will lead to more harm and destruction of native peoples” (Rice, 2021). This method was no different from how the one blood drop rule method was used to identify Black Americans to have more laborers at a low price (Tuck & Yang, 2012). In current times, when mentioning the ugly truth of Indigenous histories of what settler colonists did to Tribal Peoples, it often gets gaslighted. Why? Because it’s exposing their ancestor’s role in white supremacy, instead of acknowledging the historical atrocities, they simply deny white supremacy through gaslight to preserve their white innocence.

Maryland is a neighboring state overshadowed by other Tribal Peoples that are more recognized than Tribal Peoples living in Maryland. For instance, the Maryland State Archives (MSA) Special Collections added the Indigenous Peoples Program created and co-directed by my community partners, Maria Day and Megan Craynon. They have recently featured the launched website called *Mayis: Indigenous Records*, where historical documents are accessible to the public. However, I would like to note that just because the Archives has Indigenous records does not mean they have every record(s) from the Six Native Tribes of Maryland. Since colonial state boundaries did not apply to Tribes, numerous records exist with multiple East Coastal states,

including the U.S. federal government. This is said by a couple of Tribal interviewees who said that they have multiple treaties scattered across neighboring states, but some are not accessible to their communities. Another example is census records dating back to the 1700s a Piscataway Conoy and Nause-Waiwash interviewee mentioned that the U.S. census did not want to count Tribal Peoples as U.S. citizens until 1925 and because of this, people in the Mid-Atlantic region assumed that they were no longer Tribal Peoples in the Chesapeake Bay region.

The Mayis website holds historical records in digital form. The problem is that during the 15th century, European colonists were inconsistent in correctly spelling each Tribal name consecutively. For example, in the Mayis database, the archivists found that the word Piscataway was spelled 38 ways in English that most people frequently speak and write. This is problematic because non-Native politicians involved in Tribal politics interpret their inherited rights differently in each generation in Western society.

The Mayis website offered detailed resources from various Native scholars, including Dr. Gabrielle Tayac and her colleagues' educational book titled "We Have A Story to Tell: Native Peoples of the Chesapeake Region," accessible through the Smithsonian National Museum of American Indian's Native Knowledge 360° portal. Through this resource, Tayac and her team effectively shed light on numerous topics, including the historical exploitation of Eastern Tribes and their resilience in the modern-day Chesapeake region. Delving into these materials has been instrumental in my quest to interpret better and understand Eastern Shore Tribal Peoples' treaties, allowing me to grasp the historical nuances from a Native perspective and recognize the ongoing challenges faced by Indigenous communities in Maryland.

“The Nanticoke tribe is recognized by the state of Delaware. The state of Maryland does not officially recognize any Native tribes. Native American communities desire these forms of legal recognition so that their long-standing status as nations will be acknowledged and further respected. They also want to exercise the rights and privileges granted to recognized tribes” (Tayac et al., p.14, 2006).

In historical efforts to mitigate tensions between Tribal Peoples and English settlers, agreements such as the 1666 Articles of Peace and Amity were forged. These treaties often necessitated Indigenous communities relinquishing substantial land holdings to the colonists for peace and stability. “Among other rights, it ensured that the Piscataway would not have to give up their lands. The Articles also promised that the Piscataway could fish, hunt, and gather crabs without disturbance” (Tayac et al., p.16, 2006). Despite the inclusion of other tribes within the Piscataway Chiefdoms, which afforded them certain rights, the English legal assurances were frequently disregarded, jeopardizing the safety and security of Tribal Peoples.

Long ago, the Treaty of Middle Plantation in 1677, when Virginia English settlers negotiated with Tribal Peoples, took a while to reach an agreement. It was signed by the Piscataway Chiefdom encroaching on the Tribe’s land in the Chesapeake region because “The treaty specified an agreement that Indians would own their reservations and be treated as Englishmen under the law. The English also agreed not to settle within three miles of an Indian reservation” (Tayac et al., p 16, 2006). “Written into the treaties that ceded tribal lands to the US were rights for Native peoples to access the ceded lands for hunting, fishing, and other cultural resources.”

(Gilio-Whitaker, p.131, 2021) in the waterways of the Chesapeake Bay watershed. The settlers wanted to benefit in some way from their inherent rights. The promise was for the Tribes “to pay a tribute of game to the Virginia governor every year. At the time, these tributes helped feed the colonists” (Tayac et al.,p.16, 2006). This was the most crucial treaty for Tribal Nations sovereignty and the historical significance of politicizing the environment in a bureaucratic way.

While Northeastern and Mid-Atlantic states did indeed enter treaties with Tribal Peoples in what is now known as Maryland, the United States government denies having established treaties with the Tribal Peoples in the Chesapeake Bay region. This discrepancy may stem from the possibility that existing treaties were lost or damaged over time. These documents carry immense significance for Tribal Peoples, serving to protect their sovereignty and political autonomy.

Even though the United States government did not enter into treaties with the tribes of the Chesapeake region, the earlier colonial treaties still have relevance. They established the fact that Native nations existed here at the time the colonies were founded and after. This is very important for tribes today as they continue their efforts to keep their communities together and to assert their rights as Native nations. [Speck; Feest; Moretti-Langholtz and Waugaman; Rountree]” (Tayac et al., pg. 16, 2006).

In Table 1. I do have to say that in some way, this is false because one Piscataway interviewee stated that the Piscataway Conoy Tribe has two treaties with the U.S. federal government. Because one of their chiefs is buried at Piscataway Park on federal grounds.

Table 1. Tribal Status in the United States

Tribal Recognized	“Historically, tribes recognized each other’s status. They formed trade agreements, military and political alliances, and so on. Sometimes, they warred with one another. Today, tribes continue to interact with one another through various political, educational, economic, and tribal organizations” (Tayac et al., p. 20).
International Recognized	“Today, tribes continue to participate in the international arena. They participate in organizations such as the United Nations and the Organization of American States, and interact with the indigenous communities of other countries. In some cases, they continue to interact with the national governments of Europe, Canada, and Mexico” (Tayac et al., p. 20).
State Recognized	“Many tribes are legally recognized as governmental entities by the states. Often, as with Virginia tribes, this is a carryover from colonial times, when treaties were made with the original colonies, and later, recognition was assumed by the state itself. In these instances, states and tribes continue to interact with one another in matters of governance. Eight tribes are currently recognized by the state of Virginia, none by Maryland. Delaware recognizes the Nanticoke tribe (Tayac et al., p. 20).
Federally Recognized	“This is legal recognition of tribes by the U.S. government. Today, there are more than 560 federally recognized tribes in the U.S. In addition, there are more than 275 tribes within the U.S. that are not federally recognized. Tribes may seek federal recognition through processes available in all three branches of the government—executive, legislative, and judicial. Many tribes of the Chesapeake are either currently in the process of seeking federal recognition through one of these means or are considering it” (Tayac et al., p. 20).

Table 1. In discussing the impact of Tribal status on legitimacy at both the Federal and state levels, I've come to recognize the complex dynamics at play, particularly for Tribal Peoples in Maryland who fall within the realm of Tribal recognition and state recognition. The process of obtaining federal recognition, often reliant on ancestral lineage and blood quantum criteria, mirrors historical injustices akin to the one-drop rule imposed on Black individuals. This arduous process, spanning decades in many cases, underscores systemic barriers that hinder Tribal Peoples' full recognition and autonomy.

Despite the lengthy pursuit of federal recognition, the outcome does not always align with expectations. Even federally recognized Tribes may be denied inherent rights to vital resources and protection, further exacerbating existing disparities. This reality challenges the notion that federal recognition guarantees equitable treatment and resource access.

Addressing these systemic shortcomings requires a nuanced approach that acknowledges historical injustices and actively works towards rectifying them. Efforts to expedite the federal recognition process and ensure equitable distribution of resources are imperative. Moreover, fostering meaningful dialogue and collaboration between Tribal Peoples, governmental entities, and other stakeholders is essential in advancing genuine reconciliation and empowerment for Indigenous communities.

“But in the East, whites were making great reputations as ‘Indian experts’, as people who devoted their lives to helping the savages. Whenever Indian land was needed, the whites pictured the tribes as wasteful people who refused to develop their natural resources. Because the Indians did not ‘use’ their lands, argued many land promoters, the lands should be taken away and given to people who knew what to do with them” (Deloria, 1969, p.10).

This was new for me to understand since I come from a federally recognized Tribe that has been recognized by the federal government since 1868. In 1866, our Diné people and Mescalero Apache relatives endured Hwéedli (The Long Walk), where Diné and Mescalero Apaches were

forcibly removed from our Four Corners homelands by the U.S. Calvary and sent to Bosque Redondo, a concentration camp. Two years later, after the U.S. Calvary coerced our Diné leaders to sign the Treaty of 1868 with conditions our leaders had for our people (Davis, 2018).

However, in the present day, we still have to fight for our inherent rights to water and land and fight against extractive companies coming to our lands to steal and take our resources away.

The federal recognition process has evolved since the 1800s but still presents significant challenges for Indigenous communities. While the methods and criteria for recognition may have shifted over time, the barriers to obtaining federal recognition remain substantial. Despite changes in procedure, the fundamental struggle for recognition and sovereignty persists for many Indigenous peoples.

Discovering the intricacies of state and Tribal recognition was eye-opening for me, especially considering the complex layers involved in attaining federal recognition status. The exorbitant costs, extensive paperwork, and lengthy timeframes spanning decades are incredibly daunting and frankly absurd. Why must Indigenous peoples in the Chesapeake Bay region, who have endured the ravages of Euro-colonialism, persist in this uphill battle against a federal government perpetuating the colonial cycle?

The National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) has long been a central voice in advocating for the rights and interests of Indigenous peoples across the United States. However, recent discussions surrounding the organization's criteria for membership have raised significant concerns.

The NCAI's policy of only representing federally-recognized Tribes exclude a substantial portion of Indigenous communities, including state-recognized and unrecognized tribes. This exclusionary stance undermines the principle of Indigenous sovereignty and perpetuates harmful divisions within Native communities.

Furthermore, relying on blood quantum as a measure of Indigenous identity is seriously flawed. This colonial concept oversimplifies the rich diversity of Indigenous cultures and unfairly excludes individuals who don't meet arbitrary standards set by outsiders.

The issue of "Pretendians" also compounds these problems. These are people who falsely claim Indigenous ancestry, which not only distorts perceptions of Indigenous identity but also erases the genuine struggles and experiences of Indigenous communities. I understand that determining genuine Tribal citizenship can be complicated, especially for those seeking to reconnect after being forcibly separated through boarding schools or illegal adoptions. However, making statements like that can inadvertently perpetuate systems of white supremacy.

“A state-recognized tribe is not an Indian tribe. And a member of one of these groups is not an Indian.” (Hoskin Jr., 2023). Principal Chief Chuck Hoskin Jr.'s remarks, which cast doubt on the legitimacy of state-recognized tribes, risk exacerbating divisions within the Indigenous community. It's important to acknowledge that some tribes may opt not to cede their sovereignty to a non-native government, which is a significant factor to consider. Such rhetoric undermines the collective efforts aimed at fostering unity and solidarity among all Indigenous peoples.

In order to truly fulfill its mission of advocating for Indigenous rights and sovereignty, the NCAI must adopt a more inclusive approach that recognizes and respects the diverse identities and experiences of all Indigenous peoples, regardless of federal recognition status or blood quantum. Failure to do so perpetuates harmful colonial legacies and hinders progress towards justice and equality for Indigenous communities.

Yeah, blood quantum is a real messy topic in Indian Country, no doubt about it. It's like this outdated system that's just dripping with racism and oppression. Relying on it to determine who's "Indian enough" is like playing right into the government's hands.

The worst part is how it divides us, you know? Instead of coming together and supporting each other, we're busy arguing about who has enough Native blood to be considered legitimate. It's like a messed-up game where the rules were set by the people who wanted to wipe us out in the first place.

And you're right, it totally feels like the government sticking its nose where it doesn't belong. By dictating who's a "real" Tribe based on blood quantum, they're basically interfering with our Tribal affairs without even lifting a finger.

Honestly, it's high time we ditched this whole blood quantum thing and focused on what really matters: our culture, our communities, and our sovereignty. We shouldn't let some arbitrary

measurement define who we are as Indigenous peoples. It's time to reclaim our identities on our own terms.

It's infuriating how the government keeps using divide-and-conquer tactics to undermine Indigenous communities, isn't it? They know that if they can keep us fighting amongst ourselves over who's "legitimate," we'll be too busy to unite and stand up against their exploitation of our land and resources.

And it's not just about whether a Tribe is federally recognized or not. They'll come after any Tribe that dares to oppose their plans for commercialization or resource extraction. It's like they see our land as nothing more than a commodity to be bought, sold, and exploited for profit, regardless of the environmental or cultural consequences. It's a sickening cycle. While we're busy arguing about who's "real," the government swoops in and takes advantage of the chaos to push forward their agenda.

In a distressing turn of events, the Cedarville Band of Piscataway received a mandate from Charles County commissioners in 2023: they were ordered to evacuate their ancestral lands (Hough, 2023). This alarming revelation, which I stumbled upon following the conclusion of my second semester at UMBC, spread rapidly through social media channels. To validate the disheartening news, I resorted to an online search, only to confirm the grim reality of the eviction notice. Maria, a trusted source, disclosed that the Tribe is actively grappling with this predicament, working in conjunction with the MSA to archive the bulk of their Tribal information. Despite their concerted efforts, this archival endeavor serves as a testament to the

ongoing struggle to preserve their cultural heritage amidst relentless challenges. Tragically, the relentless encroachment on Indigenous land persists as a bleak reality. The sacredness of their home, where language, birthplace, rooted clans, and creation stories are cherished, is being devalued and commercialized (see Figure 9).

Transitioning to a federally recognized Tribe of resource exploitation. For instance, Dina Gilio-Whitaker, a Tribal citizen of the Colville Confederated Tribes, in the book *As Long As Grass Grows: The Indigenous Fight for Environmental Justice, from Colonization to Standing Rock* (2019), writes about how U.S. government policies have no integrity and do not hold themselves accountable for honoring Tribal treaties that are inherent rights to their resources, sovereignty, and government. A prime example of that is a war that broke out in 2016 between the oil company, the Dakota Access Pipeline, and the U.S. military force against the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and Native and non-Native protestors. Despite federal recognition, the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe continues to face oppression and injustice from white supremacist actions. The Dakota Access Pipeline protests in 2016 underscored ongoing challenges, including the threat to land, water, and sacred sites, met with excessive force and violations of Indigenous rights. This highlights that federal recognition does not ensure equitable treatment or protection of Indigenous rights, emphasizing the need to dismantle systemic racism and uphold Indigenous sovereignty.

“The very thing that distinguishes Indigenous peoples from settler societies is their unbroken connection to ancestral homelands. Their cultures and identities are linked to their original places in ways that define them; they are reflected in language, place

names, and cosmology (origin stories). In Indigenous worldviews, there is no separation between people and land, between people and other life forms, or between people and their ancient ancestors whose bones are infused in the land they inhabit and whose spirits permeate place (Gilio-Whitaker, p.27, 2019).



Figure 9. Marshes of Maryland

Photo Credit [Edwin Remsberg](#), Bending Waters Park, Marion Station, MD. Accohannock Tribe's homelands. Echoing Gilio-Whitaker's sentiments, the land serves as a mirror of their identity and cultural heritage. For Tribal Peoples, the Chesapeake Bay watershed holds immense significance as it embodies their essence and connection to the natural environment. Being among these landscapes is not just about inhabiting them but about being in harmony with their ancestral lands and embracing their cultural heritage. The Chesapeake Bay watershed is not merely a geographical area but a vital part of Tribal Peoples' identity and existence.

A year later, a film called *Awake: A Dream from Standing Rock* is a visual perspective from Native protestors protesting the construction of the oil pipeline going to Native territory and predicting the outcome of the pipeline breaking. Thus, ruining countless environments and animals relying on the water source. This film was created so Western media does not distort the truth of what was happening in Standing Rock. The historical context and systemic inequalities surrounding Tribal recognition indeed reflect deeply entrenched power dynamics that have perpetuated white supremacy in the United States. The criteria for federal recognition, often rooted in discriminatory practices such as blood quantum requirements, have historically served to maintain control over Indigenous lands and resources while perpetuating marginalization.

The power of media in shaping narratives cannot be understated. This film serves as compelling evidence that the water protectors were not "violent protestors," countering the negative portrayals often perpetuated by mainstream media. By providing a platform for the voices and experiences of the water protectors, the film effectively challenges misconceptions and sheds light on the true nature of their activism. Through the lens of this film, audiences can gain a deeper understanding of the motivations and struggles of the water protectors, ultimately contributing to a more nuanced and accurate portrayal of their movement.

Furthermore, the punitive measures faced by those who challenge this status quo underscore the broader mechanisms of oppression at play. Legal allegations and other forms of retaliation against individuals or groups advocating for Indigenous rights and recognition highlight the continued resistance to meaningful change within the existing power structures.

Shackled by Racism: Racial Laws of the Chesapeake Bay

The U.S. government, states, and white settlers were politicizing ridiculous law proposals that greatly devastated Maryland and other Eastern Shore Tribal Peoples. The reservation land that was set aside for the Tribes was forcibly encroached, thus violating treaties and their inherent rights. For instance, racism and segregation laws were enacted towards Chesapeake Native peoples. The laws stated, “Native Americans could not attend the same schools as whites. They could not dine in the same restaurants, drink from the same water fountains, or use the same restrooms. The nation’s response to Indian educational needs was to set up a boarding school system that separated children from their families and forced them to give up their languages, cultures, and traditional ways of life” (Tayac et al., p.8, 2006). The implementation of race-based laws emerged as a potent tool driving the erasure of Tribal Peoples from society and their ancestral lands.

One law, in particular, was to erase Tribal Peoples from the state by acting like they were invisible. The state of Virginia enacted a law to prevent interracial marriages with Tribal Peoples. Virginia’s Racial Integrity Act of 1924 was established to stop census tracking Native Americans in the state of Virginia. Neighboring states also followed this act to continue categorizing race. As Tayac (2006) describes: “As a result of interracial marriages, there were no longer any American Indians in Virginia. The act asserted that all people in Virginia were either white or black. Native people were classified as “free persons of color” and, thereby, denied their own identity. This law and others in Maryland, Delaware, and many other states forbade anyone, including Native Americans, from marrying people belonging to races other than their own.

These policies were known as anti-miscegenation laws” (Tayac et al., p.8, 2006). Since this legislative order was established, I wonder what the consequences of not obeying this outrageous law were. What was the perpetrator’s (Native person) punishment?

“Most Native Americans were not considered United States citizens until 1924; they could not vote or enjoy any of the other rights and privileges guaranteed in the United States Constitution. Lands that had been set aside as reservations for Indians were also coveted, particularly if they were found to contain valuable natural resources. During this time, millions of acres of Indian lands were acquired by non-Indians through fraudulent or unfair land deals” (Tayac et al., p.18, 2006).

This example highlights the contradictory nature of U.S. policies towards Indigenous Peoples during this time, where Tribal Peoples gained citizenship rights, but only as non-Natives, while simultaneous efforts and policies limited their social interactions and uphold systems of racial segregation.

The repercussions of laws and treaties aimed at erasing Indigenous communities have endured for decades, extending into the 21st century despite the repeal of overtly segregated statutes. This prolonged impact has resulted in a form of slow violence characterized by the gradual but persistent erosion of Indigenous presence and identity in colonial Maryland. The following section will provide a detailed exploration of how Indigenous erasure continues to affect Tribal peoples in 21st-century Maryland, shedding light on the persistent challenges and dynamics confronting these communities.

Colonialism's Slow Violence of Indigenous Erasure

Two context concepts you must know before I dive deep into the impacts of slow violence and Indigenous erasure that developed countries have systemically oppressed non-Western Nations.

“In the United States, settler colonialism structures political and social life through the ongoing appropriation and occupation of Native land, and is culturally enforced through practices that actively obscure or erase Indigenous peoples – an effort to complete via ideological and cultural means the work of earlier failed attempts at total physical genocide (Wolfe 1999; Coulthard 2014; Fenelon and Trafzer 2014; Tuck and Wayne Yang 2013)” (Bacon p.1, 2018).

After Orr et al. say this, what is the connection with how slow violence intersects with Indigenous erasure?

Rob Nixon's book *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* describes the environmental crisis of the Global South that has been persisting for decades. His writing calls to action of change and immediate response. Slow violence is an unfamiliar term that is not widely defined or widely recognized by people. Nixon describes slow violence as “a violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all” (Goudsouzian, 2021). Of course, he gave examples of environmental injustice, such as resources being exploited in a neighboring town, toxic dumping, oil spills, and many neglected environmental cases. “Time can

become a kind of camouflage for long-term damage to society's most vulnerable, whose full humanity is routinely discounted by developers, politicians, and global corporations”

(Goudsouzian, 2021).

Indigenous people have been enduring a consistent physical and psychological battle against colonialism for centuries. The battle is in favor of the majority, White people, where it tips in their favor of the outcome, and Indigenous people celebrate micro victories when it's in their favor. This slow violence of erasure and assimilation is a struggle for Indigenous people, especially for East Coastal Tribal Peoples, to survive against the dominant culture that invaded their livelihoods.

“When people lose their own ways of living and take on new ones it is called assimilation. In the centuries after European contact, many Piscataway, Nanticoke, and Powhatan individuals either chose or were forced to assimilate non-Native ways of living. Language, religion, and other aspects of culture usually change as a result of assimilation. Sometimes Native Chesapeake peoples assimilated when they left their homes in search of work or after marriage to a person from a different ethnic background. Sometimes tribal members chose to assimilate in order to escape the shame inflicted by the larger society, which stereotyped Indian people as ignorant or backwards. Some saw assimilation as a way to avoid more wars and conflict. [Tayac; Rountree; Moretti Langholtz and Waugaman; Porter]” (Tayac et al., p.9, 2006).

Fast forward to the 20th and 21st centuries of the examples of slow violence for Indigenous people due to historical violence has led to low opportunities presented. For instance, *Hostile Climates are Barriers to Diversifying the Geosciences*, written by Erika Marín-Spiotta and her

colleagues, highlighted that the metaphor for the leaky pipeline is due to historical exclusion for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities that strive to enter into the STEM fields. The STEM field fails to increase diversity representation for “in higher-level professional positions can be solved by increasing the number of individuals from these groups in graduate programs and at entry-level positions” (Marín-Spotta et al., p.118, 2020). Problems in the environmental and social fields do not have long-term solutions or have been successful because many groups are still excluded from geosciences.

For instance, “Black women earned only 69 PhD degrees in the earth, atmospheric and oceanic sciences from 1973 to 2016, compared to 163 by Black men and over 5324 by white women (Bernard, 2018). Native American women earned 20 degrees in the geosciences. White men earned 14 246 Ph.D. degrees in the same fields” (Marín-Spiotta et al., p.119, 2020). The continued underrepresentation of diverse individuals in professional STEM fields highlights the lingering influence of implicit race-based laws, indicating their enduring effect on the 21st century.

Another example of erasure is the U.S. educational system that fails to acknowledge Indigenous people. Dr. Eve Tuck (Unangan and is an enrolled citizen of the Aleut Community of St. Paul Island, Alaska) and Dr. Wayne Yang published a 2012 journal article, *Decolonization is Not a Metaphor*. This article was published to remind people that Indigenous decolonization should not be taken lightly in Western academic and professional spaces. “The need to “decolonize our schools,” or use “decolonizing methods,” or “decolonize student thinking.” Yet, we have observed a startling number of these discussions make no mention of Indigenous peoples, our/their struggles for the recognition of our/their sovereignty, or the contributions of Indigenous

intellectuals and activists to theories and frameworks of decolonization” (Tuck & Yang, 2-3). When discussing American history, it’s told from a male Eurocentric perspective that censors the genocide, land dispossession, residential boarding schools, kidnapping, disease epidemic, wars, massacres, sterilization, religious persecution, and so many broken promises. White supremacy has always been aggressive, even now, with the number of books being banned from authors who are Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Middle Eastern, Asian, LGBTQ+, and from women representation.

“Demonstrated how textbooks present Indigenous Peoples using long-held stereotypes and the language of Eurocentricity. Furthermore, in a study of how teachers taught for diversity, Wills (2001) found that teachers often present overgeneralized and simplistic information about marginalized groups, such as Indigenous Peoples’ perspectives of colonization, by not providing students with enough information about the unique and varied perspectives of Indigenous Peoples” (Shear et al., p.73, 2015).

Young educators (K-12 and college/university students) are being brainwashed of not knowing the historical stories of Indigenous people, this entails that the younger generation will not be aware of current Indigenous issue movements. Leading to a type of cultural shock of young immigrant descendants. “From the seventeenth through the twentieth centuries, the communities were forced to devise a number of strategies to survive and to keep their Native identities, histories, and cultures alive” (Tayac et al., p.8, 2006).

The U.S. education system neglects to embrace and support the cultural heritage and contemporary livelihoods of Indigenous Peoples. Instead, Indigenous communities are often

misrepresented as extinct entities, failing to recognize their vibrant presence and contributions within Western society.

This includes the harsh reality that climate change produces as yet another tool of assimilation in the era of neo-colonialism. The concerning part is that many people are unaware or uninformed about the profound impacts of climate change, particularly on how climate change affects our frontline water and land protectors. It's a disaster—on one hand, Indigenous voices are being silenced and erased from history, and on the other hand, their very existence is threatened by the devastating effects of climate change. It's high time we recognize and address these intersecting challenges before it's too late.

“Eco-colonialism has introduced a different type of loss that we are continuing to experience as Indigenous peoples. This loss extends beyond human loss to animal, plant, and other environmental loss. All environmental losses Indigenous peoples experience result in a cultural loss that fractures our identities. Like all loss, it results in grief, and the loss that results from eco-colonialism and climate change is what I refer to as ecological grief” (Hernandez, p.58, 2022).

It's imperative that we stand up and fight for the preservation of our natural environment against the destructive practices of extractive industries and individuals. Our environment cannot be replaced or replicated; every element shapes our interactions and experiences. As Native scholars and land and water protectors, we must communicate the profound importance of our responsibility to the environment to non-Native communities. This is not just a matter of politics;

it's about education and empowerment, ensuring that everyone recognizes their role in protecting and immersing themselves in the environment that sustains us all.

In the upcoming section, I'll delve into the environmental dynamics of the Chesapeake Bay region and their profound impact on the Indigeneity of Tribal Peoples in Maryland. We'll examine the intricate interplay between the unique ecosystem of the watershed and the cultural practices, livelihoods, and identities of Indigenous communities. Through this exploration, we aim to gain a comprehensive understanding of how the environment has shaped and continues to shape the Indigenous experience in this region. It's crucial to recognize that protecting these environments from commercial exploitation is vital for every living being that depends on the veins of the Earth, the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

The Ecological Devastation to the Chesapeake Bay

The Chesapeake Bay is the largest estuary in the continental United States, covering approximately 64,000 square miles across six states and the District of Columbia (Baird, D. and Ulanowicz, R.E., 1989; Maryland Department of the Environment, 2024). Its watershed comprises a complex network of freshwater streams and rivers that converge with the saltwater of the ocean, creating a unique and diverse ecosystem.

Various estuarine environments can be found within the Chesapeake Bay and its surrounding watershed, including wetlands, marshes, mudflats, underwater grass beds, and open water areas

(Maryland Department of the Environment, 2024). These environments are interconnected and play crucial roles in maintaining the ecological balance of the bay.

Wetlands and marshes serve as important habitats for a wide range of plant and animal species, providing breeding grounds, refuge, and feeding areas. They also offer valuable ecosystem services like water filtration and erosion control.

Mudflats are dynamic habitats that are exposed at low tide and submerged at high tide. They provide feeding grounds for shorebirds and support a diverse community of organisms adapted to fluctuating water levels.

Underwater grass beds are essential for the bay's ecosystem, providing habitat for fish, shellfish, and other aquatic species. They also help improve water quality by oxygenating the water and stabilizing sediments.

Open water areas within the bay support a diverse array of marine life, including plankton, fish, and marine mammals. These areas are vital for feeding, migration, and reproduction, making them essential components of the bay's ecosystem.

Understanding the complex interactions between these estuarine environments is crucial for effective management and conservation of the Chesapeake Bay ecosystem. By protecting and restoring these habitats, we can ensure the long-term health and sustainability of this valuable natural resource.

The diverse environment of the Chesapeake Bay supports dynamic home ecosystems for various plants, animals, and marine species. Maryland, in particular, is renowned for its crustacean organisms, such as the native eastern oyster (*Crassostrea virginica*), which plays a crucial role in filtering large volumes of water and was historically a primary cleaner of the Bay. Additionally, Chesapeake Bay oysters remain a popular delicacy enjoyed by many Marylanders (Maryland Department of the Environment, 2024).

For the Tribal Peoples of the Chesapeake Bay region, this unique ecosystem is integral to their way of life. Estuaries, despite appearing "dirty" to some, are actually rich in nutrients, produce oxygen, filter surface pollutants, and provide abundant food sources. The intrusion of saltwater into the bay is balanced by the diverse community of plants and animals, which contribute essential nutrients and prevent the water from being overwhelmed by saltwater.

The Tribal Peoples have long relied on the resources provided by the Chesapeake Bay watershed, utilizing every part of its living organisms for sustenance and cultural practices. Their intimate understanding of and connection to this ecosystem underscores the importance of preserving its health and biodiversity for both their livelihoods and cultural heritage.

Drastic and rapid changes can have significant consequences for the Bay's ecosystem. It is vital for human intervention to help contribute to the plant and animal species that are working to keep the ecosystem from worsening.

Often overlooked when discussing the estuarine ecosystems of the Chesapeake Bay is the role that trees and forests play. According to the Chesapeake Bay Program, the trees perform the ecological duty of ensuring the waterways are clean and filtered.

“Trees don't just produce the oxygen we breathe: through a process known as attenuation, tree roots and leaves and forest soils can also absorb and trap the pollutants in our air. Forests can capture more than 85 percent of the nitrogen that falls onto them from the air, preventing it from flowing into our groundwater, rivers and streams.” (Chesapeake Bay Program, 2023).

The trees of the Chesapeake Bay, akin to those of the Amazon Forest, serve as the lungs of the environment, extending their influence across different biome climates that mutually support one another. These trees provide habitat for numerous mammalian species, contributing to the region's biodiversity and ecological balance.

“Streamside forests shade the water that runs beneath their leafy canopies, maintaining cooler water temperatures and reducing stress on sensitive fish. Leaf litter, seeds and other plant materials fall into streams and form the foundation of the freshwater food chain, and fallen branches, logs and woody debris can create habitat for underwater critters” (Chesapeake Bay Program, 2023).

A healthy forest comprises different complex tree species, mainly deciduous and a small portion of evergreen and coniferous trees. They work together in both inland and aquatic environments

to ensure the ecosystem is cleansed due to their interventions. However, the healthy environment of trees went through a massacre period of deforestation with the arrival of European colonists. Deforestation becomes more rampant during the 1700s to support their money culture of agriculture, construction of ships, and for fuel. The colonists took down “40 to 50 percent of the Bay’s forests” (*Chesapeake Bay Program*). This was seen as a positive progressive of creating a new civilization.

In my conversation with a Pocomoke Indian Nation Tribal member, they grimly described witnessing the marshland trees morphing into a "ghost forest," a stark symbol of environmental decay spurred by phenomena like rising sea levels. This underscores the pressing need to confront climate change and safeguard ecosystems, casting a shadow over future prospects for the region.

“But what happens is when sea level rises, sweeps into those areas, trees can't deal with that much salt, and they die. So what happens? While those trees die, they turn ghost way. And they just die. And then they're these these toothpicks standing there. And it becomes more marshland because what's the only thing that can grow there, the soil becomes compacted because it's sediment.”

The degradation of the environment due to urbanization has led to frequent flooding, prompting reflection on the perspectives of Eastern Shore Tribal Peoples. To them, this degradation represents a profound betrayal of their heritage and culture. Faced with European colonial laws,

tribes have responded with a mix of armed resistance and adaptation, driven by a shared determination to safeguard their lands and traditions from external threats.

Today, in 2024, the remaining lands of the Tribal Peoples are threatened by climate change's flooding issue on the Eastern Shore's marshlands and freshwaters. Climate change assimilates the remaining cultural practices they are still trying to keep alive. This includes language, clans, seasonal interactions with plants and animals, key species that hold importance to the Tribal community, practice of environmental management, and Tribal policies.

Conclusion

The Chesapeake Bay region holds immense significance for numerous species relying on its resources, historically intertwined with the biocentric lifestyle of Tribal communities. However, the arrival of English colonizers marked a significant disruption, encroaching upon Tribal lands and resources, fundamentally altering traditional ways of life. Over time, the U.S. federal government further exacerbated this displacement, systematically enforcing laws that eroded Tribal sovereignty, rights, and cultural heritage.

Despite efforts to uncover historical accounts from the perspective of Chesapeake Tribal Peoples, existing literature predominantly reflects Eurocentric viewpoints, leaving gaps in understanding their lived experiences. In the upcoming chapter, I aim to address this disparity by amplifying the voices of Maryland's Tribal communities, providing insight into their history, cultural practices, and resilience amidst colonialism and environmental challenges.

While resources like the Maryland State Archives offer valuable information on Tribal treaties, they often reflect a limited perspective and may not capture the full extent of Tribal narratives. Furthermore, engagement with environmental organizations presents an opportunity to explore collaborative efforts in addressing the environmental crisis and erasure faced by Tribal communities.

In the next chapter, I will delve deeper into the narratives of Maryland's Tribal Peoples, shedding light on their perspectives on history, the significance of Chesapeake's waterways, the impact of colonialism, and their ongoing struggle for recognition and empowerment. Additionally, I will explore the role of environmental agencies in fostering partnerships with Tribal communities to address pressing environmental issues and promote inclusive stewardship of the region's resources.

Chapter 2: Maryland's Tribal and Environmental Organizations Relationships & Gaps

Introduction

I took the initiative to follow my partner mentor's advice by applying for a summer internship at the Maryland State Archives (MSA) Special Collections: Indigenous Peoples Program. To perform a successful thesis project, my mission at the Archives was to familiarize myself with Maryland's history between Tribal Peoples and whether other organizations are maintaining their relationship with Tribal communities. Co-directors of the Indigenous Peoples' Program, Senior Director of the Special Collections, Maria Day, and Director of Special Collections & Library Services, Megan Craynon, were my supervisors and colleagues during my time at the Archives. My job was to review and record historical Maryland county land records in an Excel spreadsheet that contained Tribal names of rivers, people, Tribes, events, and other significant cases dating back to the 1700s or 1800s. The purpose of this was to update the Indigenous Peoples' Program online website called Mayis: Indigenous Records, which was created in 2020 by my co-directors and colleagues to make it accessible for Tribes to have access to these records.

Toward the end of the internship, the MSA's Indigenous Peoples' Program held a teachers' workshop at Salisbury University in Salisbury, Maryland, on August 4-6, 2023. The Indigenous Education in Maryland's Lower Eastern Shore workshop invited K-12 educators, librarians, and archivists to learn about Native Peoples in Maryland and Indigenous Peoples throughout the United States historically and currently. It was to assist them with resources available to teach

their students about Native Peoples' history before the school year began. The MSA hosted lectures and outdoor activities for teachers to participate in. They invited two Tribes ancestral to Maryland, and the individuals from the two Tribal Nations shared their stories and experiences with the educators attending the workshop.

First, the Pocomoke Indian Nation individuals Cheryl Doughty, Norris (Buddy) Howard Jr., and Chief Norris Howard presented their keystone plant species, the cattails used to make their traditional house of the wigwam. The educators traveled to Handsell National Register Historic Site-Chicone Indian Village to witness the already established wigwam, a hut home in Vienna, Maryland. The wigwam's exterior is crafted from cattails and oak bark. The hut's architecture is impressive, with the ability to relieve Maryland's unbearable summertime humidity, as entering the hut creates a cooling effect similar to modern air conditioning. (Maryland Office of Tourism, 2023). The educators were grouped into four teams to make cattail mats from the Pocomoke instructors instructing us how to properly make a cattail mat for the exterior of the wigwam.

Lastly, the Nause-Waiwash Band of Indian's Chief Donna explained the importance of the mammal muskrats. The muskrat plays a crucial role in maintaining the health of the marsh and holds significant importance in the cultural practices of Tribal peoples. Additionally, discussions also revolved around the history of their Tribe, highlighting numerous interactions with English settlers and Black people throughout their history.

According to the Maryland Department of Natural Resources, muskrats inhabit freshwater marshlands and subsist on a diet of cattails, insects, and aquatic creatures. These creatures create open water pathways for other marine mammals. Still, they can also disrupt the regrowth of native vegetation by consuming the root of the cattails, causing the remaining vegetation to sink

into the marsh with no possibility of regrowth (Maryland Mammals- Common Muskrat (*Ondatra zibethicus*), 2023). To prevent this, it is necessary to regulate the muskrat population to maintain a healthy ecosystem and allow cultural practices to continue within the Nause Waiwash community.

After listening to the two Tribes' priorities on preserving their environments, I decided I would go in the direction of the impacts of climate change and stimulating the continuance of Indigenous erasure. I felt my interviewee's answers would confirm whether our research questions would really connect with the lived experience of Tribal Peoples. Fortunately, I came across a journal article that specifically addresses the challenges faced by Northeast and Mid-Atlantic Tribal peoples due to sea level rise. The article highlights the risks posed to Indigenous communities that are often excluded from mainstream environmental initiatives. It also discusses how some Tribal communities have taken matters into their own hands by developing their own frameworks to prepare for and respond to unforeseen events related to sea level rise. This proactive approach demonstrates the resilience and self-determination of these communities in the face of environmental threats.

Kelsey Leonard's 2021 journal article, *WAMPUM Adaptation Framework: eastern coastal Tribal Nations and sea level rise impacts on water security*, depicts Eastern Coastal Tribal Nations being excluded in sea level rise (SLR) modules, though in 2019, the United Nation's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) acknowledges Indigenous knowledge they fail to take into account of cultural, social, political, or spiritual factors, especially in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic regions Tribal Nations of the United States. No existing module has successfully or accurately created an environmental module for Indigenous communities (Leonard, 844). This can indicate a continuance of Indigenous erasure on the northeast and Mid-

Atlantic home territories that are being assimilated once again but this time by climate change and neo-colonization. “When the Chesapeake tribes lost their lands, they also lost much of their access to the region’s rich natural resources.” (Tayac et al., p. 10, 2006)

This chapter will focus on the analysis of two sets of interviews I conducted with Tribal Peoples in Maryland, as well as representatives from environmental organizations. The overall goal of interviewing Tribal Peoples was to invite them to share their experiences in addressing the narration of their histories and how they continue to thrive in current-day Maryland. I also wanted to understand how they connected with issues of environmental and climate change concern or stayed connected to the land in the midst of a highly urbanized and fragmented landscape. The goal of interviewing representatives from environmental organizations was to understand better their perspectives on engagement with Tribal communities in the state and to hear them reflect on the reasons why they do or do not have established relationships with Tribal Peoples.

Methodology

Prior to designing the sets of interview questions, I reviewed scholarly research detailing interview questions with Tribal Nations that emphasized the importance of establishing trust and familiarity with Tribal People’s homelands, learning the histories from Native perspectives, and attending public Tribal events. Second, I had in-depth conversations with my academic advisor, Dr. Maggie Holland, and my partner mentor, Dr. Ashley Minner-Jones (Lumbee of North Carolina), on how to approach open-ended and semi-structured interviews, as well as how to

recruit Tribal people best to participate in the interview process. My partner mentor, Dr. Ashley, recommended that I attend the Maryland Commission of Indian Affairs meeting that is held every month, where Tribal individuals, leaders, and groups gather to discuss Maryland's Tribal Nation's priorities. On June 5, 2023, I presented my research project to Tribal individuals who attended the in-person or virtual meeting.

Then, my team and I created transparent, open-ended interview questions for my two sets of interviewees. Dr. Ashley helped generate questions for Tribal interviewees, and Dr. Maggie helped craft the questions for representatives from environmental organizations. Some of the questions that were somewhat overlapping for both groups. In the end, the interview questions included three sets of themes and embedded questions for each group. For the interviewees from environmental organizations, the main themes for interview questions fell into the following groupings: (1) Knowledge and Understanding of Indigenous Peoples, (2) Indigenous erasure and ways to counter erasure, and (3) Available Opportunities for Tribal Nations within environmental or climate change-related initiatives and programming (see [Appendix I](#)). The interview questions for Tribal interviewees were grouped into the following themes: (1) Tribal Community Background, (2) Tribal Community's Relationship to Maryland's Environments, and (3) Indigenous People's relationship with the state of Maryland. The two sets of guiding questions for these interviews are included in this thesis document (see [Appendix II](#)).

Lastly, I created consent forms that detail an hour-long interview, indicated any risks and benefits associated with the research, the purpose of the project, sought permission to record the interview, confirmed that each participant's identity would remain protected, and noted that

compensation for each participant's time and effort would be recognized through gifting them a non-monetary craft item from my home in Arizona to show my gratitude to each person and to support Diné businesses and craftspeople. Each interviewee had the right to withdraw at any time that won't be held against them. The interview questions and associated consent forms were submitted as a research protocol to UMBC's Institutional Review Board (IRB) for approval as exempt research before I conducted any interviews. Once approved, I started to schedule and conduct the interviews, focusing on soliciting more in-depth conversations derived from their experiences, opinions, observations, and how they felt.

My participants were chosen based on their availability to be interviewed. Dr. Ashley created a list of contacts of Tribal Peoples she knew would be willing to participate. Maggie and another ICARE colleague, Rylee Wernoch, also created a list of contacts for environmental groups in Maryland. I emailed them by explaining who I was, what I was doing, the reason I was doing this, and asking them if they would be interested in participating, for both groups. Our ideal number of participants was to have between eight to ten individuals from each of the Tribal and environmental interviewees.

After the interviews, we uploaded each recording to an online transcription (AI-based) software to generate each set of transcripts. I reviewed each transcript along with the audio recording to ensure that everything was corrected and complete. I then highlighted and coded themes the interviewees responded to during the interview process.

This encounter enabled me to grasp the intricate array of challenges that Maryland's Tribal Peoples currently confront and their proactive approaches to tackling these issues. Through engaging with their narrations and experiences, my questions will naturally evolve, guided by the

insights gained from their perspectives and lived realities. Their responses will illuminate the complex layers of their struggles and aspirations, guiding further inquiry and fostering a more nuanced understanding of their circumstances.

Highlighted Theme Results

The thematic exploration undertaken during the interviews unveiled multifaceted dimensions within each categorized theme. Through their responses, the interviewees provided our research team with valuable insights into their interpretations of the questions posed and illuminated the diverse narratives they shared in response. While it is acknowledged that certain aspects may warrant deeper exploration and interpretation during the discussions, nonetheless, sheds light on how the colonial mindset shapes the perceptions of American citizens regarding Indigenous Peoples within their respective home states. By delving into these themes, our understanding of these perceptions' complexities was enriched, contributing to a more comprehensive analysis of the dynamics at play.

Upon reviewing the data extracted from transcripts, recordings, and coded themes obtained from interviews with Tribal and environmental stakeholders, several key insights have surfaced. These findings shed light on the intricate web of interactions and interconnectedness between Tribal Peoples' heritage in Maryland and the current state of affairs. They also highlight areas where gaps exist and actions are being taken, providing valuable insights into the ongoing dynamics and efforts within the community.

Interviewees from Environmental Organizations

I interviewed seven environmental representatives, encompassing individuals actively engaged in environmental advocacy and academic experts in the field (see Table 2). During our discussions, it was noted that each interviewee's participation typically spanned the duration of our hour-long conversation.

The individual conversations I conducted with each participant shed light on their awareness regarding their organization's initiatives within the Chesapeake Bay watershed. It became apparent that while they understood their organization's projects, there was a noticeable gap in their knowledge regarding the presence and significance of local Tribal Peoples in Maryland. This lack of awareness underscored the absence of established relationships between their organization and Indigenous communities within their operational vicinity.

This revelation highlighted a broader issue: the absence of personal and professional acquaintance with Tribal Peoples among the participants. Despite their genuine efforts at engagement, it became evident that further initiatives are necessary to bridge this gap and foster equitable relations within Maryland. It is imperative to recognize and address this gap in understanding to ensure inclusivity and meaningful collaboration with Tribal communities in the region. The environmental group themes were:

1. **Knowledge of Local Tribal Peoples/Indigenous Peoples Historically and Currently**
2. **Chesapeake Bay Projects and Inclusivity**
3. **Challenges and Barriers**
4. **How to Engage and Available Resources**
5. **Organization project and purpose**

Table 2. Environmental Group’s Interview

Individuals	Environmental Representative	# years with organization	Organization type	Virtual/In-person	Time of Interview
Interview #1	EPA	2022	Federal	Virtual	39:27 minutes
Interview #2	Chesapeake Bay Foundation	2023	Non-profit	Virtual	1:00 hour
Interview #3	Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake	10 years	Non-profit	Virtual	45:17 minutes
Interview #4	Maryland DNR Forest Service	27 years	State Agency	Virtual	49:48 minutes
Interview #5	University of Maryland (UMBC) & Science & Technical Advisory Committee (STAC) for Chesapeake Bay Program	40 years/10 years	Academic Institution	Virtual	51:01 minutes
Interview #6	Chesapeake Climate Action Network	22 years	Non-profit	Virtual	24:13 minutes
Interview #7	Baltimore Bluewater Waterkeeper	10 years	Non-profit	Virtual	41:10 minutes

The topic of Tribal Peoples emerged subtly throughout our interactions, often extending the conversation, notably when interviewees referenced projects related to Indigenous communities. Notably, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation representative demonstrated a deeper understanding of Tribal Peoples in the Mid-Atlantic region, owing to prior engagements predating their involvement in the program.

It is essential to acknowledge the various factors influencing the length and depth of our conversations, including the diverse range of projects in which interviewees were involved and their respective time constraints. These considerations ensured a nuanced understanding of each interviewee's perspectives and facilitated meaningful exchanges during our interactions.

Interviewees from Tribal Groups

I interviewed seven Tribal individuals representing different Tribal Nations (see Table 3). The Tribal individuals were willing to share their experiences, addressing the narration of their histories and lifestyles in urban Maryland. Upon meticulous review of each transcript stemming from the Tribal individuals' responses, a discernible pattern emerged, delineating five prominent thematic threads. These themes, meticulously elucidated throughout the interview process, served as conduits through which the experiential narratives of the participants found expression. Each theme's unique perspective and narrative arc encapsulated a distinct facet of the Tribal individuals' lived experiences and perceptions.

The Tribal group's themes highlighted during the interview were:

- 1. Tribal Perspective on Historical Accounts**
- 2. Colonization and Neo-colonialism Acts**
- 3. Modern-day Tribes Thriving not Surviving**
- 4. Environmental Issues or Priorities**
- 5. Next Steps of Indigenous Futurity**

Table 3. Tribal Group’s Interview

Individuals	Citizen of a Tribal Nation	Tribal Status	Chesapeake Bay Roots?	Virtual/ In-person	Time of Interview
Interviewee #1	Kiowa and Isanti Dakota and Ohkay Owingeh Pueblo	Federally Recognized	No	Virtual (Email)	N/A
Interviewee #2	Pocomoke Indian Nation	Tribal Recognized	Yes	In-person	1:36 hours
Interviewee #3	Choptico Band of Indians -Piscataway Conoy	State Recognized	Yes	Virtual	2:06 hours
Interviewee #4	Nause-Waiwash Band of Indians	Tribal Recognized	Yes	Virtual	1:06 hours
Interviewee #5	Piscataway Conoy Tribe	State Recognized	Yes	Virtual	1:18 hours
Interviewee #6	Piscataway Indian Nation	State Recognized	Yes	Virtual	1:44 hours
Interviewee #7	Tuscarora & Lumbee Nation of North Carolina	Federally Recognized (No Full Federal Status)	No	Virtual	46:59 minutes

Table 3. To ensure that their perspective, stories, and experiences are not interpreted as homogeneous, I have included a selection of each Tribal interviewee's responses to the themes. What they addressed and told me was from their personal experiences as a person and as a citizen of their Tribal Nation. There were many variations of what they told me. Reviewing each of the transcripts of the Tribal individual's responses revealed five highlighted topic themes that were carefully explained through the interview process. Each theme had its own version of their experiential narratives.

The anticipation and enthusiasm exuded by the Tribal People of Maryland were palpable as they eagerly shared their stories. It was clear that they viewed this opportunity as a platform to illuminate their Tribe's rich history, their current way of life, environmental concerns, cultural practices (no culturally sensitive information will be revealed), and personal aspirations. Their eagerness to carve out time from their bustling schedules underscored their dedication to shedding light on their existence within the fabric of Maryland's contemporary landscape.

Throughout the interview process, conducted with seven Tribal individuals, it became evident that each participant brought forth a distinct and vibrant narrative. Their stories vividly depicted their experiences, offering a kaleidoscope of perspectives and insights. To honor the diversity within their accounts, meticulous attention was paid to segmenting each interviewee's contributions. Thus, their narratives reflected personal anecdotes and offered profound insights into their Tribal heritage.

Voices of Tribal Peoples of Maryland: Narratives of Heritage, Culture, and Contemporary Realities

This chapter section is dedicated to the individual narratives of Tribal citizens who graciously participated in the interviews. Each interviewee's account encapsulates a multifaceted portrayal encompassing various themes, including historical recollections, cultural perspectives, contemporary lifestyles within Maryland, reflections on colonization and neocolonial influences, and environmental concerns and priorities. These narratives serve as a conduit through which the richness of Tribal heritage is conveyed, with a dual aim: to enlighten the researcher and educate fellow Maryland residents who may lack familiarity with Tribal history and traditions. Through the voices and experiences of these individuals, a deeper understanding of the complexities inherent in Tribal identity and its enduring relevance to contemporary society is garnered.

It is paramount to recognize that the experiences of Tribal individuals should neither be underestimated nor juxtaposed with those possessing formal credentials in American Indian Studies. These narratives encapsulate the resilience and adaptation of Tribal communities within the contemporary landscape of the Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia (DMV) region. Despite encountering challenges to their Indigeneity and cultural practices in an area historically impacted by colonization, Tribal Peoples persist in asserting their presence and cultural vitality. The resounding declaration of "Still Here" serves as a poignant reminder that the history of the United States did not commence with the arrival of Europeans; instead, it was a continuum already in motion, with Tribal Peoples flourishing in their ancestral territories. Oral traditions

remain a vibrant aspect of modern-day life, preserving the rich tapestry of Indigenous knowledge and heritage amidst evolving societal dynamics.

The Tribal Peoples of Maryland

Tribal Peoples History on Historical Accounts

Gilio-Whitaker's assertion powerfully emphasizes the unyielding bond Indigenous Peoples maintain with their homelands, a connection that eludes understanding by Western society. This profound relationship defines Indigenous identity and worldview, yet misconceptions propagated by outsiders frequently result in harm to both Indigenous communities and their ecological environments. Acknowledging and honoring Indigenous perspectives on their land relationships is imperative for fostering understanding, equity, and sustainable stewardship of natural resources.

“Their cultures and identities are linked to their original places in ways that define them; they are reflected in language, place names, and cosmology (origin stories). In Indigenous worldviews, there is no separation between people and land, between people and other life forms, or between people and their ancient ancestors whose bones are infused in the land they inhabit and whose spirits permeate place (Gilio-Whitaker, p.27, 2019).

Before starting our conversation with one another, the interviewees would introduce themselves in their language or describe themselves in English where their Tribal names originated from, where their ancestors lived before the colonialists' arrival, and what they play in their community. They shared a lot of profound knowledge about themselves and their kinship to their environment. This raises questions about why Western academia often overlooks or suppresses Indigenous knowledge expression.

Each interviewee provided a distinct and culturally rich introduction during the interview, reflecting their unique ways of expressing their identity, heritage, and role within their community.

Pocomoke Indian Nation

“I am a citizen and cultural ambassador of the Pocomoke Indian Nation. We are one of the Six Tribes in the state of Maryland. Our traditional homelands are all Somerset County, parts of Wicomico, parts of western parts of Sussex County, Delaware and parts of the northern part of Akhmat County, Virginia as well as Tangier and Smith Island.”

The Pocomoke Indian Nation is ancestral to what is now known as Maryland, in the southern region of the state. As our conversation delved deeper, I learned about the historical significance of my tribe's name, Pocomoke, and its practical implications in our lives.

“We were a paramountcy, a small Confederacy. So in the 17th century, many of our tribes were in these small confederacies that were related to each other by mutual kinship and related to each other by shared culture and language. We were a small paramountcy confederacy of eight different tribes.”

Choptico Band of Indians- Piscataway Conoy

Transitioning to the next interviewee’s history. This Tribe, known as the Choptico Band of Indians have integrated with the Piscataway Tribe. Therefore, while they maintain their identity as the Choptico Band, they are also recognized as part of the broader Piscataway Tribe.

“I’m an elder of the Choptico Band of the people who live with waters blend that all rapids most people know us as Piscataway. My community expands and you want to make it but my immediate community, the Choptico, we're a matrilineal people.”

This individual offered an extensive and detailed narrative encompassing the historical lineage of their tribe, recounting significant events that shaped their community over many decades. They shared personal accounts of both positive changes and persistent challenges experienced throughout this period of time. For instance, he first describes his family’s lineage from his paternal and maternal grandmothers.

“My grandmother was born and I think 1884 If memory serves me correct, all of my grandparents are born in 1800s, 1870s said between 1875 and 1884”.

The interviewee's aunt recorded their grandmother's oral history of where their family and Tribal community used to live on a cassette tape. The knowledge she shared was traced all the way back to the 16th century.

“So in that tape, my grandmother talked about her grandmother's mother, which took the this way back to the mid-1700s. And talking about where they lived, and how and why they were displaced. They were living back then, on the Choptico reservation. So what is now St. Mary's County, and by some of the language that my grandmother used, and what was passed on to her from her mother, and grandmother used, and what was passed on to her from her mother, and grandmother.”

The valuable recording connected the dots of censored colonial history. Again, Tribal People's history is not validated in the Western world because it's told in oral form. This is why Tribal People's history is again told from a Eurocentric perspective because if you have the credentials then you are telling the truth.

As a citizen of a Tribal Nation, I deeply understand the frustration and pain that comes with having our histories dismissed or distorted by Western perspectives. Our oral traditions hold the essence of who we are, carrying the wisdom, experiences, and resilience of our ancestors through generations. The emphasis on written records and formal credentials has created a systemic barrier that denies the validity of our stories, reinforcing the dominance of Eurocentric

perspectives. The Choptico elder goes into detail about how Tribal history told orally is dismissed in his homelands.

“Of course, it is very difficult, especially here in the East (U.S. Northeast and Mid-Atlantic region). To validate your history, to validate your genealogy, to validate where you come from, where you originate from. Surprisingly, well, maybe not surprisingly, that during that period, the 50-year period that we were all pushing to try to get the state of Maryland to acknowledge the fact that we're still here.

They will not accept oral history. And aside from overhead, now understand that that my grandmother born at 1800, she never went to school. Her mother never went to school, no school. No, no, no, no, my my grandmother's father, there was no school. When they lived down in that part of Southern Maryland, up on Mount Victoria, nobody else was up there. They were no schools. It wasn't even a church. So, you know, they were kind of off the beaten path off the map and, and out of sight out of mind. They were basically they were self-sustaining farmers. They didn't have employment, all the way up into the 1800s. So it was ready to ask somebody to prove who they are and what all we have is oral history.

And to say, *oh, we can't use it*. You know, you've got to hire people with the you know, with a V-tie, you know, they've got to be an anthropologist, a PhD. They've got to be archaeologists, they've got to be a historian. They've got to have credibility credentials before we can accept this information. They have to validate what you're saying. *How are you going to do that?* So it was very difficult, very difficult for us to get to that point.”

It's true that we live in a world where, to validate the narration of someone who doesn't speak English or went to school, they are illegitimate and cannot be labeled as false information. The structures that enforce this definition of "legitimate" knowledge and the bureaucratic processes that enable it to continue to hinder communication and preservation of oral stories.

Finding ways to incorporate diverse forms of knowledge and storytelling into formal systems while respecting their cultural significance and authenticity is a challenge that requires collaboration and sensitivity. Ultimately, every individual's narrative deserves to be considered with respect and openness, regardless of their linguistic or educational background. The elder continued by saying that the recording was legitimate based on the cassette that held the evidence.

“And when I use those names, in talking with Dr. King, she jotted those down when she then gave those names to one of her associates who did this guy still read those in marvelous research into colonial records. And he was able to take those two names that my grandmother voiced on that tape. And by using those two names, they went directly. And with the first shovel that went in the ground, they found the reservation. So you know, that made me feel very proud that, that history is there, that my grandmother being able to pass that information on after several generations proved to be productive.”

As someone who's passionate about social justice, I'm totally on board with supporting urban Tribal communities, especially here in Maryland. It's frustrating to see the barriers they face

when it comes to accessing their ancestral lands and waterways. I mean, these are essential parts of their cultural heritage, right? But the thing is, these bureaucratic hoops they have to jump through. It's like a modern form of colonization, trying to erase their traditions and assimilate them into Western norms.

It's deeply unjust for an elder, who has endured the hardships of multiple eras from Jim Crow to subtle colonialism, to continue facing such challenges. Their resilience in navigating these transitions speaks volumes about their strength and knowledge.

Piscataway Conoy Tribe

My next interviewee represented the Piscataway Conoy Tribe, whose ancestral lands spanned large swaths of the present-day mid-Atlantic states. Throughout our discussion, they shed light on the enduring presence of Tribal Peoples in the region, countering misconceptions propagated by colonial narratives. They underscored the detrimental impact of K-12 history educators disseminating false information about Indigenous extinction in the Mid-Atlantic, particularly on Native youth within those classrooms.

The interviewee recounted another pivotal historical event that contributed to their embrace of Indigeneity in the Mid-Atlantic region. The American Indian Movement (AIM) occurred during the Civil Rights Movement Era. AIM was famous for occupying Alcatraz and for supporting the annual massacre of Wounded Knee. Though now, most of their other involvement throughout Indian country was overshadowed by other movements.

“My community is 2500 people who are enrolled in the Piscataway Tribe. We are the descendants of those who met the first colonists in 1634. Our ancestors never left the state, we found a way to adapt and thrive. And we remain sort of underground, self-isolated in rural communities as long as we could. The change in the DMV area due to World War II changed our interaction with the non-Indigenous society. And it wasn't until the Civil Rights Movement, which we realized that at this point, was safe to come out and identify ourselves as Piscataway people once again. And since the 1970s, we've been working on that resurgence out into the public environment.

I am a product of the American Indian Movement (AIM). It was a major role in my life as a youth. It, AIM came to DC in 1974. 1974? Getting my years, right. And really changed the way that Indigenous people, I'm sorry, 1972, with the Trail of Broken Treaties, came to DC and really changed the way that Indigenous peoples specifically my Tribe, thought about our culture and our history. And that was sort of the beginning, it lit the fuse of us taking a public stance. And AIM was a political movement, but it's also a cultural movement. And that cultural movement really caught fire, and expand it up and down the East Coast.”

In our conversation, he passionately emphasized the pivotal role of the American Indian Movement (AIM) in empowering not only his Tribe but also Indigenous communities across the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic to express their Indigeneity freely. AIM's efforts have enabled them to move beyond mere survival and confront white supremacy in new ways.

The era of Self-Determination brought about significant legislative changes benefiting Tribal Peoples' Nations. Key laws included the Voting Rights Act of 1968, Indian Civil Rights Act of 1968, Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975, American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978, Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978, and Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 (Federal Emergency Management Agency, 2024). Despite these advancements, these laws remain challenged by the dominant culture, highlighting ongoing struggles for Indigenous rights and sovereignty.

We also discussed the injustices faced by Tribal Peoples, including those who served in the military to protect the nation. We reflected on the legacy of Native code talkers, like the Choctaw Code Talkers in World War I and the Navajo Code Talkers in World War II, who used their languages as codes to aid allies and defend against international threats.

Despite their heroic contributions, these code talkers were not adequately recognized. Sadly, just nine years after the war ended, the federal government continued oppressive policies by forcibly relocating Tribal Nations from their reservation lands. This historical injustice underscores the ongoing struggle against colonization addressed by AIM.

AIM, as an intertribal group, stands as a beacon of resistance against persistent acts of colonization. By uniting Indigenous peoples and advocating for their rights, AIM empowers communities to fight systemic oppression and uphold sovereignty, land rights, and cultural expression. AIM provides crucial support for individuals to embrace their identities as Tribal

Peoples while emphasizing their rights as citizens, highlighting the importance of defending these rights.

The interviewee shifted their focus to the 18th century, they stated that the assertion that there are no longer Tribal Peoples in the Mid-Atlantic is entirely false. They emphasized that this misconception persists due to federal and academia's failure to recognize or acknowledge the continued presence of Tribal communities in the region.

“It goes back for generations, if not centuries. It starts off with the census, the original Maryland census from 1790. Specifically said “*do not count Indians*”. So therefore, if you have a population of White people, you have a population of Black people. And you have a population that doesn't fit directly in either a physical category, *how do you describe them?* And the term mulatto, the term colored, the term freed people, there was all these different descriptors being placed upon my community over the century, in which academia came in, and they started with the premise that there are no Indians, because the census says so. *So who are these people? And why are they different? And why would they make money they don't leave? And why they only have these certain surnames? and why are they always associated with the Catholic Church? And why are this these surnames only associated with these particular rural communities throughout the southern part of the state?* So all those descriptions was talking about our Indigenous community without applying that label, some would say there are a mixture of Black, White and Indian, some articles that have Indian traits. Some would say that these people act differently than anyone else, and we don't know where they came from.

So those are the kinds of negative articles that are out there. That does a lot of harm to the youth. When the documents they read or the books they read, says that Indians disappeared in Maryland in the 1700s. *Than what is mom and dad telling me?* The teacher says through this book, this is right. And what mom and dad at home is telling me something different. So those kinds of dilemmas in dealing with the state has an impact.

While at the Maryland State Archives, I observed a clear bias in the historical records favoring the colonists' agenda of land acquisition and resource exploitation. They skillfully used language, religious beliefs, and legal mechanisms, often incomprehensible to Tribal Peoples, to advance their interests. Reviewing census records dating back to the 1700s, it became evident that Tribal Peoples were deliberately excluded from these documents. This realization was not overlooked by the Archive faculty, who were cognizant of this historical discrepancy.

Nause-Waiwash Band of Indians

The Nause-Waiwash individual shared various initiatives undertaken by their tribe and themselves, spanning environmental conservation, historical preservation, and community development. It was heartening to learn about their proactive approach to addressing challenges and their commitment to preserving their cultural identity while contributing to positive change.

“Our community is... the organization itself is made up of around 300 plus enrolled members, and we are descendants of the Choptank and Nanticoke Indians. We do have a few descendants of the Pocomoke that their lines overlap with ours and our community is very much involved in trying to be good stewards of the land. And we're all about education and teaching, we realize that in order to preserve our culture, and our history and our traditions, that we have to teach it. I know that there are some things that are sacred that we like to hold close to our chest, but for the most part, we are very excited about sharing and teaching who we are to the community and beyond.”

Tuscarora & Lumbee Nation of North Carolina

This interviewee, along with his Tribe, arrived in Maryland during the 20th century, making them newcomers to the area. However, despite their relatively recent arrival, the Lumbee community has established a strong presence in Baltimore and across Maryland. Their cultural influence can be felt in various aspects of local life, from vibrant community gatherings to cherished traditions passed down through generations. Socially, the Lumbee community actively participates in the fabric of Maryland society, enriching the cultural diversity of the region and contributing to its dynamic and inclusive atmosphere.

“So here, in the state of Maryland, we have the Lumbee Tribe, that moved up into this area between mainly the 1940s and 1960s. And establishing a church establishing that there was a group of Tribal people that were not Indigenous to the state that were coming up from the Carolina area, for a variety of reasons. And so when I moved to the state in

1994, I was welcomed to the Tribal community, I had had experience with them previously with going to their powwows, their gatherings, interacting with their organization, through their JTPA program, and I came up for an internship at the at the Baltimore American Indian Center.”

The Tribe has actively participated in social events in the Maryland area, both within Tribal and non-Tribal gatherings. Other ancestral Tribal communities in the region have warmly embraced their presence.

Piscataway Indian Nation

She details the geographical location of her ancestral roots within the DMV region and highlights her Piscataway community's ongoing efforts to maintain connections with their ancestral burial grounds and access their waterways. They are striving to assert their sovereign rights while also elucidating the relationships with other Piscataway Tribes.

“Our geography like basically goes from what we call the foul line. So it's like where the mountains start to come up with reducing the kind of like Great Falls but then it goes out further all along that that river system of Potomac, from really like from its source, but, but more where it comes down into what we call the fall line or Great Falls all along the Potomac and its tributaries, all the creeks and little rivers that flow into it down the side of the into the Chesapeake Bay.

In more direct terms. I have Piscataway is my, my Indigenous community, my extended kinship community, the tribe that I'm a part of, and we are based in southern like the heart, the core of it is really radiates out over time through a location called Accokeek, Maryland, which was our and is our sacred site, burial grounds a place of our memories of freedom and sovereignty, which was the main the main town that was there, and the community of Piscataway people. Even though we live in many different spaces, there's a very core center that's in what we might know now is Charles Prince George's County, Maryland. And within extended a like family groups, there's, there's like legal enrollments like recognized enrollments, there's two, two Piscataway Tribes. Piscataway Indian Nation, Piscataway Conoy Tribe, we're all completely interrelated as a political distinction. That's my Native community.”

Discussion

Our histories are not less valid because they're passed down orally. In fact, they often provide a more nuanced and holistic understanding of our past, rooted in our connection to the land, our cultural practices, and our communal experiences.

It's time for our voices to be heard and our stories to be given the respect and recognition they deserve. Decolonizing historical narratives means acknowledging the inherent value of Indigenous knowledge systems and actively working to amplify our voices in the telling of our

own histories. Only then can we truly achieve a more inclusive and accurate portrayal of the human experience.

It's important to recognize that language proficiency and formal education are not the only indicators of validity or truthfulness. Oral storytelling traditions have existed for centuries in many cultures around the world, passing down knowledge, history, and wisdom from generation to generation. These stories hold immense value and should not be dismissed simply because they come from individuals who may not speak English or have formal schooling.

However, it's also essential to acknowledge that language barriers and lack of formal education can sometimes lead to misunderstandings or inaccuracies in communication. This is why efforts to bridge these gaps, such as language interpretation services and culturally sensitive communication approaches, are crucial for ensuring that diverse voices are heard and understood.

Colonization & Neo-colonialism Acts

The start of European colonization's home base was in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic region, the Tribal Peoples were greatly impacted by their invasion. Like all human beings, the Tribes had to adapt to survive rapidly and for the next generations to survive. Americans glorify white historical figures who influenced the industrialization and economy of the United States to become successful. It's the same historical figures that tried to eradicate Tribal Peoples to acquire land and for their socio-cultural lives to cease to exist.

Yes, yeah, we adapted really differently. Yeah. And a lot of it was due to survival. And, you know, it's sad, some of the things we've lost, like, our language was taken from us, our most of our homelands were taken from us. Our traditional forms of living were taken from us, and we survived and I think we're we are a testament to the human spirit to the albeit native spirit that we survived. And we're here today as a community to tell our story in despite of the historical figures that wanted to destroy us and wanted to be rid of us and wanted to murder us and for good and get rid of us. And we, you know, I'm sure they roll in their graves, that we still exist, and that we are a Tribal community still to this very day. But it is important to acknowledge that because that colonial period really shaped how we are right now”.

As they brought up many themes of historical, cultural, and livelihoods. They noted that they're community's priority on coming together is focusing on public education, meaning they are reclaiming their stories of history and of their culture. “Our community is very focused on education, particularly public education. We kind of see ourselves as the stewards of history and the stewards of our culture.” They do this because not a lot of non-Tribal people are aware of that Tribal Peoples exist as their neighbor or in their local community.

Nause-Waiwash Band of Indians

Erasure doesn't always involve physical violence but can take on subtler forms like the deliberate omission or destruction of records, documents, or narratives that acknowledge the existence and experiences of certain groups.

The erasure of Tribal Peoples' histories and identities is unfortunately a common occurrence throughout history, often perpetuated by colonial powers or dominant societies seeking to assert control over land, resources, and narratives. This erasure can have profound effects on Indigenous communities, denying them recognition, rights, and agency.

In the case of the Nause-Waiwash Band of Indians, their absence from historical records may indeed be a result of deliberate erasure or neglect. Addressing this erasure involves not only uncovering and acknowledging historical truths but also challenging prevailing narratives and advocating for the rights and recognition of Indigenous communities.

“I think that a lot of people aren't aware of the, the order of execution that was put out to try and decimate our race, which is how our people ended up in to the marshes of lower Dorchester County, when we got run off the reservations, whether it was the Nanticoke reservation, the Choptank, they just kept encroaching more and more on our land and taking more and more away to the point where like, *“Okay, we want it all. So we're going to kill you all off”*. And our people ran out into the marshes to avoid execution, and then they'd be came, they lived among the Black people communities and the European communities. And they didn't practice their culture, or their religion or their traditions,

when they were out among the communities. They didn't practice all that until they got home, within their own houses.

So a lot of our history is not documented because of that. And a lot of people also don't realize that the Dorchester County Courthouse caught on fire and burned down in the 1800s. And there was a lot of documentation that was lost there. So our history is difficult to trace, for a number of reasons that just played against us from the very beginning. And I think that is a historical time period that not all people are aware of.

It's we were here are living among the entire population and community. So it's whether we like it or not, we still have to, we're still living in in. I'm going to say we're living in a white man society. We're living in a white man's government.

I would like to share that we are a matrilineal society. So women hold all the power, they're highly respected. They make all the major decisions. And I think that's huge. That is huge. Women give life. So, um, it's all you know, woman power, yay. And the other part to that is, we, everybody needs to do their part. If you treat Mother Earth, well, she will treat you well back. She will provide for us. I feel like she is being abused right now. And she is in distress. So just respect Mother Earth. She's there to help us.”

Indigenous advocacy holds immense importance in human society because Indigenous communities often bear the brunt of natural disasters that impact their communal environment.

Despite facing these challenges firsthand and often lacking sufficient financial assistance, Indigenous peoples actively maintain what remains of their environment.

“I would like for the public to, to hear us, not just see us, but to hear us I just want to be heard, I want to personally speaking I have oftentimes been made to feel that because I'm a female chief that I'm easily manipulated, and I don't know what I'm doing. And maybe I don't know what I'm doing, but I'm not easily manipulated. And that oftentimes is a struggle. And I want people to hear me as leader as chief of the Nause-Waiwash.”

Tuscarora & Lumbee Nation of North Carolina

Another violent tactic that is upholding the colonial legacy of erasure is Tribal recognition. In Chapter 1, I explained how federal recognition can only be obtained through blood quantum, meaning how much percentage of Native blood you have as an individual. What I forgot to mention in the first chapter that every federally recognized is assigned a chart number for the federal government (a non-Native government) to know the legitimacy of what it means to be Native. You would think being federally recognized has many benefits. In cases, of attending executive, legislative, and judicial courts, bills, and laws and having the power to oppose those yes.

Ultimately, this systematic racial tactic does us no good to prove who we are as individual, as a people, and as a Sovereign Nation. You could say having federal recognition is submitting to the government, which it does look like that. However, you have to remember that during the 1700

and 1800s every Tribal Nation in this country that was fighting to live in their own society, they did not want White people interfering and dictating their livelihoods. But no, because of the Doctrine of Discovery (Manifest Destiny) they justified that they had to perform the white saviorism by forcibly converting Tribal Peoples to their religion beliefs and to *Save the Man, Kill the Indian*. That mission statement for Tribal Peoples to live as White people, thus killing off the elders and kidnapping children to attend boarding school.

The Tuscarora & Lumbee individual explains how their relationship with federal government is and how they are not treated as a people, rather as forgotten Sovereign Peoples.

“And for the Lumbee Tribes, you know, we're federally recognized, but we don't have full federal status, we don't receive the full federal benefits to other federally recognized tribes do. And just in that, is just an educational situation. Because if you got someone who's Lumbee, and says, “*Oh, we're fighting for, we're fighting for federal recognition.*” well, that's, that's not correct, we're fighting for full federal status. And then by having that full federal status, and that given the given relationship that is exist, to his fullest degree, or perhaps it doesn't, you know, those are the kinds of things that are very impactful, not just from a historical point of view, but from a very contemporary point of view, and what we're fighting for looking and striving for, for the future.

So that sovereignty is a is an interesting word, when you look at it from a historical point of view, or you look at it from a contemporary point of view. And that's, again, part of the education as part of the cultural awareness. And when we say culture, but the culture

is not just a historical or that red road, but it's again, that you know, what is affecting me and my people and who we should be, who we were, and who we should be, you know, as generations continue. And so, that's a broad statement, maybe or provide a broad answer on providing it, that's, that's just how broad it is. And it's how it affects us.

Because sometimes we get into a silo, and we're looking at one way of what sovereignty is, but we have to, we have to look at it from a holistic point of view. And that that word, to me isn't used as much as it should, or maybe as broad as it should be. Because we think about holistic

Education is vital to our people, but not letting go of who you are, as well. So the idea of walking into two worlds every day, you know, that there used to be said a lot you don't hear as much today, but it's still just as true as it was yesterday, as it is today, walking in two worlds in a very balanced manner. And I find it there, there's an imbalance that's definitely occurring.”

“It's the idea of, of taking away from who you are, culturally, as {as an as a, as a,} an Indigenous person to this country more so and specifically to your Tribe, and then becoming assimilated to something else. Because for me, when you assimilate yourself, you're taking, losing something of who you are to become something else or be a part of something else. And so erasure is, is I just identify it back as assimilation. And I find that in society, we love to, you know, every decade or every two couple of decades, we'd like to just be like to change the terms. But even though the terms are changing is still the same thing. You know?

You know, {native} Native American erasure or assimilation? You know, I'd rather use the word adapting than the word assimilation or to assimilate. And, but you know, whatever term you use, it's the same thing to me. And maybe that's me just getting older, you know, 52 years old. Of course, my viewpoints and how I look at things change from when I was just 21. You can change the word, but the situation is still the same.”

Stereotypes continue to plague a lot of Tribal Peoples and individual identities. Because as the years progress the lack of support for Tribes that are not recognized try to find creative ways for the youth to be able to walk in two worlds.

Piscataway Indian Nation

“Indigenous erasure means it's actually connected to your last question. Indigenous erasure is physical. It's psychological. It's spiritual. Mental. It affects us on on all levels.

Sometimes I think about, you know, is erasure genocide. Yes. Erasure means that our absences very present, right? It's something that as you know, as a Piscataway, I think, I think all Indigenous people, all Native people, whether there's, you know, a relatively large Native Nation, or sometimes even a huge population.

And also, Indigenous erasure means you better speak up. know, we just have to keep, keep doing what we need to do. And defying it, and not allowing it and understanding it.

But other people, too, may say, *Well, what's your big message?* You know, *what do you want people to know, like, after our interview is over, like, what do you want people to know*, and people say we're *still here*. That's a really powerful message. But I think it's more powerful in the sense of when we think about the, the big, the big message for opening NMAI (National Museum of American Indian). And I had heard this statement years and years before you know, *we're here, we're still here*. The fact that you we have to begin a conversation with convincing people that we are alive is, is highly impactful. It makes it hard for us to be able to sometimes move into like the levels that we need to move into. The idea that people have no idea of what are you know, Piscataway little Piscataway Tribe are a just about that big like the idea that that most people have no idea we're here. And then when we say that we're here, are we fully believed?

There's many reasons for that, right. I mean, it's, it's comes from land access, land seizure, because if you remove our presence, right, that's like that was the original intent, also a blood quantum right. It was to, to remove us. And then I've also really been exploring over the past. I would say, like 15 years very deeply about our erasure. I'm going to speak more specifically to Piscataway, but also a lot of Atlantic Coast people.”

The parallels between the negative impacts of erasure on Indigenous sovereignty and the insights offered by Gilio-Whitaker regarding environmental justice from a White perspective are indeed striking. Both highlight the danger of ignoring or minimizing the experiences and perspectives of

marginalized communities, whether it's Indigenous peoples facing erasure or communities impacted by environmental injustices.

“Applying the lens of settler colonialism to the topic of environmental justice sheds a different light on the processes of history, providing irrefutable linkages between all eras and aspects of settler and Indigenous contact, environmental injustice, and genocide; they are inseparable. As a facet of settler colonialism, environmental injustice is linked with a larger ongoing process of Indigenous erasure that is built into the structure of the State. It began, and continues, as depriving Native peoples of the conditions necessary for life and the continuance of cultural existence, what can be called “environmental deprivation” (Gilio-Whitaker, p.39, 2019).

Erasure not only undermines Indigenous sovereignty and community functioning but also perpetuates a narrative that centers the interests and perspectives of dominant groups, often at the expense of marginalized communities. When discussions about environmental justice or Indigenous rights are framed solely from the perspective of those in power, it can lead to superficial understandings of the issues and ineffective solutions that fail to address underlying systemic injustices.

Gilio-Whitaker's insight about the danger of "hearing what you want to hear" and avoiding uncomfortable truths like White guilt is particularly relevant in professional and political fields where discussions about race, power, and privilege can be contentious.

The question I said the Piscataway interviewee was how Maryland celebrates Indigenous Peoples in any type of way. She responded in the following.

“Proactive like responsive. I mean, it's all very, it's still very nominal. You know, there's like declarations about proclamations.

But there's no like, funding. We have an administrator on the Maryland Indian Commission. But there's no like, there's no funding for the Tribes to do anything. So you know, it's more like the declarations of things.

Extremely hostile. For a number of years, like our, our state petition was, it took 18 years. It took, I submitted it, you know, for our people in 1994, I was nine months pregnant with my son. And we didn't get the recognition until, like, the year that he was graduating from high school was 18 years. And then for 10 of those years, they said they lost it. *Oh, we lost it. We thought we put it in a cabinet. And now we can't find it.* I'm being like, seriously lost it. Can't find it. *Oh, we were moving offices and we can't find it.* You know, it was awful. It was awful.

And a lot of other things that had been put up as blocks and calling us frauds and fakes and all of that, like suddenly, like came off the internet that had been there for 12 years. Like if you had Googled me like a few, maybe like 10 years ago. and Google like Piscataway and Tayacs it would have been like, fake Tribe. There's this paper that came out about how fake we were. And that paper that had been circulating and I found out that

it was it got like these huge Google hits because it was linked to if you ever heard of Stormfront?

Stormfront is a white supremacist website, it's run by like Aryan Nation. That paper was linked to Stormfront which is, you know, like, neo-Nazi, neo-Nazi website.

The current, you know, Governor want more it's been really it's been, has been very supportive. And I hope that that translates into something that would be more concrete.

I think that in order for us to do this, to really be able to do this work, you know, and for the community, at least, to do something like to not have any support, like no support whatsoever from any governmental agency is it's hard. Yeah, and a lot of it gets self-funded. A lot of people like take jobs and extra jobs in order to like, fund things or the community, like, you know, like, literally, like, passes the hat, you know, does blanket dance the whole you know, it's a lot of what happens.

Yeah. You know, it's so funny. It's like, we're, you know, it's like, I'm almost so used to it, like, not be you know, being that way, that when I kind of stood about when I sit back and like when you ask these questions, I think like, yeah, no wonder everybody's like, all like, freaked out. Like this, you know.”

Raymond Orr, a citizen of the Potawatomi Nation, and his colleague's 2018 journal article *American Indian Erasure and the Logic of Elimination: An Experimental Study of Depiction and*

Support for Resources and Rights for Tribes. In one segment of his paper, Orr and his team conducted a study to investigate the perceptions of non-Native individuals towards urban Tribal Peoples and whether they would support their community. The results of this study were indeed surprising, although in hindsight, perhaps not entirely unexpected given the prevailing stereotypes and misconceptions about what constitutes a Native person in this country.

“For example, when confronted with descriptions of American Indian communities living in cities, participants were less willing to support tribes across multiple measures. Authenticity was also swayed by geographic context. When the tribe was described as having never moved, this fit within static conceptions of American Indians and was one of the rare instances that increased assessments of authenticity against the control. However, tribes that were described as living in urban locations violated this narrow image and were assessed as inauthentic. This confirms the subjection of American Indians to a geographic expectation of their identity and authenticity. The origins of expectation are likely manifold and include the association of indigenous identity to nature in film, literature, art, and activities such as subsistence patterns” (Orr et al., p.13-14, 2018).

Discussion

"Walking in two worlds" is an expression that encapsulates the experience of balancing life in the Western world with the values, traditions, and perspectives of the Native world. In Maryland,

however, accessing green spaces can be challenging due to the extensive industrialization that has encroached upon areas where humans and nature should coexist harmoniously.

The proliferation of industrial infrastructure has created barriers to accessing green spaces, disrupting the delicate balance between humans and nature. As industrialization has permanently altered the landscape, people have limited opportunities to connect with the natural environment and engage in activities that foster a sense of connection and stewardship.

Despite these challenges, there is a growing recognition of the importance of preserving green spaces and promoting environmental conservation efforts. Initiatives aimed at reclaiming and revitalizing urban green spaces are emerging, providing communities with opportunities to reconnect with nature and promote biodiversity in urban environments.

By advocating for the protection and restoration of green spaces, individuals and organizations in Maryland can work towards restoring balance between human development and ecological sustainability, ensuring that future generations can continue to enjoy the benefits of living in harmony with nature.

Modern-day Tribes Thriving, Not Just Surviving

In this section, we will explore how Indigenous tribes in the Chesapeake region thrive amidst an abundance of kinship, communal gatherings, and intertribal events, even in urban Maryland.

Despite historical and ongoing challenges, these communities continue to preserve and celebrate their cultures in creative and resilient ways.

Kinship forms the foundation of Indigenous communities, providing networks of support, connection, and belonging. Within the Chesapeake region, tribes maintain strong familial ties, passing down traditions, languages, and knowledge from generation to generation. This kinship extends beyond blood relations to include chosen families and broader community networks, reinforcing a sense of unity and collective identity.

Communal gatherings play a central role in Indigenous life, serving as spaces for celebration, ceremony, and collective decision-making. These gatherings, ranging from powwows and festivals to community feasts and cultural workshops, provide opportunities for tribes to come together, share stories, and reaffirm their cultural connections. Despite living in urban environments, Indigenous communities in Maryland continue to organize and participate in these gatherings, fostering a sense of community and belonging.

Intertribal events further strengthen connections between Indigenous peoples across different tribes and nations. These events, which may include intertribal powwows, cultural exchanges, and solidarity marches, promote solidarity, mutual support, and cultural exchange. They offer opportunities for tribes to share traditions, learn from one another, and build alliances in the face of common challenges.

In urban Maryland, Indigenous communities adapt and innovate to maintain and revitalize their cultures in creative ways. From establishing cultural centers and language revitalization programs to incorporating traditional practices into contemporary art, music, and storytelling, tribes in the Chesapeake region find innovative ways to preserve and transmit their cultural heritage to future generations.

Despite the legacies of colonization and erasure, Indigenous tribes in the Chesapeake region continue to thrive, drawing strength from their kinship ties, communal gatherings, and cultural resilience. Through creativity, perseverance, and collective action, these communities assert their presence, reclaim their identities, and shape a future that honors their diverse cultures and traditions.

Kiowa, Isanti Dakota, and Ohkay Owingeh Pueblo

“I am Kiowa, Isanti Dakota and Ohkay Owingeh Pueblo. The Tribal communities where they are located are: Kiowa (Oklahoma), Isanti Dakota (Nebraska) and Ohkay Owingeh Pueblo (New Mexico). I am originally from Albuquerque, New Mexico.

As someone who's not originally from Maryland, I've found a home in the DMV area for over 18 years now. Settling here has allowed me to immerse myself in the vibrant Native American community, embracing its rich culture and traditions. Living amongst fellow Tribal members in Maryland has taught me the importance of commitment to our intertribal and tribal community.

Whether it's attending powwows, cultural gatherings, or communal events, I've come to understand the significance of showing up and being present for our community.

“I live currently in an urban community of (the DMV) Washington D.C. area where I regularly interact with individuals of approximately 5000 local Native intertribal community members.”

“In order to have a Native tie to our Native DMV community I have to be proactive in organizing Native community events, participating in Native events that are sponsored by other Natives and have healthy engagement with other Natives.” - (Kiowa/Isanti Dakota/Ohkay Owingeh Pueblo)

Participating in these events isn't just about attendance; it's about actively engaging with and contributing to the shared experiences and heritage of our people. It's about fostering connections, preserving traditions, and celebrating our identity as Native Americans in an urban setting. Through my involvement in the Chesapeake Tribal community, I've not only found a sense of belonging but also a deeper appreciation for the bonds that tie us together as a people.

Choptico-Piscataway Conoy

One elder explains that his Tribe in particular went through changes that he has observed over the years and his Tribe are living in different sectors of Maryland and other parts of the country they have settled or traveled to.

“We are a diaspora. I mean, we're all over Turtle Island. but for the main part in terms of numbers, we're here in what they call the DMV, or the District, Maryland, Virginia. geographic area. And as you bring that in, I would think that numerically, there are more of us in Maryland. But not we I can walk out the door and, you know, have knock on the door of one of my relatives. Unfortunately, that's usually not the case in most for most of us. That's why I use the word I don't know another word other than diaspora we just spread out.”

Nause-Waiwash Band of Indians

The Nause-Waiwash Band of Indians, located in Dorchester County, Maryland, resides in an area of marshlands and agricultural farmland. However, they are grappling with the effects of climate change, including rising sea levels and increased flooding. This presents a complex dilemma as it involves leaving behind ancestral lands and cultural heritage. Yet, their experiences highlight the urgent need for comprehensive climate adaptation strategies that prioritize the needs of Indigenous communities while addressing the root causes of climate change.

“Our language is pretty much non-existent. And our Tribe is made up of descendants of the Choptank in Indian or Choptank and Nanticoke Indian Tribes in what is now Dorchester County. So we are a nonprofit organization that is trying to preserve our culture in our history and to educate others on that to keep all of that alive.”

Environmental Issues or Priorities

Dr. Jessica Hernandez (Zapotec & Maya Ch'orti) recently published book (2022) *Fresh Banana Leaves* uses her academic and professional platform to advocate for Indigenous rights to land (environments), sovereignty, and Tribal identity within Western academic spaces. In her book, she talks about how Western environmental science does not sufficiently work for Tribal Nation's current lands and usually has a short-term solution rather than a long-term solution. Unethical research practices have led to non-existing relationships in modern times. She states that Western researchers need to support Native-led projects that work for the community.

“Our landscapes are where our creation stories take place, where we continue to practice our culture, and where we continue to fight against eradication and assimilation tactics settler governments continue to practice. Healing our Indigenous landscapes will allow us to heal ourselves, our people, and break free from the chains that settler colonialism continues to restrain us with. This includes being able to go against conservation practices that further oppress our communities and being able to say no to tourism ventures that will harm our communities further” (Hernandez, p.213, 2022).

This section emphasizes the enduring importance of the environment to Tribal Peoples, highlighting the deep connection between cultural elements and their surroundings. It criticizes

the dominance of white conservationist perspectives, which often marginalize Indigenous priorities and perpetuate power imbalances through white saviorism. The passage advocates for supporting Indigenous-led environmental initiatives to center their knowledge and stewardship of the land.

This underscores the fact that the names of Tribal Peoples are intricately linked to the natural surroundings of their home environment, reflecting a deep connection to the land they inhabit.

Pocomoke Indian Nation

“Our main artery that defined us, that's where the cypress trees are. The cypress is very important in our community, that's traditionally we made the canoes from the cypress and cypress plays a very big part in our tradition and our culture. But the cypress trees what they do, because they're like in the Cedar family, they stain water. And so cedars will stay in the water, this dark amber color. And so the Pocomoke that is very dark because of the staining from the cypress trees. And so our community feels, we go with the way we feel and we go with the definition of the Dark Water People, the People of the Black Water.”

The name Pocomoke holds profound meaning for us beyond its mere linguistic or historical origins. It represents a connection to our ancestral lands, a reminder of our roots, and a symbol of resilience in the face of adversity.

Historically, the name Pocomoke is derived from the Algonquian language, meaning “Pocomoke literally means Dark Water People” This reference is a combination of their cultural heritage deriving from their main elements: water and wood. In essence, the name Pocomoke is not just a label; it's a living embodiment of our identity as a tribe, shaping our collective consciousness and informing our actions in the present day. It serves as a beacon of strength and unity, binding us together as we navigate the complexities of modern life while honoring our cultural heritage.

Choptico Band of Indians

For instance, Pulido’s article investigated at National Historical Landmarks and found that most people visiting or working there assumed that Tribal Peoples did not own land, did not have permanent homes, or passed through the area the historical landmark was at. Pulido stated.

“First, it overlooks the fact that Native peoples used large areas of land in different ways depending on the season. Second, and relatedly, this legal violence is compounded by the belief that only Native settlements recognized by archaeologists or that exist in the English language archive are legitimate.” (Pulido, p.1072-1073, 2023).

The denial of forced displacements and historical injustices faced by Indigenous communities is a significant issue rooted in systemic racism and colonial attitudes. Indigenous peoples often face barriers to validating their claims due to the requirement for Western academic credentials, which disregards the validity of Indigenous oral histories and cultural traditions.

This is the connection the Choptico elder interviewee stated when he and his people were displaced when the English settlers illegally trespassed and occupied their homelands.

“They (Native peoples) didn't abandon the villages. But when winter came, if you stay in this area long enough, you will know that being on the edge of the Potomac River in the winter is not where you want to be, unless you like icicles hanging off your extremities. So our people will move inland during the winter. You go inland you got plenty of wood, you know, limbs that have fallen out of trees and dried, you got good firewood where the animals go, they go the same place, they're not going to be around the water before there's nothing to eat there. They're going to go into the forest because not all the acorns and falling from the trees they have plenty to eat all the other fruit nuts and other fruits and how to fall from the trees. They got plenty to eat. So our people would move where they were (animals). You have protection from the wind from the snow, you had plenty of firewood.

So that's what you were and when spring came back, you'd go back to the water because now you're going to have the fish runs you're going to have the shad and the heron coming in from the ocean coming up the Bay coming into the rivers and fish was a main commodity you know for eating and used to be dried and stored. And in order to do that you had to have access to the water.

But while our people moved inland during the winter, what did the Europeans do? They went in and they burned down the long houses, they map marked out according to their

laws and rules. That if they “did improvements” on the property once they had marked it out, and I don't know, if you're familiar with the head rate system that Maryland was exercising, where any person who came over here (United States), from Europe, was entitled to a certain number of acres of land.

If they brought other people over here from England, then that person would get another plot of land with the intent, that once that person that they brought over here finish their term of servitude that person would get, I believe was a Hogshead, or tobacco, which was money that day, a suit of clothes. Something like 50 acres of land. And if he had a wife, he got more land if he had children, he got more land. Now the question is, *whose land are we talking about?*

They start marking off because the Natives were gone. They marked off their land where they had every intention; on coming back. So when they come back (Native peoples), here's somebody (colonialists) sitting here talking about “*this is mine now!*” We live the long all the waterways. They use our lifestyles or life ways against us.”

Transitioning to the 21st century, this issue of access is still occurring between parks and recreations and other local environmental conservation spaces. Because one these spaces are privatized by landowners that is on Tribal lands and the second is the federal government had has restricted access to be within the spaces. Because the Choptico elder and his companions drove miles and miles to reach their waterway that is in the parks and recreation

We did a canoe trip and wound up (arrived) at one of the parks and the park ranger came down and wanted to charge us to take our canoes out of the water. You gotta be kidding. You know, what do we suppose the we can just sort of this is a public park, State Park. We're taxpayers and we're Native, retired, we've peddled a long way want to take our canoes out just the rest, bite on the sandwich, put our canoes back in the water. See you later.

It took a phone call to his boss in Annapolis. Who fortunately, knew who I was, knew me by name. He's like "*you better leave them people alone. Let them do what they're doing. They can go about their business. Don't start no crap*". But if I wasn't there, if that name recognition wasn't there, what would have been the next thing you know? Somebody get hit in the head? Somebody gets shot or locked up? You know, so that's kind of thing that we're pushing back against now we should have access, but then somebody will say, "*Well, if they could do it, we should do it*". Then you got that fight to deal with. So it's, it's a we don't know where it's gonna end up.

From his story from his family lineage being denied from their land, resources, cultural expression, and being considered American citizens and people to him that is being denied access to their waterways, their inherent right is what I would call neo-colonization.

Certainly. In the narrative of a family's struggle against neo-colonization, it portrays a situation where they have been denied access to their ancestral land, resources, cultural expression, and

full recognition as citizens. Now, they face another challenge as they are denied access to their waterways, a fundamental aspect of their heritage and livelihood.

In this story, the family's lineage reflects the broader historical and contemporary struggles of indigenous or marginalized communities against systemic oppression. Despite being considered citizens, they continue to face discrimination and marginalization, reminiscent of the colonial era.

The denial of access to their waterways underscores the ongoing power dynamics and injustices inherent in neo-colonization. It symbolizes the control exerted by dominant forces over essential resources, further exacerbating the family's vulnerability and eroding their sense of identity and connection to their land.

Through their ordeal, the family represents the resilience and determination of communities fighting against neo-colonial forces, advocating for their rights, dignity, and autonomy. Their story serves as a poignant reminder of the enduring legacy of colonization and the ongoing struggle for justice and equality.

Piscataway Conoy Tribe

Our interviewee gives us an example of what I mean when I say walking in two worlds.

“It has the possibility. Suburbia came to us. We're not one of those Tribes in which people will people left to go move to the big city, hours away. The big city of Washington, DC, now call the DMV intruded upon our homelands. And that began in the post-World War II era. And whereas there are a lot of opportunities that big city environment offers jobs, employment, education. The challenge is balancing that with culture.

It's very easy for your young and brightest, to put on a uniform, and it'd be gone for 28 to 30 years, you'd lose that contribution to the Tribe. And the same thing with corporate America. It's very easy for our youngest, best and brightest to put on a suit and tie and go work in corporate America for the next 30 years, and thrive in that environment. But *what has that loss to the community generated?* That's the challenges. You want to encourage the youth to put on that suit and tie to gain that knowledge but to offset that with having roots within your community that they come back home, and they participate in ceremony, they come back home and attend and support the powwow, they come back home to teach their skill set to the next generation.

Those are the important things. And you got to find that that balance between their city life and running their own families and able to bring that knowledge back and stay within the communities. So they can thrive as individuals as as nuclear families, but they also can help move the Tribe forward, based upon their given skills.”

You know, it's absolutely essential to include Tribal Nations as permanent partners in environmental organizations. Their deep, inherent connection to the land and environment is undeniable—it's practically woven into their identity. The fact that their names often come from the land itself speaks volumes about how deeply rooted this relationship is.

Excluding Tribal nations from important environmental discussions? That's not just unfair; it's also a missed opportunity to effectively address climate change. These communities hold onto centuries of traditional knowledge that has played a crucial role in maintaining environmental balance. By involving them in decision-making processes, we can tap into this wealth of knowledge and gain diverse perspectives, leading to more effective solutions to environmental challenges.

Moreover, collaborating with Tribal Nations is a significant step towards achieving environmental justice. It's about recognizing and rectifying historical injustices, such as land dispossession and resource exploitation, that have disproportionately affected Indigenous communities. By acknowledging Tribal sovereignty and supporting their self-determination, environmental organizations can work towards more equitable and sustainable approaches to conservation and resource management.

“Our name is Piscataway means where *“the are people who live with the waters blend”*”.

That is our focus, and growing up, and understanding all the gifts of these many different waterways throughout our homeland. We're quite fortunate here in the Mid-Atlantic, to have such great bounty available to us. But we also saw the disaster that could be forced upon our lands, and our waterways, from those who don't know, from the invader. When

you look at the building of dams, how it destroyed spawning grounds for the fisheries. When you look at building Earth levees, along some of our waterways, which turn productive river ecosystems into an open city sewer. And you see how this even though the concept, as always, water flows away. Well, we're very much a title people. So what you throw in the water in the morning, it's going to be right back in your backyard in the afternoon. And it takes years for those kinds of pollutants to clear.

But that's not the colonial mindset. And we saw the devastation that beginning in post-World War II that did to our waterways, our ability support families from fishing, you couldn't eat the fish that you were catching in the 60s and 70s 60s, and 70s, because of the pollutants. That sort of gave awareness to the environmental movement that started in the late 60s, early 70s.

So from a Tribal perspective, we know the relationships between many different animals living to water, our contributes to keeping the water clean, we know the relationship between those land animals, the beaver that protects the waters and keeping it clean. And we know what the challenges are with dealing with farmers, and how they see the use of water on their private property. We see the use of the DOD military structure with dumping chemicals into the waterways, that lasts for four decades. We see the pollutants when they build bridges over our waterways, and they put in salt for the wintertime. And all that salt washes into the streams and creeks and does damage.

So those are the kinds of stories that we can advocate for. Because we have the stories, we have that history with the land of unknowing what it could be if people start thinking of this waterways as the veins and the arteries of the earth, and not just a resource to traffic up and down and use as dividers between counties and dividers between states, transportation network for boats, for business and pleasure. But as a true source of having a healthy community, you got to have those healthy waterways. And those things I think we can advocate for, and are beginning to do now, as we sort of take that next step and our Tribal public roles.”

Ensuring healthy waterways in the Chesapeake region requires human intervention to address Maryland's climate change challenges, including sea-level rise encroaching on watersheds and diverse environments. Incorporating Traditional Ecological Knowledge alongside other forms of expertise creates a ripple effect, enriching the pool of knowledge and strategies available for conservation efforts.

An example of this is looking at a distinguished Native scholar, who utilized her Tribal community's knowledge to explore plant science. However, expressing her Native knowledge and Indigeneity faced challenges. On one hand, it was often discouraged, not considered legitimate within mainstream academia. On the other hand, there was a tendency to fetishize or romanticize Indigenous knowledge when it suited certain narratives. This created a complex dynamic for her to navigate, where her expertise was both undervalued and selectively embraced.

Dr. Robin Wall Kimmerer, a Citizen Potawatomi Nation, is a professor at the State University of New York (SUNY) who uses her experiences to teach her students about the value of Traditional Ecological Knowledge and how the place-based knowledge is used to establish a relationship with the ecosystem and its inhabitants. Her book, *Braiding Sweetgrass* became a sensational book throughout the United States with her poetic words of reciprocity to nature and it's not just a 'Native thing', it's a human thing. Kimmerer in her prime was educated in the Potawatomi culture of botany and how science and art were at the same level.

Fast forward to 1972, an enrolled first-year student was with her academic advisor to discuss her reasons for majoring in botany. was because of the beauty of various flowers growing with each other such as Asters and Goldenrods. Separation is not a thing in the natural world, everything grows and interacts with one another. To say that humans are separate from nature is a colonial mindset and we cannot intervene in the "natural order" of Mother Nature. Instead, humans were created to be key helpers to correct the wrongs when there is some time of disorder happening in the environment. How does this relate to Chesapeake Tribal Peoples historically and currently?

Nause-Waiwash Band of Indians

The Nause-Waiwash individual provided detailed insights into the escalating challenges of flooding, which have become increasingly destructive for the Dorchester community. The severity of flooding is forcing community members to consider relocation, highlighting the urgent need for action. Additionally, the encroachment of saltwater into vegetation, including crops and marshlands, further exacerbates the situation. Unfortunately, the outlook for flooding

does not seem promising, signaling ongoing threats to the community's livelihoods and cultural heritage.

“Flooding, flooding, I don't know if you heard in the news, we got this big storm yesterday. My cousin has sent me pictures where the roads are just washed out, they're flooded. Sadly, that is happening more and more all the time. The high tides are getting higher. And they're happening more often the floods are happening more often. And there's not typically enough time for the tide to drain off the road before there's a next high tide coming in. So it seems like there's always water on the road. Yes, water is life. But.

So that's part of it. And, and you can see where I grew up, which is two-thirds of the lower part of Dorchester County was all a thriving healthy community with farmland and houses. And now with the environment, the climate change in all of that you have you now have the ghost forest, so the trees are dying. So now there's no root system to hold all this vegetation together. The saltwater has taken over the land where you can't grow anything in saltwater. Houses that were built back in the (19)50s and (19)60s, on high land, are now their front yards are being flooded. When we have a heavy rain or storm surge.

I actually own a piece of property. I bought it because it's marsh and we wanted to trap it. And I did a little research on it. And back in the 1940s it was a baseball field. And now it is Marsh. Some of our ancestral land that were trapping, which is right across the road.

There was a whole community back there was called Robins Landing and the other side was called Abbott town and there was a whole village community of people in their houses in their garden, everything and all of that now is Marsh.

So over 50 years is not a very long time. And if we're losing that much ground in 50 years, we really need to sit up and take notice. Because it's happening, I think faster than we realize. And I don't know if it's to a point now that it's irreversible or not. It's, yep, we've climate change has definitely affected us, it's affected where we live, it's affected our livelihoods. So it has quite an impact. And it is not just on the Indigenous people in Dorchester County, but other communities, because only we still have people working the waterways.”

Connecting back to Leonard’s WAMPUM paper, on addressing sea level rise is impacting Tribal communities in terms of climate change. She raises the question “Why are Tribal Nations not being included in the SLR research and adaptation frameworks?” (Leonard, p.12, 2021). Leonard mentions another scholar, Marino (2018), who uses the word adaptation oppression and gives possible guesses on why Tribal Peoples are excluded from climate change-related discussions. “The concept of ‘adaptation oppression’ to highlight western scientific and cultural biases reflected in the limited adaptation options present in existing frameworks” (Leonard, p. 12, 2021). The three main points of adaptation oppression is Additionally, within the process of adaptation oppression Marino (2018) identifies three key is “western colonial ethnocentrism that contribute to the contemporary oppressive limitations of existing adaptation frameworks for Indigenous Peoples: (1) western property law systems exclude Indigenous owners; (2) market

and economic valuations commodify the natural world solely for human benefit; and (3) settler-colonial individualism undermines Indigenous nationhood, kinship and sovereignty” (Leonard, p. 12, 2021). This pertains to the Tribes such as the Nause-Waiwash that is left out from important ecological decision-making that involves their ancestral homelands.

Climate change indeed poses a significant threat to Indigenous communities like the Nause-Waiwash on the Eastern Shore, potentially exacerbating the process of cultural erasure and assimilation. As these communities face mounting challenges from rising sea levels, increased flooding, and other climate-related impacts, their ability to adapt is often outpaced by the rapid pace of environmental change. This disparity in adaptation capabilities can result in displacement, loss of cultural heritage, and the erosion of traditional ways of life.

“Yes, I would say it is. Yes. It's destroying it very quickly. A lot quicker than I would have liked, for sure. And because of that, people aren't trapping as a livelihood anymore. You do it because you just love to do it. And you're trying to manage the marshlands and rodent control to have a healthier marshland and making sure you do have a good environment and healthy vegetation for the wildlife that's there. But yeah, it's you have to do it because you love to do it. It's sadly not a way of life anymore. So even a lot of the water men are doing it as a hobby and they have found employment doing other things.”

Furthermore, the disproportionate impacts of climate change on Indigenous communities highlight broader issues of environmental injustice and historical marginalization. The forces of

colonization and ongoing systemic inequalities exacerbate the vulnerability of these communities, compounding the challenges they face in confronting climate-related threats.

Piscataway Indian Nation

The Piscataway interviewee elaborates that their Tribal name originates from the Chesapeake watershed and other interconnected water systems in the region. One Piscataway woman described her relationship with the land and water of where she lives and the deep bond she has with her ancestral environment.

“So, Piscataway means *where the waters blend*. Our veins are veins of the river. The rivers are veins of Earth, Mother Earth. It's who I am. Our landscapes are where our creation stories take place, where we continue to practice our culture, and where we continue to fight against eradication and assimilation tactics settler governments continue to practice.

I spend about half of my time now down on Nanjemoy Creek. I was just there yesterday. And so it is, yeah, it's a central land and water. animal beings all of it. It's, I don't see myself apart from any of that. It's to like, it's like, it's like the core value. Core self.”

The Piscataway interviewee, whose ancestral ties lie in this region, describes her community's efforts to reconnect with their roots and homeland. They express frustration over restrictive

policies imposed by parks and recreational authorities, which hinder their access to these areas.

However, they

“Because this is our land, and we're here to take care of it. And our land is us. So we need to, not only we need to be but we are, we are here, we're very good. I have to say, I'm proud of my peeps, because we're very good. We're very good at. We don't care if you don't want us at the table, we're here anyway. You know, it's like, bring up the chair. Build the table, we're very good at door-busting.

A lot of that had been done but it's been I'll tell you, it's been a it's been a tough been a tough row. It's funny, because like it the it was all these years, years and years and years and years and years of either being denied, ignored, or having to get nasty to get into a room right? To be included. And now it's like, finally, everybody wants to include us or like most people want to, you know, most organizations like they know they need to, so it's like now we can't like answer all the inquiry like I can't answer I like I'm overwhelmed with like, this is a good problem.

Because we would hold them when they would come to testify in Congress and they would want to come down to pray You know, before they had to go so we'd like pick, pick them, especially Roberta, pick her up. got very, very involved in You know other people to like just these waves of people with that mentality, that fighting spirit mentality. And that's not true for all Piscataway people, but like, we've got like a good little crew

that's like that. And now it's becoming more acceptable, right? Because we have this like, groundwork that's there.

I think after, after many years, and also I've just I want to tell you, sometimes environmental organizations were, you know, have been, like, big allies for us, because we've had to deal with these like racist landowner, people and institutions that really wanted to keep us out.

Other coalition's so that's been good, I think, part of what I see. And I know, like, you know, your, your central focus is on these issues. I think has been this kind of classic point about

Well, one environmental organization, that's what I'm going to talk about with you. I was like, which organization am I going to deal with, and they already know this, because we've had issues and they're trying to get better, but I don't know, is Alex Ferguson Foundation, which is a local environmental organization, down at that were the gatekeepers to our burial grounds, and that was decades of direct confrontation with them.

The larger organizations usually have been more like, like national, you know, National Resource Defense Council or Earth Justice. They've been pretty good. Like we've tried to, you know, that's usually something like if we have, we're hosting or supporting other native people that are coming in from other parts of the country, and they're like

sponsoring or like working with them in some way. We just started working a little bit with Nature Conservancy. But, you know, the classic issue, of course, has been that, you know, somehow Native presence in you know, as part of this, like, it's like, it's considered as like human pollution, you know, and so that's, that's been a problem.

So probably like when we get into, you know, if you want to, like talk about, like, case studies situation like that, for us has been the most direct one. The National Park Service has been a big agency. They're better now. Accokeek Foundation has made a like a total giant turnaround.

And I got invited I think I might have I don't know if I was the first Piscataway person, but like, they had been like, they're also there's our burial grounds Accokeek, we have two adjacent organizations that were gatekeeping trying to keep us off of our of our sacred site, both environmental, both having an environmental component.

Accokeek Foundation made a total turnaround in 2007. And now that is really, like moved into Piscataway hands. I mean, it's, it's taken nearly 20 years, but that happen. So I was the first board member they asked to come on to so that was like a bit of a set, but they wanted to, they wanted to, because we'd been like pushing and pushing and pushing at them. And then there's another one who is not so much of a direct confrontational, but it's not really that involved with us still, you know, there's it's sort of like, more passive, but, but they were like, really horrendous, horrendous, and are an environmental organization local. So sometimes we have to deal with these like real localized, real

localized ones, you know, and then the larger ones are just starting to kinda like, interact more specifically with Piscataway in the past, I would say like, three to four year three to five years and actually reaching out which has been nice.

So more of my involvement with other environmental organizations has been in if, you know, just through, like background support with other Native people that have been coming in and like kind of larger issues and of course, like standing rock and you know, which is more recent, but, you know, just ongoing for like a really, really long time.

Dr. Hernandez explains that Western environmental conservation programs do not consider eco-cultural lifestyles having a reciprocal relationship with their environment that defines them as a people and community. Instead, conservation programs continue to have settler colonialism that continues to gatekeep and assimilate their eco-cultural practices.

“Our landscapes are where our creation stories take place, where we continue to practice our culture, and where we continue to fight against eradication and assimilation tactics settler governments continue to practice. Healing our Indigenous landscapes will allow us to heal ourselves, our people, and break free from the chains that settler colonialism continues to restrain us with. This includes being able to go against conservation practices that further oppress our communities and being able to say no to tourism ventures that will harm our communities further” (Hernandez, p.213, 2022).

The main hindrance to engagement stems from local environmental conservation programs, which currently act as gatekeepers, preventing Tribal Peoples from accessing their ancestral burial grounds, waterways, and homelands. Overcoming this challenge is arduous due to the prolonged timeframe typically required for organizations to achieve inclusivity, often spanning years or even decades, resulting in turnover among personnel and the issue being sidelined. Immediate action is essential, and the process of enhancing inclusivity and diversity within organizations should not be drawn out over extended periods.

Discussion

As Gilio-Whitaker also stated that “Protecting sacred sites is one of the most difficult and pressing issues Native people now face” (Gilio-Whitaker, p.129, 2019). The struggle of Tribal Peoples, both those with federal recognition and those without, to protect their homelands from encroachments and preserve their cultural practices is indeed a significant and ongoing battle. In many cases, these communities face formidable challenges from extractive practices sanctioned by federal and state governments, as well as the additional pressures of climate change exacerbating these threats.

The lack of federal recognition for some Tribal Peoples can further compound these challenges, as it may limit their legal standing and access to resources for defending their rights and lands. This situation underscores broader issues of injustice and historical marginalization faced by Indigenous communities across the United States.

Efforts to address these injustices and support Tribal Peoples in their struggles for sovereignty, cultural preservation, and environmental stewardship are essential. This includes advocating for policy changes, legal protections, and collaborative approaches that respect Indigenous rights and knowledge systems. Raising awareness about the interconnectedness of Indigenous rights, environmental conservation, and climate justice can help mobilize support for these causes.

Next Steps of Indigenous Futurity

When we mention the future, what does that truly mean? Does future mean tomorrow? Next week? Next month? Next year? In two years? Five years? Ten years? Twenty years? The conversation of future is not clear on the span of time for things such as inclusion or diversity to make change. Instead, I focused on the present moment of 2024 for them to know how from here to know how the Tribal Peoples expect to happen.

When discussing the future of inclusion and diversity for the Tribal Peoples of Maryland, it's important to focus on both short-term and long-term perspectives. In the present moment of 2024, the emphasis may be on immediate actions such as policy reforms, community representation, and partnerships to address systemic inequalities. However, it's crucial to also maintain a vision for the future, encompassing longer-term goals like education, economic opportunities, and cultural preservation.

Tuscarora & Lumbee Nation of North Carolina

Identity shapes who you are as a person, focusing on your character rather than your background. Instead of seeing Tribal Peoples or individuals as unique human beings like everyone else, stereotypes often dictate what an "Indian" is supposed to be. This pressure to conform to stereotypes is what's considered authentic. However, our interviewee challenges this notion, that individuals have the right to choose who they want to be in today's society and within their community.

“One to stereotypical idea of what Tribal people are to be, when you're not Tribal, when you're not Native, it's, I find it very interesting when people who are not Native American, American Indian, Indigenous, just or Lumbee, Navajo, whatever Tribe that you belong to whatever clan you belong to whatever band you belong to, that their idea is the one that's that that's important. And that's it's backwards. Like a, like a lot of things, you know, in this country or other countries, you know, we have a rear backwards way of seeing things, you know, drive on parkways and park and driveways. You know, and that's the example I give many times is that we were very backwards in our thought process.

So it's important that we continuously represent ourselves from a historical point of view, at the same time, not give in to the stereotypic idea that that's what Native people all about just the past or historically, or when net when November rolls around, you know, everybody is like, oh, Native Americans, American Indians, and this, make a phone call. And let's get them here. And let's check that box off, because we're required to have some type of celebration, but then the rest of the month for the rest of the year, nobody knows

who we are, or if that's too stereotypical idea of what they're expecting us to bring or do and, and what I want people to understand is that, you know, I don't want to live into your idea of who I am, I want to live under the idea of what my elders and people that are older than me, expect me to be and carry out and carry on and still be a productive individual in a contemporary society.

So for me, it's, it's realizing, "*Hey, I'm not going to live by your rules and your thoughts about who I'm supposed to be.*" I'm going to I'm gonna do that and base it off of, again, what I was raised and what I was raised with. And so when we talk about traditions, customs, and teachings, you know, those values and those morals, I mean, it's all together again, you can use whatever word you want to, but my upbringing is important. And what makes it makes me unique from anybody else, is what's important as well, and carrying that on, and being once again, and **walking in two worlds** being just as productive in my, in my, in my cultural identity as I am in my profession or in mainstream society.

And so, you know, balance is important. And I think, in my opinion, we lose that idea of balance. Many times, we spend so much time in one versus another. And I do believe that, you know, there's, there's a, there's a balance in my life that I need to be able to keep and have. And if I don't, and you know, then there's an imbalance and whenever there's an imbalance, there can be chaos, there can be confusion. And so again, that holistic idea is always kept in place to the best of my abilities."

Orr et al., paper ties with how American society validates Tribal Peoples unless they uphold their version of what it means to be Native, Tribal, or Indigenous People. Having these stereotypes is what it truly means to be Native, Tribal, or Indigenous rather the Tribal Nation living their ideal of who they are. “A narrowly defined American Indian identity through the creation of stereotypes. In other words, Americans hold a specific and narrow image of an ‘authentic’ Indian, and American Indians who fit this image closely are viewed as more deserving of resources and rights” (Orr et al., p. 6, 2018). It's unmistakable that American society tends to impose its judgments on us, shaping perceptions of our identity according to its own lens, rather than acknowledging the authenticity of who we are at our core.

Piscataway Indian Nation

“I think with some level of like, respect, concern, care, acknowledgment, right. I mean, I mean, there's me as like, like in all these different roles in the spaces, but certainly for the Tribal community for Piscataway people as an alive, dynamic present-day people who are the deepest most solid long-term caretakers and relatives of this land people who have an entirely distinctive worthy value in terms of history, but also in the sense of like, what we can bring now, you know.

I would want people to view Piscataway people, first of all, again, you know, say, say aren't say, say our name. I want people to understand that there is no healing of this earth and of our communities and of who we are as a society without including our people. Because we are at a core of it and everything, we're part of every, we're part of every

story that has happened on this landscape. For the past, like how many whatever 1000s of years, and also in the past 400 years, and in the past 40 years and in the past minute, like, and in the next centuries, we're like a constant of some kind. You know, even like, with all of the changes and adaptations and change, you know, all of it like, so that's what I think I would hope for.

We don't just hope for things we have to make them happen. You know, be proactive, don't just hope like, somebody's going to care about the river, don't just hope that somebody's going to care. To stop, you know, using derogatory mascot names, you know. Don't just hope that the teacher is not going to, like, have your kindergartener not do the, you know, paper, feather headdress thing for Thanksgiving. Like make an appointment, the minute your kid's going to be in the school, and go give them a package and say, *Here's my name, here's my number, here's the information, this is what you need to*, you know, be proud, you know, we have to be proactive about this. And you can't, you can never, ever assume that somebody else is going to do something for you ever. You know, we need to do this ourselves. If there's other help along the way, that's great. We should have it, but don't count on it.

Professional academia fields talk about decolonizing information, though there is no mention of Indigenous Peoples when talking about decolonization. You cannot talk about decolonization and not mention Indigenous Peoples (Tuck & Yang, 2012). You cannot talk about Indigenous Peoples without decolonization. The conversation is not broad enough to even where did the term come from? How is defined among Indigenous Peoples? How is the concept practiced

among the Indigenous communities? We are living in a digital age where information is accessible and to differentiate false and truths.

For instance, the elders, the walking libraries of knowledge, are not going to be here forever. Like every human being they're there one day and the next they're not. It's important to incorporate lived experiences and accounts as truths that got buried from another perspective.

Someday we're all going to be elders. You know, the people that used to do stuff for you may not be there, they're not going to be around anymore. The people who said that they would be interested involved in active may or may not be around. So always be ready to do it. You know, even if it's just you, as I've told my kids, like, you can't, you know, like, we're all here is, like, by I'm harsher than like, we're all cool, you know, but it's just saying like, you we always have to, you know, just always don't ever expect that somebody else is going to do your work. You know, and take care of things like you need to, you know, don't ever assume that because if we had assume that like a lot of our you know, our spiritual tradition actually came down to like, one person and my grandfather turkey. What if he had said eff it and left, you know. That would have been really, we wouldn't you know, maybe, I mean, people would have like, tried to come back but we would have been so much less capable.

You always have to do it, you know, just do your work, be responsible, be accountable, be joyful. You know, also like you know, the things that we're fighting for, for the rights of you know, the land to be healthy and intact and breathing in is wonderful. And, you

know, like, Yeah, we're gonna sit by the river too. You know what I mean? Like, I'm gonna watch the birds fly.”

It's frustrating that scholarly discourse often overlooks the invaluable perspectives and knowledge of elders within Indigenous communities. There's this huge gap in understanding caused by historical biases, and it's about time academia acknowledged and respected Indigenous epistemologies and methodologies. We're talking about dismissing oral traditions and lived experiences as if they don't count.

Academia needs to wake up and actively engage with Indigenous scholars and communities in research. It's not just about ticking boxes; it's about righting historical wrongs and creating a more inclusive and equitable scholarly landscape. We've got to challenge the entrenched power dynamics that have silenced marginalized voices for far too long.

Discussion

The stories we heard from the Tribal group really opened our eyes to the complexities of life in Maryland today. They showed us a whole range of experiences, from the highs to the lows. It was such a breath of fresh air to move away from the usual Eurocentric views that often treat Native peoples like they're stuck in the past, instead of being active parts of society right now.

These narratives gave us a real understanding of the ongoing struggles faced by Tribal communities, showing us the barriers, they still have to deal with in being heard and included in important decisions. It's clear there's still a lot of work to do to make sure their voices count in shaping Maryland's future.

If nothing is done for Tribal Peoples in Maryland in the next months or year, conflict will arise in the short future. It will cause conflict where it would be almost impossible for a relationship to be established. For instance, in 2018, the journal article, *If Indigenous Peoples Stand with the Sciences, Will Scientists Stand with Us?*, written by Megan Bang (Ojibwe and Italian descent), Ananda Marin, and Douglas Medin, addresses the exclusion of Indigenous science. They argue that excluding Indigenous science is a dangerous decision because you're excluding centuries' worth of sustainable knowledge that has maintained the environment for generations. Lastly, tensions will arise with existing relationships between Tribal Nations and Western institutions, leading to conflict in viewpoints (Bang et al., 151, 2018).

Federal institutions have embraced diversity and inclusion but often overlook First Peoples. Western science sometimes integrates alternative knowledge during crises but asserts dominance in stability. The term "decolonization" is filtered to preserve white innocence. Whitewashing history minimizes colonialism's impact, perpetuating oppression. True diversity involves amplifying marginalized voices. By prioritizing diversity, we challenge narratives of white innocence and work towards equity.

For instance, Dr. Elisa Sobo and her colleague's 2021 journal article, *Land acknowledgments meant to honor Indigenous people too often do the opposite-erasing American Indians and sanitizing history instead*, discusses how land acknowledgments are performative versions of land back. Dr. Sobo et al. state, “Land acknowledgments have been used to start conversations regarding how non-Indigenous people can support Indigenous sovereignty and advocate for land repatriation” (Sobo et al., 2). When no action follows land acknowledgments to support Tribal communities, it can be perceived as performative rather than genuine care. Neglecting to take substantive steps undermines educational efforts to learn history from the perspective of Tribal Peoples. Thus, without action-based initiatives, land acknowledgments lose their purpose and fail to foster meaningful relationships or address historical injustices.

However, most land acknowledgments are held from a Eurocentric perspective where the Tribal history is not whitewashed, making the audience believe that the Tribal Peoples of this country were willing to give up their land for productivity when in reality, they fought countless battles to ensure their people would be able to have access to their lands. Most Tribal peoples interpret this introductory ritual as performative. “After acknowledging that an institution sits on another’s land, there is no follow-up. Plans are almost never articulated to give the land back. The implication is: “What was once yours is now ours” (Sobo et al., p.3 2021). To prevent conflicts with tribes, institutions must conduct research that incorporates accurate historical accounts and actively supports their local Tribal communities. This entails recognizing and respecting the lived experiences and ongoing presence of Tribal communities within the area. Institutions can foster positive relationships and mitigate potential conflicts by prioritizing collaboration and cultural sensitivity.

What's the point of acknowledging diversity if the atrocities against Indigenous communities are ignored? When will they receive reparations? Maryland's diverse discourse overlooks Native Peoples, highlighting the need for inclusive initiatives. Governor Wes Moore's call to "Leave No One Behind" demands bold action to address systemic inequalities.

In line with Governor Moore's words: "Maryland, this is our decade, and if we want to go boldly into the future, then we need to take bold action" (Elliott, 2022). This is a call to action; I'm initiating efforts to support Native Peoples in Maryland. It's time for concrete action, not just symbolic gestures. Maryland must act now to address pressing issues and ensure meaningful progress.

This isn't just an academic pursuit—it's a heartfelt commitment woven into my thesis work. It signifies a sincere effort to promote equity and inclusivity throughout Maryland's diverse communities.

Embarking on this journey, I acknowledge the weight of responsibility it carries. Yet, this sense of duty drives my determination to effect positive change and confront the systemic disparities faced by Native populations.

Insights from Maryland's Environmental Organizations

This section presents each environmental interviewee's insights, encapsulating their responses to the interview questions or any specific perspectives they chose to share. Each contribution represents a distinct viewpoint, from personal experiences with environmental issues to advocacy for collective action. These diverse perspectives enrich our understanding of environmental challenges and opportunities. As we examine these insights, we approach them with professionalism, acknowledging our interviewees' expertise and depth of thought.

Organization's Purpose & Project(s)

Each interviewee is affiliated with a different environmental organization with the goal of maintaining the Chesapeake Bay watershed using scientific methodologies to know if the watershed's health is in immediate danger and what frameworks to use that have the best solutions. Some recently are now trying to get involved with communities living along or near the watershed.

Research has a troubled history of exploiting marginalized people and excluding them from opportunities. Recent mandates, like those from the Black Lives Matter movement in 2020, push for diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice (DEIJ/JEDI) in professional fields. However, there's still a question of who's truly included and who's left out.

Environmental organizations working on the Chesapeake Bay watershed have started incorporating DEIJ principles, recognizing historical injustices. Yet, there are concerns about

who's genuinely included and who's still marginalized. Marginalized communities along the watershed have often been treated poorly or excluded from decision-making.

To address this, some organizations are actively involving these communities in their work, acknowledging the importance of diverse perspectives. But challenges remain, including systemic barriers and distrust toward environmental organizations.

The Black Lives Matter movement prompted many organizations to prioritize DEIJ principles, true implementation varies, and ongoing accountability is crucial (Pieratos et al., 2021). How can these organizations ensure true inclusivity and representation for all communities, especially historically marginalized ones, in their efforts on the Chesapeake Bay watershed? That's what the participants discussed regarding their organization's purpose and projects.

However, research, historically speaking, has had a bad reputation for treating marginalized people as test subjects for their experiments, causing a lot of inhumane acts or gatekeeping information and opportunities to be presented to them. Now, some are trying to write the wrongs of their organization's past to be more inclusive than ever before, especially more recently, in 2020, the Black Lives Matter movement mandated that professional careers incorporate diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice (DEIJ) or (JEDI). Though who is really to be included and who is not to be included? The participants had to say this about their organization's purpose and projects.

EPA

“We want to make the world a better place by cleaning up the air by cleaning up the water and cleaning up the land.”

Chesapeake Bay Foundation

“Our Maryland office within environmental protection and restoration. So work a lot with communities on engagement and policy and advocacy work and restoration projects like tree plantings and oyster restoration around the Chesapeake Bay watershed.”

UMBC & STAC

“I am a longtime faculty member at UMBC in the Department of Geography and Environmental Systems. I have been here. This is my 41st year on the faculty. My research and teaching specialties are primarily in things related to water and watersheds. So my background is in surface water hydrology and fluvial geomorphology, which is a study of rivers and riverine landforms and the fate and transport of sediment and water in the landscape. I have had a longtime affiliation with the Chesapeake Bay Program, Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC), I was a member of STAC from 2013 through September of 2023.

Well, I'm a faculty member at UMBC. So our main mission is to educate undergraduate and graduate students to try to train them for future careers and to make sure they get the

the skills and the knowledge they need to be successful, whatever they decide to go on to do.

In my time working with the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC), that is a group that consists of 30, some odd volunteers, most of them are either natural scientists or social scientists, who either are coming from academia, or from federal or state agencies or from non-governmental organizations, who all bring some combination of expertise that's relevant to the knowledge that's needed to actually engage in and help guide provide scientific advice to the Chesapeake Bay program as part of the Chesapeake Bay watershed restoration effort to try to improve water quality and living resources and just being so that's we all come from different backgrounds, but we all have worked together on a variety.”

Chesapeake Climate Action Network

“Our goal is to promote awareness and solutions associated with global warming in Maryland, Virginia, and DC.

Bluewater Baltimore Water Keeper

“I'm at the Baltimore Harbor Waterkeeper with a group called Blue Water Baltimore. And so Waterkeeper organizations throughout the world are really focused on being like

water Watchdogs. So it's a non-governmental group, but it's focused on preserving and protecting everybody's right to clean water.”

One thing I did want to ask the interviewee was what a waterkeeper was because this was a concept I was not familiar with, and wanted to learn if the concept and practice were similar to the Tribal Peoples that are connected to the waterways of the Chesapeake Bay watershed.

“So I think the stated mission of the organization is to protect and restore waterways throughout the Patapsco and back river watersheds. And so Waterkeeper is really delineated by watersheds. So all of the area of land that drains into a specific water body, so it's intrinsically linked to flowing waters, and kind of doing whatever we can to protect those spaces from pollution and amplifying the voices of the people who are living within those watersheds that are being negatively affected by pollution. So it sort of takes water protection from almost like the negative space of amplifying voices of people who are being impacted, and then bringing it into the positive space of trying to implement changes or change policies, or sometimes suing polluters to make a positive difference across the watershed.

I think the power of a waterkeeper is rooted in connection to waterways and also the people who kind of stand behind that Waterkeeper. So like it is, it is a public-facing position being a waterkeeper somebody who can speak truth to power when necessary, somebody who can build consensus and coalition's to move policy forward. But really, at

the end of the day, I can't I am worthless, I'm meaningless if I'm not authentically representing the needs of people within the watershed.”

As I engaged in the interview, a question arose in my mind regarding the term "waterkeeper," a concept I hadn't encountered before. Intrigued by its potential significance within environmental advocacy, I felt compelled to inquire further, seeking clarity on its role and function. Moreover, I was eager to discern whether the principles and practices embodied by waterkeepers bore resemblance to the age-old traditions of the Tribal Peoples residing along the waterways of the Chesapeake Bay watershed. This curiosity stemmed from a desire to grasp the interconnectedness between modern environmental stewardship approaches and the ancestral wisdom of indigenous communities deeply connected to the land and water.

“Bluewater Baltimore didn't make up the term Waterkeeper. It comes from the Waterkeeper Alliance, which is a global organization that started with the Hudson River Keeper. So now there are I want to say like 350 Different Waterkeeper organizations all across the world. And the term Waterkeeper is like it's a licensed trademark term. And so we have to abide by a certain set of Waterkeeper quality standards in order to maintain our trademark licensure agreement, basically, with Waterkeeper Alliance.

You have to patrol your local waterways for pollution, to you have to have a plan for involving a wide breadth of people within your work. So like you have to have an established justice, equity, diversity and inclusion plan for your organization. You can't just be representing one segment of your watershed all the way to like, you have to be

abiding by best financial accounting practices, things like that. So it's both standards in the process of doing our work, but also to protect that trademark legally.

There's like a whole lot of Waterkeepers here and the Chesapeake region. I think there's many more, it's more prevalent on the East Coast. And that's probably partially because the movement started with Hudson River Keeper in New York. But there's Waterkeepers all over the US. And so there's, there's like a bunch out west in California and Washington.”

Knowledge of Local Tribal Peoples/Indigenous Peoples Historically and Currently

This section is to learn what the environmental interviewees’ knowledge they hold about Indigenous Peoples and especially the Tribal Peoples historically and currently in the Maryland region. I wanted to learn more about if they were having conversations within their organizations involving Tribal Peoples. This is what the interviewees had to say.

Chesapeake Bay Foundation

I asked if this individual had personal knowledge or understanding about Tribal Peoples or Indigenous Peoples. This is how they responded.

“Yeah, sure, um, my personal perspective is that I know, of various Tribes that are a part of, you know, in Maryland, and who have either migrated to the Maryland region from other places, specifically the Lumbee Tribe that has a very strong Tribal community in Baltimore, Maryland. And also in North Carolina, where I went to college, and also just Maryland, tribes that are not federally recognized, but are very active in the environmental movement, very active in policy in terms of land back and land stewardship.

And then within my organization, it has been in the past few years or so that our organization has actually acknowledged, you know, the, the places where Native and Indigenous communities were and are, because many of them have been displaced. But then also acknowledging where some of our organizational properties and facilities, the land that we are on was once inhabited, or still inhabited by those Tribal communities. So we've done a few, some small projects where we've kind of dug into some of that history, but still have a lot to uncover, and to include as a part of those Tribal communities.

But I will also say, you know, some of my personal connections are just folks that are very active in within their tribe and within their community. So that's just my personal connection, because I have friends that are Lumbee or from the Piscataway Conoy Tribe.”

Dr. Hollie A. Kulago, a Navajo Nation citizen, and her colleagues have scrutinized the dominance of Western-centric curriculum in education. They emphasize how Indigenous history is often relegated to elective status or ignored entirely, while settler colonialism shapes the teaching of environmentalism, sidelining Indigenous perspectives on conservation and knowledge systems. This perpetuates a dualistic educational model that prioritizes Western paradigms over Indigenous epistemologies.

“Whitestream place-based education hits the trail assuming that if settlers learn enough about the land, they can become native to it. But learning the violent histories of colonialism should cause settlers to feel less comfortable in the places they live, not more. Because it fails to understand land as a force, personality, and agency, place-based education enacts Native erasure, replacement, and elimination. Native erasure is written into the most basic mythologies about how settler environmental thinking and education came to be. For example, Aldo Leopold wrote in his widely influential essay on the “Land Ethic” from his book of the 1940s, *A Sand County Almanac*, “There is as yet no ethic dealing with man’s relation to the land and to the animals and plants which grow upon it” (1950, p. 203). His delusion implies that European-descended people can be the first to “discover” environmental values in a place where their history is paper-thin (Kulago et al., p.352, 2021).

Erasure is continuing to separate Indigenous Peoples from the environment that defines them and their culture, and the Western education system is rewriting their truths in favor of benefiting

their white innocence of history. “Wills (2001) found that teachers often present overgeneralized and simplistic information about marginalized groups, such as Indigenous Peoples’ perspectives of colonization, by not providing students with enough information about the unique and varied perspectives of Indigenous Peoples” (Shear et al., p. 73, 2015). Our interviewee ties in with how this relates to Shear et al.'s statement on overgeneralization.

“When you think about history, you think about the the erasure of Native peoples on this land where there were very large communities and knowing that they traveled across the watershed across the East Coast, you know, to different places based on, you know, where the food was or where ceremonies were happening, and then coming back to know that your, your community was overtaken by settlers and erasing the stories through, you know, overpowering them with, with news stories, or, you know, something I've read recently, where there were names of certain things that then get renamed by, you know, English people and White people who colonized this area.

The erasure of that, you know, culture and stories and names, then, you know, there is no placement, you know, being displaced, where your community was. So not really having a tie to the land, you know, having a tie to those ancestors into that story. So when I think about erasure, I think about that, and Indigenous communities, and I think about that, you know, for my own history, as well, my ancestors were descendants from, you know, from Africa before they were enslaved. And I do not know, that concept of where my family is, from specifically, what village what country, you know, so just knowing that that part

of my history is erased because there was there is no connection. So when I think about, you know, cultural erasure, I think about very similarly to African communities, and knowing that that was a very similar experience here in the Americas, for Indigenous and Native people as well.

“Purposefully, to eliminate, you know, eliminate people for power, for resources, you know, for things like that. But that doesn't mean, you know, you hold on to that, because there are ways that I mean, it's fortunate that a lot of Indigenous communities here, especially in Maryland, or other places, you know, have some knowledge of that, you know, there are people that are still around that can tell those stories that know, the Native language, but, you know, a lot of that is being lost to because a lot of those elders are dying. And, you know, some of the newer generation doesn't know, you know, what some of those practices are, some of those cultural things are, you know, those ceremonies, and also the language and dance. So it's really nice to have that whereas, you know, it's been, at least for generations, in my own family, where I have no clue most of my family was born here in the Americas because of that, of that history.”

The interviewer was struck by the interviewee's poignant connection to her Black heritage, particularly the recognition of her familial lineage's African heritage being forcibly stripped away—a loss emblematic of ongoing cultural erasure. While Black and Indigenous communities may share some similarities, their experiences are distinct and should not be conflated. Each community has its own unique struggles and aspirations, shaped by geographic location and historical context. Black Liberation focuses on empowering Black communities to determine

their futures, while Indigenous Sovereignty advocates for the rights of Sovereign Nations, including Tribally and State recognized Tribes, on issues like LandBack and government accountability. Despite not always being explicitly stated, these communities actively address a wide range of issues relevant to their well-being and empowerment, underscoring their resilience and ongoing efforts for justice and equity. Genuine equity and inclusion require us to respect and acknowledge each community's diverse needs and aspirations, fostering environments where every voice is valued and supported.

Maryland DNR Forest Service

The next interviewee shared how encountering a Tribal individual within the organization gave her a valuable new perspective on the Eastern Shore. This encounter catalyzed her to seek further engagements with other Tribal Nations that expressed a desire to collaborate.

“My personal level of understanding for Indigenous contacts. We have, we have requirements as part of our sustainable certification for forest management to maintain contacts with Indigenous groups. So we have contacts on our different state forest sections, I guess I'm more personally aware of some of the ones on the Eastern Shore. And then there's what I've been able to get through personal connections, we have a staff member on Maryland DNR Forest Service, Brad Shaw, who has recently been appointed to the Maryland Commission on Indian Affairs. So he's been helpful in explaining some of the Tribal perspectives and desires for connections.

And then I have a friend working at the University of Maryland, who is Native, and has been trying to help me understand what would be helpful ways for us to reach out for, in particular for a forest management and inclusion. And we request participation in an appropriate manner when that's respectful of perspectives and some of the time limitations. Some of the folks have been pretty excited to be some of the expansion, particularly at the federal level in information about some of the force management practices. And we're seeing a real change in what's available that way, and a lot of attention being paid to it in a way that I've not seen in previous decades.”

Indigenous engagements can occur in several ways from meeting an individual from a Tribal Nation or attending events that is hosted by the community. It's a start of something to occur, but if state organizations aren't putting effort into establishing authentic relationships, than it's just seen in a transaction type of way. It is crucial to have agencies outside their comfort zone for an effort to be made. “Decolonization, which we assert is a distinct project from other civil and human rights-based social justice projects, is far too often subsumed into the directives of these projects, with no regard for how decolonization wants something different than those forms of justice (Tuck & Yang, p.2, 2012).

UMBC & STAC

Shifting to a different set of questions, I asked our UMBC & STAC friend about what his thoughts are when I bring up the concept Indigenous erasure and in what way does he feel towards the concept and practice of Indigenous erasure. His response was the following.

“Indigenous erasure essentially means pretending like there was nobody here before Europeans got here. Right? In other words, they sort of recognize that there were but but there's, there's two ways of looking at it, like, history begins with European arrival, we don't pay any attention to what were presumably 1000s of years of settlement and things that were learned, you know. But it's also not acknowledging.

There's so many elements to it, right? There's not a, they were treaties that were signed by the US government that were abrogated and ignored. And, and but, erase your hand mean, elimination. I mean, there is certainly a form of genocide that was carried out over historically, in this country. And it also can simply mean, failing to acknowledge or recognize that European settlers, we're not the first ones on this landscape. So an erasure can simply mean that we just don't. Yeah, we just don't recognize it or pay any attention to.”

This individual had no personal connections with Tribal Peoples but engaged in a conversation with one Tribal person at an STAC meeting where a land acknowledgment was held. Their curiosity prompted them to inquire about the Tribal individual's feelings regarding land acknowledgments, which provided valuable insight and learning for the individual.

“I don't I don't know many Indigenous people personally. I know that there are Tribal Nations within Maryland. I believe it's the case that Maryland does not formally recognize any Tribal Nations. I know there are other states in the Mid-Atlantic and Northeast that have come a little bit farther along in terms in terms of that.

The first STAC meeting that I've been at, where we had someone who was coming from, it was actually a, I believe, an environmental anthropologist who was also a Native American, who does consulting with organizations that are trying to recognize and incorporate understanding of Native American, Native American viewpoints. And after she gave her talk over, you know, sort of over lunch, I had a conversation with her about these land acknowledgement statements, because my, I asked her, *“Do you usually use you considered the sort of performative rather than actually accomplishing something?”*

I mean, the thing they primarily accomplish is that where people are not Native Americans to recognize that, in fact, there were people on the landscape before them, but it doesn't necessarily do anything beyond, beyond that. And he said, “Yeah, we have some problems with the way those statements are commonly used, because they're kind of like, putting a band aid on something you recognize, but have no actual pathway to do something about it at least does your organization.”

It's commendable that the interviewer took the initiative to ask rather than assume the feelings of the Tribal individual about land acknowledgments. While it may be intimidating to broach such topics', seeking understanding is far better than making assumptions. This approach fosters open

dialogue and respect for diverse perspectives, ultimately contributing to more meaningful and authentic interactions. “In most cases these statements fail to acknowledge the violent trauma of land being stolen from Indigenous people – the death, dispossession and displacement of countless individuals and much collective suffering. The afterlives of these traumas are deeply felt and experienced in Indigenous communities” -(Sobo et al., p. 3, 2021).

Chesapeake Climate Network Action

“Understanding Indians is not an esoteric art. All it takes is a trip through Arizona or New Mexico, watching a documentary on TV, having known *one* in the service, or having read a popular book on *them*. There appears to be some secret osmosis about Indian people by which they can magically and instantaneously communicate complete knowledge about themselves to these interested whites. Rarely is physical contact required. Anyone and everyone who knows an Indian or who is *interested*, immediately and thoroughly understands them” (Deloria, p.5, 1969).

I used Deloria’s quote for the interview because I know most think the best way to engage is to learn in-direct way and that may be reading literature, listening to a podcast, and TV shows or interviews. Though it does not help to start a conversation of Tribal Peoples because each Tribal person is different such as are they ancestral to Maryland? Are they man, woman, or two-spirited? Are they old or young? Did they always live with the community? The conversations can go in any direction.

I inquired about the interviewee's personal familiarity or experience with Indigenous Peoples in any capacity. His responses were ones that transitioned from indirect to direct.

“I have read a lot about the Anacostia people of the Piscataway Tribe here in the DC area, I have a real interest in that history and archaeological site. And just understanding the Indigenous culture in history of the region that I live in.

In terms of climate change, we have historically worked closely with Indigenous leaders, especially in Virginia who were fighting the Mountain Valley Pipeline and the Atlantic Coast Pipeline, which goes through some sacred Indigenous communities, disrupts farmland owned by Indigenous people. And so we be historically we're in alliances in coalition with some of those Indigenous leaders in Virginia especially, and to some degree in Southern Maryland, fighting some other fossil fuel infrastructure projects.”

Though this person read about Tribal Peoples to get an idea of the community, he also took the initiative to learn firsthand about how Tribal leaders are taking action of protecting their home by being in the frontlines of protests.

Moving on to the next set of questions, I asked whether the interviewee's organization has engaged in discussions involving Indigenous Peoples. Specifically, I inquired whether the organization's ongoing projects might hinder such conversations or if the thought of engaging with Tribal Peoples had not previously crossed their mind. He responded with:

“I mean, we, we have had lots of conversations that involve Indigenous concerns and Indigenous voices, in the context of campaigns in the field, real threats to real people. How do we get Indigenous leaders to come to a press conference? How do we take their concerns and elevate it to the larger community? How do we set up meetings with affected Indigenous families with polluting companies, et cetera? But just a conversation on improving our inclusion? Or relationships with Indigenous communities uniquely? We have not had that and we probably should.

I think in in saying, you know, I think this conversation is sort of just be you know, there's more to be done. There are just fewer there are fewer organized Indigenous communities and this in Mid-Atlantic then there are last, you know, I used to live in Montana. And now it's just in. So, but I, but they're there. And we have and we've a decent job of coordinating by case. I shouldn't come Indigenous leaders, but I think we ought to be more intentional. That's my takeaway from this conversation. So I appreciate I appreciate having this thought.”

From the perspective of organizations engaging with Tribal Peoples to address ecological issues, securing adequate resources presents a significant challenge. While it may seem that access to information is readily available in the digital age, the reality is often more complex. To navigate this challenge, it's crucial to develop structured frameworks with targeted questions to foster inclusive relationships and support Tribes in overcoming these obstacles. Addressing resource limitations requires exploring avenues such as grants, partnerships, and leveraging existing networks for assistance. Collaborative approaches that prioritize mutual respect and active Tribal

participation are essential for effective engagement. Additionally, investing in capacity-building initiatives within Tribal communities enables them to contribute meaningfully to decision-making processes and implement sustainable solutions.

Bluewater Baltimore Water Keeper

Dr. Ashley, renowned in the Mid-Atlantic region, established connections with organizations through personal relationships. These connections facilitated discussions on engaging with other Tribal or Intertribal groups in the area, underscoring the significance of leveraging personal networks to advance collaboration and initiatives for Tribal communities.

“I think my personal understanding is very basic, very baseline low. So I, my only interaction with the Lumbee community in Baltimore has really been through Ashley up to this point. So what I know about the Lumbee community in Baltimore is through what Ashley has shared with me. I also know that this this area will be the area that I live in, like up in northern Baltimore County, is the historic territory and land of the Susquehanna people.

And I also think that there. There is still the Piscataway Conoy Tribe. And I think like a big part of Baltimore, is historically like their land. So those are the two like the Tribes that I'm aware of in this area. But there's probably more. And I am not, I am not tuned in like I don't have personal contacts or friends within the Piscataway Conoy Tribe. I know

that the Potomac River Keeper has a close connection with I believe his name is Francis Gray, with the Piscataway Conoy Tribe, but I don't have a personal relationship with him. So that's really the limit of my personal knowledge.”

The prevailing understanding of Tribal Peoples of Maryland often centers on their historical displacement from ancestral lands and the genocidal acts perpetrated by colonial settlers. While this knowledge serves as a starting point for conversations, its accuracy from a historical perspective and the narratives surrounding Tribal Peoples are questioned. It's crucial to critically examine who is telling these historical narratives and whose perspectives are being centered.

To move beyond stereotypical images of Native Americans perpetuated by mainstream narratives, modern, authentic relationships are essential. By fostering genuine connections and engaging directly with Tribal communities, individuals can gain a more nuanced understanding of their cultures, histories, and contemporary experiences. This approach not only challenges stereotypes but also promotes mutual respect and understanding, laying the groundwork for meaningful collaboration and reconciliation.

Discussion

The next step involves examining how organizations develop and align inclusive projects with their mission and Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Justice (DEIJ) statements. This entails assessing how their programs promote diversity, equity, and inclusion within their work.

Understanding how these initiatives relate to organizational values and goals makes it possible to

ensure that efforts are aligned with broader objectives and effectively address the needs and perspectives of Tribal Peoples and other marginalized communities. This holistic approach facilitates the development of meaningful, sustainable projects that contribute to positive social change and advance the principles of DEIJ.

Chesapeake Bay Projects & Inclusivity

This section highlights whether the organization's projects align with inclusivity in the Maryland community or if inclusivity efforts are still pending. It examines whether the organization has taken steps to actively involve diverse community voices, including those of Tribal Peoples, in its projects. If inclusivity measures have not yet been implemented, it underscores the need for the organization to prioritize and enact strategies to ensure that its projects are inclusive and representative of the Maryland community's diversity.

Maryland DNR Forest Service

“So I lead Maryland DNR Forest Service. It's the state agency responsible for forest restoration, conservation and management of public and private forest land and tree canopy. Eight wide we have programs in fire, urban and community forestry. Our stewardship, utilization, watershed, forestry, forest health forest legacy and we're responsible for implementing a number of laws statewide. That particularly around civil roadside tree law Forest Conservation Act, as well as responding to fires, doing proactive,

fire risk reduction and prescribed burning, and we manage over 215,000 acres of state forest land.”

Upon discovering that the interviewee works with a state agency where trees have become a prominent topic within Maryland's conservation programs, I expressed interest in delving deeper into their perspectives on Tribal Peoples. I inquired about their opinion regarding whether their organization is capable of combating Indigenous erasure and how they could effectively address this issue. I sought to elucidate potential strategies in detail, emphasizing the importance of countering erasure through comprehensive means. She responded in the following:

“We're in a position to counter erasure through. Well, one having reached out previously, I know when we did forest action plan, we didn't get comments from some of the folks on Eastern Shore, about Tribal priorities. And that got included kind of our action plan. In terms of where we would like to go moving forward, one of the efforts that we have underway is to develop a Traditional Ecological Knowledge Fellowship, that would be trying to capture some of the Traditional Knowledge as it relevant to forest management, invasive species control prescribed fire, and put it out and in a way that are the folks who are managing or forest lands interacting with people can better understand and can learn what they don't know, about Indigenous people, because most people are not aware that there are still Tribal folks in Maryland, we don't have big reservations.

You pointed out that there's no federally recognized Tribes at this point. And so it's, that makes it easier for people to say, well, I don't need to consider that. When I think

everything that's in our policy, and certainly in this administration, they're trying to place a lot of priority and say that, yes, it is something that needs to be considered and better engaged. So we've got our sustainable forest certification, that includes voice or Indigenous people.

We have the Traditional Ecological Knowledge Fellowship. And then we have a staff member from Maryland Commission for Indian Affairs, and the information that he can bring back to us. At our most recent forest service annual meeting, we had a presentation really on diversity, our new round park service managers, lady of color, was talking about some of the past the injustices and suppression for the Black community.”

The interviewee's involvement in a fellowship focused on Traditional Ecological Knowledge for forest management suggests their organization is actively addressing Indigenous perspectives. To further counter Indigenous erasure, they could deepen partnerships with Indigenous communities and promote awareness of their contributions to conservation.

I inquired whether the TEK fellowship would incorporate participation from Tribal Peoples or if it primarily focused on learning about TEK to apply it for the organization's benefit. I expressed curiosity regarding whether this initiative respects and safeguards Tribal Peoples' culture and livelihoods, ensuring that their knowledge is not exploited or appropriated. Her response was the following:

“I’m still trying to figure out how we can get it out there, we’re hoping to have it be focused on Tribal members. And to and to, for it to be a strong support for education, as well as deliver products that are going to be helped us advance our understanding of including those issues in our forest resource management.

We’re trying to figure out what is a good way to reach out. And we hope to be able to offer this for more than one year, and I want to build people’s understanding of the value that a different perspective can bring. What one interesting thing, from the Maryland Planning Commissioners Association meeting that we were speaking at, about some forest harvesting issues, the panel before us was on it, Native American land use issues and connections.

And so, you know, we, they had several different Tribal members, talking about the things that were important to them, that they would want to have considered and land use. And so they shared some of the traditional stories. And when looking at it from forest managers perspective, when stories aren’t just stories, they’re a speak to how the people connected to the wildlife and the resources. And there’s things that, you know, it’s it may not be literal, but there’s, there’s knowledge embodied in that story. That, you know, maybe it needs some interpretation. But there’s, you know, millennia of wisdom in it. So that’s some of the thing that I’d love to see brought forward.

You look at, you know, some of the forest management issues. And I know I went to Oregon State University and we looked at Warm Springs reservation as an example of

just really amazing forest management, I think it's is it the there's a couple of things in the Upper Midwest, Minnesota is Menominee. And there's some just really impressive, like, models of both traditional practice and local economic value being supported through the forestry.”

It's encouraging to learn that the fellowship is progressing towards its launch and is prioritizing incorporating diverse forms of knowledge, such as Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK), alongside Western science in forest management. However, it's crucial to ensure that the initiative remains sensitive to potential issues of cultural appropriation and safeguards the interests and rights of Tribal Peoples. Maintaining this direction is essential to fostering respectful collaboration and ensuring that Tribal Peoples' knowledge is valued and utilized appropriately.

UMBC and STAC

The University of Maryland-Baltimore County (UMBC) professor and STAC member made it known to me that they are the brains behind the findings of the Chesapeake Bay waterways and continuing to learn the science behind the reason for their findings.

“I am a longtime faculty member at UMBC in the Department of Geography and Environmental Systems. I have been here. This is my 41st year on the faculty. My research and teaching specialties are primarily in things related to water and watersheds. So my background is in surface water hydrology and fluvial geomorphology, which is a

study of rivers and riverine landforms and the fate and transport of sediment and water in the landscape. I have had a longtime affiliation with the Chesapeake Bay Program, Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC), I was a member of STAC from 2013 through September of 2023.”

Discussion

The organization's projects have traditionally centered on watershed ecology, with limited incorporation of community involvement. As a result, Tribal Peoples have been marginalized from these conversations for an extended period. This exclusion overlooks the invaluable knowledge and perspectives Tribal communities possess regarding their environments. To rectify this oversight, the organization must prioritize integrating community involvement, including Tribal Peoples, into its projects. By fostering collaboration and incorporating diverse voices, the organization can enhance the effectiveness and sustainability of its efforts while promoting inclusivity and equity in environmental stewardship.

“Engagement with Indigenous sciences requires the knower to recognize, cultivate, and support Indigenous peoples and their efforts to create thriving communities. Non-Indigenous scientists, policy-makers, and institutions (especially nation-state governments and educational institutions in their many forms) need to recognize the powerful historical accumulations and institutional structures that have consistently undermined Indigenous communities and ways of life. Engagement with Indigenous

sciences will require commitment to transform processes that uphold and assert Western epistemic supremacy. Importantly, this is not intended to suggest that Western epistemic practices have not been productive or should not continue; rather, we object to the insistence on their singularity.” (Bang et al., p.156, 2018).

Under various names, Indigenous science fundamentally revolves around identifying the right variables to distinguish between errors and solutions. It embodies a holistic understanding of natural systems and emphasizes the interconnectedness of elements. This approach, refined over generations, offers valuable insights into sustainable problem-solving and environmental stewardship alongside Western scientific methods.

Challenges & Barriers

Mary Kathryn Nagle, a citizen of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma, an attorney and author of the 2018 journal article, *Environmental Justice and Tribal Sovereignty: Lessons from Standing Rock*, American laws have historically employed the Doctrine of Discovery as a framework to justify their regulations, particularly concerning environmental matters.

Many laws enacted under this framework serve as excuses to diminish Indigenous Peoples' sovereignty over their lands and resources. Instead of upholding Indigenous rights and stewardship practices, these laws often prioritize the interests of settler colonial governments and corporations, leading to the exploitation and degradation of Indigenous lands and natural

resources. This exploitation is further compounded by the historical legacy of dispossession, displacement, and cultural erasure experienced by Indigenous Peoples. Recognizing and challenging these laws' underlying biases and injustices is essential for promoting environmental justice and upholding Indigenous sovereignty and rights.

“Tribal Nations were never in need of a dissenting “environmental” movement to tell us that we need to protect the environment. Tribal Nations have been striving to respect and protect the land we live on since time immemorial. However, since the Supreme Court’s adoption of the Doctrine of Discovery, our indigenous “environmentalism” has been used as a justification for erasing the inherent sovereignty of our Nations” (Nagle, p.683, 2018).

“The laws of Tribal Nations that command respect for the Earth have, historically, been used as an excuse to destroy the Nations who created them” (Nagle, p.683, 2018).

Diving into the insights provided by the environmental interviewees can offer valuable perspectives on the questions posed to them. Their responses can shed light on various aspects such as their understanding of environmental challenges, their approaches to addressing them, and their perspectives on engaging with Tribal communities and promoting inclusivity.

Analyzing their responses can provide valuable insights into the complexities of environmental issues, the importance of inclusive practices, and the challenges and opportunities for collaboration with Tribal Peoples.

EPA

I expressed curiosity about the challenges that a federal organization like the EPA faces in establishing relationships with Tribal Nations. If they haven't encountered difficulties, I inquired about the methods they employed to initiate and cultivate those relationships.

“It takes time, energy and funding. And so you know, I think the biggest challenge is, is that I work for the federal government, I work at the pleasure of the executive branch. And as we all know, every four years, there is the potential for a change of leadership in the executive branch. So with that being said, I think one of the main challenges is consistency. Because, you know, we, my my job is to enable the executive branch's goals and priorities.

Which is Region 3, and we're located in Philadelphia. And while that doesn't seem like it's a long way away from Maryland, in some cases, it is challenging having face to face meetings or having ongoing interaction with some of these particular communities. And then likewise, for the actual communities to come together on a statewide basis, it doesn't happen as often as you may think.”

Navigating face-to-face meetings poses a challenge, particularly for EPA Region 3 located in Philadelphia. Furthermore, the shifting priorities of executive leadership, coupled with frequent changes due to turnover, disrupt the establishment of relationships as the focus continually evolves. It is insightful information that I did not realize, until now.

Chesapeake Bay Foundation

This individual's profound knowledge of Indigenous or Tribal priorities, along with their familiarity with the terminology used by Native scholars and activists, greatly enriches conversations. Their awareness of Indigenous Peoples facilitates in-depth discussions about culture, systemic challenges, and personal perspectives. By integrating their Black heritage into these conversations, they demonstrate a commitment to understanding diverse experiences and fostering honesty as both an employee and an individual. This multifaceted approach enhances their effectiveness in engaging with and supporting Indigenous communities.

I inquired whether the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, as a non-federal organization, has any policies that hinder it from forming relationships with Tribal Peoples of Maryland compared to federally recognized Tribal Peoples of Virginia. I questioned whether Tribal status played a role in the lack of engagement. This was her response:

“No, I mean, I really think it's just the relationships. We have just different relationships and Virginia than we do in Maryland. And that's just based on staff and an engagement, not necessarily because of the status either. You know, in Maryland, we're working with a Tribe, I think, that has been trying to get federally recognized since the 90s. The Piscataway Conoy Tribe is that federally recognized yet, but you know, still, I know, they're still working on their status, but we have some relationships with some of the members of that Tribe. But we haven't been involved in any of the, you know, projects that they're working on, or anything like that. Whereas in Virginia, it's just we have a

stronger relationship with the Nansemond Tribe, and we're working with them on different restoration projects and education and, you know, touch points, things like that. So it's just just different.”

In sometimes I guess it does have to do with Tribal status because Tribal Peoples in Maryland only organized form of agency is the Maryland Commission of Indian Affairs. Some of the Tribes that I do know of most of the organizations they may have within their community is voluntary. So that’s a factor I’ve considered that others may also consider because the Tribe cannot get paid to do the work they are advocating for.

I asked for her perspective on how Maryland mentions diversity and whether Tribal Nations are included when diversity is discussed. Her responses echoed my own thoughts on the matter.

“Oh, that's a great question. Probably not. A lot of times when people think about diversity, they're thinking about the physical, racial and ethnic diversity, and not really looking at Indigenous communities in terms of, you know, the population that makes up some of some of that. So, yeah, I'm not sure. I mean, a lot of times when people think about diversity, they're thinking, Black and White, you know, specifically in, in Maryland, or specifically in the Americas, you know, because of the division of White and Black community. So, yeah, I'm not sure that Indigenous communities are a part of that.

And, you know, could be a number of things, but a lot of times Indigenous people have assimilated into the contemporary culture. So they're not really segregated from some of the larger racial or ethnic groups that people are talking about when they think about environmental justice communities or diverse communities.

When you're thinking about people, acknowledging the background, and the culture, and the race and ethnicity is very important, if you're talking specifically about Black communities, name that, if you're talking specifically about the Latino community, name that, you know, you know, for all of those groups, because that means that you acknowledge and understand their presence and, and their role and different cultures have different meaningful experiences when it comes to the environment and to climate and to nature. You know, there are a lot of differences within those cultures, where they experience different things and that they are, you know, a part of different issues and have different challenges within their own community. So it's really important to name them specifically.

You know, I mentioned Landback and land stewardship, that's very important to Tribal communities, whereas, you know, maybe not as much in Black communities where we're just wanting, you know, voices to be heard, and the acknowledgment, that no, we are, are dealing with some of the things and have been disenfranchised and disempowered.

Whereas Latino communities might feel differently, they might, you know, this is I'm a first generation and, you know, I'm here and I don't speak English, you know, there are just a lot of different challenges that people in those different groups are dealing with.

And acknowledging those specific issues and also acknowledging them, you know, specifically as a community, it's just very important to, to show respect and honor and, you know, of that culture. And knowing that each of them have different ways to mitigate some of the issues that we're dealing with, and climate in the environment.”

Advocating for diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice (DEIJ) or justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion (JEDI) requires specificity and intentionality. It's crucial to prioritize the voices and needs of marginalized and underrepresented communities rather than defaulting to homogeneity or prioritizing dominant perspectives. By centering on the experiences and perspectives of diverse communities, we can ensure that our advocacy efforts are truly inclusive and equitable, and that they address the unique challenges faced by different groups. This approach fosters a more just and equitable society where all voices are heard, valued, and empowered.

UMBC & STAC

The ecological environment we have today has been significantly impacted by centuries of human activity, particularly since the arrival of Europeans. Restoring it to its pre-European state will indeed be a lengthy process, likely to take decades or even longer. This task is compounded by the challenges posed by increasing populations and the need to provide food, housing, and resources for diverse communities.

STAC is primarily a science-based organization and doesn't heavily focus on community outreach in analyzing the Chesapeake Bay watershed, I was interested in understanding whether

they consider human interventions in their scientific advice. I raised the point that while conventional science often portrays humans and nature as separate entities, there are numerous interactions between them that are often overlooked in scientific findings. His response goes into account of the historical aspects of the lands and how it changed over time.

“Well, it's clear that the degradation of water quality and impact living resources are a result of long-term human. And when I say human actually should say, post-colonial and post-colonial activity on the landscape. You know, before Europeans got here, conditions in the watershed are much better in terms of impact on water quality and living resources. And it's really the effect of everything from agricultural land use very intensive agricultural land use to the amount of sanitary sewage that was originally not treated until later on, they developed a treatment methods to the effect of, you know, deforestation on the landscape, and how that affects flows coming into the system.

So it's really all about trying to understand that we can't go back to the pre-European settlement landscape, there's no way to do that. We are still increasing the population in the watershed, and in fact, trying to account for and to minimize the negative impacts of growing population to the watershed, which includes increasing amounts of urban development, increasing amounts, you know, areas being paved, or roads being built. But also increasing intensity of agricultural land use, you know, 50-60 years ago, we didn't have concentrated animal feedlots that produce enormous amounts of manure that are not very well controlled, that has a huge impact environmentally.

We have to recognize that the Chesapeake Bay watershed going forward is going to be a different system than it has been in the last century because of rapid climate change.”

It's a reality that returning to the conditions before European settlement isn't feasible, when the land was in better condition. Instead, the emphasis should be on allowing the land time to recover. This underscores the significance of promoting more Native-led initiatives, where environmental management is under their stewardship. Native approaches to management are typically less extractive, leading to more sustainable land practices.

Dr. Hernandez advocates for LandBack, which calls for returning lands to Indigenous Peoples. This enables them to implement sustainable management practices, crucial for combating the unpredictable challenges of climate change.

“Throughout the Americas we continue advocating for “land back”. Many have conflated this as a means for massive deportation, displacing everyone who is not Indigenous to these lands. However, land back means returning the autonomy and right to manage and steward our landscapes back to the Indigenous peoples and communities who were displaced from their lands due to settler colonialism” (Hernandez, p.226, 2022).

This observation underscores the deep-rooted environmental prejudices and inequalities hindering Tribal Peoples' access to green spaces. These barriers are exacerbated by bureaucratic policies, making equitable access nearly impossible. Addressing this issue requires dismantling

discriminatory policies and actively promoting inclusivity and equity in environmental decision-making.

The interviewee made a connection with Tribal recognition and why it is challenging for institutes or organizations to establish relationships with Tribal Peoples in Maryland. Which highlights the reality of present-day exclusivity.

“Well, you have to know that the state of Maryland doesn't even recognize Tribal Nations by knowledge, right? So here's a lot of there's a lot of progress that needs to be made. before we could even get to the point of figuring out how to better connect institutions. I think it's actually easier for going to an organization like STAC, because they can say, well, these are particular objectives we have, we have a particular job that is involves informing, or providing advice to the Chesapeake Bay Program about management and landscape. And so I think it's not as hard to identify why would traditional knowledge be useful in that respect.

And to find people who are representative of groups that actually have some of that knowledge to connect with. I think it's easier to do that. And if you're just if you're University, your goals are so, I won't say they're poorly defined, but they're so broad.”

The lack of recognition of the six Tribes of Maryland by the state government creates a ripple effect, impacting other entities' acknowledgment of them. This underscores the importance of integrating Indigenous knowledges and histories from Tribal Nations into education programs.

Bluewater Baltimore Water Keeper

The question here I asked was what the challenge might be to establish relationship with Tribal Peoples.

The interviewee elaborates on the absence of a relationship between Tribal Peoples and their organization. The underlying reason is that the relationship may lack genuineness and instead be perceived as transactional, serving short-term interests of the organization's needs. Despite the candid nature of this assessment, the interviewee commends them for speaking truthfully rather than merely saying what was expected. This honesty underscores the importance of embracing truthfulness as a means to foster inclusivity and genuine relationships moving forward.

“So I think I can speak for myself on a couple of the reasons. Well, one of the big reasons why I haven't reached out, it's because I don't want to come to a group of people and try to build a relationship that is like, based on my needs, if that makes sense. Like I can see. Like, yes, it would be valuable for Bluewater Baltimore to have a connection with Indigenous people, because it will help us it will further our goals.

And that feels like Sorry, I know this is being recorded, like that feels terrible, that feels shitty. And it feels extractive. And at the same time, that sense of not wanting to like be a burden is preventing me from actually doing the outreach to begin with. And so it's like a, it's a lose-lose situation. Because at the end of the day, I'm not making any connections, I

think part of it is time, like capacity. So having all of these priorities in terms of like legal cases, or, you know, passing bills, General Assembly, being a small nonprofit organization, and also knowing that you have to invest deeply in, like the relationship building phase of partnership. And knowing that I can't do it really well, right now is preventing you from doing it at all.”

Building relationships with communities requires time, effort, and thoroughness. It's a process that demands patience and careful consideration, particularly when engaging with the specific community you aim to work with.

Inquiring about offering resources to her and her organization as a starting point to build connections, I overlooked a crucial aspect—the demographic priorities within the region. Certain communities may be labeled as high priority while others are deemed low priority by the organization. This overlooked factor can significantly influence the dynamics of connection-building efforts:

“So I think across the board, whether it's talking about like, with Indigenous people, or in Baltimore, I mean, we are a majority White-led organization, like this environmental group, Bluewater Baltimore, and we're in a predominantly Black city. And so like, we have this conversation a lot specifically around developing organic and authentic relationships with Black communities in Baltimore. We haven't had that same conversation around building these relationships with Indigenous communities.

But it's the same, it's the same, the same conversation, I think, which is, yes, we need dedicated resources to build those relationships and to invest in partnership building, not just like the outcomes of a grant project, or like the measurable tangible pollution reduction benefits that are typically funded, if that makes sense.

So like, our funders, and like the funding mechanism of our organization, is typically these big foundations that are paying us to achieve an outcome. And those outcomes often look like passing a specific bill, or like planting a certain number of trees or, you know, doing a certain number of facilities. And to do any of that really well requires there's intentional community building and partnership building, but like, that's not the work that's actually being funded.”

Addressing diversity should go beyond merely using the term and instead focus on ensuring that every representative of each community is heard and seen. In a city like Baltimore, where the demographics are predominantly Black, followed by White people, it's essential to consider whose voices are being prioritized and acknowledged. True diversity requires actively including and amplifying the perspectives of all communities, especially those historically marginalized or underrepresented. This ensures that decision-making processes and initiatives truly reflect the rich tapestry of experiences and backgrounds present in the community.

Given the interviewee's commitment to honesty, I further inquired about whether the organization could effectively counter Indigenous erasure despite the absence of an established

relationship with Tribal Peoples. I was eager to hear their perspective on this matter, considering their candid approach to our discussion.

“I do. So I think that, you know, Bluewater Baltimore is what 14 years old at this point as an organization. And then we were formed as a merger of five different organizations in 2010. So some of those legacy organizations are even further back. And I think that we are, I would consider us a well resourced organization, even though like we're nonprofit, we're scrapping for our money just like everybody else. But I still think that we're a well-resourced organization. And I think that we're positioned to kind of change the way that funders are funding. And I've seen that in practice, like, over the years, I think, especially since like 2020, we've been intentionally trying to write in more funding in our grant proposals for direct pass-through funding and stipends to community partners.

And I think that we have the opportunity to do that specifically for Indigenous groups as well like to bring them to the table in some of these programming initiatives that we're doing, but also like decision making, processes that we're going through and fund their time to do that, because like, you can't just ask somebody to like be a part of something without funding them, and like, actually, like, resourcing them, so I think we are in the position to do both of those things.”

An organization like Bluewater Baltimore is in a position to help counter erasure for Tribal Peoples. Though this will not be an easy process as it intends to be. For instance, Tuck and Yang's *Decolonization is Not a Metaphor*, goes into explicit detail of addressing that when you

mention decolonization it should not be deluded to make the dominant culture feel less guilty of what their ancestors have inflicted on Tribal Peoples. Decolonization should not be treated lightly.

“The answers are not fully in view and can’t be as long as decolonization remains punctuated by metaphor. The answers will not emerge from friendly understanding, and indeed require a dangerous understanding of uncommonality that un-coalesces coalition politics - moves that may feel very unfriendly. But we will find out the answers as we get there” (Tuck & Yang, p. 35-36, 2021).

Confronting uncomfortable truths is essential to disrupt cycles of erasure. Engaging in difficult conversations allows us to acknowledge historical injustices and complexities in our society. Through active listening and dialogue, we can work towards healing and understanding. These uncomfortable talks are necessary steps towards building a more inclusive and equitable future.

I sought to understand the primary reason behind the lack of relationship between their organization and Tribal Nations, questioning whether Tribal Peoples' tribal status was a significant obstacle blocking progress in this regard. She response was:

“So I don't know that that plays into it, because I'm not even aware of the distinction. So keep? Yeah, I don't I don't think that's part but maybe it is part of it.

I don't think that's a big piece of the reason. I mean, I think, speaking for myself, I don't know where to start. So I think the way that I got I connected with Ashley was actually through another Waterkeeper. It was Jeff Curry, who's the Lumber Waterkeeper down in North Carolina, and I was talking with him at a conference. And he was like, *You should meet my friend Ashley*. And that's like, how I got connected with her. And so I think not to put it on anybody else. Because it's nobody else's fault, you know that we don't have these, we can do a better job of reaching out and finding these connections. But I also feel like I don't really know where to start.”

The absence of Tribal status as the primary reason for engagement may provide some relief, but it shouldn't deter the organization from pursuing relationships with Tribal Peoples of Maryland. It's imperative for the organization to recognize the value of engaging with Tribal Peoples and actively work towards establishing respectful and mutually beneficial relationships.

Discussion

In Maryland, the challenge of engaging with Tribal communities is compounded by a lack of treaty awareness among environmental organizations. Unlike in the Western United States, where the Winters Doctrine establishes water rights for Tribal Peoples on reservations, Maryland lacks a comparable legal framework. This knowledge gap inhibits effective communication and collaboration between organizations and Tribal Peoples. As a result, meaningful dialogue on environmental issues is hindered, preventing the development of inclusive solutions. Bridging this divide requires a concerted effort to educate and inform stakeholders about Treaty rights and

obligations, fostering mutual understanding and enabling productive engagement to address environmental challenges in Maryland.

How to Engage & Available Resources

Despite living in the digital age, accessing information, especially for environmental organizations, isn't always straightforward. The engagement processes often lack flexibility in adapting to diverse communication channels and community preferences. This rigidity can hinder effective outreach and collaboration, particularly with Tribal communities who may rely heavily on digital platforms for communication and organization. Recognizing and addressing these limitations is essential for ensuring that environmental organizations can engage meaningfully with all communities and leverage the full potential of digital tools for collaboration and information-sharing.

EPA

One thing I was curious about is whether a federal organization such as the EPA is willing to work with non-federally recognized Tribes. To no longer stay curious, I had to ask if the EPA can work with non-federally recognized Tribes.

“We tend to work with the federally recognized Tribes now sometimes, a Tribe or a Sovereign Nation is recognized at the local state and federal levels, great. But our main focus our federally recognized Sovereign Nations and American Indian tribes.”

While it's disappointing that the EPA is currently limited to working only with federally recognized Tribes, it doesn't mark the end of the discussion. This presents an opportunity to advocate for policy changes that would enable collaboration with Tribes of different statuses. Continuing the conversation and pushing for inclusive policies could lead to positive changes in how government agencies engage with Tribal communities.

Chesapeake Bay Foundation

The Chesapeake Bay Foundation interviewee provided a lot of insight information from their personal experiences and knowledge of her organization. When we reached the conclusion of the interview I asked if there is was anything they wish to add to the interview that I didn't ask or they didn't say. Her response was the following:

“When it comes to the environment, and climate change, you know, climate change is something that affects all of us environmental issues, affect all of us, you know, water and air has no boundaries. So we should not, you know, put those boundaries on each other, because we all deserve the right, you know, for these very important things to thrive and, and to be healthy people. So I just, you know, hope that as an organization, we continue to grow, and that we continue to grow in our relationships and our transparency in the way that we're working with people. And I hope that for, you know, myself, and I hope that for my organization moving forward, and we're really working on it, and I think that there's just a better way, as a community, you know, for the environmental

community, but also for communities in Maryland to acknowledge, you know, Tribes and Tribal communities, and really work to build those relationships for all of us.”

It's important for the interviewee's organization to establish meaningful engagement with Tribal Nations in Maryland. These nations possess valuable knowledge about the Chesapeake Bay environment and can offer significant insights and perspectives. Additionally, building relationships with Tribal Nations can lead to enriching friendships and partnerships, benefiting both parties involved.

UMBC & STAC

I posed the question to our longstanding STAC member, inquiring whether STAC would be interested in integrating Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) into their program.

“I think there's an interest in learning what could be incorporated into management efforts. I'm not sure what traditional economic ecological knowledge would tell you about solving some of those problems other than it might be a bad idea to do it. But we don't have the ability to simply, you know, wipe the slate clean and undo some of those things. So I think the question is, *“How could it be incorporated?”* Which I think is a very interesting question. And again, I haven't seen that conversation. Going beyond the sort of introductory level to the point.

I think, you know, they're definitely have been Tribal Nations, and inhabiting this landscape for a very long time, who had a lot of knowledge about you know, the life cycles of the food resources that the different, say, an address fish species, or shellfish or what have you that were staples for them. And I think what happened is that a lot of, well, we know the history of oysters in the bay, for example, right? It's not was not sustainable, because they basically mined the oysters out of the bay and create a water column of all the conditions that decimated their populations. So that was Europeans who, who did that, right? So. I think the question is, *“what can you do now, in terms of managing in the system as it exists today, that takes advantage of the knowledge that you can get for traditional sources?”* And I don't have an answer to that question myself, I think it's a question people are interested in learning more about.”

Initially, I questioned whether integrating Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) into a science program would be beneficial. However, there's hesitancy because TEK operates more as a practical management approach rather than following conventional logical terms. TEK is highly specific, dependent on various factors such as timeframe, weather, season, people involved, animals, greenspace available, and the type of issue at hand. This nuanced framework is unique to the Tribal community, as any deviation from it results in a loss of authenticity.

Discussion

I think when formal organizations such as federal, state, and local governments try to acquire digital information on Tribal Peoples in Maryland, they end up at a dead end. What they may not realize is that most of the digital information is informal such as social media platforms like Facebook. This is where most Tribal communities across the country connect with one another for events that occur. This is how I was able to participate in powwow events and attend the Baltimore American Indian Culture (BAIC) weekly cultural classes. Having an open source of information should include social media platforms.

As climate change intensifies, sea levels rise on the Eastern Shore, imperiling Tribal and non-Tribal communities residing in vital agricultural and marshland areas. Urgency is paramount as saltwater encroachment outpaces policy responses. Authentic engagement with Tribal Peoples is crucial, incorporating their Traditional Ecological Knowledge to address environmental challenges effectively. Waiting for ideal conditions or leadership changes is untenable given the urgent need for immediate action. Engagement must commence promptly, fostering respect and collaboration to build resilient communities in the face of escalating climate threats. “Traditional ecological knowledge is accrued through trial and error. The actions that allowed for the optimal completion of a task (in itself a culturally defined metric) are passed down from generation to generation.” (Drew, p.1287, 2005).

Earlier the Nause-Waiwash community in Dorchester County described that climate change is responsible for the sea level rise that is occurring on the Eastern Shore. This is where most agricultural and marshlands are located. These places have Tribal and non-Tribal Peoples living in those affected areas. Saltwater is encroaching on those landscapes faster than policies are

being implemented to do something about this. It is very vital to acknowledge other forms of knowledge, such as Traditional Ecological Knowledge/Indigenous Knowledge that has massive observational and hands-on knowledge to use sustainable practices on natural disasters.

Conclusion

Chapter 2 delves into the lived experiences of Tribal Peoples and environmental groups within Maryland, capturing their accounts in response to structured questions and additional narratives they chose to share during the interviews. Through meticulous analysis, distinct themes emerged from the data collected, delineating the unique perspectives of each group.

The environmental group themes encompassed aspects such as their knowledge of local Tribal Peoples throughout history and in contemporary contexts, their involvement in Chesapeake Bay projects and efforts toward inclusivity, encountered challenges and barriers, strategies for engagement and available resources, and the projects and purposes of relevant organizations.

In contrast, the themes identified among Tribal Peoples centered on their perspectives regarding historical accounts, reflections on colonization and contemporary manifestations of neo-colonialism, narratives of modern-day Tribal resilience and prosperity, environmental concerns or priorities, and envisioned next steps toward Indigenous futurity.

These themes collectively illuminate the multifaceted dimensions of historical, cultural, and personal narratives often overlooked by the broader Maryland community. The poignant assertion of "Still Here" by Tribal Peoples resonates with profound emotion, encapsulating their enduring experiences and resilience in the face of adversity.

“This fight for land has caused much bitterness against the white man. It is this blatant violation of the treaties that creates such frustration among the Indian people. Many wonder exactly what their rights are, for no matter where they turn treaties are disregarded and laws are used to deprive them of what little land remains to them” (Deloria, p.31, 1969).

Each interviewee's narrative is a reflection of their unique knowledge and lived reality, illustrating the profound impact of their experiences on their livelihoods. As such, these insights offer invaluable perspectives for fostering greater understanding and appreciation of Maryland's diverse tapestry of histories and cultures. “What constitutes “presence of Indigenous voice” in the classroom becomes more elusive when the Indigenous peoples of interest are geographically distant and physical presence is not possible” (Rich, p.311, 2012).

Tribal Peoples are seeking long-term engagement that positions them at the table, actively participating in decision-making conversations, framework building, and policy development concerning Maryland's environment. Conversely, environmental groups express a desire to engage with Tribal Peoples in Maryland but often face challenges in knowing where to initiate these conversations and how to establish contact with relevant individuals. These gaps and

barriers hinder diversity and inclusion and pose a significant threat to the environment, particularly in the Chesapeake Bay region, where human intervention is crucial for addressing ongoing issues.

The urgency for change cannot be overstated; action must begin immediately. Echoing the sentiment of Malcolm X, who famously questioned, "if not now, when? If not me, then who," the necessity for proactive steps is evident. For example, a representative from the Chesapeake Bay Foundation highlighted the widespread impact of climate change, emphasizing its varied effects across communities while underscoring the urgency of addressing these alarming trends.

In essence, bridging these gaps and fostering meaningful engagement between environmental groups and Tribal Peoples is essential for promoting diversity and inclusion and for effectively addressing environmental challenges in the Chesapeake Bay region and beyond. The time for action is now, and it requires a concerted effort from all stakeholders to ensure a sustainable future for all.

Chapter 3: Next Steps for Tomorrow's Recommendations

Introduction

What is diversity? What does diversity mean to the organization or agency in the Chesapeake Bay region? After the interview processes and categorizing the themes for Tribal and environmental groups. I reflected on their responses a great deal during my downtime. I connected the missing puzzle piece of Tribal history and culture versus Euro-centric history that is mandated to be taught in schools. It's incredible how Tribal communities have persisted in the Mid-Atlantic Region, where European colonization; first took hold. Colonization has led to present-day consequences of academic and professional departments lacking diversity in their fields and barely having engagements with communities that are non-white.

Maryland's discussion of diversity tends to narrowly focus on the Black and White communities, overlooking the significant contributions and perspectives of other marginalized groups. While it's important to recognize the profound impact of Black individuals on the nation's policies, fashion, activism, and cultural movements, it's equally crucial to acknowledge the overlooked contributions of other populations and identities, such as: Latinx, Asian, Tribal/Indigenous Peoples, and Middle Eastern peoples. By expanding the conversation to include all voices and experiences, we can cultivate a more inclusive and equitable society that honors the diversity of its people.

In considering recommendations for Tribal Peoples moving forward, it's imperative to acknowledge the situation's urgency. While the future often evokes a sense of gradual change, the reality is that time is of the essence. The impacts of issues like the rise of sea level in Maryland are already being keenly felt and cannot be underestimated. The destruction of the environment, particularly in the Chesapeake watershed, poses a significant threat to the ecosystems many programs are working diligently to preserve.

Without swift and decisive action involving communities, the environment will face irreparable damage in the coming years. It's crucial to prioritize collaborative efforts that engage Tribal Peoples and other communities in preserving and restoring their lands and resources. This includes fostering partnerships that respect indigenous knowledge and traditions while incorporating modern scientific understanding.

Recommendations must emphasize the importance of community-led initiatives that address both the immediate threats posed by environmental degradation and the systemic issues stemming from historical injustices and marginalization. Empowering Tribal Peoples to take an active role in environmental stewardship and decision-making processes is key to ensuring sustainable solutions that benefit both people and the planet.

In summary, the situation's urgency demands immediate action and meaningful engagement with Tribal Peoples. By prioritizing collaborative efforts and empowering communities, we can work towards a future where the environment is protected, preserved, and cherished for future generations.

Tribal People's Inherent Rights: Treaty Awareness

In the interviews with those working with environmental organizations, I found it challenging to discuss the Tribal Peoples of Maryland and Indigenous Peoples in general. One significant hurdle was their lack of awareness regarding the numerous treaties that enumerate inherent rights to Tribal Peoples' lands and cultural practices. Unfortunately, like many governmental entities, there's often dismissal or selective interpretation of these treaties, prioritizing benefits for the majority rather than upholding the inherent rights as outlined in the documents. This complexity in governmental relationships adds layers of complication, often making the situation more convoluted than necessary.

Sovereignty within Tribal communities often strengthens through community support rather than reliance on governmental agencies. Greater awareness of treaties among Maryland organizations and agencies would highlight numerous Tribal frameworks that support Indigenous rights. For instance, scholars like Dr. Lydia Jennings, a member of the Pascua Yaqui Tribe (Yoeme) and Huichol (Wixáritari), 2023 journal article, *Applying the 'CARE Principles for Indigenous Data Governance' to Ecology and Biodiversity Research* and Dr. Stephanie Russo Carroll, a citizen of the Ahtna-Native Village of Kluti-Kaah, 2020 journal article, *The CARE Principles for Indigenous Data Governance*. (See Table 4.) The two Native scholars discuss distinct perspectives on the CARE Principles.

In fact, Dr. Mallinson, the Center for Social Science Scholarship, hosted Dr. Carroll and presented to UMBC faculty and students in Fall 2023 a paper co-authored by Dr. Jennings and their colleagues. This work delves into Indigenous Data Sovereignty and Governance, providing

valuable insights into frameworks that empower Indigenous communities to manage their own data and assert their rights.

Table 4. CARE Principles: Indigenous Data Governance and Sovereignty (U of A)

Collective benefit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For inclusive development and innovation • For equitable outcomes • For improved governance and citizen engagement
Authority to Control	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognizing rights and interests • Data for governance • Governance of data
Responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For expanding capability and capacity • For positive relationships • For Indigenous languages and worldviews
Ethics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For minimizing harm and maximizing benefit • For justice • For future use

Table 1. Care Principles Jennings et al. (2023). The CARE Principles, rooted in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) presented in 2007, extend far beyond the borders of the United States. These principles are designed to uphold the rights and dignity of Indigenous Peoples worldwide. Derived from UNDRIP, the CARE Principles are a guiding framework for respecting Indigenous Data Sovereignty and Governance practices across diverse cultural contexts and geographical regions. They emphasize principles of collective benefit, autonomy, responsibility, and ethics in handling Indigenous data, ensuring that Indigenous communities maintain control over their own information and resources. By aligning with UNDRIP, the CARE Principles strive to advance the rights and self-determination of Indigenous Peoples globally, acknowledging their unique cultural heritage and the importance of preserving their sovereignty in the digital age.

“Since the 1970s, there has been a resurgence in discourse around Indigenous knowledges, identities, and rights, culminating in the 2007 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples [UNDRIP] (UN 2007). UNDRIP reaffirms Indigenous Peoples’ rights to self-determination as political entities and honors the principle of Indigenous control over Indigenous data (Tsosie 2019; Davis 2016). The rights articulated in UNDRIP (especially Article 31) also reflect discourse around Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property Rights (ICIP) and Indigenous research ethics (Mātaatua Declaration 1993; Julayinbul Statement 1993; Janke 1998, 2004; Drugge 2016; Tsosie 1997, 2019; Anderson 2009, 2015). UNDRIP reflects a broad approach to Indigenous data that is not restricted by mainstream conceptions of knowledge and intellectual property (Posey & Dutfield, 1996).

Indigenous Peoples’ data comprise (1) information and knowledge about the environment, lands, skies, resources, and non-humans with which they have relations; (2) information about Indigenous persons such as administrative, census, health, social, commercial, and corporate and, (3) information and knowledge about Indigenous Peoples as collectives, including traditional and cultural information, oral histories, ancestral and clan knowledge, cultural sites, and stories, belongings” (Jennings et al., p. 2-3, 2023).

Indeed, in 2007, the United Nations presented the international treaty known as the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), aimed at granting autonomy to Indigenous governments. However, it's worth noting that despite its significance, four colonized countries chose not to sign the UNDRIP treaty. These countries provided various excuses to justify their decision, citing concerns about accountability and other issues. Despite

these challenges, the UNDRIP remains a crucial document in advocating for the rights and autonomy of Indigenous Peoples worldwide.

“Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and the United States initially refused to sign the UNDRIP. The four countries share very similar colonial histories and, as a result, have common concerns. Each nation argued that the level of autonomy recognized for Indigenous peoples in the UNDRIP was problematic and would undermine the sovereignty of their own states, particularly in the context of land disputes and natural resource extraction. Some governments claimed that the UNDRIP might override existing human rights obligations, even though the document itself explicitly gives precedence to international human rights (see Article 46). The UNDRIP may, however, provide guiding principles that national courts could use to judge a government’s actions in cases involving Indigenous rights” (Hanson, 2009).

Subsequently, Australia and New Zealand decided to sign the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP). However, Canada and the United States have maintained their stance, upholding a legacy of colonialism and white supremacy that perpetuates injustices against Tribal Peoples. Despite increasing global recognition of Indigenous rights and calls for accountability, these two countries continue to grapple with systemic challenges in fully respecting Indigenous sovereignty and autonomy. This ongoing resistance to embracing UNDRIP reflects deep-seated issues rooted in historical oppression and power dynamics that persist to this day.

Although the reluctance of the entire nation to be held accountable for addressing historical injustices may be evident, it's important to recognize that progress toward dismantling oppressive

power dynamics is happening in various pockets of the country. While these efforts might not always receive widespread attention or media coverage, they are nonetheless significant and contribute to positive change. Many individuals, organizations, and communities are actively working to challenge systemic injustices, promote reconciliation, and uphold the rights of Indigenous Peoples. These grassroots initiatives are crucial in addressing historical oppression and fostering a more equitable and just society, even in the face of broader resistance or indifference.

Exploring Indigenous Narratives

Indeed, there is a growing community of Native scholars who bring their unique perspectives to various professional, academic, and personal experiences. Through their work, these scholars contribute valuable insights that enrich our understanding of diverse issues, including Indigenous rights, sovereignty, environmental stewardship, and cultural revitalization. Their voices offer vital perspectives that challenge dominant narratives and highlight the resilience, creativity, and contributions of Indigenous Peoples. By sharing their stories and expertise, Native scholars advance their respective fields and play a crucial role in promoting Indigenous knowledge, empowerment, and representation. As their numbers grow, their collective impact becomes increasingly significant in shaping discourse, policy, and societal attitudes toward Indigenous Peoples.

“Historically, educational institutions have played a heavy-handed role in carrying out national social policies of assimilation and cultural erasure, policies that have had

severely detrimental and lasting effects. The project of bringing Indigenous and Western knowledges together needs to take into account this history and its residue of ongoing distrust and cultural erasure. The history, in which land and land loss are so central, makes environment-related disciplines a logical site for study and discussion of Indigenous perspectives. Cultural erasure continues today. Its impact, described in the next section, can be seen not only in the marked alienation of Indigenous students from conventional education, but also in the fact that many students are largely unaware that other knowledges even exist. Thus, the need is not only to teach from Indigenous ways of knowing, but also to teach about the assumptions of Western scientific and intellectual traditions that contribute to cultural erasure” (Rich, p.311-312, 2012).

As a result, they are actively addressing this gap by producing Native literature tailored for Tribal Colleges and other Native institutions, ensuring accessibility and promoting learning opportunities within these communities.

Though, I want to emphasize that learning Native or Indigenous history and/or narratives are not for the weak of heart. Even for citizens of our own communities, can have a profound emotional impact on our well-being. For example, my sister, Summer Powell, along with our colleagues and friends at Haskell who majored in the Indigenous and American Indian Studies (IAIS) Department, experienced significant emotional strain. The weight of this historical knowledge often led to tears in the middle of class.

As they delved into document after document, students immersed themselves in the historical context to gain a deeper understanding of the events that transpired. The emotional intensity of these experiences made it feel as though they were reliving the trauma themselves. These

feelings of anguish were a constant presence during class, reflecting the intense emotional resonance of the historical records.

Over time, many students, including my sister, became somewhat accustomed to the emotional toll, learning to manage the trauma without becoming constantly triggered. However, this did not diminish the gravity of their experiences.

To maintain their well-being, many students relied on extracurricular activities as a form of self-care. Despite the perception that obtaining this degree is easy, the reality is far from it. It requires confronting historical traumas and emotional hardships, as well as confronting uncomfortable truths that the government may seek to distort in order to preserve a narrative of white innocence. Obtaining this degree demands resilience and a commitment to truth-seeking that not everyone is willing to undertake.

My own experiences came in the form of films. Movies like "Bury My Heart At Wounded Knee" and "Killers of the Flower Moon" are indeed powerful films, but their intensity can be overwhelming. I still remember watching "Bury My Heart At Wounded Knee" as a child, feeling a mix of curiosity and horror at the scenes depicted. One particular scene that has stayed with me is the portrayal of the cavalry mercilessly massacring unarmed Lakota women, children, and elders as if it were a cruel sport, especially during the harsh winter months. The sight of bodies left barely alive or frozen to death in the snow, with one Lakota elder resembling my Cheii (grandfather) who had passed away, brought me to tears.

I wept for a long time, crying out for my Cheii, fearing that he might be among the victims.

When my mom took me to see my Cheii to reassure me of his safety, I immediately rushed to his side, instinctively wanting to protect him from any potential harm. For many years, I struggled to

understand why White people would so ruthlessly slaughter Native people, my people, as if their lives meant nothing.

It wasn't until later that I realized that this reality of violence and injustice extends beyond historical events—it's a harsh truth that I, as a Black and Brown woman, must confront every day. The fear of violence, discrimination, and oppression is a constant presence, threatening not just me, but anyone who looks like me or comes from my community.

This snippet serves as an example of the depth and complexity that Indigenous and American Indian Studies majors delve into, highlighting the nuanced layers of Indigenous narratives beyond what is typically depicted in mainstream films. Rather than focusing solely on surface-level portrayals, students in these majors explore the multifaceted aspects of Indigenous history, language, and culture. This approach allows for a more comprehensive understanding of Indigenous experiences and perspectives, going beyond simplistic or stereotypical representations.

Indigenous narratives encompass more than just trauma; they comprise a multitude of complex layers that often go unaddressed or overlooked. Each generation brings its own unique perspectives and experiences, including shifts in language usage. Certain concepts and nuances inherent in Indigenous languages may not have direct translations in English due to their cultural specificity and richness.

These diverse narratives are not homogenized or generalized under the umbrella of Pan-Indianism. Instead, they reflect the distinct histories, cultures, and worldviews of individual Indigenous communities. It's important to recognize and honor the multiplicity of Indigenous

voices and perspectives, acknowledging that they extend far beyond narratives of trauma or as past relics.

Not every Native story or narration is readily accessible to all. Many of these narratives are safeguarded within Indigenous communities to prevent cultural appropriation and distortion by outsiders. Additionally, in a world where credibility often relies on Western educational credentials, orally transmitted stories may not receive the same recognition. This creates a situation where anyone could potentially claim ownership of these narratives, further undermining their integrity.

This highlights the importance of adhering to the CARE Principles: Indigenous Data Governance and Sovereignty (U of A). These principles advocate for the ethical collection, analysis, and use of Indigenous data, emphasizing the rights of Indigenous communities to control and benefit from their own narratives and knowledge. Keep in mind that protecting Indigenous perspectives and their stories is crucial for preserving cultural integrity.

Redefining Diversity

You know, when I talk about diversity, it's not just about having different folks in the same place. It's about embracing all those differences while also acknowledging the unfair barriers and inequalities out there.

Here in Baltimore, the Black community's a big presence, with White folks coming in second. But when I talk about diversity, some folks assume I'm just talking about Black and White

communities. Nah, I'm trying to shine a light on other groups too, like Native Peoples, who often don't get enough attention. Makes me think we need to rethink what diversity really means and how we go about it, bringing in more of those DEIJ principles.

Since the historic event of the Black Lives Matter in 2020, organizations everywhere have been hopping on the DEIJ train, putting out mission statements and doing training sessions. But let's be real—diversity isn't some one-size-fits-all deal. We got to be super clear about which communities we're talking about when we talk about engaging. It's about valuing all those different perspectives and experiences if we want to make real progress toward fairness and justice.

Living here in Baltimore County, near the city, I've seen firsthand how redlining and other racial systems have shaped things. It's why you see that Black Butterfly and White L thing on the map (Brown, 2021).

The map of Baltimore paints a clear picture of these racial dynamics. The wings of a black butterfly represent the concentration of Black low-income neighborhoods in East and West Baltimore, while the White L represents mainly white, affluent neighborhoods. It's all thanks to old segregation practices.

Understanding diversity means seeing these big disparities and doing something to shake up the systems that keep them going. It's about creating spaces where everyone gets a fair shot, no matter where they're from.

For example, Dr. Kyle Mays, a citizen of the Saginaw Chippewa Tribe, in his 2021 book *An Afro-Indigenous History of the United States*, describes that since colonialism developed the construction of racism, it caused a negative shift between people of color and where they should stay within their own race. This restriction has caused a revolutionary act of creating social movements that go down in history. “The relationship between colonialism and racism, and their ongoing consequences, remain crucial for understanding Afro-Indigenous relationships. But the work must be global. If settler colonialism is global, and it is linked with racism- even while considering the specificity of its operation- understanding connections with other peoples is crucial for liberation going forward” (Mays, p. 172, 2021). The fight for liberation and sovereignty can be interpreted differently for other race groups because, say, Black Liberation is told from the Black perspective in the spiritual and socio-economic sense of being free from the oppressor, whereas Indigenous sovereignty is told from the Indigenous perspective of governing their community without the dominant culture interfering with their sociopolitical livelihoods.

Indigenous sovereignty is characterized by unique priorities and perspectives that are deeply rooted within Indigenous communities. It is essential to recognize that treating Indigenous Sovereignty and Black Liberation as interchangeable overlooks the distinct struggles and aspirations of each community. Acknowledging and respecting these differences among various communities is crucial for fostering meaningful and inclusive engagement efforts.

When we talk about Pan-Africanism or Pan-Indianism, it's easy to fall into the trap of thinking everything's the same across the board. But that's like saying all of Africa is just one big blob of

sameness, when in reality, it's made up of 54 countries, each with its own vibe, language, and culture.

Same goes for Native Peoples in North America. Not every Tribe is cut from the same cloth, you know? Each one has its own traditions, language, and way of life that's unique to their corner of the continent.

And let's not forget about Pan-Indianism—it often brushes aside all the unique and interesting aspects of each Tribe's culture. We've gotta remember that it's the diversity within these communities that makes them so fascinating. It's like a mosaic of different flavors, and that's what makes it all so cool. It's super important to recognize this, because it pushes back against the way colonialism lumped diverse communities into these basic, oversimplified categories. By acknowledging and respecting the unique histories, cultures, and dreams of each community, we're laying the foundation for real solidarity and moving forward with social justice efforts.

For instance, I'd like to highlight an insight shared by my friend Randy Nagitsy, who studied Indigenous and American Indian Studies (IAIS) at Haskell. Randy pointed out that despite the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act posed challenges by promoting a homogenous education system (Nagitsy, 2019). This approach often excluded Tribal schools from incorporating their unique cultural education into their curriculum.

Keith Moore, former director of the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE), provided a comprehensive overview of Native schools across the United States that continue to operate.

“The BIE operates a Federal school system for Indian students. The BIE funds 183 facilities on 64 reservations in 23 States, consisting of 121 grant schools and 3 contract schools controlled by tribes, and 59 schools directly operated by the BIE. In addition, the BIE operates two postsecondary institutions, Haskell Indian Nations University and Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute, with student populations for the fall through the summer semesters for 2009/2010 of 2,405 and 1,818, respectively. The BIE also provides funds for 26 Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) and two tribal technical colleges” (Moore, 1-2, 2010).

The reason for bringing up Native schooling is to highlight how policies like the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act have overshadowed Native students' ability to learn their own cultural curriculum. This perpetuates the notion that Native history is deemed less important than white curriculum by the US government, which undermines Native students' efforts to reconnect with their cultures.

“Unlike States, which use a single assessment system, BIE uses 23 different State assessments. This complex system has presented a major challenge for the BIE and BIE-funded schools. Other challenges often voiced by Indian educators, parents, and tribal leaders are that NCLB has diminished American Indian cultures and languages, and that

NCLB does not address the unique needs of tribal communities, especially in rural areas”
(Moore, p. 3, 2010).

The era of Self-Determination is still very much alive today. Native people are still fighting for control over their education, and sometimes that means finding creative ways to learn outside of traditional institutions. Instead of sticking to PWIs or regular schools, many are turning to their communities and peers for cultural education.

Education in the United States is primarily a State and local responsibility. Historically, tribal communities have not been afforded appropriate control over education in their own communities. Outside interests, including the Federal Government, have historically imposed their will on tribal communities and defined the futures of Indian communities through their children (Moore, p.4, 2010).

It underscores the importance of acknowledging the significance of learning from lived experiences and shared knowledge. Despite the challenges, Native individuals are forging their own educational paths, demonstrating their resolve to shape learning experiences on their own terms for future generations.

Beyond Land Acknowledgement

How do Tribal Peoples interpret these performances, and how do they feel about the lack of subsequent action? While I cannot speak as a spokesperson for Tribal Peoples, particularly those of Maryland, it's evident that the absence of meaningful follow-up actions influences their perceptions of land acknowledgments. These interpretations vary widely and are deeply personal to each individual and community that has either experienced or questioned their institution's true intentions.

I, too, perceive these gestures as performative. Echoing the sentiments expressed by Tuck & Yang (2012), who suggest that delving into the history of Indigenous land dispossession may unsettle some individuals, particularly those who are resistant to confronting uncomfortable truths. Decolonization is not a comfortable process; it involves emotional strain and difficult conversations that need to be addressed. This raises important questions about the extent to which Indigenous history can be openly discussed and acknowledged.

In the context of UMBC, it's valid to question what the institution is actually decolonizing from if they're not acknowledging or addressing the truth about Indigenous history. Without genuine efforts to confront and rectify past injustices, gestures like land acknowledgments can be seen as superficial attempts to appease without substantive action. In fact, some may view such gestures without meaningful action as further examples of colonialism and neo-colonialism.

The solution lies in institutions like UMBC taking tangible steps to support Indigenous communities beyond symbolic gestures. Merely acknowledging the land is not enough; active engagement and support are imperative. This entails forging partnerships with local Tribal Peoples, allocating resources to their needs, and spearheading community initiatives that uplift

Indigenous voices. Genuine accountability means more than just words—it requires meaningful action that fosters authentic relationships and advances the rights and interests of Indigenous Peoples. Given the proximity of Tribal Peoples, meeting them face-to-face is feasible and essential. True engagement requires stepping outside the university's walls and actively participating in the community. This is what genuine accountability looks like.

For example, my advisor took it upon herself to hold the university accountable and demonstrate what the initial steps of accountability entail. On April 17th, my advisor, Dr. Maggie Holland, organized an open dialogue titled "Storytelling & Dialogue on Indigenous Erasure." (see Figure 10). This in-person event aimed to facilitate a storytelling session and dialogue among individuals from different tribal backgrounds to discuss experiences of Indigenous erasure and presence. The speakers included Dr. Yolanda, who is of Indigenous descent from the Purépecha lands, Dr. Joby, a citizen of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma, Drew Shuptar-Rayvis, a Tribal citizen of the Pocomoke Indian Nation, Rico Newman, a Tribal elder of the Choptico Band of Indians, and Dr. Ashley, a citizen of the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina. The event took place outside the Performing Arts building.

Unfortunately, I couldn't attend because I was participating in the Indigenous Youth Climate Resiliency Through Public Policy Program (IYCRTPPP) in Washington D.C., where we presented our policy initiatives to congressional members and policymakers. However, I heard that the event had a good turnout and that passersby were absorbing the information shared. It was evident how various forms of erasure had impacted every Tribal citizen individually in numerous aspects.

Initially, I was skeptical of the dialogue, viewing it as potentially another performative act by UMBC to merely fulfill diversity quotas. However, my ICARE colleagues who attended expressed a different sentiment, sharing their aspirations inspired by the speakers and their attentive engagement with the discussions. It became evident that this was a new and enlightening experience for them, sparking a newfound awareness. This shift in perspective made me realize that UMBC's initiative to incorporate more Indigenous content represents a significant first step toward addressing the institution's shortcomings in diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice (DEIJ). Furthermore, learning about the Lumbee student's petition advocating for Indigenous curriculum inclusion further underscores the collective acknowledgment of this issue among students.

When I spoke with Dr. Maggie about her perspective on the dialogue, she expressed that it was a great turnout and that I had inspired her to do more for the Tribal Peoples of Maryland. It was heartening to receive recognition for influencing change, especially considering that I hadn't realized the extent to which I was shaping minds to think critically about Indigenous and Tribal Peoples. Dr. Maggie, who wears many hats at UMBC, mentioned her plans to continue organizing more dialogues and even host the university's first-ever powwow on campus. This commitment to ongoing dialogue and action is a promising sign of progress toward greater inclusivity and recognition of Indigenous voices at UMBC.

This marks the university's inaugural step towards breaking free from isolation and forging connections with the Tribal community. It's imperative for the university to evolve from being reclusive to becoming socially engaged, actively supporting Tribal communities. However, it's crucial to maintain respect for boundaries and recognize limitations in terms of time and capacity.

**STORYTELLING & DIALOGUE
ON INDIGENOUS ERASURE**

Wednesday, April 17th, 2024
2:30 – 4:30pm
(With reception to follow)
Location: Sculpture Forum *outside* PAHB
Open to all

Storytelling Panelists:

Ashley Minner Jones (Artist, Folklorist
Enrolled Citizen of the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina)

Rico Newman (Tribal elder, Choctico Band of Indians)

Drew Shuptar Rayvis (Tribal citizen, Pocomoke Indian Nation)

Joby Taylor (The Shriver Center at UMBC,
enrolled citizen of Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma)

Yolanda Valencia (Asst Professor GES/UMBC,
Indigenous descendant from the Purépecha lands currently known as
Michoacán, Mexico)

Thanks to the following UMBC co-hosts:
Dept. of Geography & Environmental Systems (GES)
The Shriver Center
Center for Social Science Scholarship (CS3)
Dresher Center for the Humanities
The Inclusion Council

Notes:
This event will be in-person only (not recorded)
*Should we experience inclement weather, the location will
be the Library Gallery.
Please stay tuned to updates via myUMBC:
<http://events.umbc.edu/go/129096>

Figure 10. Storytelling & Dialogue on Indigenous Erasure

Dr. Maggie Holland spearheaded the flyer's creation and organized the dialogue, ensuring that everyone could participate and listen to firsthand experiences.

Challenges and Shortcomings

One of the significant challenges I faced was the unreliability of my Rez car, which unexpectedly began breaking down on multiple occasions. This was a new experience for me, and it significantly impacted my ability to explore and attend various Tribal events. Dealing with car repairs became frustrating, as I often encountered delays due to the car shops being busy with other clients or financial constraints. To overcome this obstacle, I resorted to using public

transportation, Uber, and occasionally renting a car to ensure I could still participate in events. However, the rising prices in today's economy made these alternatives less feasible over time.

Embarking on this thesis project has been a transformative journey for me, one that I knew from the start was much bigger than myself. Advocacy work is undoubtedly challenging and comes with its own set of struggles. Personally, one of my main challenges was adjusting to the lifestyle in Maryland, which presented its own unique obstacles.

While conducting research, I encountered several excellent journal articles that could have greatly enriched my project. However, the barrier of subscription fees prevented me from accessing them. Though I could have requested my university to purchase these articles on my behalf, the time it would take for them to acquire and provide access to the materials was not feasible for my timeline. Therefore, I had to work with the resources that were readily accessible to me to ensure progress on my project.

Navigating time constraints and managing the pace of my research was a significant challenge throughout the ICARE program. Initially, I had my thoughts about the potential participation of community members due to the reputation of institutions like Johns Hopkins, which had a history of unethical practices in research. As my focus was on engaging with Tribal Peoples, I recognized the importance of establishing genuine connections beyond the typical student-researcher dynamic.

Following my presentation to the MCIA, I encountered a response with only two Tribal individuals showing initial interest in participating. However, I remained persistent in my efforts. I reached out to personal contacts and utilized connections through Ashley to expand my

outreach. Despite the initial setbacks, I was determined to overcome these challenges and ensure meaningful community engagement in my project.

One of my major challenges was a lack of sufficient communication with my mentors, including Maggie, Ashley, Yolanda, and Joby. I mistakenly believed that I had to navigate graduate school independently, only seeking assistance when absolutely necessary. This led to misunderstandings and miscommunications, as I attempted to solve issues on my own rather than reaching out for guidance. This approach proved to be inefficient and ultimately detracted from the progress I could have made.

Moreover, I faced logistical challenges such as starting my IRB process late and conducting most of my interviews virtually during a time when I didn't have a winter break. The workload became overwhelming, and I often felt like I was falling behind my ICARE peers. This pressure culminated in a mental breakdown, as I struggled to balance the ethical integrity of my research with the desire to meet project deadlines. I was determined not to rush through my thesis at the expense of its meaning and impact, especially considering the importance of honoring the stories shared by my interviewees and their communities.

Tribal Professional Scholars in the Western Colonial Societies

How many voices must be sacrificed for progress to be achieved? Leaving behind communities with smaller populations should not be acceptable. Regardless of size or influence, each voice holds value and deserves consideration in our collective journey forward as a state.

Most federal, state, and local governments, as well as organizations, are predominantly led by individuals of white ethnicity. However, their efforts in engaging with non-white communities often fall short. This lack of engagement can be attributed to unconscious biases perpetuating ignorance, hindering understanding of diverse perspectives.

Community research has emerged as a prominent topic in academia in recent years, thanks partly to the advocacy efforts of social movements and academic professionals. There is a growing recognition of the importance of inclusivity and collaboration with communities in research endeavors. Specifically, the significance of Indigenous governance sovereignty and ethical data collection practices has come to the forefront in some areas of the country. This acknowledgment reflects a positive shift towards ensuring that research respects Indigenous communities' rights, perspectives, and autonomy.

For example, Jessica Ruf's 2020 article, "*Why Environmental Studies is Among the Least Diverse Fields in STEM*," sheds light on this issue. Ruf delves into insights provided by Dr. Dorceta Taylor, a professor specializing in environmental justice and environmental sociology at the University of Michigan School of Environment and Sustainability. Dr. Taylor offers a critical perspective on why the STEM field lacks diversity compared to other academic disciplines.

While some white professors may attribute the lack of diversity in STEM to a supposed lack of interest among non-white individuals, Dr. Taylor provides a different viewpoint. She argues that the prevalence of a single-minded approach, often characterized by playing the devil's advocate, among white staff and students contributes to this disparity. This mindset fails to acknowledge

and appreciate alternative perspectives, thereby perpetuating the exclusion of non-white voices in STEM fields.

“They should invest resources to educate White students, White faculty and White staff to understand where their biases are coming from, where their ignorance is,” Taylor says.

“Because the assumption is that they are knowledgeable, nothing needs to be done and it’s for the people of color to make all of the adjustments. As long as we have this kind of one-way understanding, nothing is going to change, so why don’t we shift the bar and have the journey be two ways?”

Dr. Taylor underscores the importance of white individuals comprehending that the relationship between Black people and nature is not inherently unnatural, despite potential differences in its expression. From an outsider's viewpoint, the connection between Black individuals and nature may be perceived differently. Similarly, the relationship between Indigenous Peoples and nature is intricately intertwined, not merely exploited for superficial acclaim. Recognizing these nuanced perspectives is essential for fostering genuine understanding and inclusivity within environmental discourse.

This thesis paper aims to highlight the continued significance of Tribal Peoples in Maryland, emphasizing their ongoing impact, resilience, and advocacy efforts. Despite being often overlooked, these communities remain vital, actively fighting for their rights and creating opportunities for future generations. Unfortunately, instances like the attempted eviction of the Cedarville Band of Piscataway of Indians by Charles County commissioners underscore the persistent challenges faced by Tribes in defending their lands and sovereignty. Such actions

contradict societal values of diversity and equity, revealing the gap between rhetoric and action in upholding these principles.

Recognizing the significance of capitalizing on Indigenous Peoples, Tribal Peoples, and Native Peoples, as well as the names of specific Tribes, is crucial. These are Nations with rich histories and cultures that deserve respect and acknowledgment.

I personally know that Tribal Peoples have endured historical exclusions that continue to affect them today. Identifying where to start in addressing these issues may seem complex, but often, the solutions lie within the community itself. It's a matter of listening to their voices and understanding their needs.

For me, recognizing Tribal Peoples as people is simply common sense. It's about acknowledging their humanity and dignity, and it's something that should be inherent in how we interact with and talk about all people.

When we talk about the future, it's not some distant thing—it starts tomorrow. Engaging with Tribal Peoples needs to happen right away. Even though we aim for inclusivity, the idea of "a state that leaves no one behind" is tainted by ongoing instances of exclusion.

For instance, DEIJ statements in organizations lack credibility without meaningful implementation. I'm inspired by the narratives of Tribal Peoples in the Chesapeake Bay region and plan to conduct community research to amplify their voices. Institutions must move beyond superficial gestures like land acknowledgments and establish enduring partnerships with

Indigenous communities, including offering courses taught by Tribal Peoples and integrating their perspectives into government planning. Reparations are needed to address historical injustices and support the resilience of Tribal Peoples.

In the next section, you'll find a diverse list of Native individuals who go beyond being just authors. They're scholars, activists, politicians, librarians, healthcare professionals, fashion designers, athletes, and more. Their contributions are immense, enriching Indigenous culture, driving social justice, and empowering future generations. I gathered these names from various sources like social media, books, podcasts, Native scholarly literature, and other resources, aiming to celebrate their resilience, creativity, and strength.

Ongoing Notable Indigenous Scholars & Activists

- **Vine Deloria Jr. (Standing Rock Sioux Tribe)**
- **Dr. Daniel Wildcat (Yuchi citizen of the Muscogee Nation of Oklahoma)**
- **Kim TallBear (Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate)**
- **Gregory Cajete (Tewa Indian)**
- **Joy Harjo (Muscogee (Creek) Nation)**
- **Anne Dodge Wauneka (Diné)**
- **Dr. Joseph Brewer (Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma/Oglala Lakota)**

- **Dr. Melinda Adams (San Carlos Apache)**
- **Sarah Deer (Muscogee (Creek) Nation of Oklahoma)**
- **Dr. Robin Wall Kimmerer (Citizen Potawatomi Nation)**
- **Dr. Haunani-Kay Trask (Kanaka Maoli)**
- **Dr. Jessica Hernandez (Maya Ch'orti' and Zapotec)**
- **Cheryl Doughty (Pocomoke Indian Nation)**
- **Mayalú Kokometi Waurá Txucarramãe (Kayapó and Waurá)**
- **Yurshell Rodriguez (Raizal Afro-Caribbean Native)**
- **Madonna Thunder Hawk (Oohenumpa band of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe)**
- **Deb Haaland (Pueblo of Laguna)**
- **Winona LaDuke (Anishinaabekwe (Ojibwe) Mississippi Band Anishinaabeg)**
- **Chief Norris Howard (Pocomoke Indian Nation)**
- **Dr. Amanda Tachine (Diné)**
- **Dr. Henrietta Mann (Cheyenne-Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma)**
- **Dr. Stephanie Fryberg (Tulalip Tribe)**
- **Lori Hasselman (Shawnee and Delaware Tribes of Oklahoma)**
- **Charlie Warriax (Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina)**
- **Oren Lyons (Onondaga and Seneca Nations of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy)**
- **Dr. Elizabeth Rule (Chickasaw Nation)**
- **Dr. Susie Walking Bear Yellowtail (Apsáalooke Crow/Oglala Lakota)**
- **Jim Thorpe (Sac and Fox Nation)**

- **Sharice Davids (Ho-Chunk Nation of Wisconsin)**
- **Rico Newman (Piscataway and Conoy Indian Nation)**
- **Kaiali'i Kahele (Native Hawaiian)**
- **Cierra Fields (Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma)**
- **Tom B.K. Goldtooth (Diné/huŋka Bdewakantonwan Dakota)**
- **Dallas Goldtooth (Shakopee Mdewakanton Dakota/Diné)**
- **Jameson Lopez (Quechen Tribe)**
- **Dr. Kyle Whyte (Citizen Potawatomi Nation)**
- **Dr. Cornell Pewewardy (Comanche-Kiowa)**
- **Carrie Cornelius (Oneida Tribe of Wisconsin & Prairie Band Potawatomi)**
- **Simeon Oxendine (Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina)**
- **Suzan Shown Harjo (Cheyenne and Hodulgee Muscogee)**
- **Dr. Ashley Minner Jones (Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina)**
- **Quannah Chasinghorse (Hän Gwich'in/Sicangu Oglala Lakota)**
- **Dr. Susan La Flesche Picotte (Umo'hoⁿ (Omaha Tribe)**
- **Tsökahovi "Lewis" Tewanima (Hopi)**
- **Drew Shuptar-Rayvis (Pocomoke Indian Nation)**
- **Tamakhóche Thehíla "Billy Mills" (Oglala Lakota)**
- **Lindy Water III (Kiowa/Cherokee)**
- **Jimi Hendrix (Cherokee Nation)**
- **Amber Starks (Muscogee (Creek) Nation)**
- **Marie Louise Bottineau Baldwin (Métis/Turtle Mountain Chippewa)**
- **Peter C. Brooks (Piscataway Choptico Band)**

- **Dr. Gabrielle A Tayac (Piscataway Indian Nation)**

- **Mario Harley (Piscataway Conoy Tribe)**

The growing list of Native scholars and activists is a testament to their resilience and contributions. While acknowledging this list may seem overwhelming, it's essential to recognize and congratulate the effort put into highlighting these individuals. In Western colonial society, these scholars and activists often remain invisible, yet within Native communities, they are celebrated figures renowned locally or even nationally. From historical figures to contemporary leaders, their impact is significant but often overlooked in mainstream discourse.

When discussing the achievements of these individuals, it's crucial to acknowledge that their influence extends far beyond mere recognition during Land Acknowledgements or Native American Heritage Month. These brief acknowledgments are insufficient to capture the depth and breadth of their contributions. Moreover, when considering a single tribe, it's essential to recognize the diverse functional roles within that tribe, representing a wide spectrum of expertise, leadership, and cultural knowledge:

- | | | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|
| • Tribal Recognition, | • Culture | • Treaties |
| • History | • Socioeconomics | • Language |
| • Place-based Historical Roots | • Politics | • Entertainment |
| | • Environmental Injustices | • Language Revitalization |

- Clans
- Social Movements
- Academic Education
- Healthcare
- Philosophies
- Tribal Sovereignty
- Generational Trauma
- Fashion
- Sports/Athletics
- Artwork
- Pop Culture
- Professional Careers
- Media
- Influencing U.S. Modernity
- Narrative Stories
- Tribal Beliefs
- Tribal Principles
- Economics
- Businesses
- Finances
- Kinship
- Other Programs

Exploring the societal civilization of a single Native tribe reveals the multifaceted nature of Indigenous communities, spanning various sectors and showcasing their complexity and diversity. It's crucial to move past Hollywood's narrow and stereotypical portrayals of "Indians," recognizing that Indigenous Tribal Peoples have rich and varied communal livelihoods.

Generalizing their way of life not only shows a lack of effort to understand but also risks reducing their identity to stereotypes. For Indigenous Peoples, their cultural livelihood is deeply intertwined with survival and resistance against the Western colonial system.

Approaching the study of Indigenous communities with respect, curiosity, and a dedication to learning is essential. It allows for a deeper understanding of their unique perspectives and experiences, honoring their complexity and resilience.

Traditional Ecological Knowledge/Indigenous Knowledge (TEK/IK)

In the preceding section, it's important to acknowledge the scholars, land and water protectors, knowledge keepers, and cultural leaders for their resilience in the face of dominant culture pressure, which sought to impose Western norms and disregard their cultural livelihoods. Opting to straddle two worlds rather than forsake one for the other, they leveraged their communal knowledge of Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) and Indigenous Knowledge (IK) to offer potential solutions for their communities.

In regions with significant Tribal populations, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has integrated Traditional Ecological Knowledge/Indigenous Knowledge (TEK/IK) to implement sustainable environmental management practices. Despite these initiatives, the partnership with Indigenous communities often remains unnoticed. Nevertheless, there is hope for increased collaboration between environmental conservation practices and Tribal Peoples in the future, acknowledging and appreciating their expertise in land stewardship.

“We can’t save the planet without uplifting the voices of its people, especially those most often unheard.” Leah Thomas is an environmental activist known for advocating the intersectionality of environmental justice on her Instagram platform. She highlights how systemic inequalities exacerbate environmental injustices, particularly for marginalized communities. Thomas inspires action and amplifies diverse voices, using social media to catalyze change toward a more equitable and sustainable future.

When considering sustainability for the future, exploring Traditional Ecological Knowledge/Indigenous Knowledge (TEK/IK) is crucial. TEK/IK encompasses various definitions shaped by historical context, geographical location, and biome. However, its essence lies in the practice rather than a fixed definition. Dr. Jennings offers insights into TEK/IK from both historical and contemporary perspectives, emphasizing its diverse applications and significance.

Since time immemorial and across intergenerational time scales, Indigenous Peoples have been land stewards. Today, Indigenous Peoples govern about 40% of the most biodiverse terrestrial lands globally. Indigenous rights and title to land — paired with place-based knowledges make Indigenous governance critical to the stewardship of global biodiversity and ecosystem services. Indigenous Peoples have tracked climate change, changes in species composition and ecosystems for millennia, and are increasingly being sought out for research partnerships that incorporate Indigenous Knowledges (such as Traditional Ecological Knowledge, Traditional Knowledges and Indigenous Ecological Knowledges). However, settler colonial research and data collection methods often extract, distort and apply Indigenous Knowledges inappropriately, without meaningful recognition of Indigenous rights and responsibilities in relation to Indigenous data. This can result in poor-quality data, restricted access to data and the inability to make evidence-supported decisions (Jennings et al., p.1, 2023).

The worsening impacts of climate change are deeply intertwined with the lasting influence of colonial patriarchy, a system that disproportionately exposes non-white males to severe ecological consequences. Within this framework, patriarchy's pervasive presence across various professional

domains stifles the acknowledgment and inclusion of multicultural knowledge, particularly Traditional Ecological Knowledge/Indigenous Science (TEK/IS). These exclusionary dynamics hinder comprehensive efforts to tackle climate challenges, disregarding invaluable insights and approaches rooted in Indigenous wisdom and experience.

Place-based knowledge is a fluid concept that evolves with each generation and varies among Tribal Nations. This observational knowledge serves as a means of conducting experiments through trial and error, involving human intervention to maintain ecological balance. This notion resonated with me when I listened to the Pocomoke people discussing their wigwam hut houses and how pleasantly cool, they were compared to the hot and stuffy colonial houses. They explained how the water in the cattails provided cool precipitation, and how the oak bark contained this precipitation. When winter arrived, the cattails expanded, insulating the house and keeping it warm. Learning about the ingenious and sustainable lifestyles of different communities was truly fascinating. It prompted me to reflect on our own traditional home, the hogan.

What's the difference between TEK/IK and Western science? Dr. Fulvio Mazzocchi, an Italian scholar, specializes in epistemic pluralism and philosophical aspects of scientific research. They explore how various knowledge systems intersect and contribute to our understanding of the world, challenging traditional scientific inquiry. Through philosophical analysis, they illuminate the assumptions and implications of scientific methodologies, fostering reflection on knowledge and truth in academia.

In his 2020 journal article, *A Deeper Meaning of Sustainability: Insights from Indigenous Knowledge*. In his paper, the author advocates for including cultural knowledge systems, particularly Indigenous Knowledge, in sustainability conversations. He contends that incorporating these alternative perspectives challenges traditional notions of sustainability and opens avenues for redefining the concept. By acknowledging and valuing Indigenous Knowledge, sustainability discussions can become more holistic and inclusive, offering fresh insights and approaches to addressing environmental challenges.

Mazzocchi critiques Western science for its exclusionary practices, arguing that it fails to recognize the validity of other knowledge systems.

“Western science because many Western scholars believe that only the latter is able to meet particular standards and values—for instance, standards of rationality, explanatory and predictive power, technical precision—and that only in this case a system should be labeled as “science.” For some of these scholars, IK only grounds in anecdotal observation and is basically unsystematic and non-quantitative. Therefore, it has a very limited reliability (Howard and Widdowson, 1996)” (Mazzocchi, 2020).

The marginalization of Traditional Ecological Knowledge/Indigenous Knowledge (TEK/IK) within research practices poses a significant threat to its recognition and preservation as a distinct knowledge system. Furthermore, another scholar contends that conservation practices in the United States perpetuate violence against the eco-cultural knowledge of Tribal Peoples.

You know what? The teachings from shimásání dóó shicheii (my grandmother and grandfather). They're not just important; they're like the backbone of who we are. From planting corn to the stories passed down in Diné Bizaad, their wisdom is what makes us who we are.

But you know what ticks me off? When Western education tries to brush aside their knowledge just because it doesn't fit their mold. But nah, I'm not buying it. Walking in two worlds means I can embrace both their teachings and what I learn in school.

I won't let anyone downplay the importance of my grandparents' wisdom. It's not just valid; it's downright essential. It's what keeps me grounded and guides me through life. So, as I keep soaking up their knowledge, I'll stand up for it, loud and clear, against anyone who tries to dismiss it.

It's infuriating to witness how the critical issue of climate change is often left in the hands of politicians who seem more focused on politicizing it than taking decisive action. Instead of listening to the voices of communities directly affected by climate impacts, they rely on research from institutes that may not grasp the full extent of the situation on the ground. This disconnect between policymakers and the reality faced by communities is beyond frustrating. It feels like they're missing the point entirely. By sidelining the insights and knowledge of those most affected, they're undermining the potential for effective solutions. It's exasperating to see such a crucial issue treated as just another political game, while real people and the planet suffer the consequences.

Dr. Jules M. Bacon, *Settler Colonialism as Eco-social Structure and the Production of Colonial Ecological Violence* (2018), biased research practices within predominantly white conversations perpetuate systemic inequities, marginalizing non-white perspectives. This bias is evident in study design, data interpretation, and publication processes, reinforcing existing hierarchies. Overcoming

this issue necessitates challenging discriminatory practices, fostering inclusivity, and amplifying marginalized voices in research discourse.

“Mainstream environmental movements particularly those with wilderness, conservation, preservation, and reform frameworks—are epistemologically bound up with settler colonialism. They rely on Western science and law as their foundation for identifying and addressing environmental concerns, and in general exhibit no explicit concern for social justice, nor any acknowledgment of Indigenous peoples as contemporary members of the world, but rather frame their arguments around generalized human mismanagement of the Earth’s natural resources” (Bacon, p.61, 2019).

It's beyond frustrating to witness how Western environmentalism often dilutes or oversimplifies Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) and Indigenous Knowledge (IK). When Indigenous perspectives are stripped of their cultural depth and context, it's like missing the entire essence of their ecological practices. We're left with this shallow understanding that barely scratches the surface of their profound wisdom.

That's why it's absolutely crucial to highlight the frontline efforts of diverse communities, including Indigenous peoples. We can't ignore environmentalism's richness and diversity, pretending that a one-size-fits-all approach will suffice. We need to acknowledge and celebrate the invaluable contributions of people from all walks of life, recognizing that their perspectives are essential for truly effective solutions. Anything less is just plain shortsighted.

“In general, US environmental groups have tended to be oblivious toward Native peoples and/or settler-colonialism, or have draw upon perverted images of an “ecological other” via tropes such as the “noble savage,” which has deep roots in the work of early environmentalists and depends upon the limited knowledge of the settler populace regarding the real lived experiences of Native peoples (Smith 2012; Leddy 2017). The pattern of discounting Indigenous epistemologies and practices is visible everywhere in environmentalist discourse, though perhaps it is most starkly evident in Aldo Leopold’s famous claim that “[t]here is as yet no ethic dealing with man’s relation to land and to the animals and plants which grow upon it”(Leopold 1987). Published in 1949, in A Sand County Almanac, this claim entirely ignores millennia of Indigenous land tenure as well as the social and cultural ethics of Indigenous peoples regarding the treatment of the land” (Bacon, p.62, 2019).

We've had enough of white conservationists swooping in, preaching about the importance of nature as if it's some groundbreaking revelation, and then taking credit for frameworks that many communities have already been practicing for generations. It's no secret that we all depend on nature for our daily well-being.

What we really need is for people to start listening to Tribal Peoples. It's time to acknowledge that the true custodians of the land hold the knowledge and wisdom needed to sustain it. One crucial step? Giving back the land that rightfully belongs to Indigenous communities. They know what needs to be done to protect and nurture the environment.

This isn't some theoretical concept; it's real life. Organizations and governments need to get their priorities straight and start taking environmental initiatives seriously. Enough with the stalling and

the empty promises. It's time for action, and it's time to put Tribal Peoples at the forefront of the conversation.

The current system we're trapped in is a complete disaster and its high time it comes to an end.

These systematic standards are nothing but oppressive, racist, violent, and downright bigoted. It feels like those in power have blinders on, refusing to acknowledge the truth even when it's staring them right in the face. It's beyond frustrating.

I don't want to be the person constantly railing against politicians, but they leave us with no choice.

I just want to be a regular college student, exploring different facets of myself. But it seems like they keep playing these same tired tactics, only seeing one narrow aspect of who I am.

Enough is enough. It's time to shake things up and encourage alternative frameworks that actually empower diverse perspectives and knowledge systems. We need solutions that address the root of the problem, not just the symptoms. And Western education needs to step aside and let other forms of knowledge shine, without trying to take credit for it. It's time for a change, and it's up to us to make it happen.

“We must, as scholars, teacher educators, and teachers seek to end these silences of Indigenous histories occurring across state standards. While the narrative of American history might appear to become grimmer for some, the power of a more complex narrative to liberate us from the grasp of hegemony is a worthy struggle that could lead to a more just society” (Shear et al., pg. 91).

Celebrating Tribal Peoples' Rez Joy

Attending UMBC, I never really had the chance to let loose and share my Rez joy. Among my ICARE or UMBC peers, I'd crack a joke or express myself, only to be met with blank stares or the need to explain why it's funny. It kind of took the fun out of it, you know?

But then came the Indigenous Youth Climate Resiliency Through Public Policy Program (IYCRTPPP), and man, it was a game-changer. Over those 13 weeks, we got down to business crafting policy initiatives, all while connecting virtually from every corner of the country. And then, bam, the grand finale in Washington D.C. where we brought our A-game, representing our communities like bosses.

What started as a professional gig turned into something so much more. We went from being colleagues to being family. Through all the serious discussions and nerve-wracking presentations, we found solace in laughter, strength in jokes, and a solid foundation of camaraderie.

And let me tell you, standing on the ancestral lands of the Piscataway and other Mid-Atlantic Tribes, it felt like we were part of something bigger. We weren't just collaborating; we were building a family, showing the world the resilience and unity of young Indigenous voices. Together, we proved that even when times get tough, there's nothing like a good laugh, a tight bond, and a shared purpose to keep us going.

Transitioning to my thesis project, I have to say, interviewing Tribal individuals has been an absolute blast. Whether over Zoom or face-to-face, I didn't hold back on my Rez joy, and you know

what? They totally vibed with it, too! It was like we had this unspoken agreement to just be ourselves and enjoy the ride together.

What struck me the most was how laid-back they were about everything. No judgment, no weird looks – just pure acceptance. It was such a refreshing change from the Western world where if you don't fit into their idea of sophistication, you're outcasted quicker than you can say "stereotype."

Speaking of stereotypes, it's kind of messed up how mainstream media only cares about other cultures when there's money to be made. But hey, in our little interviews, we flipped that script. It was all about genuine connection, breaking down barriers, and sharing some laughs along the way.

So yeah, amidst all the heavy stuff, we found a little slice of freedom just to be ourselves. And let me tell you, it was pretty darn awesome.

In today's literature, there's a noticeable absence of visual representations showcasing the everyday joys experienced by Tribal Peoples. While it's true that discussions about trauma are essential, it's equally vital to highlight stories of resilience and overcoming adversity. The dominance of trauma narratives in literature may be attributed to capitalist interests, as they often garner more attention and sales, overshadowing the vibrant aspects of Tribal communities.

Beyond the lens of trauma, Tribal Peoples exhibit inherent humor and resilience. Traveling through states like California, Colorado, New Mexico, Arizona, Kansas, Oklahoma, Maryland, the District of Columbia, Virginia, and Canada, where Tribal communities thrive, I've experienced firsthand their contagious laughter and sense of humor at Tribal events.

Their positive energy is magnetic, drawing you in effortlessly. You can't help but be swept up in the lively banter, uproarious laughter, and playful exchanges of "ayees" and "nayes" after each joke,

along with shared references to movies. Immersing oneself in this environment is truly remarkable and uplifting.

For instance, one of my many heroes once stated:

“Life is a hard battle anyway. If we laugh and sing a little as we fight the good fight of freedom, it makes it all go easier.”

Sojourner Truth's narrative transcends categorizations imposed upon her by white society. Despite being labeled a slave, she boldly reclaimed her identity, becoming a pivotal figure in Black abolitionism, civil rights, women's rights, and temperance movements. Her story underscores the importance of defining oneself on one's own terms, emphasizing resilience, empowerment, and the pursuit of justice. Moreover, her legacy reminds us to cherish moments of joy amidst the ongoing fight for equality and community upliftment.

Rez joy is more than just a label for Tribal Peoples residing on reservations; it's a collective experience shared by all. Whether one lives on the rez, in urban areas, or even abroad, Rez joy encompasses the spontaneous humor that unites Tribal communities. It's about finding laughter and connection in the present moment, regardless of location or circumstance, and enjoying those moments together with others. The laughter and joy of Native Peoples will persist, their voices echoing loud and clear, refusing to be silenced.

Rewriting History

The narratives provided by Tribal and environmental groups offer a nuanced perspective on the realities of contemporary life in Maryland, showcasing both its strengths and challenges. Unlike Eurocentric narratives that often depict Native peoples as relics of the past, these stories offer a refreshing and authentic portrayal of Indigenous communities as dynamic and resilient. They shed light on the ongoing gaps and barriers that hinder meaningful participation in decision-making processes, highlighting the importance of addressing systemic inequities and empowering Tribal voices. These narratives challenge mainstream assumptions by centering Indigenous perspectives and contribute to a more inclusive understanding of Maryland's diverse cultural landscape. They underscore the need for greater recognition, respect, and collaboration to overcome historical injustices and build a more equitable future for all.

In a 1969 interview conducted in Finland, a South African musician and activist, Miriam Makeba, passionately articulated the ongoing impact of white colonialism on Africa and its global ramifications. She fervently advocated against the oppressive systems of apartheid and white-led governments in South Africa. Through her advocacy and activism, she aimed to raise awareness about the injustices perpetuated by colonialism and Apartheid while also calling for solidarity and support from the international community in the struggle for equality, justice, and liberation in South Africa and beyond.

During her interview, she highlighted parallels and drew attention to Indigenous or Tribal Peoples in the Americas, emphasizing how white colonizers manipulated history to legitimize their conquests. Across colonized territories, histories were narrated from a white perspective, serving to justify white supremacist agendas and the exploitation of Indigenous populations. Miriam's insight

underscores the pervasive influence of colonialism and neo-colonialism, both upholding the dominant culture's interests. This resonated deeply with my decision to undertake this project, as it underscores the urgent need to challenge and rectify historical narratives that perpetuate systemic injustices and marginalize indigenous communities.

“The conqueror writes history; they came, they conquered, they wrote. You don’t expect people who came to invade us to write the truth about us. They will always write negative things about us and they have to do that because they have to justify their invasion in all countries.

It’s like saying when the Europeans went to America. There were no Indians there. It’s ridiculous because they were there. I know that my people they don’t write history it has always been handed down to us orally by our elders. Of course, the white man came and he writes history. In fact you don’t know anything about in any place until the white man gets there.

Like my husband always says “it’s like saying whenever, until the white man comes to any place nothing lives. It’s only when comes and says, “poof, I’ve discovered you, now you exist”, which is ridiculous.

And that is why I have to say the things I say in my performances because I know again that I am right and because I am right I know that I will win. Because the truth shall never be covered by lies.” -Miriam Makeba.

Autumn's Tomorrow

What are my next steps? My next steps are to graduate from UMBC with my master's degree, move back home to Arizona for the summer for my internship with the Institute for Tribal Environmental Professionalisms (ITEP) and spend family quality time. I will then continue my educational journey by attending the University of Kansas (KU) for my doctoral in the fall. Yes, this means I will not be coming back to Maryland. This is it for me. However, this is not the end. It was a struggle for me to somehow give back to the Tribal communities and I couldn't figure that out for the longest time, until I came across the National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) hiring ad for their newly launched opportunity of the Mid-Atlantic Indigenous Engagement Fellow. The purpose of is:

This Fellow will support the Indigenous engagement campaign in the Mid-Atlantic region to support tribal nations and national parks in implementation of current department initiatives, such as co-management and Traditional Ecological Knowledge. The fellow will conduct research to gain a deeper understanding of current policy as well as building relationships with Tribal Nations to support their needs as appropriate. This Fellow will create a presentation to educate advocates and stakeholders about indigenous engagement and current initiatives to further tribal sovereignty in National Parks.

This was newly launched that is working with the Chesapeake Bay region and other Northeast and Mid-Atlantic region. This was perfect for me to have a non-profit organization to establish this

connection with Tribal Peoples they might not have known about and to not expect Tribal Nations to do certain things to get the help they need. My boss, Micheala Palvat whose position is the Indigenous Partnerships Field Representative for the Chesapeake Bay region. They are trying to learn to engage in appropriate manner and updating guidelines that are helpful for future fellows who take over when I'm done.

I'm committed to working part-time and ensuring that Tribal communities in Maryland are actively involved in all environmental discussions and plans. I'll provide them with contact information and resources to ensure their voices are heard. But it doesn't stop there. I've had the privilege of meeting incredible people here, both Tribal and non-Tribal, and I'll stay connected to see how they're including Tribal Peoples in their work. I trust individuals like my advisor and programs such as ICARE at UMBC to continue fostering interdisciplinary initiatives that involve Tribal Peoples of the Chesapeake Bay region. It's important to me that the individuals I've interacted with are supported and not exploited, and that their input is valued rather than used against them.

Unfortunately, there's a tendency for some to romanticize Tribal cultural practices to fit their own aesthetic ideals, but I'm dedicated to ensuring that doesn't happen.

As an advocate, I want to extend my deepest apologies for not being able to cover every aspect of Native Peoples of the Chesapeake Bay in my research. As one person, I can only do so much, and I tried my best to make connections between historical and current information. However, I recognize that this overview may only scratch the surface, and I encourage everyone to engage in self-research to learn more about other Tribal Nations, communities, Peoples, or individuals who may resonate with them or inspire them.

I wish I weren't the sole individual from my institute undertaking research of this nature. This is why my paper is so extensive—to shed light on the fact that many people may not be aware of the realities facing Native communities in the Chesapeake Bay region and throughout the United States. So, I urge you, to rethink about colonial narratives that sanitize the whole story that may include Indigenous Peoples and their stolen homelands.

Maryland's Tomorrow

The next steps I anticipate from Maryland and UMBC involve demonstrating inclusion through tangible actions rather than mere words. Land acknowledgments in this region currently fall short of fostering true inclusivity. Through my collaboration with NPCA, I've been introduced to documents like the Tribal Cultural Areas Protection Act from the Department of the Interior and the Guide to Working with Non-Federally Recognized Tribes in the Section 106 Process. These resources are essential for individuals in environmental roles who wish to prioritize Tribal inclusivity in Baltimore and across Maryland.

I urge immediate action, as waiting for change to occur in the future is insufficient. We cannot afford to delay progress until next month, next year, or until new personnel arrive. Change must start tomorrow— No waiting around. Let's kick things into gear and make it happen, starting tomorrow.

First, the [Tribal Cultural Areas Protection Act](#) bill was introduced in 2022 that ensures Tribes to

“This bill provides for the preservation of tribal cultural sites on public land, including by establishing the Tribal Cultural Areas System, setting forth requirements related to land management, and authorizing certain actions by tribes.”

The anticipation surrounding the pending [Tribal Cultural Areas Protection Act](#) of 2022 is palpable, offering a glimmer of hope in our political landscape. The provisions granting Tribal authority over lands, such as the historic Choptank reservation in Cambridge, underscore a commitment to Indigenous sovereignty and cultural preservation. Moreover, the bill's inclusive language, extending eligibility beyond federally recognized Tribes, reflects a nuanced understanding of Indigenous rights and representation. As stakeholders eagerly await its passage, the potential enactment of this legislation stands as a testament to our dedication to equitable governance and the empowerment of Tribal communities in our political discourse.

The [Guide to Collaborating with Non-Federally Recognized Tribes in the Section 106](#) Process serves as a vital tool for promoting inclusivity within the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. It offers guidance on engaging with Tribes not federally recognized, such as those within the 50 states, Native Hawaiians, Puerto Rico, and U.S. territories. This resource facilitates consultations with federal agencies to ensure the protection and preservation of historical artifacts, particularly amidst challenges like climate change.

While it's a set of guidelines rather than formal legislation, it underscores efforts to empower Tribes in safeguarding their cultural heritage. Moreover, there may be ongoing legislative endeavors aimed at bolstering protections for Tribal historical items against climate change, highlighting the ongoing importance of advocacy and awareness in this domain.

I'm urging Maryland to engage in a critical examination of its historical narrative, confronting the ongoing systemic oppression faced by Black and Indigenous communities within the state. From my perspective, Maryland's inclusivity efforts are lacking, and it seems that societal chaos is further restricting the freedoms that were once commonplace in our daily lives. It's essential for Maryland to chart a distinct path from the federal government by making decisions that prioritize the well-being of all its citizens, particularly Indigenous Peoples who have long advocated for their concerns and priorities. It's a call for Maryland to listen attentively and take decisive action towards fostering a more inclusive and just society.

This thesis paper has touched on surface-level information regarding Tribal peoples across various sectors, but there's undoubtedly much more that remains unexplored. Rather than just reading about it, I encourage you to reach out and connect with your local Tribal communities. Engage with individuals who have lived through these experiences or possess perspectives that have been overlooked. It's time to step out of our comfort zones and engage directly with Tribal Peoples to broaden our understanding and viewpoints. By fostering these connections, we can gain deeper insights and contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of Indigenous experiences and perspectives.

Conclusion

When moving from Arizona, where environmental groups consult, involve, and include us in their environmental conversations. Though it also could be because most of the Western Tribes are federally recognized and simply cannot ignore us. Though there are times when environmental and academic institutions discriminated against us for being us. It's far from perfect and there's always

room for improvement. Though transitioning to Maryland, I was beyond astonished that environmental groups know there are Tribal Peoples here but neglected to include them in meetings, conversations, and decision-making on their land and waters. This went against every DEIJ statement that every organization has, and this made me very upset that Indigenous invisibility is very strong in this part of the country.

I strongly believed that my school was a safe place for me to attend but then after I saw the Columbus Day sign, where they are still celebrating a rapist and murderer. I concluded that Indigenous People did not matter here at UMBC and in the state of Maryland. I needed to know why exactly that Indigenous people did not matter were not considered in a lot of initiatives taking place. I first wanted to know how the Tribal Peoples felt about them not being celebrated or being included in projects and bills. Lastly, I needed to know why these environmental groups gatekeeping information and initiatives and excluding Tribal Peoples from their lands and waters.

To make my project a reality, I took Ashley's advice and attended Tribal communal events to put myself out there for them to know who I am, and my attendance is my support in showing up. I started to recognize most of the Tribal individuals and consult with them as a person, not as a student researcher. Because I only had two years to complete my community research project.

Though I wasn't able to talk about every topic I was curious about, I had to find a different route to learn about the historical content. I knew that most of the historical contents from the colonial perspectives were broadly exaggerated when it came to talking about Tribal Peoples. The online algorithm was on my side because I was able to apply for the summer internship at the Maryland

State Archives Special Collections: Indigenous Peoples' Programs. This was my chance to learn firsthand about the relationship of Tribal Peoples and Maryland's history with one another. Maria Day and Megan Craynon were able to summarize and interpret the actual accounts of history through the online website of Mayis: Indigenous Records that they started to construct before the COVID-19 Pandemic. At the same time, I was able to present my thesis project to the Maryland Commission of Indian Affairs in hopes of recruiting Tribal Peoples who may be interested in partaking in my project.

After my summer internship, I started prepping to conduct interviews with Tribal and environmental groups. Ashley and Maggie helped me formulate two different sets of interview questions for the Tribal Peoples and environmental groups, including consent forms and gift items for the interviewees to UMBC's Institutional Review Board (IRB). Later, I was approved by the IRB to conduct my interviews. After my approval, I immediately started to compile a list of people I can contact to

After completing my thesis defense, my committee members had to close the defense to review my thesis paper and evaluate my project. Each member asked me questions to learn my viewpoint on things I mentioned in my paper and what else could be done. Ashley's question revealed how I felt about everything I learned.

Ashley asked, "How are you feeling?" That question alone unveiled uprooted hidden emotions that came surfacing up to reveal what I truly felt about everything. I thought that I could present a smile and say I was fine. I couldn't lie to myself anymore by saying, "I'm fine," I couldn't utter a single word because I broke down crying. I wasn't crying because I was happy that I completed my thesis

project. I was crying because in my point of view, I saw my family through the seven Tribal individuals that I interviewed. They both struggled through discriminating acts for simply existing and being themselves, though through their struggle, they have learned to continue to embrace their Indigeneity with their community. The Tribes are thriving in this region, but they also face prejudiced acts such as being doubted, provoked, harassed, assaulted, and neglected from participating in anything. in their homelands.

I just couldn't accept that the state that shouts for inclusion is acting on exclusion. I knew work would not be easy, and it would reveal a lot of emotions from the personal experiences that they shared with me.

The government and institutions don't get to dictate what it means to be Black or Native, nor do they get to shrink me because I'm a woman who speaks her mind. I'm proud of my heritage and won't let anyone define or limit it. I'll keep being bold and assertive, honoring my ancestors' dreams along the way. This is the path that I've discovered while being in graduate school and among my ICARE cohort. I will continue to move forward in the direction that I've chosen for myself.

So far, my journey has opened my eyes to aspects of Tribal life I hadn't seen before, giving me the drive to speak up for local Tribal Nations and Peoples using my voice and academic platform. But, you know, it's not all smooth sailing. There are tough moments when I'm faced with the harsh realities of inhumane acts against my people and the ongoing struggles our community faces. That's when I remind myself to take a step back and enjoy life with my loved ones, soaking up the good times. It's all about embracing vulnerability and living in the moment, sharing laughs and making

connections. And hey, I'm only one person. I find comfort in knowing that others I've met along the way are also fighting the good fight alongside me.

My current journey leads me back home to reunite with my family and community, after a prolonged absence. As the summer draws to a close, I will embark on a new chapter pursuing my doctoral degree at the University of Kansas, specializing in Indigenous Geography. The specifics of what I will learn and uncover remain to be seen, but I eagerly anticipate the challenges that lie ahead. Though uncertain about the details of my project, I am steadfast in my commitment to embrace the journey. As @Rez_ways wisely stated on their Instagram page, "You can be Rezzed out and still accomplish great things" (see Figure 11). My own journey stands as a testament to this truth – a Rez kid who has successfully navigated graduate school. Let us not feel bound by Western standards; instead, let us continue to thrive in our own unique ways of living, embracing what serves us best.

"A State That Leaves No One Behind" - I truly hope Maryland lives up to this motto. It's not just about inclusive words; we need inclusive actions to match. Climate change affects us all, without exception, and we can't afford to leave anyone behind when it comes to addressing its disastrous impacts. I'm putting my trust in those who are stepping up or preparing to do so. This isn't the end of my connection with Maryland; I'll stay in touch with the friends I've made here. Change is constant, whether it's positive or negative, but it's inevitable. Maryland, it's time to do better. Tribal Nations, leaders, Peoples, and individuals must have a seat at the table when it comes to making decisions about environmental initiatives and bills. This is still their land, regardless of what any

deed or title might say. Their knowledge of the land surpasses that of any high-ranking official. They are the true experts. Let's ensure they're where they belong.

A'hé'hée'

Thank you.



Figure 11. Being Successful in Rezzed Out Way

[Rez Ways](#). In the realm of Rez life, encompassing both reservation and urban environments, one unwavering certainty rings true: amid the constraints of reservation living, Rez youth and individuals carry boundless potential for greatness. This conviction echoes throughout the enduring legacy of countless Rez scholars and trailblazers, who boldly challenged boundaries and carved out new frontiers. Their narratives stand tall as monuments to the unyielding resilience within our communities, sparking a fervent belief that we, too, can achieve the extraordinary.

Appendices

Appendix I

Pocomoke Indian Nation Individual

Interviewee: So I am a citizen and cultural ambassador of the Pocomoke Indian Nation. We are one of the six Tribes in the state of Maryland.

04:51

Interviewer: Hmmm, Okay, and are you guys like..... was this your ancestral homeland

Interviewee: Um, it was very close

Interviewer: (continuing) in specific Maryland?

04:56

Interviewee: So our traditional homelands are all Somerset County, parts of Wicomico, parts of western parts of Sussex County, Delaware and parts of the northern part of Akhmat County, Virginia as well as Tangier and Smith Island.

05:13

Interviewer: Oh wow. So are you guys like.....would you class classify you guys itself as like, like river people, fishery?

05:24

Interviewee: so Pocomoke, it's a broad term,

Interviewer: Okay

Interviewee: and we were a we were a paramountcy, um, which is essentially a small Confederacy. So in the 17th century, many of our tribes were in these small Confederacy's that were related to each other by mutual kinship and related to each other by shared culture and language. We were a small paramountcy confederacy of eight different tribes. So, Pocomoke literally means Dark Water People now it has two different definitions. So one is the broken ground. That's one definition and it has to kind of do with the swampy nature of the Lower Eastern Shore because you went to Blackwater and what's kind of really squishy

Interviewer: Yeah

Interviewee: (continuing) ground. So that's one definition. The one that we kind of all go with, and believe is and one that I was taught was that it means Dark Water People and the reason why it means Dark Water People is because the river that is the big river, the Pocomoke river that was you know, our main artery that defined us, that's where the cypress trees are the Cypress is very important in our community, that's traditionally we made the canoes from the Cypress and cypress plays a very big part in our tradition and our culture. But the cypress trees what they do, because they're like in the Cedar family, they stain water. And so cedars will stay in the water, this dark amber color. And so the Pocomoke that is very dark because of the staining from the cypress trees. And so our community feels, we go with the way we feel and we go with the definition of the Dark Water People, the People of the Black Water.

07:05

Interviewer: So when you said River, do you know what river? It is? Is it still called in your language?

07:11

Interviewee: Well, so our word for river is Pamptuckquah (word for river), is River.

07:16

Interviewer: Okay. And is that like, is that river? What's the current rivers name?

07:23

Interviewee: It still carries its tradition.

Interviewer: Oh, it still does?

Interviewee: Pocomoke, meaning dark water.

07:27

Interviewer: Oh Okay, so then the Pocomoke there's a Pocomoke River. That's what it's called?

Interviewer: Yeah

Interviewer: (continuing) now?

07:32

Interviewee: yeah.

Interviewer: Oh!

Interviewee: that's the big river. If you go into Lower Eastern Shore

Interviewer: Oh!

Interviewee: (continuing) that's like, well, Pocomoke City is and that's where

Interviewer: oh okay

Interviewee: Yeah that's where Delmarva Discovery was where you went

Interviewer: Oh.

Interviewee: For the archives. That's all like heartland of our territory.

Interviewer: Oh!

Interviewee: (continuing) All that area.

Interviewer: Wow

Interviewee: So it could very well be that it could be a combination of both the place where the ground is soft, and the Dark Water People. I'm not saying either of those one's greater than the other. The one our community goes with is the Dark Water People. That's the one we feel is the most accurate.

08:02

Interviewer: Oh, that's cool.

Interviewee: Yeah

Interviewer: I didn't know about the Cypress being like a cedar related tree.

Interviewee: Yeah, yeah. Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah, cuz we (Navajo Nation) have Cedar too. But of course, like we don't have that much water.

08:16

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: Yeah, they do. They stain the river and it's only a few places that you see this. But it's one it's because the tannins and the tree. It's a weird kind of chemistry kind of thing. But because the Pocomoke, believe it or not, is like crystal clear. But the reason why it's dark is because the cypress trees stain it.

08:35

Interviewer: Wow, this is so cool. I like it. Well, thank you for sharing that.

Interviewee: wanishi (thank you) thank you.

08:42

Interviewee: Yu'oh (your welcome) I should say, you're, you're welcome. Okay, well, Yu'oh

08:48

Interviewer: okay. I'll try to say that. Um, so you already said that I'm, okay. So this one. So **how does your Native identity tied to your sense of place or community?**

09:01

Interviewee: That's a really great question. So I was born outside of my community, I came to my community later in life. I was born in northwestern Connecticut. My parents had left so my family had lived in the diaspora homelands of the Pocomoke people, which is Eastern Southeastern Pennsylvania, and my family had lived in between Maryland and Southeastern Pennsylvania, back and forth from Virginia and Maryland into southeastern PA for three centuries. And it was not until my self and my first cousins were born. We were the first not to be born in that area since William Penn was alive and to give you just reference William Penn was born in the 1640s. He died in 1700 by a family members that purchased land from him when he was alive, and had not left that era since he was alive. So we're talking 300 years of being in the same place. So I grew up away from my homelands in New England. So for me, much of my family's story was tied to the Mid-Atlantic, particularly the southern Mid-Atlantic was very tied to this place through dialect, through stories through a whole bunch of things. And so, for me, if you could just reiterate the question one more time.

10:18

Interviewer: Yeah, So **how does your Native identity tied to your sense of place or community?**

10:22

Interviewee: so thank you. So, for me, though, I love New England, and I have a very soft spot for it, you know, I grew up there, you know, and you're gonna be tied, and have a soft spot for anywhere, as a kid you grew up, it always felt kind of distant. And it always felt like I wasn't shared space. So when I come to the southern Mid-Atlantic, so southeastern eastern Pennsylvania, into my Tribal homelands, your home, and it's where, you know, I feel the ground wake up and open its eyes and opens its open its mouth and start talking the way that in New England, I feel something very similar, but not the same amount. And it's one of those things I talk to a lot of people I say, you know, walking in your home, it's no matter who you are, no matter what people you come from around the world, because one of the beautiful things is that we're all Indigenous to somewhere. And that's a beautiful thing. And so when we go to our homelands, you know, the land will talk to us, as long as we're willing to listen, you know, the land, and the water, and all those things will speak to us. And so for me, with my identity, as an Indigenous person, it's very much tied to the Mid- Atlantic, because that's the the bones of my ancestors are here, the bones that my people are

here, and this ground is as much I was in shared space, skin and flesh, you know, it is the part of the earth. And so for me, you know, I am, in essence, the land and the water, and the marshes in human form, it has manifested into my shape. And so I feel very much tied to this area and to this place.

11:58

Interviewer: So when you were saying earlier about, like, a New England and everything. So when you were saying you kind of felt out of place, like, Did you mean, because there wasn't Native people around?

12:10

Interviewee: No, there...I mean, where I grew up, you know, with there's not, it's not the same. So I went to Santa Fe, New Mexico, earlier in the fall. And it was very different. There were Native people everywhere. And here it's very different, you know, for our community, we intermarry with Europeans very early. The Native people that lived by me either didn't know their own heritage, or didn't live close to me, we had several, we had two federally recognized communities in the state and three state recognized tribes within the state. So there were Native American people that didn't live very far from me, but the town I lived in had a very low Native population, those who had that heritage, you know, there was, I wouldn't say discrimination, but it wasn't. There wasn't a very large community for people to buffer themselves with. So it was very much individual people, there wasn't like a community of Native people wasn't in any great number. It was more distant to me because my family had never lived in New England. And so there were many New England things and tropes and language and dialect that were just very foreign to my family, who were very much tied to the southern Mid-Atlantic. Just and its culture in language and food and just a way of being. And so I think, you know, there's plenty of Native people. There's a lot of Native people in New England, just not in the particular park not as, excuse me, let me rephrase. In the town I grew up in there was not a high Native American population. We were not far because two towns away, but for me, there were there is a historic preservation. There is a Tribal community that lives two towns away from me. But it was distant and I didn't go to that school district and I wasn't in that town. So I didn't hang out with those kids in those families.

14:06

Interviewer: Oh okay. So when so how would you say the difference when you went to Santa Fe and here? Can you kind of elaborate on that a little bit?

14:13

Interviewee: I think because it's it's kind of like the Eastern Shore in a way that it's homogenous, in the sense that it's still the original populations that have lived there. So you have the people and it was Mexico, Indigenous Mexican people who had intermarried with Spanish people who were living there, the American settlers, who had either who had come throughout the 1800s, and the Indigenous peoples to that specific place. So the different Pueblo and peoples that were there. Were in New England, especially southern New England, and especially the upper northeast, is such a melting pot at this point. You have people from all over the world and it's not the same homogenous populations that have been there for three or four centuries, it's, you had people who you go to parts of the upper northeast, depending where you are, if you're like right outside of New York City, who are first gen, generation immigrants from Albania, who had grandparents who spoke a Indigenous European language that spoke, you know, had different customs and cultures. And so you get to certain parts in southern New England, and it's very cosmopolitan, much more so than it is in certain parts of Eastern Shore, or in Santa Fe, where it still does three or four main groups of individuals, as opposed to this kind of big metropole wording of all these different people

and culture. You know, where I grew up, it was largely Irish and Italian. That was the big two ethnic groups that were that were there, everybody else was in the minority. You know, even the, even the English settlers who had been there, I knew very, very few people who were just English, you know, in my school, like, very, very few. So I think that's, that was one of the biggest things I noticed in Santa Fe was that it was still the main three groups that had been there for the last 400 years continuing. You know, it was still the Hispanic population that came from Mexico, the colonial settler population from the United States, and the Indigenous population, three or four Pueblo communities that are out there. puebloan peoples, old Mexico

16:29

Interviewer: Hm, okay. Yeah, I can see your point. Because, like, when you're showcasing in the summertime, like your outfit, um, I call it like, Indigenizing. Some of the stuff like how you're taking like, some, some of the, like clothing, for example, and putting it into your kind of, like, traditional stuff. So yeah, I can see that because I mean, some of it, we did, too. So it's, I guess, either a survival thing, or it's either kind of like, just trying to work it out, I guess.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: So yeah. Thanks for telling me that. Um, so how does your community come together? **Interviewee:** How do you mean, can you elaborate on that?

17:10- 17:12

Interviewer: Yeah, no. Um,so when I'm saying community, I'm talking about like the Pocomoke. So how does your community like come together? As like, do you guys do like events?

Interviewee: Okay!

Interviewer: (continuing) Or do you guys do gatherings or something

17:25

Interviewee: our community is very focused on education, particularly public education. We kind of see ourselves as the stewards of history and the stewards of our culture. We're very involved in public education, particularly geared towards families, but also universities, every kind of education, but most of our programs are geared towards families, but more of raising local awareness of who we are as a people on our culture, because a lot of people believe it or not, don't know.

Because the fact of the matter is, we don't look like the people on the back of the buffalo nickel. Because colonization has changed how we look and our, you know, phenotypes, you know, that I think that's one of the things we as Native people struggle with, is our own identity, our own sense of self that, well, I don't look like that person, you know, does that mean I'm less. And that's a really hard thing to really think about. It's a very sad thing to think about. And I think so many non-Native people, they they don't understand that colonization has changed how we look in our height and our phenotype and our hair color. And, you know, and so part of our job is to say, Yeah, this is who we are. This is who we are now, and this is the kinds of things we're doing. And this is our traditional culture. And this is our modern culture. And this is what we do now.

So we have multiple events throughout the year we partner with university University, Salisbury University, we partner with Delmarva Discovery, we've done that we've partnered with lots and lots and lots of organizations throughout our territory. We just recently put up a sign for the Manonoakin, spirit plate in Indian town. That was with Somerset County Tourism Board. That's now an official state marker that's in our traditional territory. We had the director of like the

Maryland Department of Transportation was there we had a congresswoman or state representative was their district or county representative

19:29

Interviewer: Was Governor Wesmoore there?

19:30

Interviewee: He was supposed to be there.

Interviewer: Aww

Interviewee: But he was not able to attend but we had other people from Maryland government who were there. I mean, it was a big it was big to do. I was in nice suit. I was looking pretty fresh. But it was it was a big to do and so we've partnered with many, many different people. So we do have Tribal events for our own community. It's a lot of dinners and celebrations and informal council meetings that kitchen table roles where it's like, well, we have enough people for council, let's just have the council they they met. I can't tell you how many times I've been wrangled into those and cup after cup of coffee sitting at a table. And well, it's it's midnight, or it's 11:30. We've been at this table talking about a particular Tribal matter for the last four hours. And so that's happened numerous times.

We had a, we had a feast at the end of our.....not working here. But our end, the last event we had for the we had a community feast, which was nice, we put out a spirit play and to the traditional prayer. Most of our community is Christian, but they are Methodist. So it's a little bit of both, like honoring some of the old traditional things, which there is a struggle there at times just because of the traditional ideology. And that's a separate conversation for another time. But um, but that's sometimes a point of contention. But we did honor both we did we put out a spirit play and did a traditional prayer. And then we we did a Christian prayer as well.

But it was the point was we had a community meal with traditional foods that we all had prepared for this event. So it was really cool to not only connect, we had our youngest members, their their youngest citizens there and our oldest citizens there, which was a beautiful thing. And same with the Manonoakin, spirit plate in Indian town sign we had our youngest citizen, who is I want to say like 20 months, no, she's a year. She's a year old. Now. She's only 12 months old. She's I think she's about a year old now.

Interviewer: Oh, wow.

Interviewee: So she's our youngest citizen, and Chief Howard, who is our oldest citizen at 85. He's our eldest citizen. So we had everybody there. And so it was a beautiful thing to have oldest and youngest. They're participating in this tradition eating these traditional foods. And so that's been really good. So we do a lot of education events, a lot of cultural events. And I do a lot of living history, interpretive events. I've worked for multiple state sites and historical societies. And so it's mostly geared towards public education.

22:22

Interviewer: I like that, because like, when you were explaining during the summertime, I'm gonna say summertime, a lot of the time I really got to know you. But I really liked how you were explaining a lot of like, the historical of like, the colonial and also like your own, like Tribal, because I'm a sense of, like, a lot of people assume that, you know, they're just historical. So they don't exist anymore, and everything. And, you know, and I think that was really important that you showcase that because it also helped me as also a Native person that's not from here to know that this happened in this event. And it works differently now, because you're still here, but just in a different, like, I guess, a different way than what I'm used to seeing.

23:14

Interviewee: Yes, yeah, we adapted really differently. Yeah. And a lot of it was due to survival. And, you know, it's sad, some of the things we've lost, like, our language was taken from us, our most of our homelands were taken from us. Our traditional forms of living were taken from us, and we survived and I think we're we are a testament to the human spirit to the albeit native spirit that we survived. And we're here today as a community to to tell our story in despite of the historical figures that wanted to destroy us and wanted to be rid of us and wanted to murder us and for good and get rid of us. And we, you know, I'm sure they roll in their graves, that we still exist, and that we are a Tribal community still to this very day. But it is important to acknowledge that because that colonial period really shaped how we are right now. Because we lost so much and now, you know, I'm writing a I'm applying for a grant and one of the things I've said is like, you know, we're building our language from the ground up, like from documents and from late helping with linguist, other native linguist and helping with all these things, but we had to build it from the ground up, you know, and so it's, I saw I was when I was in Santa Fe, I was humbled how much some of this community still have, you know, I saw a lot of similarities with I met a lot of different Tribal people from around the country. And there were a lot of similarities but I remember when I was in Santa Fe, I was it was beautiful to see how much you were able to retain was able to still have and that was a beautiful thing. And I wish we weren't by We wish we were as fortunate, you know, to have, dare I say privileged to have that. But you know, it's a lot of hard work, blood, sweat and tears that have gone into, you know, relearning a lot of different things and reviving a lot of different customs and culture and traditions and things. We're still learning and working on them. Yeah.

25:22

Interviewer: Yeah and I would say your guys's story is a resistance story, because, I mean, I wouldn't say it's like a pity or, like sympathy, I would say it's like your way of fighting back. Like, because your existence means so much to everything. And I really liked it. And I think that's one of the things I learned during the summertime when I was well not in the summertime, when I moved here to Maryland to because the kinship is like, alive here. And I really love it here.

Interviewee: Oh, yeah.

Interviewer: So yeah, that was awesome. Thank you for that. Um, so I guess. Well, okay, so this one, I don't know if you've probably answered this, but correct me. **What are the changes you notice over the years and how your community comes together?**

26:10

Interviewee: Um, I think, you know, I came back to my community later, so like, about five years ago. And I think that's important, too. And I think that's pretty. It's a story that's not uncommon in Indian country, that not all of us are born in our homelands. Not all of us are born in our territory. Not all of us grew up in our community. I did not I came to that much later in my life. And I'm very thankful that I have that now. And I really treasure that I have that now. And it's not an uncommon story in Indian country. So I think 20 years ago, events were a lot smaller. So our tribe we are, we are one of the unrecognized tribes in Maryland. There are three other ones that are unrecognized. And so one of the things I wish would clarify, unrecognized does not mean illegitimate. But we view currently and I'm speaking as an individual, I'm not speaking as cultural ambassador, though I am. This is the feelings that my community said that with recognition, though it's very nice. It's hollow at a point because why do we need to go to a non-Native government and ask non-Native people to say we're legitimate for us, it is a compromise of our sovereignty, that we are not willing to compromise because we are sovereign. We are Pocomoke Indian Nation, we are Pocomoke people, it is up to us to decide who our citizens are in our mind. And why should we compromise

what we innately have and have had since before Europeans ever walked to the shores. So and that has its own challenges.

And so we all we do have a 501 (C)(3). And the reason for a 501 (C)(3), because there's a lot of talks going on. Well, if you have a 501(C)(3) , you're in your legitimate your your corporation and try. And let's explain why that is. Prior to a 501(C)(3), 20 years ago, everything we did, as a Tribe came out of our pockets, every water bottle, every sandwich, every event, every tent rental, every single thing came out of our pockets, which came out of one to maybe two families. That was hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of dollars. Now these are working families. These are not wealthy people. These are working individuals who paid for everything.

And there was a point in the 2000 teens, I can't remember the exact date. My accountswoman had explained this story to me before she taught me the story. And she said, Well, it came to a point where we wanted to apply for grants, because it got so burdensome, that we had to pay for everything out of our pockets. And we weren't willing to sell crafts. And we didn't want to do that. That wasn't our mission. And our goal that the state told us that the only way that we could do that is if we had a 501(C)(3) that was live. So we were forced into that status, we had no choice. But to accept that because we didn't accept the 501(C)(3), we would have put ourselves in the poor house, essentially, everything would attend to come in with pockets. And you've been to some of our events. And they're pretty big. And there's lots of people now imagining having to cater to all those people with water bottles, or how do you how do you do that? It's hundreds and hundreds of dollars. And so we do have 501(C)(3), we have the 501(C)(3) to do very basic things. One of our classrooms through our 501(C)(3), we just recently got a trailer so that we can do mobile education displays to schools. Prior to that, you know you're doing it, put everything in the back of your car. And it was borrowing, you know someone's truck, putting everything back to the car and utilizing our gas and utilizing our vehicles and utilizing everything because we couldn't afford it to like there's no way we were gonna get that money. When we want to bring in presenters, we had Ron Warren come in recently. And all those things, we needed to do partnerships, we needed to do those things. And the only way to do that was through a 501(C)(3). So to get back to your question, now that I've kind of explained that we were forced into that 501(C)(3), status earlier, everything was coming out of our pockets. And so a lot of our events were very small, not saying that they were tiny like that, like, unnoticeable. But they were a lot smaller than what they are today from my understanding, because at that time, I was not involved in the community.

And to be clear, I'm only 31 years old. So 20 years ago, I was I was a very little guy. So. So 20 years ago, things were a lot smaller. And I think now because of the 501(C)(3), we've been able to do bigger events, we've been able to promote more, we've been able to partner more. And to be clear, you know, I work for the state of Maryland. Bud Howard, North Howard Jr., Bud Howard, he's on the commission of Indian Affairs for the state. Much of this has been helped and have we've met and partnered with a lot of people because of our 501(C)(3). So I think, you know, in the past, that's how things have changed. They've gotten bigger, and they've gotten broader, and we've been able to reach more areas and meet new people. But I think it's important to note that, you know, the 501(C)(3) three really helped. And prior to that things were smaller, you know. you're a corporation and not a tribe , my council woman , Norris Howard Jr.

31:31

Interviewer: Can you explain what that is? Like the 501(C)(3)?

31:33

Interviewee: The 50...So it's a nonprofit. So it's not for profit, so it has rules and bylaws. I'm not the best person to really go into the ins and outs of that, from what I understand. And I can direct you to the correct people. If you have further questions on a 501(C)(3), and its rules and regulations, because I don't know all of them.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: But it has certain rules and regulations to how you can use money for certain projects that you're getting through grants and through funders. So there's a bunch of different rules and laws about that. But for many tribes in the area thing we have, we were forced into a 501(C)(3) status, because we weren't able to do anything, we weren't able to fund anything because we you know, we couldn't pay for it. And so it was either don't accept the 501(C)(3) and stay very, very small, and stay very isolated, or accept this 501(C)(3), get the help you need and expand. You know, we wasn't a very It wasn't an you know, very easy to win very much rock and a hard place.

32:37

Interviewer: So was there any like cons about doing that? I mean, I know you talked maybe talked about it, but to me, it sounds like there's like pros and cons about it. So....?

32:46

Interviewee: there certainly are. I mean, I think the cons with the 501(C)(3). And yet again, I'm not the greatest person to talk to about it. Like I said, I can direct you to the best people to talk with. So I'm not as a cultural ambassador, my job is to is to reflect the culture and ideas and thoughts in my community. But I can direct you to counsel if you'd like further information on how the 501(C)(3) works. From my perspective as an individual from what I've seen, the cons of 501(C)(3) is that you can only use the money for certain things. You can't just say, bam, bam, bam pay for this, that it has to be used for certain things in certain ways for certain projects. And yeah, you let's just pretend you got 15 grand, that 15 grand can only be used for specific things. So if you got through your bottoms 501(C)(3), you got 15 grand to make, I don't know, Navajo jewelry, Diné jewelry, right? You could only use it for certain things and you would have to mark every hour that you spent to show that you've worked on this where you got into how much the materials costs, X Y& Z, everything has to be accounted for. You can't just pay your brother to to make jewelry, it just it doesn't work that way. So there's a lot of rules and regulations. And so you can get a big chunk of money, but you can't use it for just whatever it has to be very specific, like stringently specific.

The cons the pros of course, are that you have that money and that funding so someone like myself, like I might be able to get like a couple \$100 for maybe making education items, you know, like a knife sheath or moccasins or leggings or clothing, you know, and I can practice that traditional skill, I can do that traditional skill. And for me it's important not only because I know it's historically accurate, it's educational so that kid or that adult is learning the correct the correct thing they have the because so much in museum stuff, some of its really bad. And some of its just super inaccurate. And, you know, so I feel better knowing, you know, I made it I know it's accurate, I can show you, you know the examples to why I know that it's right. But also, you know that it's made with the right materials. And so it leads into that conversation, but also that in when I grow old, and my council woman and I, we've had this conversation, I can go back with some of the younger generation of our tribe, and say, I made that, you know, I made that when I was a young man.

And you know, that's the style that our people make our leggings. That's the style, we make our moccasins. And so we can go back, because one of the things I learned with some of the tribes through my SAIC grant, through Carnegie Mellon is that they have this vast collection of stuff. And we just don't, you know, because we, we had to hide, we had to hide our identity to survive, because they were stealing children and taking them to schools, and they were hunting us, and

they were doing all these other things we had to hide. And so we weren't able to have this vast wealth of objects, you know, and I'm sure some of it's still out there, I'm sure it is. I know a few things that are in places, but you know, so we've had to rebuild, you know, some of our artifacts. And so for me, it's very comforting to know that with a grant like that, I can build and make certain things, you know, for education, and then go back 50 years from now, and hold that, and remember when I made it, and remember the thoughts and the feelings, and how I'm blessed as a young man, when I made it, and to go to our younger generations, and explain to them that, you know, I made this, I made this when you're when your grandfather was alive, and made this and, you know, we had a conversation about it, you know, and that then engages that whole story of community and family, and kinship.

And so with a grant like that, it gives me the opportunity to make those objects where, without it, I'm paying for the materials on my own dime, I'm making it all on my own time. You know, we all live busy lives, school and work and family, you know. And so it gives me the cushioned comforting space to make that on my own time. And to have that time making that art and connecting with my culture and my community, my ancestors. So that's definitely a pro with with grants, and with like, a 501(C)(3), like certain point. Okay,

37:30

Interviewer: Okay, you'll still be young, even though you say, I don't know what you're talking about.

Interviewer: I'm gonna be a very old man 50 years from now I'm gonna be with it?

Interviewer: Yeah, you're, you're still going to be younger regardless. Thank you for saying that. Thank you.

37:46

Interviewee: You're welcome.

Interviewer: Um, so let's see. So this one, I know, you kind of touched it touched base on this one, but I'm just kind of like going to more detail. So **how is your sovereignty being impacted currently?**

38:05

Interviewer: So I think for us right now, with our own sovereignty, we have, you know, there's so much talk with recognition. And recognition is a beautiful thing, if that's what a community decides it wants to do. Like, that's a beautiful thing. And I support it, you know, that has to be a community decision. It can't just be one or two individual, it has to be a whole community that decides, but I think we need to broaden our conversation and say, you know, that recognition by a non-Native government isn't everything. And that, in a way, it is an affront to sovereignty. You know, it is why should why shouldn't we are the only group of humans that have to prove who they are in the world, that should tell you something right there. No other group of humans have to prove who they are. And that's alarming, you know. And, you know, there's there's certain levels, you know, I don't feel comfortable going into certain levels of it. But I think, you know, some of our issues have in certain state agencies who, you know, don't don't or haven't desire to broaden the conversation now, that will likely change in my lifetime, since we have three communities in the state, all of whom all six tribes in the state of Maryland, Maryland, met with the governor.

You know, we have multiple people from unrecognized communities in Maryland who are on the Commission of Indian Affairs and have been for years. So I think we need to broaden the conversation that just because you don't have a formal recognition, given you given to you by a non-Native government, does not mean you're illegitimate. And I think that's a very hard and

difficult question for a lot of people to understand. But in essence, in a way the process of recognition is colonial at its root. It is dissented from Colonial Era policies. And if we are truly committed to decolonization in aspects of thought, and deed, and mind and policy, I think we need to broaden our conversation of Indigenous communities because for, like I said, with our community, and you know, I'm speaking, and this is kind of the opinion, and I'm speaking as the opinion of my community, what we've kind of all expressed and as cultural ambassador, I feel I have the ability and permission to say this, is that we feel that, you know, that formal recognition, though, we may apply for at some point in our future, currently, how we feel is that it's an affront to our sovereignty, something that we've had since before Europeans were here, why should we compromise that our ancestors didn't ask them to recognize as we told them, who we are, you know, and we still do.

And we still say, This is who we are, you know, either you accept that or you don't, you know, doesn't mean we'll ever go away. We've never gone away. So I think right now, to answer your question, we've had some issues with certain state agencies that just haven't brought in the conversation yet. But I think that will change in my lifetime. You know, I'm only 31. And, you know, I'm already working for a state agency already worked for Maryland State Archives. One of our Tribal members is a committee member for the Commission of Indian Affairs. So I think that conversation is broadening. And we're constantly asked all the time to speak our opinions to go to libraries to speak for, like, Maryland Heritage Area stuff, and we're being included. So I see that changing. It's just slow. And so I think it's just one of those things that it will take time, but I see it hopefully changing in my lifetime.

41:58

Interviewer: Yeah, no, I. So when you were saying about the state agencies, like how you're since you're working with the agent? **Do you feel like you're changing their perspectives a little bit? Or?**

42:12

Interviewee: I do.

Interviewer: You do?

Interviewee: I do you know, and especially because, you know, I am unapologetically Indigenous!

Interviewer: [laughs in agreement]

Interviewee: that's the thing, and it's just like, Listen, I'm going to, I don't care, I'm going to tell you if it's right, or if it's wrong, because if you I was always raised honesty is the most important thing for human being. Honesty, and that's a very Native thing is that honesty and truth and your word, super important. And that was beaten into me as a kid. Not physically, I was, you know, but, but that said that you don't lie. You always tell the truth. And if you love somebody, you're gonna tell them the truth. You know, and so if I want to see agencies grow, and do better, you know, I can't just sit there and complain and wag my finger and write a blog, that just, it's just me complaining, I need to sit down with them as equals, and say, Listen, this is what's up. You know, this is these are my concerns. And these, and I think having like, you know.

I'm a graduate of Western Connecticut State University, graduated 3.91, from university, and I have a degree in archaeology from Norwalk Community College. So I think it does help that I do have a college background. Because unfortunately, those kinds of credentials in those kinds of circles matter, and sometimes will lend you more of a voice. But it's nice to when you can sit down and say this is what's up. These are my concerns. And these are my solutions. Let's work together.

So I think absolutely, you know, I worked a lot, you know, I worked for Mayis, which is the largest database for Maryland Indigenous records. I have my community we helped a lot and like it was already created, but we helped a lot in his formation, like, my voice is on Maryland State Archives, pronouncing the word we helped create, give them that word. We have helped with a lot of different aspects of that. So I think absolutely. By my presence and presence of other people in my community in state agencies, it's absolutely helped to broaden that conversation. And it's absolutely helped to put a face to some of it. Um, you know, so if you could just reiterate that question.

44:27

Interviewer: yeah, no, so I was just saying, Oh, wait, no,

44:31

Interviewee: yes. When you said before, just I'm sorry.

44:33

Interviewer: No, you're good. I was just saying like, **do you feel like since you've been a part of the state agency, that you're changing perspectives?**

Interviewee: Could you, I'm Sorry,

Interviewer: No, it's okay. You're good.

44:43

Interviewee: But yeah, absolutely. I think so. Because, you know, one of the other things for our communities for the long time we were of, we were never silent. Like we were never silent. But we weren't as vocal at points when maybe we should have been as vocal and not to say we were silent. We always had a voice. We were always commenting. We were always, always but I think, I think now with myself being a part of state archives, my council member being commissioned of Indian Affairs, it certainly. And Chief Howard at one time was a member of Commission of Indian affairs. It puts it puts a face to your community. Um, but absolutely, I think it's certainly changing things. Absolutely.

45:26

Interviewer: Yeah, No, I agree. Because I never heard of the Pocomoke until Maria, who brought it up. And I was like Pocomoke? Oh okay.. Let's see what's up. So

Interviewee: yeah

Interviewer: definitely. It was so cool. And I like it. So much. I'm so I guess. Okay, this one, this one, I'm more curious about to hear about this one. So **what what does your What does Indigenous erasure mean to you?**

45:56

Interviewer: That's a great, great question. And it's pretty broad. I think it Indigenous erasure means to be its where, you're not including those communities that are when you're in their territory, when you're not including them in the conversation, when you're not including them in the history books, when you're not including them in cultural academic spaces. We face a lot of erasure. And that's one of our biggest things, especially when it comes to things like recognition.

You know, the fact of the matter is, you have three legitimate Tribal entities who are unrecognized within the state who all met the governor. You know, the fact of the matter is, you have these people and they're not going away. You know, we are who we are. We've been here before you were here, and we'll be here after you're here. You know, it's, so it's one of those things where we

face the erasure in that where the conversation is only for state Tribes, and say, Well, wait a minute, why are you leaving the rest of us out? And, you know, or people using old not like, using incorrect maps and incorrect things that don't document our territories correctly.

So, you know, for us that erasure is prevalent, it's certainly something that we talked about quite a bit. And that, like I said, with a lot of things that's changing, you know, we're, we're, especially with working with state agencies, a lot of that is changing. And we're, you know, we're broadening our circles and meeting new people, part of my, you know, ability is cultural ambassador, I live in the Hudson Valley in New York, you know, with my job, I come down every other week, it's had a big space period from I wasn't here for a chunk of the Fall. But Peak Peak when the peak of the grant, I was here every other week, traveling in the Hudson Valley.

And so, you know, what a part of my job is, is talking about our community and our culture, or issues, or problems, or joys and sorrows with communities up north. We've made many, many, many connections with communities up north in New England and New York. And that's good, because it's not the fault of other communities that they don't know that you're around, they don't live here. So it's important that you broaden your circle. So I mean, for erasure, for us, it's just more people not going to us when they're talking about our territories, and about our history and our culture. And we're right here, and we're happy to offer that information, we're happy for them to talk to us, email us include us, you know, the thing is, we're not I don't know how to word this. It's more. We're very much, you know, we value partnership. And that's all we ask for, you know, all we ask for is just partnership include us, but erasure in that sense. You know, it's, it's not like, you know, it's not crashing like a rock, like on your back, but it's certainly there. And it's certainly one that we talk about and deal with on a regular basis.

49:13

Interviewer: So, okay, so then I have two questions.

Interviewee: Sure.

Interviewer: But I'll just say the first one. So you mentioned about the state recognized tribes.

Interviewee: Right.

Interviewer: So because my question earlier about this was about talking about your perspective of what state recognition in federally recognized tribes, but you mentioned, you guys are not state recognized. Okay, so can you kind of elicit like, go into detail about like, **how the, your perspective on how the state recognized tribes and federally recognized and also maybe include the how you're not recognized?**

Interviewee: So, um, Can you go into more detail?

49:52

Interviewer: Yeah, no,um, so this one, I was just gonna say, **can you tell me a bit more about you either of your perspectives, have your tribes, state recognition, and or federal recognition?**

50:07

Interviewee: I mean, currently in Maryland, we don't have any federally recognized tribes, which does not mean that the tribes who are state recognized are state illegitimate. That's a fraudulent assumption. And I'm not here to go into detail on that political matter. And I have friends in both state and federal communities. I mean, I have no issue with recognition as it stands, the thoughts and feelings of my community are that it shouldn't be the end all be all.

Interviewer: Yeah

Interviewee: that's really strongly how we feel. And so it just for us, it is seen as a compromise to our innate sovereignty. And so there's, there's a lot of conversation, and, you know, political conversation you get into, and I'm not really here to do that. But um, you know, just to be clear, I have no issue with the recognition process in I have no issue if a community decides to go for recognition. I have no issue with that. That's their decision. That's their call as a community. And I think any decision like that needs to be with the entire community. Yeah, but we just feel that it should not be the end all be all.

51:18

Interviewer: Yeah, okay. Yeah, cuz you mentioned that and how the erasure, kind of tying the two together a little bit and I, I was just kind of thinking like,

51:27

Interviewee: because we are a historic Maryland tribe.

Interviewer: Yeah

Interviewee: we are, we have four treaties with the colony of Maryland from 1678 to like, 1742. We are on multiple court documents were one of them was documented tribes in the state, if you go on to Mayis, like, it's like, I want to say, and I probably have the number wrong, like 2000 entries, something like that. It's a lot. It's a lot. So we are historic Maryland tribe, we descend from those individuals. And so our feeling is it just recognition is just it. It's a beautiful thing. And it's important, but it should not be the end all be all.

52:10

Interviewer: Yeah. Gotcha. Okay, thanks for clearing that out. And everything. Um, so. Okay, so **why is it important to address erasure in Maryland's environmental organizations?**

52:26

Interviewee: I think because, you know, for our community, so much of our territory is water based. And so, you know, growing up, you know, away from my homelands, it's something I've had to come and learn, because where I lived, you know, was very mountainous and forested, and the things that I noticed where I lived was that the seasons were all wonky, they were all getting weird, and trees would turn their leaves at wrong times, and it would be far warmer than when it should, and then it would be warmer longer than when it should, and I remembered in a kid when the first snowfall is would be, you know, here in our Tribal territory, it's very water base, and it's all sea level. So it's a, it's a problem, because our sacred places, our which a lot of this is through our Tribal oral history, which is passed.

And I've been privileged and fortunate enough that my elders have taught me a lot of it, and have gifted me with that knowledge. And I'm humbled to carry it. But, you know, our sacred sites, or village sites, are burial sites, which were in specific places in Marsh lands and other waterways are compromised because of the rising seas where they weren't historically. And so when we're not involving those communities, which it's an to be clear, it's only a few agencies that have had this issue. We work very heavily with Maryland Department of Transportation with our state archaeologists. We work very, very closely with that. And in many ways, we have a very good relationship with the state government and the state government, in many ways, treats as well. There's just a very big room for improvement.

And so the issue of erasure when it comes to the environment is that when you're not including the other Tribes who have their, you know, important places being threatened by sea level rise and

sinking of land because Delmarva Peninsula where we are right now, is sinking slowly. And I want to read this quote, which I think is very interesting. So there was a book written in early 1800s by a Moravian missionary named Johannes Heckwelder, how the creator wants it and he wrote about the Lenapes he was a missionary to them from like 1750s to around the 1790s. And he answers he writes his whole book about the history, their manners, their customs, holding book, I've read the entire book, it's like 400 pages, very, very good book. But listen to this, this is what he ends this book. With with.

With this quote, he says, "I still, I still want adults with the hope that this work will be accomplished by wise benevolent government. Thus we shall demonstrate the falsity of the prediction of the Indian prophets."

Now, remember, he's Moravian missionary, so you can toss that part out.

But listen to what he says the Indian prophets say, "who say that when the White shall have ceased killing the Red Man, and got all their lands from them, the great tortoise, which bears the island upon his back, shall dive down into the deep, and drown them all, as he once did before the great many years great many years ago, and that when he rises, again rises, the Indian shall, once more be put in possession of the whole country".

Ring a bell. Our land is sinking, and it couldn't be the turtle diving just as the Indian prophets so foresaid could be. You know, this is that some old traditional knowledge there, and he recorded it. But the fact of the matter is Delmarva is sinking. And they say in 50 years, much of the shore will be underwater that compromises our historic burial grounds, both pre Christian and Christian. But also sacred sites, burial grounds, and village sites. So when you're not including those voices, those sites are even more threatened. And there's very little individuals can do. You know, some communities have had issues because the sea is blapping into the land, and the bonds of their people are falling into the water. And there's an issue some communities say that they should let it be, because that's how Keitch Man'to, the Creator wants it. And other people say, well, we need to reclaim those bones and reburying them, because then there'll be lost forever. And we won't have those ancestors with us. And it's a very big divide. And so when state agencies are neglecting to take care of all of Maryland's Indigenous communities, you're leading for catastrophic ethnic and cultural loss, that can't be repaired. It can't be fixed. It can't be. You can't make more burial grounds. You can't make more historic village sites. Once they're gone, they're gone. So when we're ignoring this that's, it leads into that, it leads more into inequity.

57:51

Interviewer: Yeah, no, that's a good point. Because it leads to like, if you don't know anything the past, then you're gonna face the consequences.

Interviewee: Yeah

Interviewer: So yeah, that's totally like what I believe that holds true, even to this day.

58:05

Interviewee: Yeah

Interviewer: Yeah

Interviewee: I mean, for the Diné. I mean, it's the uranium mining. That's an issue where you guys are and coal is an issue where you guys are, you know, and like for, it's just like. Well, if the uranium mining like the dust from that is killing people, and if it makes land infertile. What do you do with that land that you can grow your crops on is gone? You can't just get more, you know? So, yeah.

58:36

Interviewer: Yeah. I mean, it's every, every climate, like Native climate issue that is faced, it's always dealt differently. And I don't think that's one thing that environmental organizations are doing, because they kind of seeing like, environmental issues is a one size fits all kind of thing scenario, rather than like, oh, well, this climate is this climate rather than, you know, this climate. And....

Interviewee: yeah

Interviewer: it could. I don't, yeah, it's just a whole thing. And I'm just like

Interviewee: it's very community based

Interviewer: Yeah it is.

59:07

Interviewee: and super community based. And that's like, I get irked by pan Indianism, you know, because it's just like, we are all different, like every tribe, every community, around the country, we are all different. Yeah, there's some that are that share kinship and language and culture. But there's still unique, there's still different in all the territories, all of the homelands, they're all different. You know, what works in New Mexico isn't gonna work here (Maryland). You know, the issues that I had when I talked to people in New Mexico was like, we don't have water, we use have water and now it's gone. You know, and that was the issue they were talking about. We have too much water. You know, what do we do with too much water because, too, with the flooding that comes from the ocean, what it does is create what's called they're called Ghost forests. And a ghost forests is where or you have to stand a forest that's in marshland, and it could be a mixed deciduous forest, which is very good for animals, because the animals need the nuts. And they need all the other things that like oak trees, like **Interviewer:** Is almost like Blackwater? Or?

Interviewee: Yeah, a little bit where it's kind of like it's a mixed deciduous forest.

Interviewer: Okay

Interviewee: Oak trees and other kinds of all interspersed, and that's what creates a very flourishing environment.

Interviewer: Yeah

Interviewee: because the animals need the acorns, and hickory nuts and walnuts and all those things to eat and get fat and feed on those things.

Interviewer: Yeah

Interviewee: But what happens is when sea level rises, sweeps into those areas, trees can't deal with that much salt, and they die. So what happens? While those trees die, they turn ghost way. And they just die. And then they're these these toothpicks standing there. And it becomes more marshland because what's the only thing that can grow there, the soil becomes compacted because it's sediment. So all of the things like the underbrush that might have had blueberry bushes, or raspberry bushes, or all these other things that promoted environmental stability and sustainability, and even promoted Indigenous sustainability. For the Indigenous people where we could have harvested blueberries, raspberries, hunted those animals, you know, do those things. Well, that soil gets compacted, it can't grow those things now. And so what happens will the only thing that can grow there is marsh grass. And so the trees die. Marsh grass, they eventually rot and fall down. And then marsh grass takes over. And so the marshes are growing and growing and growing. And you can go to many places in our territory, where there once was forest that promoted life and promoted an eco-diversity and promoted biodiversity that are now gone. And once they're gone, they're gone. You can't you can't just go and create biodiversity.

Interviewer: Yeah

Interviewee: you can't just do that. It doesn't work that way. You know, just be, you know, and, you know, the goal isn't you can't just plant more loblolly pines and say, Ah, forest, it doesn't work that way. It's like, yeah, on paper, it's a forest. You know, you know, in LEGO LAND. Sure. It's a

forest. But in reality, a forest is a complex biodiversity thing. Made of many different parts and wheels and cogs in you, you mess with that you take one element out it doesn't work. So, I mean, for us, like, it's, it's saltwater. And so it's how do you fix that? What do you do? And so there's been a lot of conversation about sea level rise, like, what are we going to do?

1:02:33

Interviewer: So when it was during the summertime, and how you have that workshop, where you had like, like, all of us making the cat tail like

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: So what is your main like biodiverse like element? Like, is it cat tails? Or is it muskrat? Like, how the Nause-Waiwash was or is it something else?

1:02:57

Interviewee: a combination

Interviewer: combination?

Interviewee: of different things

Interviewer: Okay

Interviewee: because I know for us, the cattails are super culturally important

Interviewer: Yes

Interviewee: because we made decoys from the cattails, we use the cattails to cover our lodges, and that's recorded historically about us that we use the cattail mats to cover our homes. So literally cradled our people, like a grass that like cradled our people from the time they were born to the time they died. That's a powerful thing. You know, when we think of like a wigwam, right, which in our life, we, which I, you know, it's made from trees, it's made from bark made from grass, it's a living thing. It breathes, you know, it's much part of the environment as we are so in a sense, it's the shelter is this mother is that to living object almost, you know, that cradles us and protects us. You know, that roomette rip remains in our dreams and our thoughts, you know, because we lived in them for so long. And so for us, the cattails are super culturally important, you know, they're super tied to us. I would say the Nause Waiwash they're more connected, not not just that the cattails, the cattails are important to them, too. But the muskrats was their big tradition and our people trapped muskrats too, but not to the extent that the Nause Waiwash, have and continue to do. So I mean, I would say it's a variety of factors.

Oak trees were what's really important. And the story I was told is that they were all cut down through boats, that a lot of those oak trees that once were prominent in our territory got cut down for the boat industry, because all the industry in this area was water based was always which in our language is Wichot , change "stirring" to Oystering stirring and clamming and crabbing and was all water based and what do you need to make the water to go and learn a new boat? And they're not the Europeans aren't using dugout canoes? There. No way that's beneath us. We want English style boats and rowboats. You need a lot of.... have you ever seen a rowboat?

Interviewer: Yes, yup, yup.

Interviewee: you need a lot of wood to make that that's a lot of trees that gotta fall for you to make that, you know. So a lot of trees had to be cut down important to like cypress trees, which are super important for our community. That's traditionally what we made our dugout canoes from, you know, Cypress are protected, because they were almost wiped out for the boat industry, people use them for boats. And so you don't have some of these key species, you know, you lose some of that cultural continuity, and you lose some of that important cultural context. Like I worry, you know, and I've asked the question, you know, what, what will happen when we don't have those things that you know, mark us as individual communities, you know, what will happen when the cattails are gone? How will the Pocomoke see themselves then? When that thing that identifies us

so much is gone? You know, how are we? How are we see our own identity then? So, I mean, I think it's a very troubling issue. But I would say it's multiple things. So I'd say it's cattails, it's certain trees, it's certain animals and certain fish in certain life ways that are important, you know, that identify us in spaces too.

1:06:22

Interviewer: Ya know, that's really important, because I think one of the things like being, especially at a PWI Institute, is that I don't think I keep telling, like, some of my colleagues and peers or you know, professors about it, like how a lot of Native identity is diverged, diverted from the land. And that's how we identify ourselves. And that's how we interact with the land. But I don't think they understand how important it is because, like, you know, how, like Europeans like European settlers, they saw land as a commodity.

Interviewee: Right!

Interviewer: And they didn't think that we were using the land in the way that they thought and so

Interviewee: yeah, yeah.

Interviewer: I think in that aspect, they still have that kind of colonial mindset of like the land being a commodity thing, rather than, you know, it's an actual living organism. And we need to like respect it. and

1:07:14

Interviewee: And that's just starting to change.

1:07:16

Interviewer: I mean, of course

1:07:19

Interviewee: but for the longest time, historically, yeah. And funny enough, ancient Europeans didn't see the world that way. If you read about like the ancestors of the English, like the Celtic speaking peoples, the Gaelic speaking peoples, it wasn't literally the Germanic tribes that lived in Germany, it wasn't limited to Christian missionaries came to them, and said, you have to cut down trees, because they believe the trees in the forest are sacred. They talk about the the Celts and the Germanic tribes, they had the sacred groves of trees, that were incredibly culturally important that were sacred to them. And it wasn't until other concrete forces came that forced them into such stuff.

But yeah, by the time settlers get here, you know, through the lens of Christianity and monotheistic religion, yet, man has dominion over the plants and the animals, you know, and so land is this commodity, and it becomes a commodity not to kind of segue into it. But because in Europe, you weren't allowed to have land, only kings and lords and nobles had to have land. So I think some of the greed of land stems from the fact that nobody had it. And once you know, if you've never had a slice of cake, and ate it for the first time, then you were then you had the cake in front of you, you might go for a second slice, heck, you might even go for a third, you know, because you've enjoyed the taste so much. And so I think, because they just have no access to land in their home, territory, their Indigenous homelands, because those Europeans are Indigenous to those areas. You know, they had no access to the societal structures, they went bananas when they went here, and they were willing to compromise the rights and have a debt of the Indigenous people living here in North America, they were willing to do that, unfortunately, to negative effects.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: But I think that that feeling is changing. I think the world, the world is re-Indigenizing, which is beautiful. I'm all about you see my posts on Facebook.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah, this is awesome. And I see it all the time. I see Europeans going back to their Indigenous culture, I see Africans, Asians, all these different people going back to their Indigenous culture, and it's beautiful, because once we go back to that, we are then going to be all a part of the same. We are the land and the land is us and a lot of this crap of pollution. It'll stop because I think the thing that's halting that is this boundary that says, I'm the human, you are amount of dirt. You know, and I can do because I don't believe your alive I can do whatever I want. And I think that's changing. It's slow, you know, but it's changing. And I think that's a beautiful thing. And, you know, I hope to see my lifetime like, you know, more than just, you know, the United Nations Indigenous, like, you know, council like politics to be like, No, "we're the land, the land is us". Like, if we are to thrive, we must live with our mother, we must take care of it for it nurtures us, and we can't put these pollution, these pollutants in the ground, we can't put these pesticides on our plants. Like, I'm convinced that so many problems in our society, illnesses and things are from some of the pollutants.

Interviewer: Oh, yeah, for sure.

Interviewee: We've put in our plants we put in our food, like all the mental illness in the country, like I've said, for a long time, wonder what to put on the food? What are they putting on the wheat and all these other things, that pesticides, because you can't convince me that a pesticide that can blow up a bug that can eat it and kill it can harm me? You know, I'm not thoroughly convinced. And I've wondered that for a long time. But um, but yeah, so I see that slowly changing. But right now, it's still kind of like, it's a hurdle to kind of like, and I don't know about you? Because sometimes I feel like, I don't want to have to be that Indigenous person that's like "let me tell of the land" like, you know what I mean, like you know you hear the flute in the back

1:11:25

Interviewer: (laughing) the eagle flying right above

Interviewee: Yeah

1:11:28

Interviewee: You don't want to be that guy? Because it's just like, it's not rocket science?

Interviewer: Yeah

Interviewee: Because it's not rocket science, like all you have to do. And what's crazy is that all the Indigenous people on the Eastern Shore, like, no matter if they're close to their culture, or if they're distant, we are like yeah sea levels rising. Yeah, the environment is changing because of climate like yeah, like the amount of fish that were here on our youth aren't here now. Like, yeah, this is real. This is happening. I just literally watching this right now. You know, so it's one of these things that like, it's not rocket science. And I think I think people are just starting to get it.

Interviewer: Yeah

Interviewee: You know

1:12:07

Interviewer: no, like, that's true. Because you know, how sciences, analytical, logic, and its linear. And if you're, if it's not written in some kind of scientific journal, then it's not valid.

Interviewee: Right.

Interviewer: And I feel like I'll like I don't know if you heard of like, Traditional Ecological Knowledge.

1:12:28

Interviewee: Yeah, yeah Like, IDS and IKS. Excuse me.

Interviewer: Yeah. your good.

Interviewer: Indigenous Knowledge Systems, yeah

1:12:40

Interviewer: But like, I feel like that's also starting to come into academic

Interviewee: Oh absolutely!

Interviewer: (continuing) spaces now.

Interviewee: Yeah. From like, all over the world.

Interviewer: Oh, yeah.

1:12:48

Interviewee: That's what's really cool. You know, like, but yeah, absolutely. I mean, logic is important. We need facts, and you need logic. And you can't just throw that out and say, Oh, well, you know, because the fact of the matter is, you need logic and facts, but you need to have a middle ground, or both exist in an equal plane, you can't be all IV, like IKS, you can't like it just doesn't work. And you can't be all logic, linear science. Like you can't you can't live in one space over the other, I think you need an equal meshing of the two. But absolutely, like you definitely see are more incorporations of traditional knowledge of it, of IKS systems. You're definitely seeing more of that incorporation. Absolutely, you know, from all over the world, and that's, like, really cool to see and to see it paired with like, you know, scientific method. And, you know, I think that's, that's a great Leap, leap and step in the right direction.

1:13:48

Interviewer: And plus, not only that, the framework of it is like, very, it's like relating to a lot of like, what you were saying, like the cultural aspect to because I read this paper, it's, it's like the Wampum, they use the acronym Wampum. Oh, and it was so cool. Because they were actually saying, like, what each of the word means, and everything and how it relates to how the environment in everyday life and I thought that was pretty cool.

Interviewee: Yeah, you know, and that's, that's the thing.

1:14:16

Interviewee: it's just like, you know, okay, but yeah, like, you know, so, like I said before, I think, I think it's, you know, what I see like the next 50 years, it's gonna have to be a marriage of the two. Like, we can't live in one space, and we can't just live in the other. Like, it has to be utilizing both, like for Indigenous futurism to work you'd like, like you had posted a Hogan with like, rocket booster sounds like that's the coolest thing ever. But to make that work, like you have to use physics, which is a linear logical system. You know, you say you have to live in both spaces. And I think, you know, that's a doable thing. And I think that's going to be the next course of action in the next 40 to 50 years is that you're going to see the marriage of both IDS, or IKS, Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Western European. I would even say Eurasian because Asian people kind of think very similar, you know, because with Western forms like Eurasian forms of linear logical thinking, and I'm thinking that your next 50 years is probably a merge of the two.

1:15:27

Interviewer: Yeah. I mean, it's still a working progress.

Interviewee: Oh yeah

Interviewer: but as of now, it's still categorical and everything.

Interviewee: Yeah

Interviewer: But yeah, that's pretty. I like the insight that you're saying, and everything. Man, you're you like answered like most of my questions, and I really like it. Um, oh, okay. So this one, I'm kind of curious about this one. So, um, what do you know about Maryland's environmental and climate change priorities?

1:16:01

Interviewee: You know, I? I don't know a lot. Personally. I apologize that I don't know a lot. I probably should. I know, one of our community members is very involved in NOAA, the North?

Interviewer: I know it is.

Interviewee: Yeah. He's very involved in NOAA.

Interviewer: Yeah

Interviewee: And he's very involved in like, some of the environmental stuff with sea level rise. So he would be a better person to talk to, but I really don't know, all I can tell you is the stuff that I've seen the things my elders and people, my community have told me and people on our sister communities have told me.

1:16:41

Interviewer: And would you say, the reason why you wouldn't know is probably because the use of language? Or is it just because of your own? Like, personal....?

1:16:50

Interviewee: I would say in my own personal background. I mean, you know, because the fact of the matter is, you and I'm speaking in English, right?

Interviewer: Yeah

Interviewee: you know, we are using a Western European language as a, as a trade dialect, so to speak, you know, as a culture, because I don't speak Diné and you don't speak Renape (pronounced deh nah pea / peh), you know, you don't speak the Pocomoke language. So we're using English as a medium. But the fact of the matter is, we learned we learn English is our first language as much as we don't like that, as Indigenous people English, it's our first language. We are went to for your schools, you know, through a, your Western European lens. So I don't think language is an issue, because like, it's pretty, pretty clear cut, anybody can go and look at the state objectives. I just think it's my own personal background, like I just haven't spent the time to like, Oh, I wonder what Maryland's standards for environmental protection are? So that's, that's me.

1:17:49

Interviewer: Yeah I think when I say language, I meant like the formatting of the words because sometimes when they use, like, I don't know, some academic term that the public may not know.

1:18:00

Interviewee: I could see members of. And it's funny, because one of the things I've noticed, because I have my college degree, and the way that I speak people, like they kind of they kind of Yeah, I don't know, if you get this too, they kind of look at you. And they're like, they don't say it, but they need it with their like, you know what you're like it. So I've had those moments where I've had someone look at me, and be like, this is yeah, like, you know, this word or that.

1:18:30

Interviewee: (continuing) So I think there's a little bit of that, but nothing too extreme.

1:18:35

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: You know, so I think to answer your question, I think it's just more on me, I just haven't spent the time to look like to see the actual state standards.

1:18:46

Interviewer: Oh okay. And I know that you may not read about it, but just from like, do you feel like in some sense like with you working? Well, I you, but like the tribe working with other agencies and stuff, do you feel like it's aligning with a lot with your tribe's environmental planning and knowledge?

1:19:04

Interviewee: I would say so. I mean, I know more references, take examples from the Nause Waiwash. Because I spoke to a lot of their communities this summer, and I have a lot of friends in their community. And they work really heavy with like National Parks and like so like burning some of the marshes, which goes with their Traditional Knowledge of bringing the marshes at certain times so that the plants grow back better and the muskrats have a better habitat. And like they I remember they worked with a partnership with like National Parks, to assist them in burning marshes, because they have that tradition of doing it. So for my community, we haven't done as much but I know and others they have so I mean, if we we've been offered before like if we wanted to do anything from like, I don't know if it was National Parks. It was like the Nature Conservancy. They had offered like if we wanted to do anything like, like ecological, like they would be happy to partner with like, would be happy like an on a dime, we'd like to be like, Absolutely, we would incorporate you. So I see a very big willingness for for us to be partners.

1:20:12

Interviewer: Okay. Cool. That's interesting, because I was kind of wondering about that for the longest time, see if like, the Maryland environmental would be aligned with yours, but of course, like, but since you don't know, it's okay.

Interviewee: Yeah, its fine

Interviewer: Um, so this is kind of like, this is like, I'm in the last section. Okay, so this is? I don't know, depending on how you feel, and everything. Do you still feel good? And everything? Still Okay?

Interviewee: Yeah.

1:20:42

Interviewer: Awesome.

1:20:46

Interviewee: I have to use the bathroom though, if you want to pause first.

1:20:49

Interviewer: Oh, yeah, yeah.If you. I don't wanna like

Interviewee: No, no I just gotta use bathroom.

Interviewer: Yeah.

1:20:51

Interviewer: Okay. Um, so how do you? How do you view the state? And how does Maryland celebrate, like Indigenous people?

1:20:58

Interviewee: So can you elaborate more on the view of the state?

1:21:02

Interviewer: So for just you like, as a person? Do you? How do you view this the state of Maryland? As like an Indigenous person? Like, do you feel like the state recognizes you in a sense? Or do you feel like, like, since there's been no federally recognized or some kind of like, not recognition? Or how you're talking about Indigenous erasure? Do you?

1:21:29

Interviewee: That's a great question. I mean, obviously, I'm very tied to the state and work for the state. But I would say that the state has been very good to us on multiple counts, though, there is a very large room to grow. And I feel the state has been a fair partner with us in a lot of different things. Archives has been an amazing partner with our community, incredibly valuable. And same with Maryland Department of Transportation. state archaeologist, like archaeology has been really good with us. But like I said, there's there's room to grow. And I just think there's room to grow. And then what happened in my lifetime that will happen, things like that take time, you know, it's not going to happen overnight. You know, so it's one of those things where I think, you know, like I said, before, broadening ideas of, you know, you know, going beyond recognition, and broadening ourselves in that sense, because, you know, no one's did you know, Hawaiians in Hawaii don't have reservations, they're not recognized. But are we going to tell them the wines, they're not Hawaiian? Doesn't really work now, does it? You know, so it's one of those things is that I think we just need to broaden ourselves. I think the state needs to broaden itself. But I think where the state needs to work is not only just broadening itself in that sense, but also just making sure it's including all of the communities, all six tribes, not just three, because the one tribe that is recognized on the Eastern Shore does not speak for our community does not speak for the other communities, they can only speak for themselves, you know, and it's not fair for only their voice to be shared, when there are multiple other voices that are just as valid. And so I mean, I think I think that's kind of where I'm at. If you could reiterate the question.

1:23:28

Interviewer: Yeah. So I said, How do you view the state? And how does Maryland celebrate Indigenous people?

1:23:34

Interviewee: So, I would say Maryland celebrates Indigenous people in multiple ways. I mean, we have a date and Indigenous peoples month, of course. But there is a specific day. I think it's like the end of November?

Interviewer: No, it's an October 9th.

Interviewee: October 9th?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: Then that's the that's Indigenous peoples day. And I think there's Indigenous Heritage Day. That's like the end of November. That's like a gubernatorial declared one.

Interviewer: In Maryland?

Interviewee: Yes. Oh, that was the Bowie Powwow one.

Interviewer: Oh!

Interviewee: That's what that one was about. That just happened. Like a couple of weeks ago, that's that whole thing was about was like a state declared Indigenous Peoples Day. So I mean, the state and I've worked for historic St. Mary's city, which is a state run historic site for years now. And they've gone out of their way to be respectful and accommodating. In incredibly accommodating, but but also from the get go respectful, like the get go, treated me as a legitimate Indigenous person, and as permitted, not only because who cares about European standards of

legitimacy, but like, treated me as an Indigenous person, like from the get go and treated me as a cultural ambassador from the get go, which to me I was very impressed and very humbled, I was like, that's how it should be, you know. And the fact of the matter too, is like, you know, Governor Moore met with my chief and he met with my Council member, we extended to Governor more strand of wampum to him, probably the first time that's been done in 300 years. And it was, it stood for was a strand of white strip was a piece stream of wampum, which is a white strand. And I've had seven round beads at one end. And I want to say, it was seven, two beads on the other end. And it stood for the Gov, we were holding the seven generations of the past, and that we extended the wampum side side to the governor, which is has the power to access the dark wampum, but it has the swirl to it. And so we were extending to him, the seven generations coming forward, and that we wish to walk together in peace and in friendship and in fellowship with the governor and with the government. And so we would hold one end and he holds the other. And then we would walk down the path of life together. And we offered that to him and he took it. So we're holding him to that do that meaning, you know, and if it ever came down to it, I would absolutely say to the governor, I would actually absolutely say be like, "we offered you this to walk with you and peace to walk with you as a friend. And you have thought you have let go of your strand? Why? We still are holding our end, why have you let go of yours?"

You know, and I will I would I would say if I was asked to speak. I would do it. You know. So I mean, I think the state is doing a good job, of course room for improvement, of course. But I think it's certainly not poor. But it's a good job of celebrating Indigenous people on heritage. You know, we have a Commission of Indian Affairs, they places where there is no commission, you know, we we have like markers talking about Indigenous people and heritage throughout the state. There are, you know, Indigenous leaders in the state. So I mean, it's good. Is it the best that it could be? No, it's room for improvement. So that's kind of my thoughts and feelings on that at least.

1:27:22

Interviewer: Okay, thank you. Um, so I think you already told us told me about this one. Okay. So, um, **when Maryland mentions diverse communities, do you believe your Tribal community is included?**

1:27:38

Interviewee: That's a great question. I do sometimes. It's actually we've had conversations in our Tribe recently. And I can't go into detail about that. But we've had conversations addressing that very issue that says, Well, if you're committed to equity, diversity and inclusion, why haven't you emailed us? You know? Or if you're, if you're truly committed to this, why haven't you asked us for our voice? You know, then you're not following the best practices of EDI? You know, and if you're committed to that, and you're saying out loud, that you're committed to that, aren't we doing it? Sounds rather hollow. You know, just kind of like land acknowledgments can be hollow and self serving at a point that, you know, here we are this flowery recitation, you know, but nothing really changes. It's a cool, you've, you've admitted that you're on somebody else's porch, you know, but what are you doing to help the people? What you doing to help the people? You know, you know, and like, you know, I'm not talking like, money, because money, it's cheap anyway, what do you really do and help the people? Power? What are you doing for community uplift, but that's actually going to impact lives? Because, you know, dollars are made and spent, you know, so, in that sense, you know, we've had many conversations about that very thing. And it's, it's just more like, you know, if you're committed to these things, like, you know, and we've had plenty of people ask us for our voice and our input. So it's not to say it never ever, ever happened. It's just like, we would love to see more.

1:29:17

Interviewer: I feel that Thank you.

Interviewee: You're welcome.

1:29:21

Interviewee: Like I said I'm unapologetically Indigenous

Interviewer: and deadly too!

Interviewee: mmhhmmmm!

1:29:27

Interviewer: Oh, I love it. Um, so, um, how do you want the public to view you and your Tribal community in 2023?

1:29:37

Interviewee: That's a great question. We're still here, that we're strong. And that we wish, you know, to be stewards of our history and our culture and we wish to be a friend to the community. You know, and I think the biggest thing for us is that we are still here. We did not go away And that we won't go away. Like, you know, like, like, Heckwelder said to that we were here before, the turtle is going to dive down and clean everything. And we'll be here again. You know, we've been here since before Europeans and Africans got here, and we'll be here long after. Yeah, that's the thing, we're tied to this place. And so I think for us, it's that we're still here. And that, you know, we we ask for that acknowledgement, that, you know, you know, more cultural signs, more cultural events, and that, you know, we're thriving, we're a strong community. We're all individuals, we're all independent, we don't work is just one voice. We, we have different heights, and you've met many of my community, you know, we're all different heights and colors and hair colors, and, you know, education, background interests, you know, that we're not a monolith, that we're individual. You know, but that we are a living breathing community.

1:31:06

Interviewer: Yeah, that's, yeah, I do. Because, yeah, this stereotype still look strong in this country of how Native people are. And unfortunately, a lot of them still believe it. So

1:31:21

Interviewee: I think it goes to Hollywood.

Interviewer: Oh, yeah.

Interviewee: Movies, you know, like, the biggest ones is like, No, you don't have a reservation or reservation, if you want real answers was stolen from us from the 1700s, like, you know, it's like, does that make us less Indigenous?

1:31:39

Interviewee: Yeah (not agreeing to his question, actively listening)

Interviewer: And not only that, but I don't like a lot of the Hollywood one would say, oh, yeah, this is Sioux land (*Actual name of the tribes is Dakotas, Lakotas, and Nakotas. Sioux term was created from White settlers*). But it's all the way in like New Mexico and Arizona, like, how's the Sioux land there all the way up in like, Northern, the northern part. So that doesn't make any sense.

1:31:54

Interviewee: Well, that's the thing too, it's like, and we're totally happy to like, fix those things. Yeah, we're very big. Our big goals, our education, public education.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: And it's just like, we're here. We've got the resources. Now, well, we'll go to you, man, like, we're happy to educate you. Like, we're happy to do that. Like, we're not of the opinion. Like, it's not my job to educate you like, to me that doesn't fix anything that's up beside you being snide, and it doesn't fix anything. And now you just let someone perpetuate wrong answers and wrong thinking that doesn't fix the situation. You know, we're happy to say no, we'll be happy to educate you and give you the correct material so that you're not espousing lies, or myths, truths, or just incorrect information. You know, so and I think that's the only way to grow and move forward. Just when you can go to somebody says, here's what's up, like, you know, when you can just go to an organization be like, This is what's up, like, you know, and this is the information, here are the documents that support that information. And here are the people to tell you their history from their own mouths.

Interviewer: Exactly.

Interviewee: Like, that's, that to me, every time we've done that hasn't been warmly received by ever, because it's real. You know, you're not being snide, you're not being rude, you're not being angry. And I'm not saying anger isn't valid. I'm not saying that. But anger is limited. Anger doesn't anger only gets you so far. And then it doesn't work. You know, anger doesn't heal. Anger doesn't fix anything. Because if you break something, and you're angry, you're not going to fix it, you have to calm down first before you fix it. And so, you know, for us, it's just like, you know, we're happy to walk you through this and be with you through this and help you work on it. And that's been super warmly received, like, wherever we've been.

1:33:49

Interviewer: Okay. Cool. Thank you.

Interviewee: You're welcome

Interviewer: Um, so, um, is there anything else you would like to say? And if so, like, what additional matters Do you want to include in this interview?

1:34:06

Interviewee: Did you have any further questions for me? Before I go into anything?

1:34:10

Interviewer: This is basically the end.

1:34:14

Interviewee: I think I'm good. Keitch Wanishi , Xaheli Kemaxeleman (thank you very much, you give me great honor) I want to see, you know, cuz when he came on, Barney, thank you very much. You give me great honor. I'm honored to be here, you know, in, you know, honored to be here as an individual. And, you know, I'm proud to do this and talk about these things. And I'm still very young. So there's so much that I don't know. And I'm speaking from a young man's perspective, I know I will listen to this one day when I'm older. And I'll remember the man who sat in this chair and will laugh I know, I'll laugh because I've lived my life longer and will have thought to myself, I wish I could have talked to you know, I would have said it this way. When I'm older. I'll say I would have said it this way now, but I said it this way, then, you know, I know what I was feeling. But I'm, I'm honored to do this. I'm honored to have this time with you. And I'm honored to speak in these things. But like I was saying, I'm still very young. And if there's things that, you know, people are like, Oh, that's weird. I haven't lived my life long enough to know the true answers and to know things slowly, but I can only speak from the place that I'm in now.

1:35:26

Interviewer: Wow, I like that. That's definitely gonna hear some laughs on this recording. But do you have any questions for me though, or anything?

1:35:37

Interviewee: No, the only thing I'm requested a copy of this recording so that I can listen to it and if there's things I objected to because I would like to listen to it and have my community listen with it. Just to make sure that everything I say is on point in that you know, I haven't been spoken for no one. And if I have the ability to if I choose to correct certain things to make note of that. If I do I have that ability?

1:36:03

Interviewer: Oh, yeah, sorry.

Interviewee: It's okay.

Interviewer: Yeah, no, you do you do

1:36:08

Interviewee: And I'm speaking to this too because we you know this as well as I do that sometimes historically recordings and things like this happen use against us in certain ways

Interviewer: Oh, for sure.

Interviewee: You know, I just want to make sure that you know, we're all safe.

1:36:20

Interviewer: Oh, yeah, this is a safe place and everything it's not going to be used against you or anything like that. So this is just for research wise

Interviewee: but it was also in the fine print

Interviewer: Yes, Yes.

1:36:34

Interviewee: but I just wanted to do ensure that I can get a copy

Interviewer: Yes, Yes

Interviewee: Recording before it's officially submitted,

Interviewer: of course

Interviewee: and listen to it and review it.

Interviewer: Yeah.

1:36:41

Interviewee: Cool.

Interviewer: Awesome. Oh, I guess that's it.

Ended: 1:36:46.25

Piscataway Conoy Tribe Individual

Interviewee: I'm of the Piscataway people, the Indigenous people of what is now known as Maryland, Western shore, DC and Northern Virginia, and I'm of the Wild Turkey clan.

03:00

Interviewer: Thank you, thank you so much for your interest. lovely introduction. Um, so I'm just kind of going forward. Do you have any questions for me about anything so far before we proceed?

03:18

Interviewee: No, not at this point.

03:20

Interviewer: Okay, awesome. So I'm just to go off with the first question, because these are going to be open-ended questions. So there's going to kind of like not going to be structured this is just to help me out with everything. Um, so just the first question, Who **Who is your community?**

03:42

Interviewee: My community is 2500 people who are enrolled in the Piscataway Tribe. We are the descendants of those who met the first colonists in 1634. Our ancestors never left the state, we found a way to adapt and thrive. And we remain sort of underground, self-isolated in rural communities as long as we could. The change in the DMV area due to World War Two changed our interaction with the non-Indigenous society. And it wasn't until the Civil Rights Movement, which we realized that at this point, was safe to come out and identify ourselves as Piscataway people once again. And since the 1970s, we've been working on that resurgence out into the public environment.

04:53

Interviewer: And do you um, that civil rights group, because I heard about it from Peter Landeros that he's affiliated with, **are you also part of that civil rights group?**

05:07

Interviewee: I assume you're talking about the American Indian Movement (AIM). Is that what you're referring to?

05:11

Interviewer: Yes, yes, sorry.

05:12

Interviewee: I am a product of the American Indian Movement. It was a major role in my life as a youth. It, AIM came to DC in 1974. 1974? getting my years, right. And really changed the way that Indigenous people, I'm sorry, 1972, with with the Trail of Broken Treaties, came to DC and really changed the way that Indigenous peoples specifically my Tribe, thought about our culture and our history. And that was sort of the beginning, it lit the fuse of us taking a public stance. And AIM was a political movement, but it's also a cultural movement. And that cultural movement really caught fire, and expand it up and down the East Coast. And there was significant activity in that realm, throughout the (19)70s, and into the early (19)80s. So I very much appreciate it, being associated with AIM high AIM, sort of changed the direction, and then the Mid-Atlantic in the 1970s. And for that always have a warm heart and my warm place in my heart for for the American Indian Movement.

06:44

Interviewer: And just like one more question relating to the AIM. So since since the AIM movement have begun, do would you say that, um, **have you seen like a positive change from the mid-Atlantic region since AIM or has it kind of like, still been just like, the same?** Since.

07:11

Interviewee: Significant change. And when I talk Mid-Atlantic, I'm talking to Virginia tribes, North Carolina, Delaware, New Jersey, the Indigenous people, oh, we're doing a lot of small things, prior to prior to AIM. And it was very much local. And with AIM, it became regional, it became national, it became something that everyone wanted to embrace, and do more and learn more. So AIM had a significant impact in a positive way, and changing the direction of Native America in the mid-Atlantic.

07:57

Interviewer: Thank you, thank you for sharing that, like, I, I love AIM. I love studying the history of it. Sadly, I wasn't born at that time. So I didn't get to be there. But it's also very important learning that part of the history and how it still impacts like a lot of the movements that we have today. So.

08:17

Interviewer: When you go back and look. AIM is a product of the takeover of Alcatraz in 1968. This was a scenario and with Indian youth, for many different tribes and intertribal adventure to take over that federal property. And that to the best of my knowledge, that was the first time that intertribal youth led the way. And I think that was inspirational for AIM. And that was definitely inspirational for us. Before it was always our tribe or that tribe against the government. Now, it was many tribes coming together as a common baseline to fight those things that were historical wrongs. So you can go back and credit I'm sure, there's probably many before that, but the first I am aware of is Alcatraz as a direct influence with AIM, and then aim influencing everyone else.

09:17

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Yeah. And then also with like, how in South I think it was South or North Dakota with the Wounded Knee. Part, so.

09:28

Interviewee: Correct. 1973. Again, after the Trail of Broken Treaties, that mindset was beginning to say that, yes, this is a for the for this was a Lakota concern, but it was also for other Tribes supporting those issues. And that idea of unity of Intertribal working together was was significant.

09:56

Interviewer: Thank you for sharing that. That was I really liked hearing that Thank you again. Um, so do you have? **Do you have a Tribal community where you live currently?**

10:13

Interviewee: I guess you put how you define it. Um, I live in Southern Maryland, and of the 2500. Piscataway people, I would say 18 or 1600 still live in Southern Maryland. So we're not that far apart in Southern Maryland, not that big. So it's not like a specific reservation is not like our specific town. But I can I can drive 30 minutes in any direction, and run into dozens and dozens of tribal citizens.

10:47

Interviewer: Okay, and **how does your Native identity tied to your sense of place or community?**

10:57

Interviewee: It's always played a significant role. Growing up, even early days when we were taught not to identify yourself as Piscataway. Seeing the relationship with family, our interactions was always with either my father's clan or mother's clan, up until we went to elementary school. So it was an even after that, as far as holidays and celebrations as always with family. So that that was something that was common to us. And then as we got older, it was family plus culture. It was family plus culture plus beadwork and dance class and singing practice and ceremony. So it constantly built outward from the family core, to the extended family to engage in in tribal functions.

11:57

Interviewer: And how does your community come together?

12:04

Interviewee: Several different ways. Often it's work-related. When someone the elders in the fall, they need to need help with winterizing their homes, we're free labor for that, when there need to get off wood firewood, we're free labor for that. When it comes to in the summertime working in the gardens, as a kid, we would be shuffled off into the tobacco fields of my uncle's, every summer helping to cut and raise tobacco, we would be in the gardens, collecting food to father to give away to family and friends. So it was work was the at least from a kid's perspective, work was the most common way in which we came together. Later in life, we would come together in my younger age to hit the powwow circuit with my peers traveling up and down the coast. There's a lot of bonding associated with that being part of a drum, a lot of interaction with other Tribes associated with that. So initially, it was from a kid's perspective, it was about work, and contributing, and then later days is more about culture, doing those things. That brings the community together.

13:29

Interviewer: Um, so how I know that you talked about you being involved, especially in the kids perspective, and now, but how are when your community comes together? How are you involved in this?

13:44

Interviewee: I'm involved multiple ways. Currently, I am a volunteer instructor for the Charles County Indian Education Program. throughout the school year, this is our federal program. We teach Indian youth in the county, regardless of Tribe, traditional arts. I'm involved and teaching young men within the Tribe, how to do how to sing traditional songs, and how to learn the various dances. I'm involved in teaching history. I've done a lot of work in over the last decade in capturing Tribal history. And I was able, fortunately, lucky enough to gather about a dozen or so Piscataway people, and we created a Piscataway history course that was offered at the University of Maryland, College Park, this fall 23. So I was able to sort of organize that I was able to reach out and attract seven other people to serve as instructors for that course. So we had Piscataway people developing the curriculum, we have Piscataway people, both male and female, both in their 20s, their 30s, their 40s. And above, teaching the course. So from that perspective, it was a great opportunity to transfer knowledge to the instructors, as well as reaffirm our public presence by teaching the course up at University of Maryland.

15:26

Interviewer: So, going back to that, would you say that the University of Maryland, College Park has like a good partnerships with Tribal communities?

15:37

Interviewee: I would say it's at its infant stage. There is a lot of opportunity to improve. But there I do believe the current leadership is serious and establishing a hand out come to reach out to Indigenous America to find ways to collaborate together. I was suspect five or six years ago when this process began. But overall, I've been positively surprised how well it's gone to date.

16:18

Interviewer: Yeah, cuz just, I'm just thinking, because I feel like University of Maryland, College Park is doing pretty well, compared to all the academic institute's that is involving Indigenous people, leaders, and individuals and community. So I just think that, you know, of course, like you said, it can be improved and could be better. But so far, like, as of now, like it's doing pretty good, pretty good job. And what I've seen so far.

16:50

Interviewee: yeah, and one of the realities to consider is Tribal bandwidth. We've, we Piscataway, people, only have so much time capacity to work with the University on collaborative issues. So we have to be we'll keep that in mind. We can't run we can't sprint. It's a slow jog at best on a good year. And as long as from our perspective, we keep that in mind. And the university has all these departments, and their excitement level has to be tempered with our capacity level. And those are the kind of that's part of the dance that we go through when we're working with them.

17:35

Interviewer: Mm hmm. Okay, awesome. Thank you. Um, so one of the things I know you touched base on it, but just to go into more detail, **what are the changes you notice over the years and how your community comes together?**

17:56

Interviewee: The some of the biggest issues that I've observed is generational. When the when my elders would come together, it was about completing a common tasks, we had to build a garage, we had to build a shed, we have to do a fence, we had to cut wood. And that was the common experience. Now I see us when we come together, it's more about culture, we're being able to try and encourage and find new ways to communicate to the next generation. When you're talking to those in their teens, and 20s. They have earplugs in 25% of the time, they got their heads down in the phone a 50% of the time. And you're really don't know if what is being communicated is read as is being grasped by the individuals. So those are the kinds of different ways that we have to find, to educate and engage the younger generations where they're at. We got to find new ways to motivate them. The idea of coming together to work, I don't think is the norm or the expectation, but to come in together, learn how to do things more effectively, how to improve things. I think there's some opportunities there that bring in the next generation long can be a viable option.

19:36

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Yeah. I agree with that. Every generation is different, especially when it comes to technology-wise. So like how it is kind of scary because with my Tribe, for example, the Navajo Nation, back in probably like, I want to say like 20 years ago, we used to have like, at least like 60% Speaker Now I will have speakers. Now it's gone down to 51%. So it's kind of like we're trying to be creative with how to do about it. But it's just again, like what you said the opportunities. Were trying to find that and see how to what's like being grasped and what's actually being put into the youth's mind. So

20:22

Interviewee: And again, we have a relatable challenge in the language area we're talking about, I don't think anyone can actually have a conversation in our language today, there are words that we were able to sort of begin to bring back together. But when you talk, when you use the words, wild rice, we have a word for that. And we have the words for the animals, and numbers and colors. But those things don't come up in a normal conversation every day, you have to work hard at trying to filter that into the minds of an of a younger generation. And that's a challenge. We're looking at making these little short TikTok videos type things, of how to educate the next generation, and how to build upon that. But even in that area, it takes a cadre of people who are really dedicated and willing to learn themselves before they can teach. So those are the kinds of challenges someone saying, hey, yeah, I'll spend the next 510 20 years and helping to rejuvenate the language. That's a significant significant commitment.

21:27

Interviewer: Mm hmm. I agree. And, yeah, sorry, I forgot what I was gonna say. But it's just past through my mind. But thank you again. Um, so next question. So **how does settler, settler colonialism still persist in its impact on your Tribe?**

21:50

Interviewee: Significant, it starts with the idea that the formal records prior to the 1970s said, we all disappear. The census said, We never counted Indian in the state of Maryland, prior to the 1960s. So when you start with the idea that there are no Indian people here, all these external entities, colleges, and universities and hospitals, would, would conduct surveys and studies about our people since we acted unique compared to everyone else in the Southern Maryland region. And our people that and our people would go further in their within their shell, to try to avoid interacting with these types of institutions. And so therefore, if we were not providing the actual story in which we didn't want to do, we still wanted to hide, then they will come up with their own stories, and that there's tons of documents out there that's built upon false narratives. That misdescribes our history. So from that perspective, it is sort of income incumbent upon us to go out now and rewrite that story. The challenge is, is it's a very bureaucratic process, when you don't have degrees, and letters behind your name. It's a very small story relative to the entire continent, about the Piscataway history. So therefore, from a market ability, that story is not one that's going to sell. So finding any publishers to be able to tell our story. We don't have the oil like the Osage and create movies and but tell those kinds of historical stories to be able to gain public interest.

So those are the challenges we have is that being a relatively small Tribe, being part of the initial spearhead of the colonial invasion, we had to find ways to adapt. And we've done that and our history is very much related to, what was that guy Tom Hanks played? Forrest Gump, that we pop up all throughout early American history, colonial history, all the way out into the Civil War. Our stories are entwined in all those stories. But of course, the way that history is edited, our story has been edited out. So it's incumbent upon us to go out and complete that research and there's much more to be done, and be able to tell that story. And I think that's part of one of the big challenges. And that's the opportunities when people understand the experiences of their forefathers. There's a level of pride associated with that, and gives you a level of confidence to both go out and be able to tell those stories which many did not have access to that information. In my younger days, and prior to.

25:11

Interviewer: Yeah. And going this kind of relates also to the previous question. So **how so how is your sovereignty being impacted currently?** That's relating to the previous question.

25:28

Interviewee: The sovereignty can be looked at it many different ways. From the idea of control of our homelands, it's not there. But from the idea of control of our story, control of the direction we want to move together, there's great potential for that. When you look at sovereignty is the idea that the information that we pass on to the next generation will strengthen them from a holistic perspective. And that's the way we sort of measure sovereignty today is not with borderlines and fences. It's about that information that we are empowering the next generation with, that they can do much more than was given to us from our elders, and build sovereignty through that path.

26:21

Interviewer: I like that. I do like that. Because I think one of the things too, because especially now they think sovereignty is like land base, a lot. And, of course, that could apply to mainly federally recognized Tribe that has reservation, but when it's like this non-federally recognized Tribes, it's more of like the history, the knowledge, the information, and everything. So the way that you described that that was top tier, I really liked that.

Interviewee: Thank you.

Interviewer: Yes, thank you. Um, so I'm going into the main topic. **So what does Indigenous erasure mean to you?**

27:06

Interviewee: It's taken away the contributions and the knowledge of my ancestors. And removing that from the from the written story. Those ways from an environmental perspective that our ancestors were able to thrive for for over 15,000 years in our homelands. That's a significant understanding of the relationship between air, land and water, which has been overlooked and significant damage done since over the last 400 years of colonial invasion. And I think there's opportunities there, looking at all the potential problems coming at us to be able to to look at society in a different way to understand the value system of shared lands, shared waters, and the shared air we have, and understand that it's not a resource to be managed, bought and sold and fenced off. But it was a God Creator, given gift to all life, that we need to think in those terms. And maybe we'll make the future better for the unborn generations.

28:32

Interviewer: And then, **do you believe Indigenous erasure is affecting your own community?**

28:39

Interviewee: It has the possibility. Suburbia came to us. We're not one of those Tribes in which people will people left to go move to the big city, hours away. The big city of Washington, DC, now call the DMV intruded upon our homelands. And that began in the post-World War Two era. And whereas there are a lot of opportunities that big city environment offers jobs, employment, education. The challenge is balancing that with culture. It's very easy for your young and brightest, to put on a uniform, and it'd be gone for 28 to 30 years, you'd lose that contribution to the Tribe. And the same thing with corporate America. It's very easy for our youngest, best and brightest to put on a suit and tie and go work in corporate America for the next 30 years, and thrive in that environment. But *what has that loss to the community generated?* That's the challenges. You want to encourage the youth to put on that suit and tie to gain that knowledge but to offset that with having roots within your community that they come back home, and they participate in ceremony, they come back home and attend and support the powwow, they come back home to teach their skill set to the next generation. Those are the important things. And you got to find that that

balance between their city life and and running their own families, and being able to bring that knowledge back and stay within the communities. So they can thrive as individuals as as nuclear families, but they also can help move the Tribe forward, based upon their given skills.

30:42

Interviewer: Mm hmm. Yeah, that was also mentioned in Dr. Elizabeth Rules book Indigenous DC. I don't know if you?

30:54

Interviewee: I'm aware of it. That's a classic one. *What is Indigenous DC?* When I first heard it, were a book I was a little bit upset. We have a person from the Southern Plains, coming in here and talking about what is Indigenous DC? Indigenous DC, the see from my perspective, my answer has been a 15,000 years. These are the important places that are significant to the Indigenous community here. But you also got to take a look at a fresh look at the term Indigenous, she can come into and live within the DC, DMV environment and have a modern experience to that as well. So it really sort of broadened my, my thought process of what is Indigenous, and it's relative to the conversation you're having. So yes, the monuments, the bars, the places two of the museums that have significant from an intertribal perspective, that is Indigenous DC, those petroglyphs, those stone quarries. That's also Indigenous DC from a different perspective.

32:07

Interviewer: Hmm, okay. Yeah, I was kind of thinking about the titles and name too, because Indigenous DC that could be interpreted as being intertribal. Rather than, you know, the actual like, may or either Maryland or Eastern Shore like Tribal people that ancestral to those homelands. So, yeah, I don't know, it was different perspective. But it's also

32:32

Interviewee: I look at it if I was to move out to Albuquerque and write something about Indigenous Alburquerque. From my experiences running around the city. I'm not quite sure the Navajo people who call us at home would see it the same way. And those are the kinds of stories and thus the, the general term of Indigenous is relative to what is being communicated.

32:59

Interviewer: Yeah. That's a good point, because I didn't see it like that. But just having this conversation with you. Yeah, it's definitely different, especially because I know that I read her biography, and she's from the Oklahoma region. And so yeah, that's different, definitely a different perspective. And thank you for sharing that too. So

33:28

Interviewee: Not a problem. It's part of the the experience of life and growing, we have our perspective on Indigenous, and you think you have it all figured out, and you're working that aspect, until somebody throws you a curve. And I guess the initial aspect, you can resist it, or and be angry with it, or you can stop and think it through. And I sort of did the former First I was in that resist mode. But when you begin to think it through, there's many different ways of looking at issues. And I know her heart was in the right place, and trying to contribute. And that's a good thing. It's just that we have preconceived notions of territory and Indigenous responsibility. And when you see those things be turned inside out. You got to sort of stand back and maybe reevaluate your preconceived notions.

34:34

Interviewer: Do you think it would have been better if like the included in a more Piscataway people perspective rather than her own words?

34:43

Interviewee: I don't think we as a Tribe would participate. It's having someone else come into your homelands and tell their perspective of your story. And even though it is 90% would be separate and distinct. The idea of call it Indigenous DC, from our perspective will always be a misnomer. But we understand what she was attempting to do.

35:12

Interviewer: Okay. Thank you. Thank you so much. I'm so a little bit going from this one, going back to Indigenous erasure. So **why is it important to address erasure in Maryland environmental organizations?**

35:33

Interviewee: Our name is Piscataway means where "*the are people who live with the waters blend*". That is our focus, and growing up, and understanding all the gifts of these many different waterways throughout our homeland. We're quite fortunate here in the mid-Atlantic, to have such great bounty available to us. But we also saw the disaster that could be forced upon our lands, and our waterways, from those who don't know, from the invader. When you look at the building of dams, how it destroyed spawning grounds for the fisheries. When you look at building Earth levees, along some of our waterways, which turn productive river ecosystems into an open open city sewer. And you see how this even though the concept, as always, water flows away. Well, we're very much a title people. So what you throw in the water in the morning, it's going to be right back in your backyard in the afternoon. And it takes years for those kinds of pollutants to clear. But that's not the colonial mindset. And we saw the devastation that beginning in post World War Two that did to our waterways, our ability support families from fishing, you couldn't eat the fish that you were catching in the 60s and 70s 60s, and 70s, because of the pollutants. That sort of gave awareness to the environmental movement that started in the late 60s, early 70s.

So from a Tribal perspective, we know the relationships between many different animals living to water, our contributes to keeping the water clean, we know the relationship between those land animals, the beaver that protects the waters and keeping it clean. And we know what the challenges are with dealing with farmers, and how they see the use of water on their private property. We see the use of the DOD military structure with dumping chemicals into the waterways, that lasts for four decades. We see the pollutants when they build bridges over our waterways, and they put in salt for the wintertime. And all that salt washes into the streams and creeks and does damage. So those are the kinds of stories that we can advocate for. Because we have the stories, we have that history with the land of unknowing what it could be if people start thinking of this waterways as the veins and the arteries of the earth, and not just a resource to traffic up and down and and use as dividers between counties and dividers between states, transportation network for boats, for business and pleasure. But as a true source of having a healthy community, you got to have those healthy waterways. And those things I think we can advocate for, and are beginning to do now, as we sort of take that next step and our Tribal public roles.

39:16

Interviewer: Hmm. And, um, when you when you're addressing those advocates what you were saying, um, what do you think the **what do you think that environmental organizations what look like when you address those concerns and issues?**

39:37

Interviewee: Well, we're hoping that we can strengthen their voices. There are a lot of good scientists now out there today that are willing to listen and learn. There are scientific-based organizations that want to hear and now we're looking at collaborating with the Virginia Tribes and the Delaware Tribes To form a Chesapeake Bay Tribal Consortium, so that we can start having all our voices unified together in a larger voice. We're also working with the National Marine Sanctuary, and be able to educate their, their membership and their supporters, and able to begin to tell some of these stories and offer some ideas of what can be done or should be done in order to enhance the water qualities in this whole region. And it's a large picture, because you're looking at Pennsylvania, West Virginia, New York as being factors in the water quality here in our Piscataway homelands.

40:57

Interviewer: Okay, and so, I guess like the collaborating projects, um, because I know that earlier, you were talking about how you when you're engaging the youth, you partner with federal organization. I think so. I'm going a little into that. **Would you say like, since you guys are not federally recognized, do you feel like you still get a lot of partnerships with a lot of federal organizations?**

41:27

Interviewee: For the most part, yes. The whole federal recognized thing is such a bizarre process. The original criteria established in the early 1970s. *Was Did you have a treaty with the American government?* And if you could check a box and say, yes, then you were on the federal recognized lists. Well, when they created that list, they didn't do much research. We have two treaties with the American government, dated 1776 and 1777, one in Philadelphia, and the latter and eastern Pennsylvania. Two signatories of the Declaration of Independence, were participants in some of these treaties, Thomas Paine, the grant, the gods, the grandfather of the American Revolution, was the secretary for our 1777 Treaty. So these notable American historical historical figures committed to us as being partners in our collaboration via treaties, which are now ignored, because in these treaties, they occurred in Pennsylvania, and we were partnering with the Haudenosaunee, and they were using their term to describe us their name for us is Conoy, in the Haudenosaunee language, Iroquoian language.

So, in these treaties, it's not Piscataway is its Conoy. And one treaty is Conoy spelled with a C. c o n o y. The other treaty is canola spelled with a K. K N O I S. We're all the same people said there was no standardization. And no one in the 1970s asked us for our our input, nor did they do any kind of research to find out who this Conoy with a C and Knois with a K were. So we were ignored. So from the idea of federal recognition, there is the aspect that it was a great era done to our people a couple of centuries ago. But he it by being of one of geographic location, and close to a lot of the federal activity. We have opportunities to influence and to engage on a multitude of issues with federal authorities.

We've had the DC government passed a a fishing law that allows our people to fish in DC waters based upon a 1666 treaty. Well, in order for that to happen, the US Federal Congress had to approve it. And it was as the way with any DC law did legislation. So Congress approved that, even though we're not federally recognized, we had a one of our chiefs in the 1980s buried in federal property on Piscataway Park, which is a historical capital city, based upon federal legislation authorizing that. So we have two treaties. We have the legislation for the burial. We have the DC legislation, all of these kinds of things that support us as far as federal

acknowledgement, or federal relationships without the form formality of being having federal recognition bestowed upon us.

45:19

Interviewer: Okay, and then going into the treaties, because I read in one of Dr. Gabriel Tayact paper, I think it was like Chesapeake Bay's people's voices shrugged this in like early 2000, like 2002. It's in the Smithsonian website. I just saw it. So, um, would you say that you guys do like just Piscataway speaking? Do you guys have like a like a statewide treaty for your people? Or would you say that you don't I'm kind of confused about the treaty part.

45:56

Interviewee: We have over 30 treaties that we've been either directly affect or directly participate in or directly affected by. Some of the earliest is 1652, in which the Maryland colony so bought some of our lands from a neighboring tribe who never owned it is the Susquehanna people who are up near Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, north of Baltimore. They knew the Susquehanna didn't own it, but it was a way for them to get a paper ownership of the title to the land. We have the Treaty of 1666 with the Maryland government. We have the Treaty of 1680 with the Virginia government. We have a treaties from the 1690s, early 1700s. We have treaty from 1701 with a Pennsylvania government. We were at the Treaty of 1744 Lancaster, in which Maryland bought our homelands from the Haudenosaunee. The treaty had identified all the lands North Potomac, the Haudenosaunee sold it to the Maryland colony. The Maryland knew that Haudenosaunee never owned it. They knew that the Piscataway it was Piscataway lands, but it was a way of them obtaining alleged title to the land, let's say in some Indian sold them lands.

So there are a lot of treaties that we were involved in that tune of over 30 35 treaties, of which two are which two are with the federal government. We have one from the French and Indian War with the British government, the Treaty of 1764. So there's a wide variety of history, like the Forrest Gump comment, that we pop up in all these different aspects as being a party to or attending many of these treaties.

47:58

Interviewer: Okay, thank you for clearing that up. Because I was wondering if you guys did have treaters or not because I didn't really because I did intern with the Maryland State Archives this summer. And I didn't get to see too much I mainly saw like every other Tribe I didn't see as Piscataway speaking as part

48:17

Interviewee: It's part of that paper genocide. If you take a treaty and you bury it in the State Archives, can anyone really find it? And that becomes the issue. Now, again, with the State Archives, we're working with them, we made great progress over the last five, seven years. The challenge is we need them to be able to create a structure in which all of these treaties that aren't may not be resident in a Maryland host. But they need direct linkage to. For instance, our treaty of 1680 is in the Thomas Jefferson collection, which is a Library of Congress. So we so is not visible or available through the State Archives. So we're trying to figure out a way someone doing research can see the 1680 treaty and be directed to the Library of Congress to see this that treaty within their their holdings, Thomas Jefferson collection. So those kinds of new new business practices. We're having that conversation at the University of Maryland level, we'll be bringing in the State Archives folks, and trying to bring all this together so that those people doing research 10 years in the future will have a lot easier time pulling these stories together.

49:44

Interviewer: Okay, awesome. Thank you. I'm so this is gonna be like about the Maryland environmental questions. This is just a different section. Um, so You already said that sorry. So, um, **what are what are these environmental issues among the biggest challenges in your Tribal community faces?** I think he kind of touched base on it.

50:16

Interviewee: Yeah, there are historical foods that are still resident in our waterways, that helps sustain my ancestors for centuries. And we have the obligation to try and protect them as much as possible. And the challenge is we don't own the waterways. And we don't own the lands that assess these that border these waterways. So it's one of education. It's one of informing the public that these plants played a role, and they still serve a role in feeding the natural world today. One of those plants sources the wild rice. There's pictures from the late 1800s of the Anacostia River. Being highly a large wild rice fields growing now where the Bolling Air Force Base was. All along our freshwater creeks, especially on the Potomac, wild rice still naturally thrive because they've been left alone. And we sort of need to pick up the mantle, one, to educate the public that these plants are there. Two, to help them make them aware that there are invasive species coming in and occupying that same space. And we need to do something in order to minimize their negative effects on the on the these plants and as well as the water quality. And the third would be a continual reminder that the border just because you're not dumping something directly into the waters, those roadways, that that transit over the small creeks, the small creeks, connect to the larger waterways, and contribute to overall water quality. So what we're involved now, and we've been successful at the Mallows Bay National Marine Sanctuary, and at Piscataway Park, of putting in signage from a Tribal perspective, and educating the public about those natural gifts that are in these waterways that they that needs to be preserved and respected. And through education, and even eco-tourism, through kayaking and canoe trips, educating people to understand what does the pickle reed look like?

53:04

What does the wild rice, the chokeberry, all these different natural plants that Tuckahoe? What did they look like in the springtime? What it looked like in the summertime? So people be able to identify the sources and understand the value they add that the ducks feed off of them, that the fish feed off of them, that some of the four legged feed off of them. So those are the kinds of things that through education, and Tribal advocacy, we can begin to protect those natural wild spaces.

53:39

Interviewer: And I'm so going a little bit about the this question. So **what do you know about Maryland environmental and climate change priorities planning?**

53:54

Interviewee: I personally note little because I have not been directly involved. Again, it's a capacity issue of all the things that I get involved in. That's one area that I leave to others. And it's one of those things that I jump in when my support is requested from the historical perspective, from the Tribal advocacy perspective, but as far as getting my hands directly involved and knowing state policy, or regional policy. I haven't been directly involved in that arena.

54:28

Interviewer: Okay. And just, I know you say you're not directly involved, but just a little bit of how, you know, **do you think the environment like Maryland's environmental planning aligns with a lot of tribal planning or climate-related?**

54:50

Interviewee: I have a hard way saying yea or nay. I can't say that. In our conversations with working with the Maryland Department and Natural Resources has been very productive. But I think it needs to be bigger than that. We need to establish relationships with Virginia natural resources groups, we need to work that same with Washington DC. So that is the larger picture that needs to be addressed as opposed to a county or local area here in Southern Maryland. It's the it's the bigger picture. And I guess that's where I can come in at. When we're talking now we're talking with other Tribes that the Tribal Chesapeake Bay Tribal Consortium, that's a way to raise in the voice all of us at the same time for common issues. The other Tribes in Virginia, they're river based tribes, but they're for predominantly away from the Bay. We are right along the Bay from Baltimore, all the way down to the Potomac. So we have a lot of direct Tribal knowledge about the Bay that we can bring to the table, we also have the freshwater and the brackish water. So we can be able to tell those many different stories, how it all comes together. And those those intricate relationships that need to be understood, and *what changes may have to occur, knowing that as the waters may heat up, what does that do into those fish and those water based life forms that we that need that cooler temperatures?* Some of these don't move as easily we get into shellfish, things of that nature. So there's an so their ability for those animals to perform their historical missions of purifying the water could be impacted when the waters come to walk to warm for them to be able to do their mission. So those are the kinds of things that we can sort of raise the picture to have people thinking about the larger picture of the impact of man and his decisions on our local environment.

57:10

Interviewer: Okay, thank you. Um, so going into this next set of questions. How, **how do you view the state? And how does Maryland celebrate Indigenous people?**

57:29

Interviewee: The state is a roller coaster. The politicians and and maybe that's the nature with any group of politicians is about self-interest. And every once in a while, when the things line up appropriately, good things can happen. But there's always hidden agendas. When you get into the whole process we went through through most of the (19)80s and (19)90s. About state recognition, it was associated with gambling being a vise that they didn't want to enter into Maryland. And the fear was that if we Piscataway were a state recognized it'd be a step closer to bring in formal gambling, into Maryland. Well, that argument lasted until they signed deals with the Anne Arundel live casino with the MGM casino with the Baltimore. I mean the Ocean City casino. And once they start signing all these deals, they realized they had to work with us, in order to make recognition no longer an issue. So those are the kinds of things we dealing with politicians at the state level, their own self-interest is always a consideration. That that needs to be considered. As we advanced issues. I think in the current administration in the state of Maryland, that could be good opportunities to address some historical wrongs, we still have the remains of our ancestors stored into institutions and state and federal entities and having that those remains returned to us. So to place them back into the Earth. Are opportunities to make that happen within the current state government. So those are kind of things we sort of got maintain awareness of how the political winds are blowing in the state, and figure out how to reach out and engage when the time is right to advocate for those things that we would like to see happen based upon our priorities at that time.

59:52

Interviewer: And you did touch base on what you were saying incorrect assumptions. So **what are The incorrect assumptions peep people made about you and your community?**

1:00:06

Interviewee: It goes back for generations, if not centuries. It starts off with the census, the original Maryland census from 1790. Specifically said “*do not count Indians*”. So therefore, if you have a population of white people, you have a population of black people. And you have a population that doesn't fit directly in either a physical category, *how do you describe them?* And the term mulatto, the term colored, the term freed people, there was all these different descriptors being placed upon my community over the century, in which academia came in, and they started with the premise that there are no Indians, because the census says so. *So who are these people? And why are they different? And why would they make money they don't leave? And why they only have these certain surnames? and why are they always associated with the Catholic Church? And why are this these surnames only associated with these particular rural communities throughout the southern part of the state?* So all those descriptions was talking about our Indigenous community without applying that label, some would say there are a mixture of Black, White and Indian, some some articles that have Indian traits. Some would say that these people act differently than anyone else, and we don't know where they came from.

So those are the kinds of negative articles that are out there. That does a lot of harm to the youth. When when the documents they read or the books they read, says that Indians disappeared in Maryland in the 1700s. *Than what is mom and dad telling me?* The teacher says through this book, this is right. And what mom and dad at home is telling me something different. So those kinds of dilemmas in dealing with the state has an impact. And even today, I think they're in education areas specifically, they're trying to do better, but they don't know what they don't know. And that's part of the problem. The latest school books for the first fourth grade in the state of Maryland, was pathetic. What they put in perspective, it was a market improvement over what was 10 20 30 years ago. But from the Tribal perspective, it was pathetic. It was history that was done that was so generic, you could write you could cross out the word the Piscataway and write in the word Mohawk. Or you could write in the name Lakota, or Diné or Hopi, and it will be applicable, because it was that much considering all Indian Indian, and they were just putting in different names, but everything else was synonymous. And is that kind of opportunities for us to enhance what Maryland learns in the future. But that is a lot of room, a lot of things to change. And not only we need to do that for Maryland, we need to do for DC and Northern Virginia as well. Because there's still a mindset out there that Piscataway never crossed the Potomac River. That's That's Powhatan And the Virginia Tribes, that's separate territory that Piscataway territory, so those false narratives are still out there.

1:03:46

Interviewer: Mm hmm. Yeah. And it's kind of like they're still believing in the Hollywood, kind of like, Indian part. And it's just like, because there's just one part, I guess, from Vine Deloria, Jr. In his book, *Custer Died for My Sins*, how he was saying, “*how people believe the Hollywood stereotypical Indian, but rather, they don't believe the adapted authentic Native*”. And it's just like, it's so true, because it's kind of hard to kind of like voice out saying, like, you know, this is wrong, this is wrong. But then they're like, how do you know because this person has a degree and they have credentials, they know what they're talking about. And it's just like, just because they have a degree and credentials does not mean That's actually correct.

1:04:36

Interviewee: Exactly. I still have young people in the 8, 10, 12 year olds coming up to me in a public and asking, *do you live in a teepee?* I mean, this is 2024 now, and their level of knowledge about Indigenous America is what they see are cartoons or Hollywood movies.

1:04:59

Interviewer: Yeah, And I don't know when that will change, but I hope it changes soon for the better.

1:05:07

Interviewee: The good news, it's so poor that reality has to eventually sift sink in. And through education, awareness, and public visibility. It has it has the potential.

1:05:21

Interviewer: Mm hmm. I agree. Um, so, I guess like, um, oh, this one. So **when Maryland mentions diverse communities, do you believe your Tribal communities included?**

1:05:38

Interviewee: Short answer is no. We are a fraction when you look at state Statistics, so I'm quite confident, if we don't knock on the door, and rattle the chains were overlooked. And in any and all statistical categories. So those areas in which we see need, and there are plenty, those are the ones that we have to go ahead and advocate. And once we raise our voice and say, Hey, example would be the pandemic when Maryland was handing out, and they would do it through the counties, those mask and those devices to wash and cleanse your hands. We were not initially considered in that distribution process. It was only after after individuals within the Tribe who will work with Commission Indian Affairs, stated there are communities need, then we were considered after the fact. So we still are quite aware that we need to raise our voices to become that squeaky wheel in order to be counted in the Maryland stats or programs when they're when we see a need within our community.

1:07:12

Interviewer: Um, so **what do you think the future holds for your community?**

1:07:20

Interviewee: By definition, I have to believe the future is always bright. I know that understanding my history is that adaptability is ingrained with our within our people. And I gotta believe that that adaptability is has been and is being passed on to the younger generations and will be passed on to the future generations, through adaptability and knowledge of who they are and their history. I believe there's great potential for our Tribe going forward.

There, there are a lot of hiccups along the way. And we've experienced a lot of those hiccups. But that's part of the process you go through. As a people, we look at trying to move at a pace in which our elders can understand and keep up. And we move at a pace in which the youngest, those that crawl can keep up. And that's not always convenient for those business minded that lives by a corporate POA and M Plan of Action and Milestones in which things has to be done in a timely fashion, as fast and expeditious as possible. That's the biggest challenge is to keep those 20s, 30s, 40s, somethings engaged in trying to do things in a Tribal way. And understanding the elders is understanding of the youth while figuring out how to not apply the brakes, but how to how to do things in a manner that it benefits everyone. Even though there may be a financial cost because you can't get it done as fast as necessary.

1:09:23

Interviewer: And so this one is little tie into the future. So how do you want the public to view you in your tribal community in 2024?

1:09:36

Interviewee: I would say that if we could be viewed as a voice for the waters, as a voice for the land, that would be a successful 2024. That if we're able to raise a local awareness on environmental issues associated with land and waters, if we were able to raise it in a regional manner, that'd be even better. I think we have the skill sets. And I think we do have the individuals that have the capacity to do this. And with support coming from the overall travel community, I think that would be a great success that is achievable in 2024.

1:10:32

Interviewer: Thank you. Um, so is there anything else you'd like to say? Or what additional matters you want to include in this interview that I didn't ask you about?

1:10:46

Interviewee: Not really, we covered a wide range of issues. So if anything else pops up, uh, feel free to reach out, whether you enjoy the mountains out there in Arizona, or you're back here in DC, or Baltimore, I'm, I'm going to be here, hopefully, for quite a few more decades, I got a lot more work to do. So I would be available to fill in any gaps.

Interviewer: Okay, and then

Interviewee: I do love your background, that was like, a great place to rent.

1:11:19

Interviewer: I know, I wanted to enclose this because I was like, This looks nice kind of feel a vibe. Um, but are there any questions you'd like to ask me? Or you're curious about in the interview?

1:11:31

Interviewee: I guess you're, once you complete your thesis, or as you're completed, what happens next? All this information you gather is almost like a collection of oral histories, I assume? What happens? What do you do with it?

1:11:48

Interviewer: Yeah, good question. Thank you for asking. So this, what I plan to do is, after this, I'm going to transcribe this. And it's going to be in a transcription to include including the recordings. And then so what I'm going to do is basically, since this is your recording alone, I will, you know, this is open for me to share with you. So I will give this to you. I'm not withholding this recording from you at all you have permission to do so. And then what I'm going to do is that it will Yeah, it kind of will be archived. But say like, for example, like if your Nation or say if the Maryland Commissioner Indian Affairs, wants to get a hold of this recording or something like that, I found out that you would, the since it's University, it would, you'd have to do like a D U A, which is the agree a form. Sorry, it's an agreement a form. So it's basically saying like, because these are personal stuff, say like, if you didn't want your information, or your identity be exposed or something like that, according to university policies, it's basically for me to kind of like make sure that you're remain confidential, or you're not being exposed, or this is not going to be hold against you, or anything like that.

And, um, but of course, like, I'm still talking with a lot of with my university and advisors and stuff, to make sure that this is not just like withholding a lot of this recording information, I already made that as a big thing, because I said, if I'm going to do like, interview Tribal communities, leaders or individuals, I don't want this to be like, not open access to Tribal communities from this, because I said, this is important because I'm a Tribal individual, too. And I know like a lot of like, unethical practices have been inflicted on many Tribal communities, not just like, in this particular region, but what throughout the whole continent. And I want to make sure that you and everybody else that took part in this recording an interview thesis that you guys will have access to this.

1:14:01

Interviewee: And that was one of the issues that I'm working with University of Maryland, College Park. And I don't understand I don't fully know all of the agreements going back between Baltimore campus and College Park proper, about we're working with the library there to try and capture and develop a portal with all this information associated with in Piscataway history or Indigenous history in this area. And I will just wondering, once you complete your project, how *would that be within the Baltimore UMD system and therefore eventually accessible through the college park system?* Yeah,

1:14:49

Interviewer: Yeah, so I'm actually with UMBC. Not und so I'm with the University of Maryland, Baltimore County. Yeah.

1:14:56

Interviewee: That's separate?

Interviewer: Yeah

Interviewee: They're not affiliated?

Interviewer: No. They're not.

Interviewee: I though all the University of Maryland schools were some somehow linked in. But that's my lack of knowledge. I apologize.

1:15:08

Interviewer: No, no, no, it's okay. Like I was confused at first, because I think it's just the name University of Maryland. That's what catches people off guard. So it's def UMBC and UMD, are two different. So they're not like completely the same. So, just to answer your question. Yeah, it should be open. Like I said, I will keep you up to date. With this, like, a

1:15:37

Interviewee: Let me ask in a different way. *Would the Maryland State Archives have access to that information? When it's all said and done?*

1:15:45

Interviewer: Yeah, that is a really good question. So I actually am working with the Maryland State Archives, Megan and Maria. So I'm working with them. And so I do want to see if they can have access to this, and have to make sure that, you know, again, accessible to both of you and your Tribal community. So it's still in the works talks right now, I am really like pressuring them to make sure that this is accessible, like I'm making sure that, you know, I don't do like just to get a degree in this like next, you know, just want to, like move on and not have you not have access to this. So yeah, I'm definitely like, making a lot of like, pressure on them on they're part.

1:16:31

Interviewee: That is one of the things I probably meeting with them, Maria and Megan, the end of this month, beginning of February, to talk about the website that they have developed for the Indigenous part of the state for the Indigenous reps of the state to try to make those connections. And initially, we were looking at University of Maryland, but now that you bring in Baltimore campus, and all those unaffiliated colleges to bring that information in and be able to network that through that website, that would be a good thing.

1:17:06

Interviewer: Yeah, no, I was actually already thinking that I was thinking of putting this into the Mays website, because I just think, you know, this is really great. And it's pretty accessible, the Mays website is accessible. So I think this would just make more sense to do something like that.

1:17:22

Interviewee: The only other thing that we were I wanted to bring to their attention, is to try to maybe create two levels to that website. The general public access and Indigenous access for a little more deeper insight to some of these things that could be more personal or family related. And you got to figure out if that's feasible, we're dealing with a state institution, and how would that work? But those are the kinds of things that we're looking at in the future from a Tribal perspective of being having that conservatory of information.

1:18:00

Interviewer: Oh, that's a good that's a really good one. I think having just to like, public and Tribal I think that would make more sense to do that in that aspect. So that's a good one. Yeah, I'll bring it out. Have a good idea. Yeah,

1:18:15

Interviewee: Everyone's while have a good idea.

Interviewer: Yeah definitely. I'm sorry. Is that all you wanted to ask?

Interviewee: Yeah, that that was it.

Interviewer: Okay. Let me stop this recording because I have something to say after this. Okay.

Ends at 1:18:30

Choptico Band of Indians- Piscataway Conoy Tribe Individual

Interviewee: I am a elder, in the Choptico Band of the people who live with waters blend that all rapids most people know us as Piscataway. I won't go into that be all day.

03:51

But, I've had the privilege and pleasure of teaching should lead that off with learning. So I've spent my entire life learning either intentionally or accidentally. Much of it not on purpose. But hey, you wake up, you breathe, you step out the door, *"you're going to learn something"*, the better now I say. But at the end of the day, pretty much look at everything. Because if you try to encapsulate too much, you confuse yourself and you're certainly confuse everybody around you. So I pretty much accepted a philosophy that I learned from another Elder some years ago. Which basically, he said, *"If you simplify your life, you either want to live one in the pipe or the other"*. And we spend all day talking about that. And as it turned out, and I've learned through the years that there's so much

meaning in that simple philosophy which we don't want to get into that here. But of course, you know what the calumet the pipe looks like.

05:22

And the idea that we do not put that pipe together until we're ready to do with, but we use that pipe for. Well, I'll leave that there. And I'll just follow your lead with questions. And yet what you talked about the environment, that's one of my pet topics. I don't think there's enough being said about it. And I hope that in our discussion, may be able to share with you some of the things that have come into my orbit about the world and the life around us. And I'll let you take it from there.

06:10

Interviewer: Thank you. Thank you so much.

06:14

Interviewee: Am I talking loud enough? My wife always tells me how mumble and with the issue I'm having with, with congestion and how I don't know if I'm even worse than mumbling. But am I coming across loud enough? Clear enough?

06:30

Interviewer: I can still hear you. But just for the sake, can do you think you can talk a little louder? If you can? Hopefully, I'm not pushing you too hard.

06:43

Interviewee: I may get a little closer. Yeah, I'll try to raise the volume. But I'm, I'm trying to pace myself so that I can endure through this. But go ahead. The less I talked, the more I can answer.

06:56

Interviewer: Okay, thank you. Um, I know you've touched based on this, your identity and your Tribal affiliation. But just to start off with the first question, **who is your community?**

07:13

Interviewee: My, my community expands and you want to make it but my immediate community, the Choptico, we're a matrilineal people. And my immediate community would be those who are related to me through the matrilineally going back through my mother's mother's mother's mother, etc. But we do not forget, pops (patrilineal) up. We've, we've traced his people, and we're just as close to them as we are to to matrilineal and it's just that we identify through the matrilineal, which is why we identify as Choptico. Just as well say, we are part of PICO because we track my father's people back to that particular environment.

08:06

But you know that so we see ourselves as Choptico because we are a matrilineal people. Other than that, they bring it. Both sides of the family always welcome.

08:24

Interviewer: Okay, thank you. Um, so how do you? **Do you have a Tribal community where you currently live?**

08:39

Interviewee: Hold on a second. We got a hand waving in. What is it?

08:44

Wife or Partner: You said you were patrilineal?

08:47

Interviewee: Did I say that? I must be sick on that thought. Now, I got an eavesdropper. I'm quite sure I didn't say that we're a patrilineal people.

08:59

Anyway, I think that we respect the patrilineal. This well, but we're matrilineal people anyway. Where was I? What would you I'm sorry? I'm good.

Interviewer: No, no, it's okay. It's fine.

Interviewee: I should've went to my cave for this interview. Okay. Alright.

09:21

Interviewer: Um, I was just asking, um, so, **do you have a Tribal community where you live? You currently live? I should say.**

Interviewee: I would say that. I don't like to use the word but I think is the most appropriate to say that we are a diaspora. Not that we are as because we do have that a great nephew who's in Hawaii. Who's decided to live there. Florida. I mean, we're all over Turtle Island. but for the main part in terms of numbers, we're here in what they call the DMV, or the District, Maryland, Virginia. geographic area. And as you bring that in, I would think that numerically, there are more of us in Maryland. But not we I can walk out the door and, you know, have knock on the door of one of my relatives. Unfortunately, that's usually not the case in most for most of us. That's why I use the word I don't know another word other than diaspora we just spread out.

And there's a lot of reasons and rationale for that. Which is a whole nother chapter in life. But But to answer your question, we have come here ready because we like most people, we have these modern conveniences like this laptop computer, cell phones, where I'm constantly bombarded with text messages, and whatever, not for my sons and cousins or whatever. So we're, we communicate, but we're just not geographically so close to one another. As in my father's generation, now, they all lived in the same area, my mother's, we all lived in the same area, but due to circumstances and what was going on, say in the 19, anywhere between the 1920s coming out up into the 1950s.

11:44

People simply were put in positions where you could not stay where you were, if you figured that you were going to have something to eat, to grow or be able to live in a society that was evolving, that would exclude you, if you did not accept what was going on around you and become part of it. And they chose to become part of it. And that required them to spread out to to basically decentralized or become that diaspora. Amen.

12:26

Interviewer: Thank you. Thank you. Thank you so much. So when you're so going into the geographical sense, um, **how does your Native identity tied to your sense of place or community?**

12:41

Interviewee: Well, for me, I've done a lot to look behind door number two, as I would say, to find out exactly where my family began doing the early intrigues and entreaties of the colonial and the colonial period.

13:07

Fortunately for me, my mother's baby sister who is 96, I think was back in the (19)70s. Out of curiosity, you know, she like everyone else back in the 70s. They either saw or heard about Alex Haley and his book "Roots". And my mother sister being the baby, you know what I talked to her, she said she was always excluded from adult conversations. They would always shoo her out of the room that, you know, she was not given pretty to enter the conversation. So even when I tried to interview her, she didn't know anything, because nobody would tell her anything. And by the time she was old enough

13:55

to ask questions or whatever, the family had dispersed. So you know, she's not a, a library of information, so to speak, but because she had that curiosity, back in the 70s, she my grandmother, my mom's mom, her mom was living with her. My grandmother was born and I think 1884 If memory serves me correct, all of my grandparents are born in 1800s, 1870s said between 1875 and 1884.

14:35

So she started as she asked her questions and and she taped it you know, back in the day when I had little cassette tapes, which I have a copy and I'm scared to death that if I tried to play it or put it on machine discord, it just disintegrate, you know, and but back when she first gave it to me, I listened to it. Jot down a lot of notes. And she only gave one other copy to a cousin of mine who is since deceased. And his wife could not find that tape. So I have the only copy of that. But fortunately, again, having gone through it, I was able to make notations from specific things. And it came to bear that it would help.

Some years ago, I was approached by a professor at St. Mary's College, down in Southern Maryland, who, hearing that I was a member of the Choptico Band and asked me how I came about identifying a Shopko or Choptico and I explained to her what I said earlier about the matrilineal, tracing back through the matrilineal where we came from. So in that tape, my grandmother talked about her grandmother's mother, which took the this way back to the mid 1700s. And talking about where they lived, and how and why they were displaced.

16:14

They were living back then, on the Choptico reservation. So what is now St. Mary's County, and by some of the language that my grandmother used, and what was passed on to her from her mother, and grandmother. And when I use those names, in talking with Dr. King, she jotted those down when she then gave those names to one of her associates who did this guy still read those in marvelous research into colonial records. And he was able to take those two names that my grandmother voiced on that tape. And by using those two names, they went directly. And with the first shovel that went in the ground, they found the reservation. So you know, that made me feel very proud that, that history is there, that my grandmother being able to pass that information on after several generations proved to be productive.

Of course, it is very difficult, especially here in the East (U.S. Northeast and Mid-Atlantic region). To validate your history, to validate your genealogy, to validate where you come from, where you originate from, you know, people will poopoo you because where's the documentation. And

surprisingly, well, maybe not surprisingly, that during that period, the 50 year period that we were all pushing to try to get the state of Maryland to acknowledge the fact that we're still here.

18:01

They in this legal process that they set up. And you know, this recognition thing. Both federal and state

have all these requisites. You have to get the i's cross the T's have in the box. And although it's not stated anywhere, I don't think in federal law either from what I've read and seen.

18:30

They will not accept oral history. And aside from overhead, now understand that that my grandmother born at 1800, she never went to school. Her mother never went to school, no hurt.

No, no, no, no, my my grandmother's father, there was no school. When they lived down in that part of Southern Maryland,

up on Mount Victoria, nobody else was up there. They were no schools. It wasn't even a church.

So, you know, they were kind of off the beaten path off the map and, and out of sight out of mind.

They were basically they were self-sustaining farmers. They didn't have employment, all the way up into the 1800s. So it was ready to ask somebody to prove who they are and what all we have is oral history.

19:28

And to say, oh, we can't use it. You know, you've got to hire people with the you know, with a V-tie, you know, they've got to be an anthropologist, a PhD. They've got to be archaeologists, they've got to be a historian. They've got to have credibility credentials before we can accept this information. They have to validate what you're saying. *How are you going to do that?*

19:53

So it was very difficult, very difficult for us to get to that point. I might be going way beyond what your question was to give you an answer on that. But I hope that what I just gave you is so well suffice that I can talk on that subject all day. We'll move on.

20:16

Interviewer: Yeah, no, I think you touched a lot of like, my other questions that I had. So you're, you're good. Yeah. So you're good. Um, but just just kind of like moving on to the next question. Um, how, I guess, like, kind of like also touching based on this, like, **how, how is your sovereignty being impacted? Currently?**

20:46

Interviewee: I would in a word, we still need to divest ourselves of colonial thinking. And that's not an easy thing to do. When all people have seen and done and participated in for the past few generations, especially those that are younger than myself. It's all they've seen and done is what goes on around them, you know, the world is, to them functions based on population, elections, which are nothing of a popularity contest, given if you know, what the population isn't in a particular area.

21:33

And, you know, planning, you know, everybody wants to know, *what's your plan? Well, you know, what are we planning for? Are we planning to solve a problem? Or are we planning to create opportunity, and what's in between all of that?* And, and the third leg of it is, *is when we get back to who we are?* And instead of replicating what we've seen all our lives.

22:06

you know, I'm not born, I tried to read everything I can from Native scholars on decolonization. Starting with a young lady some years ago, where was she from? I believe in New Zealand, her name will pop in my head. Oh, Linda Tuhiwai Smith, who did a nice piece on decolonization, which was pretty much centered on what was going on in her community in New Zealand. But you can glean from that. And with some of the current Native writings and scholars that are writing on just exactly *how do you decolonize your mind, your life ways? How do you get back to? How life was?*

23:06

And is that what you want to do? You know, especially when people don't know, you're going back to what, you know, that's been taken away from us. *What was our form of governance?* You know, the earliest writings, we start seeing where they are identifying our leaders as kings and queens and emperors, but you know, was that B period s period, is where I put all of that, you know, it's just not. And the best we can do is look at some of those communities, particularly in the Old Northwest.

23:47

the current Northwest, the West, etc, that sort of, were able to retain some of the traditional forms of living with each other and not be overwhelmed or to become part of what we see going on around us. You know, are you a Democrat or Republican? What would you do I have, what are you talking about?

But you know, so but if you ask most native people here on the East Coast, one of my things when people ask about ease, I tell them, *"Look, you go north as far as Canada and start coming this way.*

You go as far as Florida, and start coming this way. As you come to where we are right now. We're in what I call the belly of the beast. Whether it's Virginia. Maryland, Pennsylvania. You look at the early history of East Coast. It's amazing. It's a wonder. We survived at all"

25:08

That we are able to even recall how we live because most early riser will say, you know, we didn't you know that they give them the misidentified everyone here as savage, which is a corruption of the French term Savas was simply "means people who choose to live in the woods". I mean, wherever you're going to live, we didn't have any metropolitan areas and how with condos and skyscrapers, and any built out places like that we didn't have temple mounds and all that good stuff.

25:44

So you know, it's lost my train of thought. But you know, it's difficult to try to recover, something that's lost, and you don't have a map.

26:05

You have to look away from them. But the farther you get away from the Belly of the Beast, Washington, DC, and you start heading South, you look at some of the tribes in the Carolinas, Georgia, Florida, Louisiana, you start going in the other direction, and you get to the Six Nations. And you see how they are still maintaining themselves based on the Great Law of Peace? And you can bring that topic up to some of our people here. And is they'll reject it, you know, because they are out there. I don't want to use the word brainwash, but they are so used to elections.

26:51

majority rule to try to get them away from that. And it makes you wonder why would anybody want to be in charge. And you ask of what, what do you want to be in charge of? we don't have a litany of agencies and we don't have a budget, to where you can draw from the people and this and that, and all that's provided from us by the others. So you know, what are we doing in terms of community and getting ourselves back together, we don't expect to go back to life as it was. I don't think anybody is I've no Native Nation I know of, looking to go back to living as they did, totally. In the 17th 18th century.

I think the latest person that was able to come out of that, I think it was a forget to put down an exhibit at the museum. That was their Ishii. The gentleman from that was found on an island in California, who had been overlooked. Nobody knew that anybody alive was on this island. And he had been on that island for some 20 to 40 years. And he, you know, they did back in the, I think it was the late (19)60s, early (19)70s. They did a TV program based on this guy where this, Euro, was found in a cave. And then he was civilized very quickly, to learn English language to dress and to act and learn skills and all just kind of stuff based on Ishii. I've only seen one book that dealt with his life. But you see, when you read that you see the same methodologies that was used where there's somebody else that have no clue about this guy's culture, etc. Trying to explain, to identify, interpret, who he was, why he was the way he was. And this guy couldn't communicate to them and if they because nobody knew what language much less what dialect he was speaking. Anyway.

29:35

So yeah, that's the big issue that we're going through. Now we're going through a period of recovery.

And many will question, *What are you recovering?* I mean, you know, I always make fun of some of the ladies and I said, you know, they just got their nails done. They ain't going out there and digging into a garden.

30:00

You know, nobody's looking to be self-sustaining. Since my aunt, my older aunt, I don't know anybody that does preserving or canning or anything of that nature, it's like, you know, again, being here in the DMV (District, Maryland, and Virginia) ,it is the easiest thing is to get a job. In some industry that pays very well, doesn't matter what it is, it can be in the in any one of the fields of engineering, software engineering, civil engineering, structural engineering, you got to make a good living.

30:43

And now they're getting people to go back into trades, which I don't think they will after I got out of junior high school back into, it will tell you how long ago that was. You know, nobody ever trades, you know, I took woodshop, I took metal shop, you know, so I learned some hands on skills, and, you know, learn how to deal with gas powered appliances. So, but what is anybody got to do with those skills today. But they're getting people back into it, because who makes more money than a plumber, if they're a if they have the right credentials, if they are a master plumber, these guys make as much money as the, as the IT specialist.

So you know, is coming back around to some of those skills that have been dropped off and lost, but nobody's going back to jumping on a John Deere tractor, and plowing the field and growing

corn or tobacco matter of fact, Maryland, you know, some years ago, pass a law, you can't grow tobacco.

31:52

You know, no, you know, you have to grow some alternative crop. But tobacco was taken off the map. So you know, but nobody is looking to farm your stuff, is the devil stuff. So trying to get back those parts of the culture. People are being very selective.

32:14

And it's kind of difficult, you know, in determining, you know, *what are you going to embrace? What are you going to reject? What's useful? What's not useful?* So it's really difficult. You know, I've got one of my nephew that lives in Phoenix. My wife's brother used to live down there. So you know, we had a place to crash when we went down, and I would, you know, go to a lot of the different places I'd go up to White Mountain, and you see a lot of places or whatever and visit some of the reservations.

32:51

Or just a side story, went to one reservation, what are the Apache reservations after we had visited the White Mountain, and my brother in law was retired, he just retired. But he worked for the FCC (Federal Communications Commission). And he was a person that was a compliance officer. And you know, make sure that people were doing things the way that according to Hoyle with the airwaves.

and when we go on this rez, they had radio station. And when he saw that he's, "oh, we got this and that" because of his interest. And we went in and the guy stopped, you know, we talked to whatever, that he introduced himself. And they were like, Whoa, you know, he was like, Okay, y'all can leave.

You know, maybe they thought that he was surreptitiously going to inspect them. And maybe there was something there that wasn't 100% or whatever. But the atmosphere completely changed. From me introducing myself and yada, yada, yada. And then him introducing himself. And because at that time I was working for National Museum of American Indian, and he retired from the FCC. So I guess he figured he had to tell him what he used to do for a living. And boom, you know, the air when, you know, we went from this end of the pipe to that end of the pipe. Have a nice day. Bye.

34:20

But, but anyway and going to these different places, and we're having the privilege of working where I finished my new career, working for government. I've met a lot of people from a lot of different Native cultures. And it always amazed me to have conversation with them, and to find out *how do they maintain those aspects, those areas, those things of their culture that are still meaningful?* You know, the old expression walking into worlds

35:00

How do you do that? But don't you know you have to? Because if not, you're going to fall off one edge or the other. So you have to walk that fine line. Oh, did I answer your question? Or did I go off or something off the edges?

35:22

Interviewer: No, you answered my question.

35:25

Interviewee: Okay. Alright.

35:27

Interviewer: Okay. Um, um, so just kind of going into more detail about this. Because you meant, I know that you were talking about, like, erasing and everything like Indigenous erasure. Um, but going into, I guess, the environmental part. **Why is it important to address erasure in Maryland's environmental organizations like specifically Indigenous erasure?**

35:59

Interviewee: Well, to that aspect, that you can look at our relationship with the environment, whether it was the riparian environment, or whether it was no the land itself or highway use, and I've had conversations where another Native would tell me, "we were just as abusive to the land as the white man". You know, and I'm going, "Are you kidding me?" You know, "we cut down trees, we did". Yes, we did".

36:32

Not for the same reasons and purposes, we did not see the force or anything else as a monetary means to anything. Again, you know, we didn't have a brick and mortar, culture, everything was made, whether it was your house, whatever it was, it was extracted from nature. So you cut trees, you had to clear fields, but you had to have fertile ground to grow food. But once that was established, which we know that very early on, of our people were practice, rotation of fields, you know, they would allow a feel, once it was clear, and initially used for crops, which is, again, part of the culture was that the clan mothers, they had the authority and the responsibility, hate use that word authority.

37:41

Responsibility to determine based on the number of women in that town or that village, how much food had to be produced, to feed everybody doing especially during that period, they called the 'Starving Time' nobody starved, but nothing was growing. So unless you like to taste the tree bark, you had to have the means of not only producing food, but storing it. And that was the responsibility of the clan mothers. The other thing they had to take in consideration, *how many women were with child?*

38:26

Because we know today from modern science, what I'm trying to say *how did the clan mothers know this back then?* They would give extra area for women that were with child, pregnant additional space to grow more food. We know today that a woman that's pregnant needs something like 600 calories a day more than a woman that's not pregnant. *How the clan mothers knew that?* I don't know. But we know that they would give this mother to be more ground to grow more food for herself and her family going into that non-growing season.

39:09

Now, I won't go off on a tangent on bat. A lot of my poor educated Tribal members with surprises me use the European term of tribute. And I see it all the time. Trying to think of this tome, I just read this guy Himalayan or whatever his name is, *Indigenous Continent* (Pekka Hämäläinen). I don't know if you're familiar with that one.

39:41

Where he talks about oh, so New York Times bestseller, I don't know where this guy's from but he's got a name that triggers me to say he's from somewhere in the med around the Mediterranean. But sometimes somebody outside can look in the window and see something you don't see. If you're inside, you're too close to it to see it for what it is. Anyway.

I like a lot of what what, what he wrote, didn't agree with it, because I'll be who agrees with everything somebody writes. But it was very interesting read but getting back to the thing about tribute, you know, he uses the term a lot, again is so Eurocentric, that you know, if you got so many apples, you got to get so many to the guy that didn't have a damn thing to do with growing them as tribute. And to me that's tribute, you know, I'm gonna give you something, why am I giving it to you? I can understand the European concept. But when I see Native scholars using that same terminology that the tribes were giving tribute to the second motor second more or the tie on whomever the leader is. And then I see the earliest one saying that they didn't have any privileges like that they had to get their butts out there and grow their own food, if they did when nobody's going to take care of them because they had some responsibilities later for that authority and rank thing. They have responsibilities. Europeans gave them these titles of authority. But before that they have responsibilities and one of their responsibilities, grow your own food.

41:39

I wrote a paper when I was at the museum about man who had more than one wife. And it was heavily censored. They didn't put all that I have attributed to it. But, you know, I tell people that. Yeah. Some men would have more than one wife. And so women have more than one husband. But then you start asking why I mean, today that would cause a lot of domestic, just, whatever violence. But back then, you know, a woman who got married that her husband would move in with her family matrilineal.

42:27

Now, there was no BlueCross or BlueShield. There was no Kaiser Permanente, there was no emergency room, no MedStar. And if you wanted the meat, you had to go hunt. The woods is a place that is full of, accident waiting to happen.

42:57

What happens to a man if he's out on the hunt, and he breaks his leg, he can't hunt with a broken leg. So and what in the jump up and down happens if he is, for whatever reason, dies. what happens to his wife and his family?

43:23

The wife's sister, if she's living in that long house with them, she now becomes like a wife to her sister's husband. He has a responsibility now to do what her husband would have been responsible to do, which is provide. He's gone. So what happens? He has to fill that role. And

43:53

I was challenged on my thinking they wanted what do you call it? Where am I getting my annotations? Where's my documentation? Where's my proof for this there or that? I said, you know, unless you can find me somebody you can dig up that live back in the 16th century of the 1500s. Before y'all got here. That's the only way I can get my answer, I don't think they wrote the books. But when you start looking at how neighboring Tribes that did was were the latest ones, they get influenced by European contact, what was happening there, how was it being handled?

You look at some of the latest Tribes that have similar culture, especially in the what they call the Old Northwest. What is now in Ohio, Indiana, etc.

44:45

They contact you know the what were those guys, the Jesuits who were required to do their annual reports that were describing what they saw. Of course, they wrote about men with what they consider more than one wife that's what they consider any woman that was in the same home with this guy, providing him with wifely duties, there was his wives he was in living in sin. *According to who?* According to the Jesuits, yes. But anyway, long story short, that was heavily censored.

I wrote a couple other pieces. I wrote about migration. I have my own theories about migration. But the I think the name of that book was *do all Indians live in teepees?* Which, of course, always comes up. No, they don't. Where was I going with that? I'm sorry.

Interviewer: No, you're good.

Interviewee: I'll let you pick back up. I'd fell off another tangent.

46:00

Interviewer: Okay, y'all, thank you. Thank you for sharing that.

46:04

Interviewee: We have to do some heavy editing on this one (laughs).

46:08

Interviewer: (laughs) No, believe I'll come back with you on this.

46:13

Interviewer: Okay

Interviewer: Oh, um, I guess one of the things I wanted to ask, so, um, **what is the biggest challenges or environmental challenges your Tribe community is facing?**

46:30

Interviewee: In a word, access. One of the, I won't say first things, but one of the things that ultimately was done was to push us away from those areas which were home to us. Europeans, of course, saw that our people had possession of the most productive land. They lived along the waterways, which prohibited or inhibited them doing what they wanted to do, which they were used to. And, you know, their culture that they brought with them was about you know, one of the land so they can grow cash crop. Wanted to be near the water, where they could put it on a ship and send it wherever to make money.

47:30

We interfered with that because where do we live, we live the long all the waterways. They use our lifestyles or life ways against us. The people here do doing...

47:43

You know, I used to tell people I lived a long time to try to live like my ancestor, had a home in a city. And I had a home in a country, by the water. And I'd be there during the summer but in the winter, I'd be back in the city where I had, you know, good heat, transportation have to worry about

it. But of course the summer, be at the water with fishing. Have fun. And our people basically did the same thing. You know, they see what they call seasonal rounds.

48:17

They didn't abandon the villages. But when winter came, if you stay in this area long enough, you will know that being on the edge of the Potomac River in the winter is not where you want to be, unless you like icicles hanging off your extremities. So our people will move inland during the winter. You go inland you got plenty of wood, you know, limbs that have fallen out of trees and dried, you got good firewood where the animals go, they go the same place, they're not going to be around the water before there's nothing to eat there. They're going to go into the forest because not all the acorns and falling from the trees they have plenty to eat all the other fruit nuts and other fruits and how to fall from the trees. They got plenty to eat. So our people would move where they were (animals). You have protection from the wind from the snow, you had plenty of firewood.

49:12

So that's what you were and when spring came back, you'd go back to the water because now you're going to have the fish runs you're going to have the Shad and the Heron coming in from the ocean coming up the Bay coming into the rivers and fish was a main commodity you know for eating and used to be dried and stored. And in order to do that you had to have access to the water.

49:43

But while our people moved inland during the winter, what did the Europeans do? They went in and they burned down the long houses, they map marked out according to their laws and rules. That if they "did improvements" on the property once they had marked it out, and I don't know, if you're familiar with the head rate system that Maryland was exercising, where any person who came over here (United States), from Europe, was entitled to a certain number of acres of land.

50:19

If they brought other people over here from England, then that person would get another plot of land with the intent, that once that person that they brought over here finish their term of servitude that person would get, I believe was a Hogshhead, or tobacco, which was money that day, a suit of clothes.

Something like 50 acres of land. And if he had a wife, he got more land if he had children, he got more land. Now the question is, *whose land are we talking about?*

51:02

They start marking off because the Natives were gone. They marked off their land where they had every intention; on coming back. So when they come back (Natives), here's somebody (colonialists) sitting here talking about "this is mine now!"

51:16

The governor says that all "I had to do is make improvements". So what do you call improvements?

They put a rock on the ground with a white mark on it. Do some triangulation and say okay, he has an oak tree. And and that's that's the other point. And they would do these points have to beginning and mark off this area. They weren't engineers. They were surveyors, they marking off this property. And if there was some evidence of Native occupation, they're like a wigwag or a longhouse. "Hey, burned into the ground". "This is my property now!" So you had this

dispossession going on and move Natives away from the waterways, which was a traditional way of subsistence moving into the woods, during a winter that was for survival and for hunting.

52:09

You know, that's not living away from the water, where now you can have tillable land. So now what do you do when you go back and this guy is sitting on yours, and with the threat that if you do anything here, you lose your life, because he's right, you're wrong. You no longer have this, he, he's obeyed their law, you don't have any. So ultimately, that's how we lost our relationship with the waterways, we were forced away from the waterways. The land that had been tilled. Again, depending on the size of the population, the number of and there was always food production was always calculated based on the number of women and increased if the women were of childbearing, not of age, but you know, they were with child. There was a system here, that if a woman became pregnant, everybody knew it, because they had a special lodge for women that weren't pregnant. So once you weren't you weren't eligible to go into dislodge or reason why you weren't be eligible into going that lodge, because you're pregnant. So the clan mothers had a clear system of knowing what was going on.

53:34

And the land that was left to go fallow, the Europeans took over right away. They had no idea about rotating fields. Okay, you you grew food here, in this have a number of acres. For so many years, you've exhausted the soil. And Europeans of course, doing the cash crop, they wanted to grow tobacco, and anybody that knows anything about tobacco, it will suck everything out of that soil faster than any other known plant. So you can't just keep planting there.

54:14

So our people, number one did not grow tobacco the same place that they grew their food crops. Because the same insects that pollinate tobacco, will pollinate your corn, will pollinate your sunflowers, will pollinate all your other vegetable crops. You don't want your corn tasty like tobacco. I don't, you know. But the bees don't care. So they (Native people) would grow tobacco in a completely separate place.

54:50

I spoke about Puerto Rico we have my father's people track back to, matter of fact, my father's father was still farming at Chapel Point

55:00

What up until they move the railhead from Port tobacco to La Plata Barrel, which was thinking to 19

I think around somewhere between 1920s, 1930s. So that had an impact depending on where you were and what ground you had available to grow food for sustenance, our people weren't growing food to sell, you know, there wasn't was all about sustenance, no market, there was no market.

55:36

Which if you want to talk about a great difference in cultures here, you've got a money culture of people that do what they do, not just to grow food to eat, sustain themselves. But they will not grow food, to eat, to grow food and sell to get money. I've seen posters and out about, you know, when is there going to come a time when these people realize you can't eat money. But you get the money, you get everything else you need.

56:22

So they thought, but these, these fields that were being rotated, they just took them over, you know, it's like, *"oh, you're not using it, you abandon it"*. They didn't understand the process of rotating fields. And while this one was being left fallow, this one had been cleared. So now this one is being used. And the next one is starting to be clear. So that as you move that rotation around, you got fields that are regrowing, if you have here in the East, you can tell pretty much the age of reforestation, because the first trees, you're going to get all your soft woods, your pines, then you're going to get the hardwoods, your oaks, and others coming in after that. So you can very easily tell how long a place has been left fallow.

57:10

But you know, that was our relationship with the land is that we respected it. And of course, as most cultures and Native cultures do, all life comes from the Earth, it is sustained by the Earth. So you had to respect that.

57:34

To disrespect the Earth, that just wasn't that it wasn't something in in the mix. Even up to my grandparents, great-grandparents, who were farmers, they will not let you even think about doing something that may damage the soil. Because you know, it went from even for them from the land being a means of subsistence to now being the means of income.

58:02

Because now they needed money. In order to live, they had to buy certain tools. That, you know, there wasn't anybody out there with the shoulder blade of a deer, digging, you know, a hose to plant in, you know, people wanted an ox or horse or mule or something and they wanted a plow. And that costs money.

58:28

So they had to convert to a money and economy, wherever they want it to well, it wasn't about whether they wanted to or not, if they wanted to live, they were going to make that adjustment to a money economy as best we could. Of course, they were in competition with a European farmer, which even my dad would tell us how his dad would take his tobacco to the auction.

59:02

And although his tobacco looked a hell a lot better than some of the other guys, he never got the same price per pound as the Anglos. I wonder why that happened? Anyway, we'll get into that whole nother ballgame. But you know, that's that's the that's what they had to deal with. And how they were initially moved away from the environment. How they will move away from the environment, especially the waterways and a fertile land. They knew the land. They knew what was what and where the land was best used for what and ultimately displaced and went through I would have to guess a hell of a transition. In going from that life ways that lifestyle that way of subsisting and maintaining your life where you depend on nature.

1:00:04

To where now you have to depend on what you used to do, but now turning it into money soon as you can, you can survive so that your family can eat. So you can do anything. But there was no going back to where you were displaced from. I forget what year it was. Calvert considered himself that would be Lord Calvert. Who, going off on a tangent here, but you know, always say that he came in with the first lie.

1:00:39

He lied. And I'll say that in anybody's church, on any kind of holy book you got, he lied. All he wanted, was a small piece of land to sit down on to practice his religion. He lied. He had a piece of paper in his back pocket from his king, that he didn't have to ask for a small place to sit down to where he could exercise his religion. He had a piece of paper in his back pocket saying, "*all this belongs to me*". All he had to do now is find out the wheat and he could get rid of the (Native) people that were already there. And they did in short order. in 60? In 66 years I believe if my math my math correct. It took the English colonists coming here to Maryland 66 years to take it all. Take it all. Leaving us (Native people) nothing.

1:01:47

I mean, it did these things called reservations. They were doing reservations here before I even thought about going outside of the Mississippi. The one that Calvert supposedly set aside for our people use was something like 25 miles long, huge area of land. You know, just a drop in a bucket, you know, to what we have available before they (colonists) got here. But okay, good. Take it. That didn't last long.

1:02:21

Encroachment. The tricks, tricks, the stuff and how not? Well, of course, it was all the way from New England all the way down to Florida, same practice. It was like these guys had the same playbook. They bring in their pastured animals, we didn't have any such thing. pastured animals. We didn't have cows and sheep and goats and that lives inside of fences. Then what they do is take the fence down, let them come out and go and eat up all the latest crops. And then when they would kill these pigs and cows and horses eaten the crop. They (Natives) had issue with it.

And I mean, you can look at any any history all the way from Massachusetts colony all the way down to rebels the Huguenots or the Spanish or whomever down in the south. Same same game being played all up down East Coast.

1:03:23

Turn the animals loose. Into the Native crops. Yeah, wooden fences. What do we need fences for? Didn't need them. Now they required you need to build a fence around your crops. "Why the hell?" "Yes, you". ""you build your fences keep your animals over there." That but that was no. They want you to move away.

1:03:53

And what's that? I forget the guys name wrote a book. About as long as the waters flowing, the grass grows. It's just another lie. Some more BS.

1:04:05

But at the end of the day, the relationship with the environment changed almost permanently. The best you could do now is get some of our people they go fishing. Not for subsistence but for sport. Otherwise, you know I'll go to I go to the fishmonger at the market and buy my fish. Whether it's Cad, Salmon doesn't matter what it is, you know, the fishmonger has got some nice fresh fish just came in I didn't have to go out and get.

1:04:44

Meat, you know, in Maryland you have to get a license. And I think that's almost everywhere. Now if you want to hunt deer, rabbit, squirrel in any of these animal. And you can't sell it. So the days of trading for Natives and trading an animal flesh, were revoked, not happening. You can use it for your own personal use. And a lot of Natives are skeptical because they don't know where these deer have been. They don't know where they've been eating. They don't know where they've been going to drink water. Was it contaminated?

1:05:33

Which is another issue. You know, back when we used to do canoe trips. We go on online and check to see what the Department of Natural Resources had put out that day as to what the water quality was, on particular creeks, where we would go and for canoeing. And the bacterial level of exam certain level, you don't want to get in at water. And they wouldn't even tell you if you got to cut scrape, hone it fingernail whatever, don't put your hand in the water. No telling what kind of disease your contract.

I was amazed to find out they don't do that anymore. And I'm wondering why is the water safe now? Or, you know, what's the deal?

1:06:19

They had a thing out a few months back. I think one of the river keepers had gotten the EPA to put out a thing that you could swim in the Anacostia River. I don't know if you know about the Anacostia River. But I would not let my dog swim in Anacostia River. I mean, you talked about pollution, sewage, you name it. No. And they're gonna tell people, you know, I don't know what that was all about. But I think a week after they first said it was going to be safe. They retracted that. I'm saying it but again, it was

1:07:14

I'm old enough to remember when then President Lyndon Johnson said that the nation's river the Potomac would be suitable for swimming by 1967. Don't swim in the Potomac River, you don't do it.

It's not ready for primetime.

1:07:36

But anyway, I think I addressed what happened with our relationship with the land and the water. We're trying to get that back. But again, you can't find a place along the waterways, where we have free access. Even the state parks and county parks, they have signs up. You're welcome. But as soon as the sun goes down, get your you know what out of here.

1:08:00

Unless they have camping grounds, which you're going to have to pay if you want to camp out in one of these parks. So those places which were our homes on the water are no longer freely accessible to us. Even that 25 mile stretch, which goes from just below what is the day from Rock Creek, which is below Washington, DC, all the way down to you know my matrilineal homelands, used to be a reservation, you know, they found purpose without any of the galleries whatsoever, to just dismiss it. Just dismiss it.

1:08:42

They can just freely draft a tree, reserve land force for your exclusive use. And when ever they feel like it. Just blow it off, you know, like like, it's nothing but dust. And that's happening even now across this country where Tribes are trying to interpret treaties.

1:09:10

I forget which the organization I got one from a couple of days ago, I wrote back in support of it. Because legally, the way they see it, and the way I see it, and I'm not a lawyer, but if a treaty does not specify certain things given to the other, then it's assumed that is reserved for the Tribe. unless it specifically says that this is given over to the United States or whatever as part of this treaty. If it's not in there, then the assumption should be that it still resides within the Tribe. They did not give it away. It's not in that document. So how does it become yours if it's not in there? That's not the purpose of a treaty.

1:10:00

Anyway, you know that that that will still that fight will be going on when. I don't know, I have no idea what, what the solution is any of that. But you know, they've got the they've got the upper hand. And they're going to interpret it. Just like they've always done to their favor into their advantage, whether it's here in Maryland, or Arizona, California, up in the Northwest doesn't matter. They're going to interpret it to their advantage. And they will, even if it doesn't, it will come down to what's in the best interests of the majority, you know, we're back to that.

1:11:03

But I don't know when anything is going to change, I don't know how it's going to change. You know, as long as we have this form of government where majority rules, and we're not a majority. And right now we're seeing everybody else jockeying for position to get all they can get. And we don't have the numbers. Nor do we have a relationship with other minorities, that will side with us, because then we'll be in competition with them.

1:11:39

People want power, they want land. They want educational opportunity, for themselves first, and we'll get around to you when we get around to you. I don't know maybe we need more. He's dead now. But maybe we need somebody to draft a Morrill Act for Native people here on the East Coast.

1:12:09

That will, if not create educational opportunities either academically or for trades, which that was what that was supposed to be. But I've given talks about the two Morrill Acts that were done the one creating the universities like University of Maryland, University, you know, all of those campuses. Then you had the Morrill Act, which created what today we call historic black colleges and universities.

1:12:41

There was another law stretched maybe about 10 to 15 years ago, that provided funds for the development of schools for Natives, particularly in the Old Northwest. And I was surprised to find out even the University of the District of Columbia is now a land grant college. And I don't know if you've looked into land grant colleges, the Morrill Acts, but the money the money comes from and the money is vested from the sale of Native land, particularly in the Midwest and the Old Northwest, all that land was the guy whose name who decided Indians had too much land. Every male head of household will get 40 acres How can I not know his name? He sliced and diced all of them laying up your side who was injured who wasn't Indian created just laying in Oklahoma call it Indian Territory.

1:14:03

Interviewer: Was it the allotment is that you're talking about?

Interviewee: Yeah, yeah. What was the guy's name that bought that the brawl that the bear? I can't think. I'm getting old. Too much information out of gray space. (Referencing to the Dawes Act of 1887, named after Henry L. Dawes. The Act was passed by former President Grover Cleveland)

1:14:22

Interviewee: Collier! Was it Collier?

Interviewer: I don't know

Interviewee: I think it was. Might have been Collier.

1:14:29

Interviewee: But whoever he was, I mean, he did a yeoman's job there were those guys fighting against it but he went out because it was in the best interest of the majority.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm

Interviewee: They created this thing called ranges and out of, what top was his name? (thinking) that Jefferson. Yeah, Jefferson, the Louisiana Purchase.

1:14:54

Slice and dice all that land off you and it's not yours but he slice and dice it. made these ranges and didn't cut it down into 40 acre parcels and whatever. And all of the considered all everything you count the heads, they did a head count on Native head of households at 40 acres per and anything else which was millions of acres of land accessed.

1:15:26

So it was being leased or sold to white ranchers. The money that came from that was vested in what do they call it? Like? All colleges have that fund set aside that they use to invest to make more money? What do you call that? escapes me.

1:15:59

Most foundations have that money set aside. Universities College has that money set aside which earns money, which goes to pay stuff that tuitions and others can't pay for. But anyway, that land is still being sold. And what amazes me is I saw one report where a collective of universities came together to charge the state governments that they owe them something like \$60 million and back payments cheap. Oh, wait, what do you think that money come from taxpayers? No, this comes from the sale of Native land. But who cares? Give me mine. I'll worry about yours later.

1:16:50

I don't know if you are old enough to remember the George Bush debacle down in the Southwest. What was the Native woman that sued Bush. She's gone now.

1:17:06

Anyway, she sued because they could not give an accounting for the same thing of land down in the Southwest, you know, dealing with the Apache, the Navajo and other Nations down in the basin and Southwest where they were leasing land to white cattlemen, horse breeders. And almost had her name and there was a lawsuit and this Native woman she was an attorney. Cobell. The Cobell lawsuit.

1:17:43

Cobell sued the Bush administration, the baby Bush. You know, them two Bushes of daddy and the son, son, I call it baby Bush. I can't remember which one is which. So I just called him to baby Bush should call the it the burn Bush.

1:17:59

But she sued him. And they had an accounting done a fall of the billions of dollars that they could not ignore Department of Interior could not account for monies that the Interior Department collected on behalf of the Tribes. "*Where that money go? Who got it?*" They never did it again. Bush even had people go down and try to pull just typical thing, you know, divide and conquer. Pull people off just like to deal with the Black Hills. Pull it look. If you go along with this, and you sign for this. We're gonna put \$50,000 in your pocket.

1:18:43

And thank God and they continue to say "*no, thank you. No, thank you. We don't want the money. We want the Black Hills*". And the same thing down in the Southwest finally settled the Cobell lawsuit. And you know if this the I can't remember what the final settlement was, or how much each member of those Tribes were entitled to, I don't know it went underground. And a friend of mine, Oklahoma, of the Tribe there has land entitlements that are so amazing. That land has to stay in that family. And my buddy, he's a few years older than I think he's around 84 or 85. He has to go back to Oklahoma and down to New Mexico to get his extended family members to sign off on the land lease agreements for their allotment in Oklahoma. So here we are in a 21st century still dealing with allotment.

1:20:03

So, you know, it's not just here the idea of dispossession. Which reminds me of a title of a book I read. Can't think of the author was a good one. It's titled, *Dispossessing the Wilderness*. And basically hit that book called hotel. But it's similar to what happened here. This is the West Coast, where, or how they were able to remove the Native people successfully, with one exception, from all of these places, like from Teddy Roosevelt on, they declared a National Park.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm (agreeing with him on the removal of Native people to create National Parks)

1:20:49

Interviewee: And just like here, with state parks, and even with those parks under the Interior Department, you gotta get you can't live in it, get out, you can come back and camp out once in a while, you know, get a permit and pay for a camping site. But all of the neighbors that lived in already get out, you can no longer live here. This is a National Park. And this guy did a yeoman's job and just describing the process of how they did that and removed all of these Natives from these places. There's only one Tribe they haven't been able to successfully do that to. What was the name of it? They live in the Grand Canyon. Can't think of the name of the tribe.

Interviewer: Is it the Havasupai?

Interviewee: Yeah, yeah, they can't get them out of there. I mean, are you gonna get them out, about who's going down and do what?

1:21:57

But yeah, the Havasupai, you know, they've had two big arguments with them. One was when they went in you, okay, you guys have been down here, we want to find out if there are any health consequences to your environment, and blah, blah, blah. So they took blood. And when they found

out that they were using this blood with this DNA crap. No, you will give me less drop of it back, buddy. Now we're destroying it. And it still amazes me today that people want to do DNA to find out what the blood quantum is Tribal, into, like, your blood is going to leap off and say," Oh, Sac and Fox". Come on.

1:22:36

No. I mean, who's got a database? You know, and I tell people that want to run that by me, "you need to get your DNA in that because you look like you mixed up with something". And I say "yes I am". I say " you want to fin out why I give you the names of the guys that did it.

1:22:49

And it's, you know, what is that? You know, DNA. Get out of here. My thing is, if you weren't at the scene of the crime, you give your DNA all day long, if they can't find a match at the scene of the crime.

You didn't do it. And the same thing, if I give my blood if you don't have a database to compare it to,

Then you stuck me from nothing. You don't have anything to compare it to. We're in the jump up and down do these people think that they got blood samples or somebody that had never been involved with another Tribe?

1:23:35

I think that's a virtual impossibility. I mean, when we know that the trade that was going on, we know that our people here in Maryland, were trading with Tribes down at the Gulf, because they were coming back with goods that had been found in graves. They couldn't come from Malachi, come on. I mean, where they come from? The stuff down here, hey, where they come from Canaanite? Where they come from?

1:24:07

You know, so we know that this trade had been going on all over the place. And we know even the day when people travel, men travel or women travel, they get some place they get there. They can't get on the train and come back home that night. They're gonna be there for a while. When I hear people talk about certain Tribes running down to Carolina to attack the Cherokees. You know, they coming down from New York. I said, what did it take the eight o'clock special? Do you know how long it will take you to walk from Lake Michigan down to the Carolinas? What do you what, what train did they catch?

What's the guy's name? Conrad Weiser I think is the best reference I've had and how to he talked about his travels when he traveled from Philadelphia, when they had roads, up to New York to Albany, and how long it took him. And I'm saying, who is missing this? You know, you're not going to? How long would it take you to get from here? To the Gulf of Mexico? I mean, you know, back in that day, you'd have no buggies no horses, you gotta walk by foot, you had to carry enough food with you. So you're gonna do it at a time of the year, where you can carry on a food or sustain you get a take care of your business and come back.

So if you're able to travel that distance across all of these different Tribal groups across their territory, and come back home alive, then all this crap that they tried to tell me about Natives killing each other boliling them in a pot? No, like, You got to be out of your mind.

1:25:58

How could this trade go on across these vast distances? If all this hostility was taking place? How could they go all the way to the Great Lakes? How could they go all the way? And look at all the places they found here in Maryland? That seasonally showed that what have you I'm getting the ones the built in mounds.

1:26:24

Anyway, yeah, those guys, we know that they were here. And then they was a regular trip. You know their sights on the Patuxent River, their sights on the Eastern Shore. And they're all on the same where you call it is that a meridian that goes this way? This is latitude, longitude, latitude, altitude, they would travel from Cahokia, not Cahokia. That's Cherokee.

1:26:56

Anyway, up there. With the mounds, they would travel on that same latitude. All the way across the country, over all the way to Eastern Shore of Maryland. And these modern day guys, engineers can break out their sexton or whatever and say, "Damn".

1:27:17

Every one of these sites is all the same meridian. How did they do that? I mean, would you get Boy Scouts? Did they have compasses? I mean, what was up with that? But it's so much that we don't know. And people take a little bit of information and make assumptions. But we are where we are. And we are trying to push back against some of this stuff. We're trying to work with the state, which is very difficult to do. To try to get, should I say free? Free access to our waterways.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm

1:28:04

Interviewee: We did a canoe trip and wound up (arrived) at one of the parks and the park ranger came down and wanted to charge us to take our canoes out of the water. You gotta be kidding. You know, what do we suppose the we can just sort of this is a public park, State Park. We're taxpayers and we're Native, retired, we've peddled a long way want to take our canoes out just the rest, bite on the sandwich, put our canoes back in the water. See you later.

1:28:38

It took a phone call to his boss in Annapolis. Who fortunately, knew who I was, knew me by name. He's like "*you better leave them people alone. Let them do what they're doing. They can go about their business. Don't start no crap*". But if I wasn't there, if that name recognition wasn't there, what would have been the next thing you know. Somebody get hit in the head? Somebody gets shot or locked up? You know, so that's kind of thing that we're pushing back against now we should have access, but then somebody will say, "*Well, if they could do it, we should do it*". Then you got that fight to deal with. So it's, it's a we don't know where it's gonna end up. .

1:29:33

Right now. We have a starting off pretty good relationship with our current governor Not much of relationship with our former governor. But this one is starting off pretty good. At least. Should I say the word game is there. We're hearing good things. We get the goosebumps and you know, get a good feeling from what's being said. But we're still waiting for something. You know, I used that thing earlier about the pipe, you know, wait for something to come out the other end of that. pipe that we can use. But we're hopeful. We're hopeful. Because without hope, what do we do? You know, we've been fighting this fight for a long time. Our people were pretty content back in the late 1700s, into the 1800s, where they could stay away, maintain themselves independently provide for

their subsistence. But now you can't. Every inch of ground now is owned by somebody. So you can't just go squat.

It's all been taken, even where my grandmother and her grandmother lived on Mount Victoria. Matter of fact, I think route 301 goes all the way to Baltimore, because by this guy that lived in Baltimore. Who that highway is named after Robert crane. That route 301 is named after he was good friends with the then governor. And he heard about all this land out here. That wasn't owned by anybody. So he came down and his is thing where my great great grandparents live. And told everybody "*Get! You don't have a deed. You don't have legal ownership*".

1:31:29

But my grandmother's father, who was the prodigy of the white land owner, and her mother dated. The man denied that my grandmother's father was his son the whole time he was alive. But being a good Catholic, you know, he wrote in his will, I guess to give me show he got into heaven. He fessed up and said it oops, "*yeah, I gotta tell ya, he's my son. I'm bequeathing this farm to him*". So Mr. Crane, who came down and bought the whole shebang, couldn't get that piece of land. But he wound up trading, which was to my ancestors benefit because he traded what he thought was useless land, which was on the water.

1:32:24

You lost the sight, no thing but the rabbit, don't throw me in that briar patch (a dense thicket of thorny plants, a metaphor). Well, that's what he did. He threw the rabbit in the briar patch, he traded his piece of farmland for the same amount of land, but was on the waterway, Potomac River. And it's still in the family to this day that as much as it was back then. But you know, a piece of it is still two pieces of it are still with the family today. So we do things there every year, celebrate seasonal events. So that we we can recall so that the next generation won't forget, so that they will be able to be informed and recalled. And we are hopeful, you know, because we see each generation getting further and further away from the culture.

There are things pulling them away. Attractive things and money, technology, sports, if I can be the quarterback or the quarterback, I'll have you know, I'd be a multimillionaire, you know, I can just walk away from all y'all. So it's rough. But we're pedaling as fast as we can and doing what we can to try to endeavor to persevere keep fighting for for access to our forest lands and to the waterways and particularly to make sure that developers don't cut down every dam treated, they can put their eyes on.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm

1:34:13

Interviewee: Certain certainly trying to do that. No, it's like it's time to start doing like, what's the name and then people the United Arab Emirates, they don't have a lot of land. So they're building straight up in air. Or like in was at Hong Kong? You got 30, 40, 50 storey buildings because they don't have the land bases spread out.

1:34:46

You know, everybody here wants "I want to build a Mac Mansion 20 acres". You got to stop doing that. There won't be a tree left. But we endeavor to persevere. We do what we can when we can we work with these conservation agencies to let them know that we need to do what we can to preserve our woodlands.

1:35:09

We fought against the Girl Scouts here trying to sell off some land that was donated to them. Battled and fought the ones that place where they launch where they track missiles, they launched their places over here in Maryland? They were tracking land as part of the Goddard Space Flight Center I think it is. They had an island that they will put out for sale commercial sale. And you know, we protested wrote letters, we got people all up and down the spectrum from religious leaders to university presidents, etc to write letters against that. So those two parcels land have survived that.

1:36:01

We've had the media, mainly Maryland public television and four other sites that people want it to sell off for commercial development to get the money. No, you just get cut down every tree. You know, you're not the only one that has to have a place to lay down asleep, you know, people will give a damn about rabbits, squirrels, deer, whatsoever, you know. If they disappear tomorrow, they think so what you know, they don't realize that it's all connected.

1:36:34

But we will endeavor to persevere and fight as we can, what we can and try to preserve at every opportunity, what's left, which a much, you know that this used to be called the Eastern Woodlands. So sad image of what it used to be. And it's unfortunate that today there are only I believe is five? What is defined as Intact Forest Landscapes on this planet. And we've seen two of them damn near burned up.

1:37:16

We saw Canada catching fire. The forest in Northern part of Russia, catch fire. Of course, we know some years back what happened to Australia. But they no longer have an intact forest landscape in Australia, you know, but for now, New Zealand does. So we don't know how long that's gonna last. And looking at the damage that they're doing down in with the Amazon. Hopefully you know that that well hopefully that stays intact. But right now we got five and hopefully had to keep five because can't lose them because we got to breathe. We did air. But we'll see we'll see.

1:38:04

It'll be your generation and the generation after you that's got to pick up that gauntlet and fight those battles. Looking at that graphic behind you all those beautiful trees with the snow falling. And you know, God, that is magnificent, you know those pines back there. But that's, that's great, you know, as hopefully, hopefully it sticks, you know, the only North American Intact Forest Landscape is the one that runs across Canada, the ones from Nova Scotia over to the Yukon. And so when they caught fire, of course, so, but they weren't able to burn up enough of it. But sometimes you look at again, to trigger and trigger in the treasury.

1:38:54

The thing to be defined as an intact forest landscape is there cannot be any human presence. There can't be any long roads. There can't be any camps. So if you start a fire, you got to get to it. So now you got to cut a road in there. And you know, once they cut the road day, they don't want to close it back up. They want to keep it coming. So I'm looking to see what's going to come out the aftermath of that fire up and Canada see what they're doing. But meanwhile down here, we're trying to save every tree we can go we got that minute. No more, though, was you had mouse. Okay, next question.

1:39:38

Interviewer: Um, so my next question is, how do you want the public view? **How would you want the public to view you and your Tribal community in 2024?**

1:39:53

Interviewee: I hope that we're somewhere on the spectrum moving away from surviving to thriving. I hear people in the communities talk about we need some means of economic development that scares me. Yeah. Oh, I understand it. I understand economic development. I know exactly what if I mean, back the last time I retired before I retired from the museum. I ran my own real estate company for 16 years. So I understanding about business. I understand by making a profit, profit and loss.

1:40:34

Business. But, you know, I don't think that that should be the prime objective that before we do some other things.

1:40:44

I think we need to get our game together as to not just who we are, you know, and I say who we are, because a lot of people will say they're Piscataway. And that's okay, "*what makes you Piscataway?*" "*Well, my grandmother.*" "*Okay, well, your grandmother was, but why are you?*" "*You, you explain that to me break it down for me.*"

1:41:12

A group in the Tribe did a yeoman's job putting together material to develop a honors course, on Piscataway history being taught at University of Maryland, College Park. And that's a great thing, it's a hell of an achievement. But I'm standing back saying now you've got some students, non-Natives, who know more about my culture, than most of my people who are supposed to be part of my culture.

1:41:51

I think that before we start getting into economics, money making, that needs to be shared with the community. So that they are totally aware of who they are, how they got where they are. And going forward, economically and otherwise, with this entailwith less orientalia Why you don't lose who you are.

1:42:25

Which can be difficult. Ain't gonna be easy. Never has been. But as they say, anything worthwhile having equal be easy, otherwise, everybody would have it. But I'm hopeful that, that that happens. I look at the University of Maryland system. And I think it needs to spread out. Some years ago, when I was on the Commission, one of the things I pushed was that every November for Native American Heritage Month that the Commission needed to endorse participate in and push events each year, go to a different campus in the state of Maryland. And they've done that we did one a University of Maryland, Baltimore, we did one at Salisbury. I don't think we've been to University of Maryland, the one in Queens over in on Eastern Shore.

1:43:31

We've been now to Bowie State. I don't know who they are on the agenda next. But, but you know, you can get so far away from the first one that you did if we get all about you. So there's got to be some continuity. Otherwise, you get forgotten. So you haven't figured out yet how to maintain that continuity.

And make sure they don't forget.

1:43:59

Which is easy to do. Out of sight out of mind. And Native American Heritage Month comes from that round, you know, something should go back to every one of those schools to remind them of it and for them to do something. It's like I tell people about these land acknowledgments. I got one community college president, I think a little upset with me.

1:44:22

She wanted me to write a land acknowledgement for her college and I told her flat out "*no, you write it*" you know, it's like, I guess I was too blunt. She didn't receive that very well. But I did I explained to her that me doing a land acknowledgement. For you, for your campus, for your student body. To me, I equate that to you, giving your students that answers to the upcoming exam. They didn't have to look up nothing. They didn't have to figure nothing out. You gave them the answer. And I said, it's like me giving you the answer for the land acknowledgement. I need you, your staff, somebody to look at the history, look back, and then you decide how you want to acknowledge what happened? What is happening? In your own words instead of mine.

1:45:30

It's self- serving for me to do it. And it becomes what's the word? Performative.

Interviewer: Mm-hmm

1:45:37

Interviewee: So, you know, I press for them, too, when people asked me to do these, I've helped a few museums, art galleries, do them, even the ones that Arlington County, they wouldn't have done it, you know, but what I did, I tried to nudge and nurse them along to look for themselves and tell them where to find it. But to put it in their own words, rather than for me to do it, case done, you know, boom, you go and forget about it.

1:46:08

You know, we did a event at Johns Hopkins this summer. And they not only did land acknowledgement, which was boilerplate, and John Hopkins, every school on that campus, every college has their own land acknowledgement. Maryland University, College Park was same way. And the new president was his name? Pines. We mentioned it to him. And he looked at it, he said, "we're going to have one land acknowledgement. For the, for the entire campus, every school on this campus will recite the same land acknowledgement". Which was good, you know, but they were kind of under pressure, because they decided to become members, athletically, and members of the Big 10.

1:47:09

And found out that the Big 10 requires every one of their participating universities to do a land acknowledgement before every athletic contest. Who knew? I didn't know that. I don't know if any other athletic group on a university level has that requirement for, its members. I don't know if they did the AAC or the southern conferences, or anybody else has that requirement, but the Big 10 has that requirement. *So will it benefit us?* I don't know. Maybe it will. But I like the idea that it is a requirement. And I don't know if all of the universities we've been to each November *has any recollection of us ever having been there?* You read UMBC. I don't want to put you on the spot. *But did they do the same for Native American Heritage Month?*

1:48:22

Interviewer: Nope. They have not done anything.

1:48:25

Interviewee: the school

1:48:29

Interviewer: Yeah,

Interviewee: *But have you read their land acknowledgement?*

1:48:34

Interviewer: Yes, I have.

1:48:36

Interviewee: I like to choked when I read. And I wonder who who that, well, I mean, if they wrote it fine. But did they run it by anybody for validity?

1:48:51

Because one of the things they had in there that I saw was they gave some credence, credibility to the treaty that Maryland wrote with the Susquehannaix back in 1625, or something like that, where the Susquehanna basically said, "*oh, yeah, you can have all that. You want that you got that too*". It's like okay, what is that about? But anyway, I don't know who they ran it by. But they certainly need to take a little look at it because it's, it is beyond reality.

1:49:30

We, I don't know. I mean, anyways, it is what it is, it's one of the treaties is in one of the treaties that Maryland did. Again, the lie, the dishonesty during the colonial period of them doing a treaty with the Susquehanna and in the process, the Susquehanna they didn't have any cartographers, civil engineers

1:50:00

You know Maryland said, "*Well, we want all this here all the way down to the Nanticoke River*". The Susquehannas said "*you got it*". On the other side of the river, "*okay, we want this over here, all the way down, not just through Baltimore. But the Patapsco River*". "*You got it*". So Maryland who takes all this land. Because the Susquehanna said you can have it wasn't there to give.

1:50:32

But hey, Maryland, like I said, you know, it's the trickery and treachery. It was the what was going on during that era. They just took what they can get. Ultimately, they took it all. Okay, all right. Done with that was next.

1:50:49

Interviewer: Um, so, **is there anything else you would like to say are what additional matters Do you want to include in this interview?**

1:51:03

Interviewee: Only thing that I would include that hadn't spoken out would be about education. I've mentioned the honors program being done at the University of Maryland College Park. I know the young man was at the meeting that we had with the governor, he's from the Lumbee in Baltimore.

And he spoke on the matter of the county and the city rejecting their being able to retain, I think it's Title VI program where they can get federal funds for schools to eliminate the excuse. "We don't have the money for that". To do Native programs for Native students, so that there's some sense of awareness in the school system, elementary, middle, high school, that they would be programming that would expose the Native history, culture, etc, to the student body. Because Native students can sit in that class. And, you know, I'm preaching to the choir here, if you don't have on a head dress, or moccasins, or you know, the typical stuff that they want to see, if you just have on a pair jeans, or sweatshirt. And that's it, then they don't see an Indian

1:52:42

You know, I talk about the Indian that's in everybody's head. Everybody's got an Indian up here (pointing to his head). When I used to go to schools, I would tell everybody, close your eyes. I want you to tell me describe to me what that Indian looks like this in your head.

1:53:02

It was like they were all seeing the same damn Indian. You know, it's, it's amazing. And as soon as you say somewhat, you're being validated. You're being compared to that image that people have in their heads. And if you don't here, it is more. Here you go. I'm gonna put you right beside. Nope, you don't look like my Indian. So you're dismissed. So I pressed the school system. The way to get around that to do something about that is to have programs in schools starting in elementary.

1:53:41

Now, Governor O'Malley, former Governor O'Malley, he wrote a mandate that Maryland public schools would be required to teach Native Maryland Native history from elementary through high school. And that at before graduation, they would have to pass a competency test. Well, you know, what happened to that was soon as he was out of the governor's house and the Republicans came, you know, what happened to that? I bet you nobody in the school system will acknowledge that it ever existed.

1:54:27

Baltimore County city had had the latitude to turn down federal dollars to put programs in the schools. Can you imagine that happening to any other ethnicity? It just wouldn't happen. But again, you know, as early as about population to numbers, if you don't have enough people that can vote somebody into office or out of office. Your voice out, okay, how loud you get? Or how many bricks you throw? Okay, how much you demonstrate? If you can't put them in or take them out, have a nice day.

1:55:11

We don't have those kind of numbers, nor do we have that kind of support from other ethnic communities. We've never been able to get it. We stand alone. And we all where we are. So I don't know what the solution is. But it you know, it's like, what was that? I don't know. It was the article in the paper that day or something I heard on a newscast.

1:55:41

Some guy named Ronan, row RONO, whatever they had, think of Georgia, they want to get rid of the idea of equity, diversity and inclusion. That is disrupting people's thinking. And that is becoming to mean something that it wasn't intended to mean and where he's going with that to me although he doesn't say it. I'm saying what the hell's wrong with Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion? So who

does he want to exclude? What diversity does he have issues with? And who is it that he was does not want to have included?

1:56:23

you want to you look at further things that are going on and this guy state of Georgia and you know exactly what it is? You know, it's it's about the following on you they're too damn close to Florida, I guess. You know, it's about certain literature books. They want out they want the the rainbow flying groups in the hand, just get rid of that, you know, forget about it, you know, become not colorblind, but blind to anything but

Wife: White.

Interviewee: okay, blind to anything that is not white. You will if you if you wind up getting Snowblind it has to wait. But I don't know. I don't know where it's going. You know, I used to talk about JEDI. Everybody is like "JEDI?? Oh you mean Star Wars?" No. It's Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. My quick way of remembering those three things up poor memory what it used to be. So JEDI was my way remembering that. This guy just got the hell away rid of justice? Oh, yeah, justice is fine. I want these other three gone. Equity. No, we don't want racial diversity being a consideration.

1:57:45

I mean, you look at what they did with the President of Harvard. So you know, if they go after her, watch out. They'll know they'll come back to anybody. And I figured she could hold her own. But hey, all they got to do is find a soft spot and they come at you. But anyway, that's that's my closing argument. And it's about education. It's got to start with starts.

1:58:21

I talked with a group several months ago. Seed distributing planting group. That for me, I think that in earliest years of school, since they're making kids go to school, and just soon as they get stopped nursing, you know, you're going to pre K pre pre K, pre K, you're going to get it you know, they're in school. Probably, I mean, most of that you're going to be in school longer and you're probably going to live there started real early.

1:58:56

God, how old is my great granddaughter? How is our great granddaughter? (asking he's wife) How old is she five? Great-granddaughter, Cheyenne's daughter. How old she? Five?

1:59:07

Wife: No three or four.

Interviewee: Three or four. She's already in school. So she's already getting indoc, indoc, indoctrinated to system. And I think at that age before they start worrying about their fingernails, or their nails getting done, and you know, they're getting all sharp and cute, that they should be outside in the fall, clearing ground and be taught about the environment. So that in the spring, they go out in the plant, they put seeds in the ground. And by the time school is actually you know going around it will be coming up. Then they can come out and see the benefits of the work that they did and they can take the tomatoes and cucumbers in the summer squash and, and whatever home and what will that do to them to have done that?

2:00:10

I think it's more rewarding than to sit them in a classroom and just drill down to them. Yeah, they got to learn the alphabet. Yeah, they got to learn that numbers. But is that all they need to know nothing about nature. Nothing about food where it comes. From what the Earth has to do with it. But I think if they instill that in children, when they first started the educational system, they'll never forget it, they'll never forget it. Anyway, that's, that's my 10 cents on that. And then that's, I think we should go, I don't know if it will go, because I don't know how many parents will support that.

2:00:55

But I think it's something that needs to be done. If we ever think that the next generation, that generation is going to have the kind of respect for nature, for the land, for the water, for the one legged, the trees and the plants, and the four-legged have to live there with us. If not, when? How?

2:01:20

So, anyways, that's my, as my 10 cents work on that. We're going out with education. And I can't understand Baltimore turning now free money. You know, when the Maryland did the last iteration of its third, fourth grade reader, I was asked to participate, because every 10 years, they redo the books. And I was part of that iteration. This one, I noticed that this one they did completely online with a commercial company that publishes books.

2:01:59

And I was the only Native involved. Everybody else was a teacher. Which I didn't have a problem with. I mean, they're the ones that have to transmit this information to the students. But their biggest argument, and I can see where they're coming from. They get six hours a day.

2:02:24

You got to give them an additional block of material for students to learn where they got to fit it in, when they know that you're going to judge them, test them, determine their promotions, etc, on a given standard. *So what are they going to sacrifice in order to bring in this new element into their course?* And that was their big argument. They got six hours, and is full. *So what are they going to take out of it? In order to put this in? Where do they put in Native studies, when there's not enough room?*

2:03:13

Prince George's County came up with an idea of a trailer, a 15 foot trailer. That will be towed around to the different elementary schools. Drop the tailgate, the kids go in, and they would be computers on the right side and computers on the left side. And the computers on this side would deal with Native Americans and the computers on this side would deal with African Americans.

2:03:41

I said okay, *how many computers? How many students? Are you serious? How much time are they gonna get to sit at one of those computers? Are they gonna have all day? I mean, how's that going to work? And how many schools are you going to, in the course of one school day. One school per day? How many students in that school? Is going to be reserved just for third and fourth graders? If they've got 400 3rd and fourth grade students, how much time does each one gonna have at those computers? And are you going to compel them now?*

2:04:33

You can't just if you're African American, you're not going to be able to come in and just sit at the one for African American you got to you got to spend some time over here. And if you're a Native American, you got to spend some time over there. I just don't see how that was going to work.

2:04:40

They got to trailers, they got all the get outfitted and whatever but they have never implemented and I don't see how they ever will. I just don't see that being a working solution. To that happening, they got to come up with another another scenario.

2:04:59

But it was tax money, not well spent. Put it that way. But anyway, that's my story and I'm sticking with it.

2:05:09

Interviewer: Okay, thank you. **So is there any questions you like? Or is there anything that you would like to ask me? Or you're curious about during the interview?**

2:05:21

Interviewee: No, well I don't know if you already told me. But *what's the nature of the course that you're taking that this is going to help you with doing whatever your coursework is? Are you is this for a Master's or PhD? Is this for social science anthropology?*

2:05:44

Interviewer: So this is actually for my master's degree. So it's not as much as like a class course more. It's more like kind of just like to the degree part

Interviewee: okay. All right. Okay, well tell Ashley. Jones. I can't get used to, I can't used to calling her Jones. Tell her I said, Hello, and I look forward to seeing crossing swords with her sometime in the future.

Interviewer: Yeah, of course. I'll tell her.

2:06:23

Interviewer: Wait, let me did you Is that all you wanted to say?

2:06:29

Interviewee: Yes. Yeah.

2:06:30

Interviewer: Okay. And then I'll stop the recording.

Ends at 2:06:34 mintues

Nause-Waiwash Band of Indians Individual

02:31

Interviewee: I am Chief of the Nause-Waiwash Band of Indians. I apologize for not being able to speak our language. Our language is pretty much non-existent. We do have a few words that we

share with our sister tribe, the Nanticoke in Delaware, and one being Aho', so I like to open my emails and greetings with greetings and in Aho'. So that's about all I got for you for our language.

It is quite an honor for you to ask me to participate in your project, I think it's wonderful. And I am pleased to share my thoughts and input and I would even go out on a limb and say, My thoughts are probably very close to if not the same as our tribe as a whole. And our tribe is made up of Descendants of the Choptank in Indian or Choptank and Nanticoke Indian tribes in what is now Dorchester County. So we are a nonprofit organization that is trying to preserve our culture in our history and to educate others on that to keep all of that alive.

04:03

Interviewer: Thank you, thank you for introduction. And again, I'm really excited you taking part in this because I am interested in holding space in conversation with you about any of the either questions I asked or you know, anything that you want to input that, you know, I don't ask or something. But, um, just to kind of start off with our first question. **Who is your community?**

04:36

Interviewee: Our community is we're made up of the the organization itself is made up of around 300 plus enrolled members, and we are descendants of the Choptank and Nanticoke Indians. We do have a few descendants of the Pocomoke that their lines overlap with ours and our community is very much involved in trying to be good stewards of the land. And we're all about education and teaching, we realize that in order to preserve our culture, and our history and our traditions, that we have to teach it. I know that there are some things that are sacred that we like to hold close to our chest, but for the most part, we are very excited about sharing and teaching who we are to the community and and beyond.

05:44

Interviewer: And so **Do you have a Tribal community where you live?**

05:51

Interviewee: Um, as far as like a reservation land no. We are members of the Dorchester County, Maryland communities. Cambridge, the lower part of Dorchester, we do own land, but it's a very tiny piece of land that we have a church on that we plan to use as a longhouse upon renovation. And then we have another small church with a cemetery that we maintain. But as far as a designated place, space of land where all of our people live and share our own form of government, so to speak, no, we don't have that.

06:40

Interviewer: Okay. Um, and **how does your Native identity tied to your sense of place or community?**

06:50

Interviewee: That's tough. It really is. We know, I'm going to speak for myself here, I know who I am. Growing up, I always knew who I was. Although, to me, that was normal. That was just who I was, and our way of life, the things that we did.

But today, fast forward 50 years, there are a lot of people, even within our own county, that don't recognize that there are still descendants here trying to preserve the history of Dorchester County. And it seems to be an ongoing battle. I oftentimes hear you know, "*you don't look Indian*" and "*there wannabes*". And so it's hard to establish, re-establish, get the exposure that we're hoping to

get when there are so many people that still don't acknowledge us. In that, it's why we feel like education is very important in trying to turn that around.

08:15

Interviewer: Thank you. Um, so how does your community come together?

08:21

Interviewee: We hold meetings a couple times a month, and discuss what we're doing, where we would like to go. And where we'd like to see ourselves a year from now, five years from now, we often come together for fundraisers, we do not apply for government grant money. We apply for grant money from private organizations and foundations. Most of the grant money or up until this point, I haven't been able to find anywhere. They don't require giving up an easement to our property. And we're not ready to do that we figure that the government has already taken enough from us. So we're plugging along. We're getting things done a little bit slower. And then we would if we did have government money available to us. But we have fundraisers.

Our annual festival is a big fundraiser for us. We hold that in September every year and this year will be our 32nd year. So we seems like we always got our irons in the fire. With the proceeds that we get from these fundraisers we put into upgrades and renovations to our churches when one hopefully to be our longhouse. We have recently gotten a new roof new windows, we stained the outside of that, we had oak, huge grandfather oak tree cut down a couple years ago, sadly, we had to be done. But we all pull together and we participate in that. And so we, we, we put it, we're a good group of people, we get along very well. And we seem to get things done. Maybe not as quickly as I'd like, but we all work outside the home, and we have our own homes to keep and families and also, but we're very proud of the accomplishments that we have made so far, in pulling all of this together.

10:44

Interviewer: And then following up with that question, how are you involved when the community comes together?

10:55

Interviewee: Oh, sometimes more, I'd like to be. I just try to being in this Chief's position. Um, I actually traditionally have no say in anything, I am just the face of the Tribe, the Council makes all the decisions about everything. I often times make valid suggestions and recommend that they may do something and most of the time, they kind of follow my path. So, um, yeah, I just I kind of like maybe make suggestions and, and hopefully guide them to what I'd like to see happen.

11:48

Interviewer: Okay, and then, um, I know you touched base on this previously, but what are the changes you notice over the years and how your community comes together?

12:01

Interviewee: Um, well, over the years, I would say, back in the day, whenever my pastor always said back in the day was always a Wednesday. It wasn't, it was just community, helping community or neighbors helping neighbors, we would all go out fishing together and we'd share our catch. If we had gardens, we would share our product from the garden. And if we had a family that was down and out and was in need of wood for their fireplace in the winter, we would all pitch in and send them over some wood. And so that's come along way.

More recently. I think things because back then that was normal. More recently, I think people are trying to make a distinction between home life, everyday life and Tribal life. And there's no reason why that can't be both. So I think these days, people tend to be more reserved and much faster pace and don't always have time to share with others in getting things pulled together.

So a good example of that is renovating our longhouse. We have two contractors, we have a roofer. We have an electrician, and all of those people are enrolled members of our organization, and they all can do all of this work. And it wouldn't cost us any labor. But they can't, they won't for one reason or another. So we have to in turn, hire contractors to come in and get the job done. So back in the day, that never would have happened, it would be okay, this needs to be done. Let's get it done. So, and I think that's just the fast pace of today's society. So and I'm not faulting anyone for that. I just think that that's how it's grown to be.

14:34

Interviewer: And then, um, I guess like one thing I'm kind of curious about because you call your community as an organization. So **do you think when you say organization, is it more like a community sense or is it more like a professional kind of sense?**

14:57

Interviewee: Both um, I want to refer to it as community because that's what it is we are our community, we're a family. Sadly, some of our people more than I would like to admit, kind of treated as a as a club, as you know, like the Elks club or something like that. And it's, it's not a club, we don't pay dues. We're just trying to keep what little bit of history we do have, so we don't lose it.

And the other part to that is these the words organizations and communities and groups. A lot of that is a play on words, to satisfy the government. So I can call, there's a difference. Our name is Nause-Waiwash Band of Indians. I often interchange the word Tribe for Band. Technically, there's a difference. It's a play on words. According to the state of Maryland, we are not a Tribe, we are not state-recognized we are a nonprofit organization, whose mission is to observe our culture and our history. So then that's a play on words, there.

Um, I would, I would like to say that because according to the state of Maryland, those who are enrolled, who can trace their bloodline to Indigenous people from Dorchester County, are members of our Tribe. And then there are people who volunteer who are Native American descent that are not Nause-Waiwash, maybe they moved here and there, Cherokee or Navajo and they have joined our organization. So again, a play on words, you still get a membership card, and you can write that you're a member of the Nause-Waiwash. No one really has the right to question that. The fact that blood member or not, never really gets challenged at that point. So it's a whole play on words with the government.

I know that was a long answer to a short question.

17:55

Interviewer: No, you're good. You're good. Um, so I guess, like, kind of tying into that. **Would you say that, that settler colonialism is still persisting its impacts on your Tribe?**

18:11

Interviewee: Yes. Yes, I have often felt like that. We have taken the backseat to whatever else is going on at the time. And I'm going to be selfish. I think we should take priority we were here first.

So with without our ancestors, being here and teaching the Europeans, what life was like here and how to manage it and survive through it, then there would be no community today, European or Indigenous people.

So an example of that would be the Harriet Tubman movement. I'll call it a movement. And I am by no means minimizing what they are doing. Harriet Tubman is a hero, and she was among her people. But places like tourism and other organizations, when they go to promote two organizations or two events, seems like they can't promote both of them at the same time. So because of the Harriet Tubman movement, they're gonna go with that first because that is what is in the spotlight, we get set to the back burner, which is okay, we're going to eventually have our time in the limelight as well. I just find it hard that they can't promote two organizations and help two organizations at the same time. That's what I have a problem with.

19:59

Interviewer: Hmm. And then, um, how? So how is your sovereignty also being impacted? Currently?

20:09

Interviewee: Good question. Um, we have, we're kind of up in the air about that we are not state-recognized. we do have, we will have the ability to be state-recognized, if we choose to, we would ultimately will say, qualify for it, providing all the paperwork is there, it's a huge long, very expensive process. Which one we should not have to pay, improve who we are to the state. So that I think has affected our sovereignty, if you will. The other part the other side to that, and this is kind of where I'm leaning towards is the state of Maryland. As they come, they've come to us, we have a person that sits on the Maryland Commission on Indian Affairs, so that says, "*Okay, we know you're there, even though you're not state recognized, but we're going to give you a spot on the table*". And then there is places like the Archives who want us to participate in preserving the Indigenous culture. So then you got that state organization, our agency saying, "*Yeah, we know you're here. So, okay, let us help you*". So with that said, I feel like the state knows we're here, even though they don't recognize us. And if we apply for state recognition, we are essentially going before the governor and saying, "*Okay, we are admitting that we were never here. So we would like for you to now acknowledge us and give us recognition*". And I feel like at that point, that's where we would lose our sovereignty. I don't know. Does that make sense?

I really don't see where at this point. Because I think Maryland is lagging behind in so many things as far as Indigenous communities. But at this point, I really haven't seen a whole lot that the state could offer us that would benefit us if we were state-recognized.

22:33

Interviewer: Yeah. Now that makes sense. I understand where you're coming from, because there was others that I talked to, to also said, *Why should we have federally recognition from a non-Native government?* And I mean, it does make sense. I'm not saying it does it. And it's, it's very complicated and very, like frustrating.

22:57

Interviewee: play on words. Yes. Yup.

23:03

Interviewer: Um, so my next question. Um, so I guess like, what does Indigenous erasure mean to you?

23:15

Interviewee: Um, it means to me that 400 years ago, the Europeans tried to erase us. And in some cases, they succeeded at it. And I would go as far as saying, Here we are 400 years later, and there are still people and organizations and agencies that are still trying to do that by saying, *“okay, you don't count because you're not state-recognized”. “And I didn't know that there were even still any Indians alive around here. I thought we killed you all off?”* Which they tried to. So I think, maybe not to the degree that happened three or 400 years ago, but certainly, people are still trying certain people are still trying to try that. Which is a big part of our battle. And our mission is to get beyond that and educate the people in the community, all communities that hey, *“yes, there are still descendants here of the original people”*. That hold dear there. They embrace their bloodline in their heritage. So we're preserving, you know, the Asian culture. We're preserving the European culture. We're preserving the African American culture. *“Why why is it always questioned and why is it always so difficult to preserve the Indigenous culture?”* To me, that is also a part of it, being erased. So I think education, the more education we do, hopefully that will start to turn around as well.

25:14

Interviewer: **Why is it important to address the erasure in Maryland environmental organizations?**

25:21

Interviewee: I think that some of these environmental organizations are just now coming to realize that here we are in 2024. And we're trying to slow down erosion, we're trying, there's global warming, and what have we done to prevent that, and I'm gonna say my generation is to blame for all of that, because we just abused Mother Earth, and took advantage of so many things that she offered in here, we are now trying to backpedal and fix things. And I think some of these organizations now realize, *“hey, the Indigenous people have protected this land for centuries for millennia, let's take a look at what they did and what they are still down doing to help preserve the land”*. And, you know, the solar power, the wind power, they're making a big deal about these wind farms off the coast of Ocean City. Wind power is nothing new, solar energy is nothing new. That's what we did to preserve and protect Mother Earth. Back then 400 years ago, or hundreds of years ago, so I think these agencies and I want to use specifically say the Nature Conservancy are realizing, *“hey, let's take a look at what they're doing. And maybe we can emulate that, to help”*. So

27:05

Interviewer: and then kind of going into that, um, **would you say that your, your tribe has like a form of like, Traditional Ecological Knowledge, also known as TEK like to, I don't know, probably partner up or something?** because I know, TEK is becoming really popular in an environmental organizations.

27:26

Interviewee: Yeah, um, we have, we're currently working very closely with the Nature Conservancy, with the Robinson Neck Preserve on Taylor's Island, and they have come to us and said, *“Okay, you what can we do to help preserve this land?”* So a lot of it is Marsh, and we're like, *“okay, you need to burn the marsh, it makes for a healthier environment, for the vegetation and for the wildlife that's there”*. So they're jumping on board with that. We have pretty much educated them on the reasons why when, like the Phragmites, what can we do to get rid of the Phragmites? And they do not like using chemicals, and I don't either. However, I think the Phragmites is so out

of control right now, that if you burned it, and it's not going to do anything, just make it healthier for it to spread even faster. So I'm not sure what the solution to that problem is.

And it might it like we've lost a lot of the population of the muskrat, which is an animal that we hold very dear to our hearts part of our past and our present. And we wonder, you know why? I mean, they're not extinct or anything. But certainly years ago, when I was a kid, my father would come home after trapping in the marsh. And if it wasn't a good day, I mean, you had to have at least 500 muskrats if it wasn't a good day. So now we're lucky to get half a dozen a day. And we're like, "Okay, *what happened here? Was it the Eagles?*" Because the Eagles are no longer on the endangered species list and muskrat is on the top of their list for food. *Was it back in the (19)70s when the state rode around in a truck and sprayed for mosquitoes? Was it those chemicals that help kill those things off?* So we're trying to rectify those things and we're trying to guide them and preserving their environment on some of the the environment that the muskrat live in, among other animals, not just the muskrat, but things that maybe they did to help make things healthier, you know, 50 years ago that they're not doing today and we can introduce that to the Nature Conservancy, and they can give it a try and see, see how it works.

So they, they have been very respectful and have welcomed our comments and suggestions. So we're looking forward to we've had a great relationship with them, and we're looking forward to continuing working with them. And we've worked with Blackwater Refuge also. They're a great group of people to work with.

30:54

Interviewer: Awesome. Um, so what is your relationship to the water and land where you live?

31:03

Interviewee: Water is life. Absolutely. Water is life. We draw our energy from water. Today, traditionally, when we have a lot of our ceremonies, it's done near the water. Our festival every year is practically on the Nanticoke River in Vienna. It will it is, it's a bean field between us and the river. So, we, my naming ceremony was on the Blackwater River, my son's naming ceremony was on the Blackwater River. So we have we hold water very, very dear to us. And of course, you know, the land would be very hearty or healthy without the water. So we definitely need that to sustain all life. So we were trying to not just clean up and preserve the land but also the water there's there's the fish and the crabs in the Aqua life, marine life that need the water to survive. And we need to help them out as well.

32:27

Interviewer: Um, and I guess like you did touch base on this one. But what do you see as the main environmental challenges your Tribal community is facing?

32:40

Interviewee: Flooding, flooding, I don't know if you heard in the news, we got this big storm yesterday. My cousin has sent me pictures where the roads are just washed out, they're flooded. Sadly, that is happening more and more all the time. The high tides are getting higher. And they're happening more often the floods are happening more often. And there's not typically enough time for the tide to drain off the road before there's a next high tide coming in. So it seems like there's always water on the road. Yes, water is life. But.

So that's part of it. And, and you can see where I grew up, which is two-thirds of the lower part of Dorchester County was all a thriving healthy community with farmland and houses. And now with the environment, the climate change in all of that you have you now have the ghost forest, so the trees are dying. So now there's no root system to hold all this vegetation together. The saltwater has taken over the land where you can't grow anything in saltwater. Houses that were built back in the 50s and 60s, on high land, are now their front yards are being flooded. When we have a heavy rain or storm surge.

I actually own a piece of property. I bought it because it's marsh and we wanted to trap it. And I did a little research on it. And back in the 1940s it was a baseball field. And now it is Marsh. Some of our ancestral land that were trapping, which is right across the road. There was a whole community back there was called Robins Landing and the other side was called Abbott town and there was a whole village community of people in their houses in their garden, everything and all of that now is Marsh.

So over 50 years is not a very long time. And if we're losing that much ground in 50 years, we really need to sit up and take notice. Because it's happening, I think faster than we realize. And I don't know if it's to a point now that it's irreversible or not. It's, yep, we've climate change has definitely affected us, it's affected where we live, it's affected our livelihoods. So it has quite an impact. And it is not just on the Indigenous people in Dorchester County, but other communities, because only we still have people working the waterways. But there's also people of European descent that still work the waterways too. And they're like, "*Yeah, can't make no money here. So it's time to pack up and move on*". So it's affected everybody. I just think that maybe since we're, I feel like better stewards of the land, and that maybe we might be more aware of it than other groups.

36:29

Interviewer: Yeah. And because of the flooding is impacting a lot of the lands that your Tribe and community, organization, **would you say that climate change is, like assimilating your culture a lot faster than? I don't know what you've seen so far?**

36:53

Interviewee: Um, yes, I would say it is. Yes. It's destroying it very quickly. A lot quicker than I would have liked, for sure. And because of that, people aren't trapping as a livelihood anymore. You do it because you just love to do it. And you're trying to manage the marshlands and rodent control to have a healthier marshland and making sure you do have a good environment and healthy vegetation for the wildlife that's there. But yeah, it's it's you have to do it because you love to do it. It's sadly not a way of life anymore. So even a lot of the water men are doing it as a hobby and they have found employment doing other things. So.

38:10

Interviewer: Okay, and then kind of relating to how your priorities as a Tribe, **what do you what do you know about Maryland's environmental and climate change priorities planning?**

38:27

Interviewee: I'm honestly not much. I have myself have been very trying to focus on keeping us going.

Pardon saffron over here, he's got a big mouth.

I have, there have been organizations and agencies that reach out to me, like the Department of the Environment, oftentimes send me the monthly letter with people who have applied for permits to do some sort of construction or something going on in different counties in the wetlands areas. Like if somebody's putting a dock up, or a pier, you know, all those things. I get notified, for that. I'm just not, I'm not sure *what the end goal is?* I know what my end goal is. I'm not sure if it's the same as the Nature Conservancy's or I'd like to think it is or the Department of the Environment or not, I don't know. Planning and Zoning. That's another big one, you know, are they keep putting that stamp of approval on all these permits and application shins, *but are they aware of the end result in the impact of it?* I'm not sure. I know, I'm just trying to keep going with what exists right now. And try to prevent it from deteriorating any further.

40:24

Interviewer: And would you say it's mainly like the language part of like the, how they're using a lot of academic terms or something? Or is it just because it's, you just don't, probably not aware of a lot of these plannings?

40:41

Interviewee: I, I'm probably just not aware, I'm probably just ignorant to what else is going on through other agencies. I think if I had on little bit more participation from our people, maybe I would have free up more time that I could pay more attention to what they're doing, the other agencies are doing.

I know like years ago. It was Delmarva power. And I want to say maybe they fall under the Exelon umbrella. They were at one point trying to they were planning to dig under Blackwater River through the Refuge to put in these power lines that Dorchester County residents weren't even going to benefit from the, this these power lines were to feed power up to the New England area. And they came to us wanted our input. *"And we're like, you know, you're going to be digging in on ancestral land, there's graves there, you know, what's gonna happen with all of that. It's just so you could put your powerlines in"*. And I don't know what happened with that. But a couple years later, they just put a stop to that whole project. I would like to think we had a part in that. But I don't know. I probably it's, it's where I'm lacking. I just I know, I need to be more in tune with what they're doing. And I just maybe if I get a little more participation, I can be. so. Terrible thing to admit. But

42:55

Interviewer: well, it's okay. Sometimes I don't pay attention to some of the other stuffs and I'm like barely finding out like what? What happened?

Interviewee: Right.

Interviewer: But it's fine. Um, but I guess like, kind of, I know that you said you don't really not aware of the plannings, but would you say that Maryland's environmental planning aligned with a lot with your tribes environmental planning or knowledge?

43:25

Interviewee: No. And I say that with one thing in mind, and that is there was a ossuary that was discovered 16 or 17 years ago, in Queen Ann County, along the Y River. And an archaeologist went out and did his thing and write a report up on it. And for the last 15, 16 years, the tides just keep lapping against the shoreline and all these remains keep floating away in the river and along the beach. And then they're like, *"Okay, you're the closest tribe, y'all need to decide what you want to do about it"*. And *"I'm like, wait a minute, this has been going on for 15 years. Why am I just now hearing about it?"* So they with a lack of a better term. They just dumped this major decision in my

lap and as a group and as a council we made a decision on how we wanted to handle it that we thought was best for everyone.

And we made that decision and here we are two years later, and nothing's been done. It's still a naked ossuary open for the world to see. And to be plucked apart. I always had reservations as to whether it was a true Native American ossuary. They just didn't produce the proof to me that it was, I've always questioned it. So then there was some some disagreement and tension there.

So back to what are, are our goals the same? I just feel like in that incidence, our goals weren't the same. And that again, *why is it taking 17 years?* And I told them, they had Planning and Zoning there, the Department of Natural Resources, or the Maryland Commission on Indian Affairs, it was a whole ton of organizations and agencies in higher-ups and everybody that was there, and they all knew about it, but me. And I'm, like, you know, shame on you shame on every single one of you for letting this go for 15 years. And again, two years beyond that, we still haven't accomplished anything. So maybe our goals are different. And I realize that we're not the only group that they're dealing with also, but don't make this big thing about it and demand a decision right away to get it taken care of, because it sat on somebody's back burner for all those years. And then not do anything about it.

So then I have to wonder who is that? Does that fall on me as trying to be a good steward of the land? Or does it fall on them? Or are we just going to completely butt heads over anything like that? Always? I don't know. I now can't remember now, if I even answered your question.

Interviewer: No. You did.

Interviewee: Okay.

47:25

Interviewer: Oh, um, so you mentioned how, like you said about the state of Maryland. But **how do you view the state and how does Maryland celebrate Indigenous people?**

47:44

Interviewee: I view the state of Maryland. Um, I feel like at times that they are making some small gesture to work with us and to acknowledge our existence. Some just some small effort. They do have a commission which is supposed to be a liaison between the Native communities in the state of Maryland.

48:28

But then again, I also feel like that they have more opportunities, and they offer more to the to state-recognized Tribes than they do the self-identified groups. And I think that they need to do away with Columbus Day and make it Indigenous Peoples Day. And that's been apparently been talked about for years, in multiple administrations, and it still has not come with anything.

However. Well, I used to sit on the Maryland Commission Indian Affairs as well. And there were a couple of these little projects and things that we wanted to get done. For example, allowing Native Americans to wear an eagle feather in their cap and gown when they graduate, which was not allowed. So seems like that never got accomplished. But in the last year and a half, we have the Tribal chiefs and leaders in the state of Maryland have formed a group, a committee a a group group of just the chiefs in tribal chairs in the state of Maryland. It is a nonpolitical group. And we recently in September all the chiefs, for the first time in history, all the chiefs met with Governor of Maryland. And we expressed our concerns to him. And I feel like just by organizing this group of chiefs that I think we've gotten more accomplished by doing that in the governor more hearing us

than what the Commission has accomplished in five times the amount of time. So it's sometimes I feel like Maryland is trying to put forth that little bit of an effort in that they're not meeting us halfway, I feel like we're going like three-quarters of the way, and they're only coming a quarter of the way. But I'll take it, I'll take whatever they're willing to offer in any way. We got to start somewhere. So I'm kind of on the fence about it. I do think that there needs to be more acknowledgement, more celebration, more something for Indigenous people, then, than what's being done so.

51:30

Interviewer: And then, kind of tying into that, what are incorrect assumptions people made about you in your community?

51:40

Interviewee: “*You don't look Indian*”. That's always the big one. I blame that on Hollywood, and Cher. Because if you stop and think about it, you know, we're Eastern Woodland, and *how much exposure to the sun would we be getting if we're in the woods?* So not all Native Americans are dark skin. So that's a huge misconception. And the other part is, *didn't know we still existed?* And I'd like to get beyond that as well. Yeah, huge misconceptions there.

The other is, you know, I've often asked and I can't seem to get an answer to is *when did we become unrecognized?* So, but I think we're, I think we're breaking through that barrier. And I would like to think that because in the last couple of years, my phone has run off the hall with people wanting me to participate in different things and diversity and inclusion and speaking engagements for this and demonstrations for that. And I love every minute of that. And I was told that it all this came this inclusion and diversity came with the Black Lives Matter movement. And I'm like, Great, I'll take it however it came about, I'll take it because I am all for any of the exposure that we can get. So we can clear up those misconceptions. That Cher is the only Native American that I've ever seen that has taught them that long black hair and high cheekbones. So, yeah, we need to and not all of us are impoverished. Not all of us are alcoholics. Although our communities do tend to have a higher ratio of people suffering from those disorders and diseases, but you know, we all, we have jobs, we're educated, we have indoor plumbing, we don't live in teepees. So you know.

54:20

Interviewer: And then um, I guess like, what historical accounts are not mentioned that you wish to share with Marylanders?

54:40

Interviewee: Hmm. Ah, well. I think that a lot of people aren't aware of the, the order of execution that was put out to try and decimate our race, which is how our people ended up in to the marshes of lower Dorchester County, when when we got run off the reservations, whether it was the Nanticoke reservation, the Choptank, they just kept encroaching more and more on our land and taking more and more away to the point where like, “*Okay, we want it all. So we're going to kill you all off*”. And our people ran out into the marshes to avoid execution, and then they'd be came, they lived among the Black people communities and the European communities. And they didn't practice their culture, or their religion or their traditions, when they were out among the communities. They didn't practice all that until they got home, within their own houses.

So a lot of our history is not documented because of that. And a lot of people also don't realize that the Dorchester County Courthouse caught on fire and burned down in the 1800s. And there was a

lot of documentation that was lost there. So our history is difficult to trace, for a number of reasons that just played against us from the very beginning. And I think that is a historical time period that not all people are aware of. I have often been told, "*Well, I know my grandmother was Native American, her name was such and such*", and I know that's a name and Dorchester County. And, and it is, it probably is, but that's not up to me to verify that. And just because your family name isn't a name that we are currently using for enrollment, doesn't mean you're not Native American. And I've seen people oftentimes think that that's what I'm saying to them. And it's not. It's just again, another requirement from the government that we have to have. So, which is a whole nother misconception.

It's we were here are living among the entire population and community. So it's whether we like it or not, we still have to, we're still living in in. I'm going to say we're living in a white man society. We're living in a white man's government. It's slowly changing. But in in Dorchester County, there's that good old boy system that's not going anywhere. And that's another obstacle and a struggle. But yeah, I think that the right now our big misconception is that the descendents are still here. People don't realize that, and maybe we need to educate them on how it got to be to that point. A lot of that is missed.

58:22

Interviewer: And then, so **when Maryland mentions diverse communities, do you believe your tribal community is included, when they mentioned diverse communities?**

58:34

Interviewee: I think we are now. I think that that is something new. Because it didn't used to be that way. I'm gonna say in the last five years, it's probably been more we've been more inclusive in the last five years than we ever have before. But again, for whatever reason, I'll take it. I'll take it and just play on that and use it to my advantage.

59:10

Interviewer: And then, um, I guess like, **how do you want the public to view you in your Tribal community in 2024?**

59:20

Interviewee: Um, I would like for the public to, to hear us, not just see us, but to hear us. We have an excellent following of people who attend our festival. But I want people to hear why we do this festival every year. I want people to hear why we are trying to preserve our traditions and cultures. I just want to be heard, I want to personally speaking I have oftentimes been made to feel that because I'm a female chief that I'm easily manipulated, and I don't know what I'm doing. And maybe I don't know what I'm doing, but I'm not easily manipulated. And that oftentimes is a struggle. And I want people to hear me as leader as chief of the Nause-Waiwash. I don't want people to hear me as Donna the female.

1:00:34

Interviewer: That's great. I love that.

Interviewee: Oh thanks.

Interviewer: Um, I guess like, **is there anything you'd like to say? Or you want to include in this interview that I didn't mention?**

1:00:47

Interviewee: Um, I would like to share that we are a matrilineal society. So women hold all the power, they're highly respected. They make all the major decisions. And I think that's huge. That is huge. Women give life. So, um, it's all you know, woman power, yay. And the other part to that is, we, everybody needs to do their part. If you treat Mother Earth, well, she will treat you well back. She will provide for us. I feel like she is being abused right now. And she is in distress. So just respect Mother Earth. She's there to help us.

1:01:49

Interviewer: I, I totally agree. 100%. respect Mother Earth.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: Um, is there any questions you'd like to ask me? Or you're curious about in the interview?

1:02:02

Interviewee: Um, so you're, I very much admire your, the concept of your project, I'm all about saving the environment for sure. *What's your end goal with this? Would you call it a thesis project? So what's your end goal when you finish this, and you turn it in? For your credits, or your grade, or however that works for you. What happens after that with this thesis project?*

1:02:42

Interviewer: Good question. Thank you for asking. So what I plan to do is I plan to have this I do want to at least publicize this. Not like the recordings or anything, but just because of like, HIPAA regulations or something. Um, but more as to me kind of making sure that this is accessible for all the Tribal people in everything. Um, I'm kind of trying to find at least like, where to publicize this. I did talk with the Archives about that. And they said that they're all like, willing to be, you know, have this accessible. I don't know if you know about their website, they launched the my Mayis website.

Interviewee: Yes, yeah.

Interviewer: So I'm thinking about that. And I'm just trying to make sure that this is not gatekeeper. Because I don't want to be that researcher or student or, you know, person like that. Because, I mean, I'm also a Native too. So I'm like, I know how it is when some scientist comes in, and they're just like, helicopter research, basically just come in, and you never hear from them again. And you just like, so what happened after this. So it also to like, I'm going to transcribe this and I'm going to like, send it off to you to make sure that everything that we said here is also accurate, or if there's like, you know, any kind of in corrections I made that you may fill into as well. So, hopefully that answered your question.

1:04:20

Interviewee: Yes, it does very much so, and I'm for your benefit. When you send me stuff, can you give me a timeline? I feel like that baby with a little nudge. I can get it done back to you quicker. My sister has recently moved in with me like in the last 10 days and her health isn't good. So the last 10 days I've been distracted with her. As matter of fact, she was admitted to the hospital last night, but she'll be she'll be okay. She's, but I tend to and I'm normally not a procrastinator. I'm you I'm normally like, boom, it's done. But here lately, and I guess it's just that whole overwhelming thing, which is where I would really like more participation from our people to help me out. But yeah, if you can give me say, hey, I need this by this date, then that little bit of nudge probably helped me a lot in you.

1:05:25

Interviewer: Yeah, no, thank you for telling me that. Because sometimes I do tend to do that I do last minute stuff. And I'm like, maybe I shouldn't do that. Because I know people have other things to do. And I don't want to like, I don't know, over, like, overwhelm them with their schedule that they already planned. So

1:05:43

Interviewee: yeah, that's Yeah,

1:05:45

Interviewer: but did you have any other questions? Oh, sorry.

1:05:49

Interviewee: No, right now, I think I think you've answered all my questions. I, um, I hope I answered your questions.

1:05:57

Interviewer: You did. You did.

1:05:58

Interviewee: I, I appreciate the inclusion in your project. So that's awesome. That's exciting.

1:06:05

Interviewer: So yeah, um, wait, let me stop this. And then I do have something to say afterward. Sure.

Ends at 1:06:17

Tuscarora and Lumbee Nation of North Carolina Individual

Interviewee: I'm Tuscarora and enrolled member of the Lumbee Tribe. I wanted to greet you in my Tribal language by saying Hello, friend, we are acquainted with each other through other venues. But here today, I'm representing Native Americans Protectors (NAP), which is my own consulting group. As a visual artist here in the state of Maryland, throughout the country, I have the opportunity to engage with Tribal communities, whether it's through workshops, presentations, lectures, or concerning the visual presentations that are presented by NAP. And so again, appreciate the opportunity to be a part of this interview process.

02:49

Interviewer: So thank you so much. And do you have any questions for me so far? Before we begin? **Interviewee:** No, no, I don't.

Interviewer: Okay. So just to start off with the first question. So I know you already said this already. But just to if you want to dive in a little bit more is like, **who is your community?**

03:09

Interviewee: Sure. So here, in the state of Maryland, we have the Lumbee Tribe, that moved up into this area between mainly the 1940s and 1960s. And establishing a church establishing that there was a group of Tribal people that were not Indigenous to the state that were coming up from

the Carolina area, for a variety of reasons. And so when I moved to the state in 1994, I was welcomed to the Tribal community, I had had experience with them previously with going to their powwows, their gatherings, interacting with their organization, through their JTPA program, and I came up for an internship at the at the Baltimore American Indian Center. And so from that experience, prior to 1994, I was welcome to come up and

03:57

apply for the drug and alcohol prevention job for the youth program or for the youth. And then so I had the opportunity to do that for about a year. And then I moved into the cultural program as its culture director taking over from Mr. Archie Lynch, who's, who's also from North Carolina Hello opponent. And so just, you know, being a part of the community in that aspect, and then participating in a variety of functions that was here. It was good to know that as as an enrolled Lumbee individual from North Carolina, that I had a group of my own Tribal people right here in an urban setting.

04:33

Interviewer: Okay, thank you. And so kind of tying into that. So currently, where you're at **Do you have any like Tribal community that you where you live at?**

04:46

Interviewee: Well, I live in Middle River, Maryland, which is specifically where I'm at but I did live in right in Baltimore City, and so I had the opportunity to be in walking distance of the Baltimore American Indian Center. So, you know, south southeast Baltimore

05:00

Around the Fells Point area,

05:04

pretty much in that location, you know, you had a quite a few Tribal individuals that live near. So anywhere from 5 to 6000, Lumbees were living, you know, or are living in this particular area of Maryland. And so to be in the community around Tribal people having various activities that were occurring either at the center of the church or being around other families that had moved up, born and raised here in Maryland. So there's a there is a Tribal community of vibrant tribal community, like any tribal community has its ups and downs. But I would say that, again, not just surviving but thriving through a variety of interactions, or that they have with their own tribal people and with, again, non-Tribal people, right, in the Baltimore metropolitan area itself.

05:55

Interviewer: And so going into the next question, **how does your Native identity tied to your sense of place or community?**

06:03

Interviewee: Well, Native identity for me, I mean, a variety of ways, whether you're representing yourself, you know, from a social standpoint, in your career, your job, the opportunity to represent yourself through the type of conversations you have with individuals, and not always a situation of portraying yourself in a physical manner, like some people do. But it's just the the idea of knowing who you are that confidence level that comes across the self-esteem you have and the pride in who your people are historically, and who they are in a contemporary standpoint, and being able to represent your people in a in the best way possible. So for me, it's about you know, not representing just who I am, I'm representing the people in my history where I grew up, you know,

and things that I was raised with, so that opportunities always present. For me, it's always, you know, in either in the back of my mind or forefront of my mind, depending upon the situation I'm in if I'm presenting in a very professional manner, through my consulting group, that's one way or if it's just in daily conversation, and having the opportunity to express something about my people to the to the other people that I'm around that may not have no, no idea or may have an idea, and it may be correct, it may not be to its fullest fruition.

07:14

Or maybe it's some stereotypical idea that I can assist them with. And so if that's viewed as an educational opportunity, greatest if it's just viewed as an opportunity to, to let people know who I am, and who we are, as as Lumbee people, Tuscaroras, or as Native people in general, without overstepping any boundaries, or saying something about another Tribe, that that's not correct or incorrect.

07:41

Interviewer: So I'm out is you I know you did specify this, but **how does your community come together?**

07:50

Interviewee: We come together through church. That's one way, many of us are Baptists individuals, there are those of us who are holiness. So when you're talking about the different religions, that Tribal people can partake in that one, or if they're looking at it from just a spiritual sense. I myself like to view it as you know, your religious that's one one way of looking at your spiritual, that's another way of looking at it more so for me, spirituality is allowing me to be who I am from a cultural standpoint and expressing my beliefs and how that can how to allows me to conduct myself in everyday life. So for me, it's it's one of those things that I can do so through church, or I can do do so through their cultural activities, whether it's through their cultural programs, their cultural classes, whether it's an opportunity to share, teach, or to invite people to come and share their own. Because for me, it's really about learning from each other, and constantly, you know, doing so with other Tribal groups. And that's one thing that the Baltimore American Indian Center is there for is not just for Lumbee people, but everybody for Tribal people in general. And they've proven that, since their existence is, you know, having other Tribal people from other areas come share, teach, express who they are, seek out assistance, you know, at times when they've had the opportunity to programs. So there's a variety of ways that we interact with each other. It's just if you decide to partake or are coming to assist, we know at any any community center, there's always the need for people to assist and donate their time or donate services. So there's a lot of interaction that goes on, and all those capacities.

09:24

Interviewer: **And so when your community comes together, how are you involved?**

Interviewee: Well, before I was involved, as as I said, as a cultural director, you know, taking what I know and instilling and encouraging other young people to be involved from a cultural standpoint means becoming culturally aware of who they are, becoming culturally aware of how you can participate, whether that was through the Red Road or the powwow circuit or becoming more involved and who your people were, as far as Lumbees concerned our history from time in North Carolina to the migration and moving into the Maryland area.

10:00

Or other areas around the country like Chicago, California, New York. So you know, just under having that opportunity to express what I know, but at the same time still being a student of things

that I didn't, whether it was other Tribal people that were visiting the center and visiting our community, and sharing things, and those opportunities are always taking place. But for me, it's you know, it's always more about the cultural aspect more about what I could give that someone gave to me, and I could pass it on to someone else. And then, of course, if there's a way for me to donate my time, I'm coming to a cultural class or providing some type of consulting to them. In the donation part, and is really key to any Tribal organization, especially in an urban setting. For others who have the entire community or, or a larger base, or maybe like a reservation, there's, you know, they have another set of opportunity and human resources that are there are a number of times when an urban setting that is a little bit less. And so this is when you have to come together and support them any way that you can, just getting the word about certain activities that they have taking place, that will encourage other people to come and support know about the center.

11:09

You know, there's, there's so many ways that people sometimes don't realize how they can lend a helping hand. And it's nothing more than sharing that the knowledge that there's an urban Native American Center, that is there, and how they can assist from that point on. So it's really about a variety of ways of being being involved, not just one or two.

11:33

Interviewer: And then what are the changes you notice over the years and how your community comes together?

11:40

Interviewee: Fluctuation. Notice the people who have migrated who are living here in Maryland, and then they decide to make their way to North Carolina, where their maybe their grandparents originated from or great grandparents, the my the back and forth of getting involved in knowing about what's going on amongst the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina and bringing some of those things back here, the different Sandy assistance that's been provided in the different programs that were in play maybe 10 15 years ago, and, and what's involved now, and then some of the production that occurred before we didn't have like a museum that what we have today, it was much smaller, but there's more activity, more involvement from outside of the community to see the museum flourish. I've seen a change in the cultural program, where it was just more so about dancing and being involved in powwows. To now, you know, some of the things that are the artistic side, the beadwork, the leather work, the feather work, once again, the the understanding of Tribes that are you know, coming to be known to the center and making themselves available to them and, and having that, that base. And so that has changed as well, I have seen a lot less of an interaction between the youth in Baltimore City, the Baltimore community, I have seen where that could be, that could definitely be increased. And I also know that the senior citizens program that used to be in place, no longer is and so you know, there's, again, there's ups and downs of any Tribal community, and especially in an urban setting, that there are things that are improved, and there are things that have sort of dropped off, and could be brought and revived or revived as it should. So, you know, looking at from one generation to the other, how things have improved and how things have lessened.

13:30

Interviewee: And then, like going into the next question, so how does settler colonialism still persist its impacts on your Tribe?

13:40

Interviewer: So I would say that colonialism, you know, depending upon what facet you're looking at, if you're looking at it from a traditional standpoint, you know, how was it how has it changed our, our living our eating habits, our the way that we govern ourselves? Now, the types of things that we we've kept alive, and that we sort of have put to the wayside or set aside and looked at other things that may be more of a priority here amongst people who aren't Tribal, or who are culturally aware of who they are, are raised in certain in a certain way. And that's where I see colonialism, you know,

14:15

in their different viewpoints that people have. I mean, if you're talking about colonialism, what aspect we're talking, you know, people no longer speak their language, in a very fluent manner. Or we speak in our language and in phrases instead of speaking them in a way that we carry on the conversation without breaking. Is that the opportunity that we hunt, and we see how that way of life was sustaining us now we're relying more so on on things that are processed and not more so of the natural world. Also, how we look at the environment? Is it more important to develop the land in an agricultural manner? Or is it more important to build another building of no steel in stone? So for me, it's you know, there's a variety of ways that we look at colonialism how we treat each other, the respect we have, and, and how we've changed from some of our viewpoints of a society and how we conduct ourselves and carry ourselves how we look at our, our elders, and how we look at our children.

15:16

I could take it way back to say, hey, 13 14 years old, most of us were considered men at 14, maybe 15. And now we look at, you know, 12 13 14 15 year-olds as still as children or young or youth. And so just in that aspect, my idea of colonialism and society may vary, or I'm sorry, made me be very consistent with other Tribal people, and you may differ in a great manner. But that's, that's just me as an individual.

15:47

Interviewer: And then, how is your sovereignty being impacted?

15:52

Interviewee: Well, sovereignty for you know, the idea of the government-to-government relationship, the the sovereignty to govern ourselves, and to make our own decisions. You know, if you don't, depending on your recognition and process that you've achieved, that's going to vary from one job to the next. And for the Lumbee tribes, you know, we're federally recognized, but we don't have full federal status, we don't receive the full federal benefits to other federally recognized tribes do. And just in that, is just an educational situation. Because if you got someone who's Lumbee, and says, Oh, we're fighting for, we're fighting for federal recognition, well, that's, that's not correct, we're fighting for full federal status. And then by having that full federal status, and that given the given relationship that is exist, to his fullest degree, or perhaps it doesn't, you know, those are the kinds of things that are very impactful, not just from a historical point of view, but from a very contemporary point of view, and what we're fighting for looking and striving for, for the future.

And so there's a lot of those, that impact is huge, when you're looking at, you know, an opportunity to, you know, to have land rights and to place, you know, have those type of situations that are generational changes for people, and still the idea that it's not about what I'm doing for myself, or for the right now, but what's what I'm trying to do for the, for the future generations before me, and

looking at what's worked and what hasn't worked with the generations behind me, and for my own generation.

So that sovereignty is a is an interesting word, when you look at it from a historical point of view, or you look at it from a contemporary point of view. And that's, again, part of the education as part of the cultural awareness. And when we say culture, but the culture is not just a historical or that red road, but it's again, that you know, what is affecting me and my people and who we should be, who we were, and who we should be, you know, as as generations continue. And so, that's a broad statement, maybe or provide a broad answer on providing it, that's, that's just how broad it is. And it's how it affects us. Because sometimes we get into a silo, and we're looking at one way of what sovereignty is, but we have to, we have to look at it from a holistic point of view. And that that word, to me isn't used as much as it should, or maybe as as broad as it should be. Because we think about holistic, it's from, it's just from,

18:08

like, I would say what I do as a coach, as a visual artist, you know, when I'm representing there from a holistic point of view, but just in that, in that sense, but we have to look at it from a much broader sense, and get our youth to understand as well, like I said, if you're not, if you're not engaging your generational situation, again, you're living in a particular silo. And that's not good, either. Education is vital to our people, but not letting go of who you are, as well. So the idea of walking into two worlds every day, you know, that there used to be said a lot you don't hear as much today, but it's still just as true as it was yesterday, as it is today, walking in two worlds in a very balanced manner. And and I find it there, there's an imbalance that's definitely occurring.

18:53

Interviewer: And to kind of tying it into like the sovereignty and the federal recognition part, **what does what does Indigenous erasure mean to you?**

19:08

Interviewee: How do we get to the.....

19:12

I would say, it's the idea of, of taking away from who you are, culturally, as as an as a, as a, an Indigenous person to this country more so and specifically to your Tribe, and then becoming assimilated to something else. Because for me, when you assimilate yourself, you're taking, losing something of who you are to become something else or be a part of something else. And so erasure is, is I just identify it back as assimilation. And I love it. And I find that in society, we love to, you know, every decade or every two couple of decades, we'd like to just be like to change the terms. But even though the terms are changing is still the same thing. You know?

20:00

You know, native Native American erasure or assimilation? You know, I'd rather use the word adapting than the word assimilation or to assimilate. And, but you know, whatever term you use, it's the same thing to me. And maybe that's me just getting older, you know, 52 years old. Of course, my viewpoints and how I look at things change from when I was just 21, or when I was 15, or 16, running up and down the road going to gatherings and powwows, and now that I have an opportunity to be a positive effect on situations.

20:31

Yeah, I look, I look at what it really is in reality, but also look at what society is as well, and how we view things and how it views what was done and how it's done. I've provided long answers to questions. Is just that, yeah, terminology, you can change the word, but the situation is still the same.

20:53

Interviewer: Yeah, no, you're fine. I enjoy listening to, you know, what you're saying. And it helps me process a lot. Because again, I'm not from this area. So especially like in the suburban area, because where I live is rural. So we don't have a lot of like places where we can just like, walk in everything. So we had to, like drive couple miles and everything. So

21:17

it's definitely a good perspective. And it's very refreshing to hear it from, you know, another standpoint and everything. So you're good, you're fine.

21:27

Um, so I guess, like going into that. **Why is it important to address erasure in Maryland's environmental organizations?**

21:38

Interviewee: One to stereotypical idea of what Tribal people are to be, when you're not Tribal, when you're not Native, it's, I find it very interesting when people who are not Native American, American Indian, Indigenous, just or Lumbee, Navajo, whatever Tribe that you belong to whatever clan you belong to whatever band you belong to, that their idea is the one that's that that's important. And that's it's backwards. Like a, like a lot of things, you know, in this country or other countries, you know, we have a rear backwards way of seeing things, you know, drive on parkways and park and driveways. You know, and that's the example I give many times is that we were very backwards in our thought process.

So it's important that we continuously represent ourselves from a historical point of view, at the same time, not give in to the stereotypic idea that that's what Native people all about just the past or historically, or when net when November rolls around, you know, everybody is like, oh, Native Americans, American Indians, and this, make a phone call. And let's get them here. And let's check that box off, because we're required to have some type of celebration, but then the rest of the month for the rest of the year, nobody knows who we are, or if that's too stereotypical idea of what they're expecting us to bring or do and, and what I want people to understand is that, you know, I don't want to live into your idea of who I am, I want to live under the idea of what my elders and people that are older than me, expect me to be and carry out and carry on and still be a productive individual in a contemporary society.

23:03

So for me, it's, it's realizing, *Hey, I'm not going to live by your rules and your thoughts about who I'm supposed to be.* I'm going to I'm gonna do that and base it off of, again, what I was raised and what I was raised with. And so when we talk about traditions, customs, and teachings, you know, those values and those morals, I mean, it's all together again, you can use whatever word you want to, but my upbringing is important. And what makes it makes me unique from anybody else, is what's important as well, and carrying that on, and being once again, and walking in two worlds being just as productive in my, in my, in my cultural identity as I am in my profession or in mainstream society. And so, you know, balance is important. And I think, in my opinion, we lose that idea of balance. Many times, we spend so much time in one versus another. And I do believe

that, you know, there's, there's a, there's a balance in my life that I need to be able to keep and have. And if I don't, and you know, then there's an imbalance and whenever there's an imbalance, there can be chaos, there can be confusion. And so again, that holistic idea is always kept in place to the best of my abilities.

24:24

Interviewer: And then kind of going into like the environmental questions a little bit. **What is your relationship to the water and land where you live?**

24:34

Interviewee: Well, I don't get to spend as much time on the water that I'd like to. I know that with my people, we are people who believe in protecting the environment, utilizing the environment not being a wasteful, having a wasteful mindset. Now living in an urban setting like Baltimore City, of course, that's going to be less than to some type of degree it's going to be less than by the laws that are in place. And it's unfortunate that you know, if there were laws that were encouraging or assisting to Tribal people, that they're not kept up to par or follow to the best degree.

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because, you know, we, we have water rights and fishing rights that were established when when people were coming to our lands, and some of those things are not being kept as they should. And so, you know, I know, for instance, some of the Tribal people that are Indigenous to Maryland, those are some of the things that they're fighting for, and bringing bringing to the forefront, and how that can be amended, changed to increase. I know that the federally recognized if you're federally recognized that you have more an opportunity to do that. And when you don't have that status, or when you don't have a full status with that, it can be much more difficult to do so. My relationship is, you know, I, I know what it is to be back home and be able to be out in the woods, and to enjoy that and to see for what it is to be one who hunts and not to hunt, just to kill, but to again, provide nourishment for my body and for my family. And those are the kinds of things that I like to keep alive. But that can be very difficult.

Again, we're living in an urban setting that we do, as far as you know, around the waterways of either Baltimore City, Baltimore County. My idea of people taking trash and not putting it where it belongs. I, I disliked that, in a very rare, very much. So the recycling aspect I love when people talk about being green. Well, well, hey, guess what we we've been that way, since our entire existence. And so we go back to that colonialism, when we go back to that idea that you're not following who you are, from a traditional standpoint, if you're disrespecting the land, then therefore, that's where you lose that that cultural identity is not in play as it should.

26:36

So for me, as an individual, I want to see the land respected, I want to see it utilized in the best way possible that might not always be agreed upon across the across the board. But I clearly understand that without the natural world, we can't survive as a people we can't survive as a species. And sometimes people just have to go into an understanding that that's, that's a that's a reality, that's a fact.

27:11

Interviewer: And kind of how you were saying about the trash and everything? **Do you consider yourself a steward of the water and land where you live?** I do

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Interviewee: I do. I do. I don't believe that there's a situation where you shouldn't be taking any type of

27:27

synthetic substance, some type of situation that's going to poison the water or poison the animals and things around you. And I'm fortunate I have a an area that I see the animals that come into my yard, and I know that if I pollute the water, or the stream has behind me how much of an effect it's gonna be, not just for me, but for for the things that are around me. I'm not a person that believes in taking away and being destructive, clearing out an area, but at the same time making sure that areas safe, you know, not just for me, but we know for all that's around me. So I truly believe I am a steward I don't believe in and being an individual that's going to pollute what is around me in my environment.

28:11

I also think people should be more mindful and be more of a real be realistic, that if you are driving a vehicle, that somehow some way unless you're driving something that does not pollute whatsoever, that you are contributing to the situation. At the same time, it the reality is that can everybody afford to live that way? And I will say no, but you know, again, that may be an opinionated statement at this point in time. But I can tell you, I not every one of my friends is driving around in an electric vehicle. And even with an electric vehicle, what what is it that we're taking from the natural world to create those vehicles that supposedly are doing a good for the environment. ,

28:56

And for me I'm not a bandwagoner, I like to know facts. I like to have an independent thought process, instead of being told how to think you know, do your own research, do your own due diligence. And then if you decide to, you know, be a contributor to the environment, and take away from it, but also be realistic in what you're doing and what you're not doing.

29:17

So I drive a vehicle, I don't drive electric vehicle, am I am I providing some type of pollution to the to the environment? Clearly, you know, how many of us are not going to stop driving cars, you know, how many of us will go back to walking or in doing so. So for me, be realistic in what you're putting forth and what you're saying what you're supporting. And if it's not at 100% Don't fake it. You know, if you can't be 100% about not polluting whatsoever. Be very mindful of how you point those fingers at other people.

29:49

Interviewer: 100 percent agree. Yeah, I 100% agree about that. So kind of tying into how you were saying about the electric cars and everything. Um, and environmental but **what do you know about Maryland's environmental and climate change priority planning?**

30:00

Interviewee: Well, I don't know, as much as I'd like probably would like to know, I do know that with the Chesapeake Bay, I do know that with the University of Maryland, and then just as individuals, how we can support those, those, those initiatives. And so like with the University of Maryland, I know about the the environmental homes, that that they continue to create, the competitions that they're involved in, throughout the world, and how they have created these green homes. And so I'm very thankful that that type of initiative is in play and is constantly in play. And it involves Tribal people, and traditional aspects of living in doing so. So I'm somewhat aware of that.

I know that with the Chesapeake Bay Area, and how we're constantly trying to again, be servants of the environment, and how we can play a part in that whether it's through supporting the the legislation and the laws that are created each year in the General Assembly, which I constantly tell people, please get involved in, in your general assembly every year, here in the state so that you can see what legislation is going in house affecting Tribal people, how's affecting our preservation sites, how it's affecting, you know, our Tribal communities, and don't assume, now we're gonna support every type of initiative that's being done or created or put in place, because maybe it's not productive for Tribal people.

31:22

And you won't know that until you actually engage your Tribal people themselves. And so when people may say, Well, you know, I, there aren't any Tribal people in Maryland. Well, once again, it's very difficult for me to believe someone's saying that when we have the internet, we have social media, we have opportunities that are all around you, to engage whoever you want to meet with. So if you can engage with a nonprofit organization, you can engage with, with the Tribal community, if you want engage with state government, and then you can engage with Tribal community. So the point I make to many people is that if you really want to engage with the people, you have that opportunity. And so it might not be on your terms, it might be on the Tribal communities terms, some of our Tribal people who don't engage themselves so much on social media, as a much would like to meet you in person. Some of our communities are very much traditional in the way they engage in their Tribal meetings and being invited to do so. Or again, having a very open mindset to whoever wants to come and witness what's taking place. So the respect level, I believe, you know, could be a bit better about the expectations that people have.

32:46

Interviewer: And do you do you feel like what the Maryland's I know, you said you didn't know too much. But do you think Maryland's environmental planning may align with some of the tribal communities planning or priorities?

Interviewee: I do. When you're looking at the development that takes place, I know what the state of Maryland that they follow section 106, the federal law that whenever there's a any type of development that's going on at the Tribal communities, or those who are are engaged with Tribal communities, that that that is in play that that's followed, I know that with the erosion that's going on in the state of Maryland, and that may impact the traditional burial grounds, ossuaries, and the repatriation efforts that are going on in the state, that that's being improved and is constantly working being worked on. And, of course, following whatever NAGPRA laws that are in play, or federal laws that are that are established and must be followed. But I do believe that Maryland is, is running a parallel, but I do believe that there's also could be a bit more Tribal consultation that goes on. But yeah, that is increasing from what knowledge that I have. I'm aware that that it's improving here in the state.

33:59

Interviewer: And then, um, I guess I should have asked this in the beginning, but um, what what do you see as the main environmental challenge your tribal community or other tribal communities is currently facing?

34:14

Interviewee: Engagement. The there needs to be clearly more engagement on both sides in confronting, combating the environment, issues that we have within the state, within each county, around our t+Tribal communities, and it has to be not only it whether it's the state, the federal

government or the private sector engaging, but it has to be us also being at the table and being willing to be there listen, and provide the input that we need to form a factual basis not you know, from a cultural basis, a factual basis has affecting not just one but has affecting the entire Tribal community and it has to be more involvement there and it has to take place on both sides.

35:00

If we've got Tribal leaders saying, Hey, we we need help with support. And let us be specific about where that help and support needs to be. And then when we can do that is if we know our Tribal communities, if we are engaging our Tribal communities, if we're engaging all facets of our Tribal communities, we're engaging all generations of our Tribal communities, that plays a part in drinking water is not appropriate for elders, it is, of course, it's not going to be appropriate for our children and for you, but are just in essence, different example. But are all our children in our youth, engaging in a way that can be supportive of our of our elders that are facing some of these situations. Are they being listened to? Or are they listening to each other? And then are they sharing this information with people that can make the difference? And this is why from General Assembly, your political representatives, your your Tribal councils, your Tribal leaders, your Tribal communities, again, a holistic approach has to be in play, it can't just be one has to be all of us. And so yes, the engagement needs to be improved.

36:01

Interviewer: Thank you for that. Um, and then kind of going into about the Maryland State of Maryland questions. **How do you view this state? And how does Maryland celebrate Indigenous people?**

Interviewee: I'm aware that the state of Maryland does follow the process of Native American Heritage Month, I'm aware that they do celebrate it and support it through state agencies. Also, in reference to his Tribal communities, I'm aware that it supports the initiatives that are set forth by Tribal communities, when it's brought forward to you know, particular entities on the state level, maybe to Tribal Commission, Tribal consultation that's being encouraged more so probably than ever before. So those are just some of the ways that I know that possibly the state is engaging with with Tribal people.

37:02

Interviewer: And then, um, **what are incorrect assumptions people made about you and your community?**

37:11

Interviewee: We're all the same, there's a certain physical characteristic that we're supposed to have. There's the idea that if you know about your own, and you know about every other Tribe, that when you speak, you represent all Tribes, when you really are representing your Tribe. First and foremost, the idea that we all want to be called Native American, or we all want to be called American Indian, or we all want to be called Indigenous, when more so I know, for my people, we won't be known for who we are, which are Lumbees, which are Tuscaroras and, and being allowed to share that information. And the way that we see it. And so, you know, there's, there's the stereotypical idea and the misconception, or when society labels a group of people for for instance, I don't want to be known as a color. I'm not a color. I'm known, I want to be known as a Tuscarora, and as a Lumbee individual or Tribal member. First and foremost. If you can't say that or can't remember it, well, I don't have a problem with American Indian, our problem Native American, I don't have a problem with Indigenous.

38:20

Don't, don't label me, because that's what suits society. That's what I have an issue with, as a person. Doesn't have anything to do with my profession has anything to do with, you know, my nine to five or whatever case may be, it's about, it's about me. So and again, this is why this interview is about me as a as a private citizen, as an individual as a Lumbee as a Tuscarora the labeling that goes on and how it fits people's agendas, and so forth. I'm not about that. So.

38:55

Interviewer: And then, **when Maryland mentions diverse communities, do you believe your Tribal communities included?**

39:03

Interviewee: I do believe it's included, I do believe that there's more efficiency and better relationships that can be improved. It's great if you if we're known by one particular part of society, we should be known by all parts of society, but also believe that that's a two-way road, we need to be able to engage people. As much as people want to engage us and have that fruitful relationship have a positive relationship. I do don't believe that we should live in the past. I just believe that we should learn from it. And we shouldn't repeat anything that's negative. And what our viewpoints of that whatever that negativity is to be listened to. It's not about what you see only as a negative. It's about what we see as a negative and having that conversation. And so I do believe that there should be more conversations had and it should be a two-way road in those conversations. You know, that listening, that learning that sharing And even when when there's a disagreement that it's okay to disagree, but how we keep that level of respect and courtesy and play is so vital. And so once again, we can't be Tribal people that's always pointing the finger and saying, Oh, it would, you know, we're in a situation because of you well, that there's a certain degree that's there for that. But we also had to be, you know, have a desire to move forward, as well, and be able to listen and learn where we where we haven't, and not to repeat the same mistakes that we've repeated in the past.

Whether I'm saying this as a Lumbee, or as a Tuscarora, or as an Indigenous person. So sometimes we get, we get caught up in a in a particular time period. And that doesn't help anyone remember us that will say, you know, generations behind us and generations in front of us. And so nice, again, not just thinking about ourselves, our own personal agendas.

40:54

Interviewer: And then, **what do you think the future holds for your community?**

41:01

Interviewee: It's dependent, is dependent upon the people who are involved, the people who want to see what what they want to see, if they want to keep a strong unit of our people and play. If we want to keep our identity alive from a cultural standpoint, from a spiritual standpoint. If we want to be successful in mainstream society, but not letting go of who we are. So it's really dependent. And I'm very optimistic because I see the people who are engaging with our community, who are giving back to the community, you have individuals like Ashley, that we both know who has done that, and still doing so.

41:41

And realizing that it does, it takes more than one, it takes more than a few, once again, is it takes the community in so depending upon how we do that, within the next four years, the next decade, the next 25 years, is depending upon who's involved and and what they want to see and what they

want to see continue. Once again, if you want to adapt, wonderful if you want to assimilate, maybe not so much.

42:08

If you want to be successful, only one aspect of your life or mainstream society, but you don't have a care for your people. So it's really dependent, but I'm very optimistic. And so if you've got one that's willing to share and do and work, donate their time, provide their experiences, then it can be very fruitful. But if not, you know, like I said, we don't have a Senior Citizens Program no longer at the Baltimore American Indian Center within our Tribal community.

And so therefore, that's an example that we need to do better. We need to we need to be more efficient, and we need to make sure that those things that worked in the past that we put back in place that are no longer there.

42:46

Interviewer: And then how do you want the public to view you view you and your tribal community in the year 2024?

42:57

Interviewee: See us as Lumbee people. See us as those who are productive and who provide to society, not that we take away and that, you know, as much as the uniqueness is there is that, you know, there's there's a voice of unity, there's a voice of support.

43:15

And that don't look at me through your lens, look at me as who I am, and what I gave and I present. And if there's any contradiction or issue to that, let's talk about it, let's work on it. You know, there's a there's a respect level and a courtesy level that should be there, there should be a foundation of respect and courtesy amongst people. If you don't have then that's you know, you're gonna have a strong foundation, anything that there is, that's why things crumble, or that's why it doesn't stay strong or whole. And so for me, I want people to see us for who we are, know our history. No, no, don't let it be a checkbox, si- situation, as much as you want to gauge any other ethnicity or group of people. Hopefully, that will be just as much for us as well.

44:02

Interviewer: Um, so is because we came to the end, and everything. Um, **is there anything you'd like to say? Or what additional matters Do you want to include in this interview that I didn't bring up?**

44:15

Interviewee: This where there's opportunity for one, let it be an opportunity for another, where there's a desire to engage, let that be there for us as well? Where there can be assistance, please let it let it be and in where there is an opportunity for us to share and engage. Let there be of steps forward and stair steps backwards. And yes, the respectful level I went back I said that already but I just can't stress enough the respect level that we should have for each other and and the equity and the equality that people strive for. Let it not be just for one or for a few let it be for everyone. And that way we're all included in that.

45:03

Interviewer: And **is there anything you'd like to ask? Ask a few questions to me that you're curious about during the interview?**

Interviewee: No, not really, you know, pretty much to the point, you know, again, providing a long answers to your great questions that you've had, and, and having the opportunity to do so.

45:21

This is where this type of engagement is type of consultation, this type of interview process, where you engage the people for themselves and who they are as an individual, and as a representative of their of their Tribal, Tribal community communities or their enrollment or who they're enrolled with.

45:39

More this needs to occur, and needs to do so not just with one particular generation, but with with all of our generations, you know, our elders, having more engaging with our elders who are walking libraries, who were that engaged was not happening as much as it should. And then being able to share those, those changes and the things that have come about, and why those changes have come about or the views of why those changes have come about as well. Was out of necessity? Was it out of desire? Was it out of survival? In real and being able to listen to why those things and not be disrespectful to those situations that we've all faced from one generation to the next, which have varied from one generation to the next. Respect once again.

46:24

Interviewer: Thank you, I love it. Thank you so much. And you know, again, I loved your answers. And I love listening to it. So this I do love engaging with the Tribal communities, as I've talked to many of them and Ashley wanted me to talk to you to get a Lumbees perspective and you know, also as a person too. So, this was really great. And

46:47

before like we leave first Can I tell you something?

Interviewee: Sure

Interviewer: I'll stop there.

Interviewee: Sure.

Ends at 46:59

Piscataway Indian Nation Individual

Interviewee: Yeah, well Autumn it's really nice to meet you and also to welcome your, your lineage your your, your people, your landscape that you bring with you into this space in what's now known as Maryland. So I just wanted to acknowledge and appreciate your your full introduction, Diné.

I am a Piscataway woman, Beaver clan woman. We're Indigenous to this Potomac, mostly Potomac river lands, and its its environments and relationships that we have to it. I'm also currently an associate professor of public history at George Mason University. I'm also a curator for Smithsonian and work with a lot of land-based people in different community capacities that will be able to unfold through the course of our conversation of it, so I'll just keep it there for now.

04:12

Interviewer: Awesome. Well, thank you so much for your introductions. And thank you again for participating. Um, so, um, do you have any questions so far before we go forward?

04:27

Interviewee: No, I think your your introduction and also your written permission form was very thorough and helpful.

04:37

Interviewer: Awesome. Okay. Well, thank you again. So just to start off with the first question, I know you already said this in your introduction, but who who is your community?

04:52

Interviewee: My community is a set have interconnected people so that I can define, I was actually thinking about us actually thinking about this question this morning about, you know, who I consider, really to be my community.

And I would say that my community are the people whose who them not only themselves as as people, but as their children, grandchildren, and maybe going into the next, you know, number of generations would have the same care and concern for our lands, our well being, as, as I do. And so this not just as an individual, but but as a collective, and that when our children and grandchildren meet with each other, that someday that that they would express those same values and caretaking. That's who I consider to be my community.

In more direct terms. I have Piscataway is my, my Indigenous community, my extended kinship community, the tribe that I'm a part of, and we are based in southern like the the heart, the core of it is really radiates out over time through a location called Accokeek, Maryland, which was our and is our sacred site, burial grounds a place of our memories of freedom and sovereignty, which was the main the main town that was there, and the community of Piscataway people. Even though we live in many different spaces, there's a very core center that's in what we might know now is Charles Prince George's County, Maryland. And within extended a like family groups, there's, there's like legal enrollments like recognized enrollments, there's two, two Piscataway Tribes. Piscataway Indian Nation, Piscataway Conoy Tribe, we're all completely interrelated as as a political distinction.

So that's, that's my, that's my Native community. And then, of course, there's other interleavings of community that that we could define, but that's the one that I'll be speaking on most, today. And those people that that have that focus on our ancestral and future generational lands or there's a there's a Ponca elder Casey Camp Porter, who reminded me to think about you know, it's not just land it's not resources, we're talking about life source, right. So life source as we speak about those spaces.

So our geography like basically goes from what we call the foul line. So it's like where the the mountains start to come up with reducing the kind of like Great Falls but then it goes out further all along that that river system of Potomac, from really like from its source, but, but more where it comes down into what we call the the fall line or Great Falls all along the Potomac and its tributaries, all the creeks and little rivers that flow into it down the side of the into the Chesapeake Bay.

And then our people are also more boundaried originally, up to the Potomac between the Potomac and the Patuxent. And although there's going back and forth into what we know is Virginia, our main villages towns and where our people live now, in terms of our like, community bases are on

the Maryland side of the Potomac, but lots of crisscrossing up and down the river and living in other places too.

09:41

Interviewer: Thank you. And, um, so how does your community come together?

09:51

Interviewee: That's a really good question. Um, I think our community cert community is very It's actually a very fractured. So there's components of community that come together and in different ways.

People come together, for for Piscataway Indian Nation traditionally came together through ceremonies, through actions, through family events. There's four main ceremonies a year that happened and also at my own. There's also there's actually quite a number of Piscataway people also that get together for different gatherings. There's a lot of I would say, like the family interrelationships, there used to be a lot more like marriages within and that's really like in the past, I would say, like generation that's really changed. You know, for better for worse, right? Like, because that's, that's the way that we come together also come, you know, come together for certainly important functions, like if there's so some major meeting or gathering that's happening for a particular purpose, sometimes around Accokeek.

Our people were also, you know, we were very colonized very early. And missionized very early. So Piscataway is where were converted to Catholicism in 1640, by English Jesuits, which is a you know, kind of unusual. So there's also church, church centering for Piscataway people around Saint Ignatius around an area called Brandywine, Waldorf there's, there's certain church locations that the different families have have gone to.

Everybody, I would say, every every Piscataway person, if you go back just a couple of generations, and they still might continue, this has some interrelationship to the first site of Baptism, which was called St. Ignatius church, and people still go there. But also like for for different issues. I mean, we definitely, from my experience, I'm more aligned with people who are more concerned about issues and traditional ceremonials. So that's when we would get together on on those occasions, like if there's something that's going on, that's where we get together but also very informed, you know, a lot of informally, also, you know, people see each other informally.

It's been interesting lately, there's been more people getting together. For educational projects, there was a long standing title Title IV them, I guess it's Title IX education, meeting and trying to rebuild that. So lots lots of different ways.

We're distinctive, you know, Autumn it's different here, because we are like, we're completely inundated and surrounded by everybody else. You know, there's not like a reservation, wherever you were, where a lot of people are, that all you see are Piscataway people, like we don't have any location really like that. Exactly. Not even like Robeson County, like with Lumbee, like you go to Pembroke is like, let me like, let me know, Walmart, you know, it's just like everywhere. We don't have that kind of situation. So we really, what's interesting is that, like all of us are, or family members are in the places where people have been for a very long time, but then just got filled in. And so you'll see like, kind of clusters of, of families in various locations that are interconnected.

14:00

Interviewer: Okay, and then when your community comes together, like how are you involved in that?

14:06

Interviewee: Well, I'm really I've been very, very involved in the sense of, well definitely ceremonially involved, politically involved. So with hosting, hosting people, that hosting hosting ceremony, and sometimes they're going to say, it's not only, oh there's also like powwows, you know, people like get together powers, but for me personally and like professionally and Tribally. I also like do consider the community that I'm most involved with is that it's Piscataway, but also other Indigenous people who live here in this region, who are highly dedicated to Indigenous land rights, environmental rights, our human rights, our history, and our spirituality.

I'm actually not a church-going person. So that puts me in a kind of, I think, maybe slightly different, slightly different category that I don't feel aligned or compelled to be involved with the Catholic Church. So for me, it's been really looking at, I've been very deeply engaged with land protection, our burial grounds protection. So I've been one of the people who's organized and written and met with for decades, the different interested or conflicting parties, that have to do with with protecting our burial grounds. So I often, you know, often have been an almost have always been the person who would like, you know, writes a letter or arranges for the meetings, like, so that people could come together, you know, help to facilitate that.

And, you know, bringing our elders, I was very, very close to my late uncle, Billy Tayac. And so I really worked, I would say, probably from the time I was like, 18, until like, just maybe like 2017, until he kind of started to wind down. Helping him to, to represent, you know, pulling this like pulling all those pieces together.

I pulled the pieces together for things like like our documents together, so I do a lot of the like academic, new, kind of like scholarly, like writing, research support, repatriation, advocacy, and also diplomatically, my role has been to either support, you know, taking it on more with when there are Native people coming into DC as they do a lot, not just from the US, but Canada, central South America, to arrange hosting for them, and helping because that's an important part of our role, you know, in our position that has been ongoing for probably the last 100 years, my grandfather started doing that in the 1920s. So like, my kids are a fourth generation of people that like when Native people come into come into town, and they've needed help, there's more and more like, people that have, you know, now these days, like more people have, you know, Tribal support or funding or, you know, so it's not as much but it used to be, and still is, sometimes we have these roles of, of trying to, you know, help take people in, walk with them, go with them to their meetings if they need to advocate for their land protection or, you know, human rights violations or massacres that are happening. And so it's been I've been very involved with more of a also like what I would call a diplomatic role for for our community.

So, yeah, and then just kind of like current organized community events, namings. ceremonials. We just had one this weekend for for actually more of an extended community kind of an Intertribal presence. So trying to work with that. So, yeah, I mean, mostly, like my role up until probably, you know, my role is my role has been changing over the past several years. Because I was really a support person for our chief. And now he's, you know, he's past. So trying to find those those spaces as well for for our people, teaching, writing.

Yeah. So it's a lot, you know, it's, I would say, like, it's like, what's the what's the, what's my, what's my position? I'm not. So I'm not a elected Tribal official or leader. I'm not a council person. There's,

it's really interesting, up until like, just this past year, the different Tribal factions didn't like, there was hardly there was such little communication, but I always tried to work with like, we would always like go to the meetings together. And so I've like, over the past, I'd say 15 years also been working really hard to bridge gaps. You know, so that like really focusing on look like we have a we have an issue coming up. We all need to be at the meeting. Can we all be at the meeting together? Right. So it's, it's kind of a it's kind of an intense, it's kind of an intense role, but one that I feel very called to be involved with basically, I would say They just, if I just sum it up, I'm just like, I'm just sort of service. You know, I, I'm a service to our community in whatever way I can.

20:15

Interviewer: wow, you, even though you said that you're not like a leader or you're not in the Tribal council, you still do a lot. Sounds like you still do a lot. Because Ashley was pointing me to a lot of stuff that you wrote about, or you took part in writing. And, you know, it was pretty, pretty cool. I read some of the stuff. I think the one I read was the I think it is, I think it was from the Smithsonian people. Something about sorry, I'm getting so confused with the title, like a voice that people have a voice a story to tell.

20:49

Interviewee: Oh, yeah, *We Have A Story To Tell*. Yeah. So you know, I have to say, thank you. Like, I would have to say like, my writing is probably like, a half of like, shows kind of like, like a half a percent of like this done, because some of them so busy doing it, like I don't, and this is ridiculous, like as a scholar, right, that I don't write about it as much.

Um, so yeah, I I'm very, like, kind of in the I would say like more of like a in the trench person. But I also do a lot of like, a lot of advising, like, right now advising on different exhibits that are taking place like curating them. I get maybe like three or four inquiries a day from different, you know, all kinds of organizations like, and other Tribes, I have a like delegation of Mapuche people coming from Chile (South America). They want to speak to their ancestors who are being held in NMAI (National Museum of American Indian) collections. And so they want to come and speak to the land here first. And that's actually stuff like I don't write about and don't talk, you know, what I mean?

It's like more personal just this past weekend, there was a healing needed for a man who is from another Tribe. And so, like, we've been based in California, but was out here has really needed help. So I wanted to do it here because he lives here. And it was like, okay, so that was just, you know, like, arranging for and receiving his, his medicine man and his family, like, flew out and came. So doing that, like on our land base, and then we have a small nonprofit. So it's yeah, it's a lot.

But you know, it's part of, I feel like, it's part of a lineage. And I think for me, like, making that decision about not taking official leadership, like never, like, running for Tribal council, or, like, chief thing. Also, the Piscataway Indian Nation is very, like, it's kind of, it's a little small, and like, still it's little hold out of like, you know, kind of, like hereditary, like, sort of hereditary leadership.

And so like, when there was a family issue that has come up, I'm like, I can't, I was like, this is gonna keep me from doing the work, you know, so let's just, you know, people can have a lot of, there's been just like, a lot of, like I said, I mean, it's, it's, I'm just being real, I'm just being very, very frank and honest. There's a lot of extreme, extreme factionalism, conflict, and I feel like it, it's important to be mindful of it, but when that takes on a life of its own, and then there's something about like, Hey, there's this airport being built that's going to contaminate Mattawoman. I don't feel

like, I don't feel like my issue is, is it's not about who's going to have a title to speak or they don't, you know, somebody doesn't want to do it or be in the meeting because that other person is there. Or, like, be so caught up in that problem. It's a real issue, but I'm like, we're gonna have a bunch of runoff and things are gonna get messed up.

You know, there's pipelines coming. We have people coming here into into DC because of oil spills because they're there. They're niece went missing. You know, like trailing LMA, you know, you know, so like, you know, from from from your people. We were very close. We were very close to Roberta Blackgoat and I just had the John Spinelli family stay with me and we were close to Cooley Benally. So if somebody doesn't have time to help them, then I just feel like this gives me more of like, you know what, what I'm what I'm called to do. And where, where my heart and spirit is. So I just I kind of just keep it that way I, you know, I served on Maryland Commission of Indian Affairs for like six years and it was like "aahh:, just like, it was really contentious and, and like, like, I'm okay with the with all of those things like if we need to do it, but I feel like I'm best, I'm best if I can just speak the truth. You know.

And then I also kind of keep, I also feel like with the and this is maybe something you've been working with, I don't know how much this is something that you think about or work with, you know, for those of us who were, you know, become like Indigenous academics. You know, what's that role in between where we are scholars in the capacity of the academy, and really valuing our traditional knowledge keepers. And then being able to help where we can. So I've just also let like, all the I feel like that's stronger for me to be able to say, *look, whatever, you know, faction family issue you have, if you need my help with research, if you need my help with writing something up figuring out what this law is about. I'm here to help you like*, I'm not going to say like, *oh, I don't like your family*, you know. So I feel like if there's, there's like a political leadership that is there, I think that would be a detriment to my capacity to be able to say, I've withdrawn from alignment with different family, family, family factions in our Tribe, and anybody can get in touch with me. And if I see anything, that would be a benefit. For all of us. I'll help.

Like, we just did something like Shelly Lowe from the National Endowment for the Humanities. She's the chair, she's she's one of your people (Diné). She's the chair of National Endowment for the Humanities now. And she gave me she gave me a call. She's a Navajo woman, a Diné woman. She gave me a call and was like, hey, you know, because I knew her from from from Harvard. And she was like, oh, so could you you know, I'm here just got appointed chair, which is really awesome of any age. And she's like, *I want to know about your people*. I'm like, *oh, yeah, my people*. Yeah. Okay. So I was like, this is kind of cool. Like the chair any age, like, what's the common like, spend the day with directions? Like, oh, wow, do I meet people? Because they come to office? I was like, Well, why don't you instead, instead of us coming to your office? I don't think like, I think if you're here in DC, us, it would be really amazing for you to be able to see what our land really looks like, you know, who we are. Because we have right? Like we have, we have DC. But then there's DC, like home DC. And then there's when you get even beyond that, right? As like, you know, people in the city, Washingtonians, right? Then you also have, like, our land is this interconnected web of rivers and waters and forests that have been chopped off and assaulted, you know, our learned has been assaulted. Like, we've been assaulted, you know. So, but there's so much beauty in it, too.

So she did, she came with her senior stuff. But the day like, so I was able to like it was cool, because I was able to like call people from all the different bands like reps, and I was like, hey, look, you know, this is just an educational employee, like, let's get our brain trust together and receive her. And I'll just help, you know, facilitate it. And she spent the whole day with us, which

was really great. And there were like, six of us from all like, I was like, you know, a few years ago, these people wouldn't have wanted to be in the room together. But I was like, we didn't we didn't we actually, we actually did not include. There was a couple of people who were like, Council Member, you know, council members of some kind, but they weren't there in that role, you know, because we just wanted to be able to talk about like, this is our knowledge, like, it's not the politics like, you know, we have the politics but we really want to be able to talk about like, how we can create this support.

So yeah, I don't know, it's weird. I, I don't really know how to like weave it. And also, I also know when I say stuff, I'm like, I don't know what's gonna find that I'm like, be mad at me. But I'm gonna go well like good stuff. Do you know what we want? We work difficult lines, right? Sometimes. But, yeah, but this, like the work that you're doing with, you know, what we call environment is, is so critical that it just, you know, we just do what we need to do. And I'm just glad that I have a lot of teachers and support people and people who I've worked with and done what I you know, just do what you can, you know, just do what we can.

30:37

Interviewer: Definitely, yeah, I will always do what we can. And, you know, especially since coming here to the east, you know, I'm doing what I can, especially for my academic platform, and kind of like highlighting a lot of stuff. I'm not like over speaking or something, but I'm just like, highlighting a lot of issues that people tend to dismiss or ignore a lot. And I'm like,

Interviewee: Yeah, t

Interviewer: These stories have been told way before I was even born. So just something I want to highlight, too, especially in the academic world.

Interviewee: Right.

Interviewer: Yeah. So. But I'm excited, though. But just to move on to the next question. Um, so I guess, like, going into this one, so **how is your sovereignty being impacted currently?**

31:31

Interviewee: Well, I think it's probably because like, our sovereignty has been impacted for a long time.

31:39

On on multiple levels, right. I say like, we have what I would call, like, you know, sovereignty, that just is. In some ways, it may, you know, because we're not federal. And we have the state recognition, but we were sovereign before the state recognition. We were sovereign before the invasion. thing think? I don't feel like we, you know, of course, we need to work on recognitions and issues, but that also holds us back from being able to do what we need to do.

So, you know, the, I think one of the issues like we're sovereignties being impacted, of course, without the federal recognition, like, you know, for like repatriation, right, like, for all of these, you know, like, formal consultations and things. Like, it's interesting, because I think, probably because we've been so active and out there and involved with these larger movements. Um, we do get called into meetings and stuff, but it's almost because whoever is maybe in charge. Like they, they, they, they want to they care about it. Um, it was like for us, it's interesting. We're not really.....

Oh, I'm sorry, could I just get right back with ya?

Interviewer: Yeah

Interviewee: I'm so sorry.

Interviewer: No, you're okay.

33:14

Interviewer: Do you want me to stop it?

Part 1 Ends at 33:23

Continuing Part 2

Interviewer: Okay, um, so I one thing I wanted to ask. So what does indigenous erasure mean to you?

00:15

Interviewee: Indigenous erasure means it's actually connected to your last question. Indigenous erasure is physical. It's psychological. It's spiritual. Mental.

00:36

It affects us on on all levels. Sometimes I think about, you know, is erasure genocide. Yes. Erasure means that our absences very present, right? It's something that as you know, as a Piscataway, I think, I think all Indigenous people, all Native people, whether there's, you know, a relatively large Native Nation, or sometimes even a huge population, like it was 44 million Indigenous people, at least in the Americas. And we're still talking about *did aliens build Machu Picchu*. You know, or people are compelled to want to hide, erase, or make themselves more small, because of the shame that they've been put through intergenerationally it's all part of erasure. Erasure is violent.

01:46

And also, Indigenous erasure means you better speak up. You know, we just have to keep, keep doing what we need to do. And defying it, and not not allowing it and understanding it.

You know, it means like, so, so get this right, like so, you know, I think, you know, like, I was a curator, National Musuem of American Indian for like, 20 years, right. So do you know what, you know, what our first big messages and you've probably heard, I don't know if you've heard this, like in other places where you say like, oh, what's your final? I don't know. Like it didn't like is this happens a lot, especially East Coast Natives. Okay. But other people, too, may say, Well, what's your big message? You know, what do you want people to know, like, after our interview is over, like, what do you want people to know, and people say we're *still here*. That's a really powerful message. But I think it's more powerful in the sense of when we think about the, the big, the big message for opening NMAI. And I had heard this statement years and years before you know, *we're here, we're still here*. The fact that you we have to begin a conversation with convincing people that we are alive is, is highly impactful. It makes it hard for us to be able to sometimes move into into like the levels that we need to move into. The idea that people have no idea of what are you know, Piscataway little Piscataway Tribe are a just about that big like the idea that that most people have no idea we're here. And then when we say that we're here are we fully believed? You know, there's, there's there's many reasons for that, right. I mean, it's, it's comes from land access, land seizure, because if you remove our presence, right, that's like that was the original

intent, also a blood quantum right. It was to, to remove us. And then I've also really been exploring over the past. I would say, like 15 years very deeply about our erasure. I'm going to speak more specifically to Piscataway, but also a lot of Atlantic Coast people. Our erasure was done through what I would call eugenics, because we do have a very deep-rooted blend with African Americans and White Americans and actually coming from like, really early like our people originate from Love, Love between Native People. This is like early like 17 century, early, early intermarriages, between like our people, and the children of enslaved African American men, particularly, and white indentured women, and others, you know, he brought in with with with love. And you know that for Piscataway, for Nanticoke. For others, our land bases and reservations, like on the Eastern Shore, were dissolved specifically and explicitly, because we were, we were not considered Indian anymore, because of our intermarriage with African American people. Like as if African American people couldn't own land, you know, that that was like the message was like this deep, deep hatred that happened from white supremacy. To erase Tribalism, with the excuse, you know, with the idea of like, that they're not, they're not fully Native anymore, and that somehow, those intermarriages would should erase or make us an eligible, you know, so it's like this very fundamentally deep, racist white supremacist mechanisms that are intentional. That also caused a lot of like, shame and fear and hiding and denial of our full ancestors, who we must reclaim and love, you know, in our presence, so, you know, that we we, we experienced erasure in many forms here, and that then impeached, you know, was another way of, of stripping us of recognize sovereignty had to do with race law.

So, you know, something about Piscataway is that, and this is true, I think, for you know, again, Atlantic Seaboard. It's a very, it's very, just, everybody's got their distinctive stuff, like everybody, you know, who's I don't know, it's like, Tolstoy is like, a happy family is all happy in one way, but unhappy families are unhappy in lots of different ways, right?

Like, there's all different horsemen of the apocalypse that we, you know, spirit eaters drawn to Dell called them that we have to deal with. And here we, you know, we went through the, you know, pandemic, diseases, the land invasions, the seizures, the removals, the relocations, the termination, the massacres, that actually enslavement of our people ended up getting like enslaved and sent to the West Indies as punishment for resistance. I really want to know what happened to them. And but all of that, for us was all of that, for us. Treaties of breaking treaties, and breaking the treaties or the whole, the whole mess, the whole mess, the whole terrible catastrophe was kind of locked in place by 1699 1700. And then we have something additional, which is race law, and the codification of race caste. So, that's something that that Piscataway. So that's like, where it also comes into, we really interact a lot with that, you know, it's like, yeah, we have we have the, the issues and things that we need to deal with that come from processes that most Native people, all Native people in the US have to deal with. But then we also have a very long-standing where we were locked into a system of race law and classification as free people of color, which also meant that you can't you know, you don't have the right to sue people, white men, that you're not allowed to go to court you lose your collective land, right our our reservations dissolved in dissolution. Because of it. People then kind of forgetting where they stand people trying to blend in hide like levels of fear and terror. I'm going into like shame and not wanting to say who they are usually takes a generation of people, you know, it only takes a generation for like one person not to tell the next person about like who they are or where they are. Because of poverty, people leaving racism, lynchings like, the whole thing like that happened.

My uncle Duke, who's older than my father, remembers, whenever, you know, lynching one of our community members remembered it, you know, seeing it happen. So it was just, you know, these are patterns and interactions that we need to deal with. And so we have to reclaim it, you know,

and it's in its full truth, right? And you can't, you can't recover if you you know, you can't, you can't recover. And you can't get to truth until you get you can't to get to reconciliation until you get to truth, you can't deal with your trauma until you speak it right. So like, we have to work with these things. I mean, so yeah, erasure, erasure is, is a massive factor. And again, you know, we, it's something that we see, it's, you know, I'll tell you what, my I wish you had a chance to like me, my uncle Bill, he said, he was like, it's a world biggest lie. Lies you know, even like, that we deny ourselves of who we are, it's one of the biggest lies in history, that, that, that we don't exist. You know, and at the same time, having to understand that there are people who are fully annihilated, you know, like, dog people over on the other side of the river, and

11:46

Ycomous people, you know, a lot of our a lot of our, a lot of our people, sub-tribes, you know, I mean, maybe there's, like, individual descendants of people, but like, as a Tribe, as community, you know, there's a lot of a lot of death. So, we've been on the, I think we really been on the way back up for the past, maybe 100. About the last 100 years, we've been on, like, kind of a way back up, you know, and, and being much more fully present. So that's why like, I can kind of cook sometimes, like, kind of complain about, like, all the factionalism and like, oh, like, that person happens. And we're like, *Yeah, but we're all here having a fight. So that's good.* Like, you know, I mean, okay. That means like, we all care about something, and they're all arguing and it like, doesn't feel great the moment but I'm like, you know, what? Yeah, like, we're all we're all in it. So it's good, you know, and people coming back home. So, yeah, that's a big question. Good question.

12:47

Interviewer: And then just kind of tying it a little bit into their ratio part. But, um, **why do you think it's important to address a ratio in Maryland's environmental organizations?**

13:01

Interviewee: Because this is our land, and we're here to take care of it. And our land is us. So we need to, not only we need to be but we are, we are here, we're very good. I have to say, I'm proud of my peeps, because we're very good. We're very good at. We don't care if you don't want us at the table, we're here anyway. You know, it's like, bring up the chair. Build the table, we're very good at door-busting. So I think that that's and we had, like, breakthrough generation that did that. And I was kinda like, the, the hell I was like, the yellow mine. I was like, yeah, go go. I was like, I'll deal with you. Um, but a lot of that had been done but it's been I'll tell you, it's been a it's been a tough been a tough row. It's funny, because like it the it was all these years, years and years and years and years and years of either being denied, ignored, or having to get nasty to get into a room right? To be included. And now it's like, finally, everybody wants to include us or like most people want to, you know, most organizations like they know they need to, so it's like now we can't like answer all the inquiry like I can't answer I like I'm overwhelmed with like, this is a good problem. But you know, and I have to say a lot of this came from energy like from your people, your people, Diné, the Big Mountain resistor women were big influences on our lives. Because we would hold them when they would come to testify in Congress and they would want to come down to pray You know, before they had to go so we'd like pick, pick them, especially Roberta, pick her up. got very, very involved in You know other people to like just these waves of people with that mentality, that fighting spirit mentality. And that's not true for all Piscataway people, but like, we've got like a good little little crew that's like that. And now it's becoming more acceptable, right? Because we have this like, groundwork that's there. So, yeah.

So so that's the thing. I mean, I think after, after many years, and also I've just I want to tell you, sometimes environmental organizations were, you know, have been, like, big allies for us, because

we've had to deal with these like racist landowner, people and institutions that really wanted to keep us out. And so sometimes it has been, you know, like, green more of like, like green pea Sierra Club was not terrible with us. And it's actually better Beth roaches in there. So we've had we've had some more like, like, more recently three.org was better with us. Other coalition's so that's been good, I think, part of what I see. And I know, like, you know, your, your central focus is on these issues. I think has been this kind of classic point about.

Well, one environmental organization, that's what I'm going to talk about with you. I was like, which organization am I going to deal with, and they already know this, because we've had issues and they're trying to get better, but I don't know, is Alex Ferguson Foundation, which is a local environmental organization, down at dow that were the gatekeepers to our burial grounds, and that was decades of direct confrontation with them.

The larger organizations usually have been more like, like national, you know, National Resource Defense Council or Earth Justice. They've been pretty good. Like we've tried to, you know, that's usually something like if we have, we're hosting or supporting other native people that are coming in from other parts of the country, and they're like sponsoring or like working with them in some way. We just started working a little bit with Nature Conservancy. But, you know, the classic issue, of course, has been that, you know, somehow Native presence in you know, as part of this, like, it's like, it's considered as like human pollution, you know, and so that's, that's been a problem.

So probably like when we get into, you know, if you want to, like talk about, like, case studies situation like that, for us has been the most direct one. National Park Service has been a big agency. They're better now Acokeek Foundation has made a like a total total giant turnaround. So like Angela Barnes, who's Piscataway is now like the president and Jared Thomas. And I got invited I think I might have I don't know if I was the first Piscataway person, but like, they had been like, they're also there's our burial grounds Accokeek, we have two adjacent organizations that were gatekeeping trying to keep us off of our of our sacred site, both environmental, both both having an environmental component.

Accokeek Foundation made a total turnaround in 2007. And now that is really, like moved into Piscataway hands. I mean, it's, it's taken nearly 20 years, but that happen. So I was the first board member they asked to come on to so that was like a bit of a set, but they wanted to, they wanted to, because we'd been like pushing and pushing and pushing at them. And then there's another one who is not so much of a direct confrontational, but it's not really that involved with us still, you know, there's it's sort of like, more passive, but, but they were like, really horrendous, horrendous, and are an environmental organization local. So sometimes we have to deal with these like real localized, real localized ones, you know, and then the larger ones are just starting to kinda like, interact more specifically with Piscataway in the past, I would say like, three to four year three to five years and actually reaching out which has been nice.

So more of my involvement with with other environmental organizations has been in if, you know, just just through, like background support with other Native people that have been coming in and like kind of larger issues and of course, like standing rock and you know, which is more recent, but but, you know, just ongoing for like a really, really long time. Yeah, really a long time.

20:31

Interviewer: And I'm still kind of tying in to the environmental questions, but, um, what is your relationship to the water and land where you live? Yeah.

20:46

Interviewee: So, Piscataway means where the waters blend. Our veins are veins of the river. The rivers are veins of Earth, Mother Earth. It's who I am. To my children, or I named my daughter, Jazzy Kwame, means beautiful river woman. My great-grandmother's name was Gen Gen CP this way named Gen Z for we're one in the same, it's why I live here right now. I'm talking to you from my little spot in Tacoma Park. Because I'm kind of like a Funkadelic hippie chick, too.

But um, I like living around activists. I like living around activists and you know, people who were involved with things I do like that. But I also I also spend half of my time I'm very thankful to be able to do this. I spend about half of my time now down on Nanjemoy Creek. I was just there yesterday. And so it is, yeah, it's a central land and water. animal beings all of it. It's, I don't see myself apart from any of that. It's to like, it's like, it's like the core value. Core self.

22:20

Interviewer: And do you consider yourself a steward of the with land and water where you live?

22:28

Interviewee: Um, I think steward. Yeah, I've been I've been wrestling with that word, though. Because it still expresses Dominion in a Christian a Christian, your sense? Meaning like caretaker is if I am the caretaker isn't like the lands my caretaker to. But yeah, I'm in the sense of like, responsible, interrelated relative. Yeah.

I'll tell you what, like, I just started, I just started talking with people about the term stored, like, I get the word and I use it. And I'm like, Well, maybe it's not stored. It's not like, like, shepard. It's like, not, it's like, I mean, it's a responsibility as a as a family member, as a relative, like, it's me. So. Yeah, absolutely. Like, it's, it's, it's a lot of what I do. It's a lot of what I've it's kind of the central part that I always have. You know, do I like all this other stuff, right, like, but coming down to the center of it. Right? It's, you know, of course, you know, my kids and the family on but what we all really care about what we all take care of and are responsible for is the space. so I just had the opportunity that's so that's when like, Uncle Billy and my two cousins, and surely they re-purchase land in 1986 because there was also tried to do like land claims, you know, like land claims, which I guess that's what freaked out the white supremacist organizations and neighbors was land, land claims were filed in the 1970s by Piscataway, Piscataway Indian Nation, which started out as Piscataway Indian Conoy and they split whatever but yeah, Piscataway, like land claims to act quick.

And so, yeah, I mean, it's it's really it's really key. So, so the lat the family like there's some families that have some of their original. When I say originally, it's not like Tribal allotments. But people had to like buy their own land, like all of our collective reservation rights were dissolved by the early, usually, at least by the early 18th century. So people had to purchase their property. And we've also had to like now re-purchase. So there's other Piscataway people who are also trying to re-purchase property in our homeland, if they don't somehow have it passed down, you know, their grandparents, something happened to it, right? So I had this possibility of getting to this place on Antietam Android Creek, which is where one of the slats he my grandfather Turkey collected, he was a what they call herb doctors of herbal doctor and leader and other senses to political leadership, but he was he was a practicing or herb doctor, or herbal, like medicine man, and it's herbal sense and spiritual, like sensory.

So I had the chance to be able to go there, right on the water. And me and my cousin Sarita, and our dear sister ally, who's Chappaquiddick Wampanoag and African American Penny gamble, Williams formed an organization called the Wicomico, which means house of the mother in Piscataway. And we were able to it was really nice, we had a just a small, it's like a small, like, it's a cabin with about a couple acres, but it's right on the water, very, very well taken care of place that that's, you know, you have to keep fighting to keep it, keep it okay, because we need spaces, you know, we have spaces like struggle, like when you go to Accokeek, it's a place where we've had to really, really fight like fight and fight and fight and fight and fight against desecration for access, for spiritual practice, for protection, and it's still in process. And it's important to go there spiritually. But it's also like, you can't just ever just go there and just be, you know.

So Tayac territory, which was purchased in Port Tobacco by my Uncle Billy and his two kids was a 120-acre site that they have and take care of. And then in 2019, I had the opportunity to get down to Nanjemoy Creek, which is very, very protected spot. Because I was like, I think like, we need a place that we can just be. And not always have to just be like educating everybody and in conflict with everybody in fighting for this and fighting for that, like, like, what are we fighting for, you know, like, I'm 55 56 years old, and I would like to be able to, like, sit here and be in communion with our, you know, with our homeland, and not have to worry if some, like Park Police person is going to come and bother me and tell me to leave and then have to have a fight with them, you know, or like, show my permit or you know, all these things.

So yeah, it's it's a core thing, I think especially getting older, it's more and more what I'm focusing my attention to, of being in place and having those spaces and caring for them and being more active, actively present, not just doing it like from my home and Takoma park, but actually like being on the land being like being there on the water. And I have the opportunity now to do that.

28:59

Interviewer: And then, um, I guess, like going into that, but, um, what do you know about like Maryland's environmental, and climate change priority plannings?

29:14

Interviewee: I'll confess, like, I actually don't know a lot about it. I've been very, very localized. So that's where you probably can talk to some other folks. They'll probably know like, Angela Barnes will know more about it. Tara Robinson might know more about it. I know only like very, very low, like so it's weird, like I know very much more locally about what's going on like, I got really, really hyper-focused on Nanjemoy Creek and we've been having a lot of issues. There was a lot of issues with like the Charles County Commission, um, where we were just, you know, part of the effort to get it into protective zoning, but it really wasn't enough so that finally happened. You know, Accokeek being in the like National Park Service. That was another part of it.

So yeah, I'm, I'm really not that familiar. But that's, uh, that's also good, really awesome questions like, both on the practical and the philosophical. So I don't know that much about it.

I just know Charles County has been a bear. And not not a good bear. I shouldn't even like, I shouldn't even identify them with bears. Because bears are medicine beings, right? And so I don't feel like, yeah, they're just been really, they're very development oriented. Charles County has been eaten alive by this by this development planning, and so I mean, now there's, like, larger zones is the Southern Maryland Heritage Area. That's it, that's the more of like cultural, so hopefully, that'll afford some protections. But if there's pieces, maybe that's part of what's sitting

behind some of the more positive efforts, I don't know, but, but Charles County, and like, the industrial parks, and, you know, they really fight it.

And unfortunately, I'm just gonna cut to the chase on this. Um, our Tribal response has not been to get very involved. And it's really frustrating. It's really frustrating to not have our Tribal leadership involved in pushing in pushing back on this, so it's just been more individual action, there was a little bit of response, but there's not a very active response. So I'm kind of sitting with trying to figure out how to deal with it. And that was sort of part of like, the hesitancy about, like, even wanting to, like, get it because I don't, I don't want to get into and I just, I don't want to, like,

31:57

put anybody down or like, you know, what I mean? Like, have a have an issue or like, I can't speak for that, like, she's not once elected. I'm like, No, I'm not. But you know, sometimes you just have to do stuff, even if some other people are not going to do it. But it's been a it's been a problem or like, if I speak up or say something, then you know, I mean, I always speak as an individual at this point. And but yeah, the, the Tribes have not generally been responding to local requests, um, like, even local, like little Sierra Club chapters and stuff to help out, but also part of that has been that speaking now, kind of like looking, you know, thinking about the topics that you sent me.

Some of that has also been because the environmental organizations have not been like people who are more like environmental like kind of like activist locally, have not really invested in long-term relationship building. One of the people who has is the Potomac, it's a River Keeper, like de nada AX, and, you know, there's some people that take their personalities, you know, that they'll, that they care and they want to be involved. But a lot of this has to do with it's not until there's a prot, like a problem as it's defined by the environmental organization or foundation, or because we've had really, we had a kind of horrific interaction with more of like local environmentalists who wanted us to not be there to practice our ceremonies and call like, the police on us. Um, the, I think that that's kind of soured the interest in being involved to a certain degree.

And then the others is that I think, you know, some people are concerned about the economic you know, I get it, like concerned about the economic development. So there's one person in leadership who I think might have like a construction contract with the new airport. I'm like, okay, you know, so it's a like, everywhere, it's it's highly, highly complicated, right? Between people who are economically, like very marginalized and have a hard time. And just not having the manpower or consciousness sometimes to get as deeply involved. I think that's changing purpose guy. I feel good about that. But yeah, we were much more like, hyper, like really, we were really, really hyper focused on the it was such a huge fight.

I mean, it's like 50 years to be able to have a good enough relationship, to be able to access Our burial grounds, which is our most sacred, you know, it's different than Navajo Navajo. Like, your your interactions with the dead are very different than ours. For ours for us, like we have to be in the presence of our ancestors in order to pray properly. So you have to be like, sitting with their, their burial sites to be able to pray properly, we have to ask them to help us. So if we can't get to our burial grounds, have you been down to Accokeek yet? Have you been there?

Interviewer: Sadly, no.

Interviewee: Yeah, I would really encourage you to, you know, to have a more complete understanding. And again, understanding like culturally, it may not be right for you. But to try to get into the, onto the, onto these places, it's hard to understand them without being being there or

seeing them or at least next to them. So, yeah, I mean, my train of thought, but go ahead. Things. Other questions you want to ask?

36:04

Interviewer: Yeah. So, um, how do you view the state? And how does Maryland celebrate Indigenous people?

36:16

Interviewee: Um, I think the state has the state under the current governor has been very, very, very, like kind of more like proactive, proactive like responsive. I mean, it's all very, it's still very nominal. You know, there's like declarations about proclamations for newest people, they there's been like, it was like the state league sponsors a dinner. You know, but there's no like, funding. We have an administrator on the Maryland Indian Commission. But there's no like, there's no funding for the Tribes to do anything. So you know, it's more like the declarations of things.

37:27

They, you know, it was like, extremely hostile. For a number of years, like our, our state petition was, it took 18 years. It took, I submitted it, you know, for our people in 1994, I was nine months pregnant with my son. And we didn't get the recognition until, like, the year that he was graduating from high school was 18 years. And then for 10 of those years, they said they lost it. *Oh, we lost it. We thought we put it in a cabinet. And now we can't find it.* I'm being like, seriously lost it. Can't find it. *Oh, we were moving offices and we can't find it.* You know, it was awful. It was awful.

And actually that had to do with they were even though like state records, you know, if you have state recognition, you can't get gaming, right? Like you have to be federal, but there was this whole trope that we were gonna, like, bring gaming into the state and, and that was also part of, you know, it had been sad like Skyrim can confer some tough times, like when they submitted their petition. They're like, Yeah, we're gonna do state now we're gonna get federal gaming but what okay, you know, but it's like so what? And so it was actually by the time I don't know if you've ever seen up in Oxon Hill, there's God called, you know, the big like Maryland casino puts up the MGM a at up in up in Oxon Hill, you know, the day that the the like, just two weeks after that, like Maryland gaming compact was signed that we got a call from the governor's office, saying that, that our state recognition was gonna go through. Yeah.

Interviewer: Wow.

Interviewee: I know. It was like, wow. Wow. And a lot of other things that had been put up as blocks and calling us frauds and fakes and all of that, like suddenly, like came off the internet that had been there for 12 years. Like if you had Googled me like a few, maybe like 10 years ago. and Google like Piscataway and Tayacs it would have been like, fake Tribe. There's this paper that came out about how fake we were. And that paper that had been circulating and I found out that it was it got like these huge Google hits because it was linked to if you ever heard of Stormfront?

Stormfront is a white supremacist website, it's run by like Aryan Nation. That paper was linked to Stormfront which is, you know, like, neo-Nazi, neo-Nazi website. And it was also linked to a number of like, Ukrainian like, bride-selling sites and porno sites. And that gross and weird. And I mean, like, I hate to say it makes me sound like a, like a, like, I was like, you can't make this stuff up. If you heard this, you'd be like, Oh my gosh, this person's like a paranoid, like delusional, but it was true.

And so once once the MGM deal was signed, I guess we weren't considered to be any more of like a competitive threat, not that maybe we were because we don't have federal. And so we got the state recognition very soon after that. And then it was very, like, you know, it's been like, friendly. But there's not really anything that supports our people at all, you know, like, in Massachusetts, and so it's like, all great, but Massachusetts, New Jersey, like some other states. And now Now there's Virginia, which have now these Tribes have recent federal recognition. But before that, they did get at least like a little support from the state. So, you know, with all with all also understanding of, you know, you talk about like tensions and issues. There's no Piscataway leader figure person who is able to do this Tribal work full time, like everybody has a day job, everybody has to do this as as, like, additional work. And that's like, you know, it's a lot, it's stressful. It's stressful. You know, maybe they're gonna move through with it, but I don't with something.

So, ya know, the current, you know, Governor want more it's been really it's been, has been very supportive. And I hope that that translates into something that would be more concrete. I don't, I don't need to, like, I'm good. Like, like, what I'm doing. I'm good as a, as a university. But I think, you know, I think that in order for us to do this, to really be able to do this work, you know, and for the community, at least, to do something like to not have any support, like no support whatsoever from any governmental agency is it's hard. Yeah, and a lot of it gets self-funded. A lot of people like take jobs and extra jobs in order to like, fund things or the community, like, you know, like, literally, like, passes the hat, you know, does blanket dance the whole you know, it's a lot of what happens.

43:22

Interviewer: Yeah, wow, that's, that's crazy. I cannot believe that. That's what you have to deal with. And, yeah, it just so outrageous and should not be happening.

43:35

Interviewee: Yeah. You know, it's so funny. It's like, we're, you know, it's like, I'm almost so used to it, like, not be you know, being that way, that when I kind of stood about when I sit back and like when you ask these questions, I think like, yeah, no wonder everybody's like, all like, freaked out. Like this, you know?

Yeah, like nothing, I don't think there's anything and even with the big like, destination southern where this whole, like Southern Maryland Heritage area that was designated, I'm really glad that that happened. And there's going to be like a, you know, these grants for like programs and stuff, but we also know things come and go, right? The end of the day, like, I don't think that there's going to be more than what like 100 to \$500,000 in grant money and that can sound like a lot but it's really not, you know, when you're really talking about developing something, it's it's just not and also for environmental work and, and health and what's happening with climate. So, yeah,

and then also like, not not as much to me, but like my kids, like my daughter was a co-founder of Zero Hour. She's working with like Women Environmental Leadership Institute, and she was actually Just features I just came down but featured in a zoo exhibit at a Smithsonian Anacostia museum called To Live and Breathe. So she's still very, she's very active in environmental work. My son was very, very involved also, was it like a Standing Rock and 350 and all of that. So it's more like still, like, grassroots type stuff. And then my role has been more like, Okay, I'm kind of getting into this older role. I'm just gonna, like, hold it down with the frogs. And, you know, I'm gonna, like, hold it down with like, the frogs and the swamp and like, work on having us all feel better. Yeah.

45:40

Interviewer: Wow. That's so cool that your family is also involved and I love like, how you still try to fight for that for your people and everything. So I really love that, too.

45:52

Interviewee: Yeah, it's a it's an intergenerational. It's intergenerational work. And it's it. Yes. It's really at the core of everything, You know. I'm trying to work on like, taking care of myself to feel better.

Interviewer: Yeah, always take care of yourself.

Interviewee: Because this stuff can just like it's it's never it never ends. So we need to, you know, kind of constantly come back to, to that to. Yeah.

46:28

Interviewer: Always have that Native humor around you. Always good medicine.

46:32

Interviewee: Oh, I know. I know people are funny is like, sometimes was like, just like, I made myself laugh. Right. I know. It's funny, right? Like, because we can talk in these interviews. And everything's like, so like, so serious. Oh, you know, but then like, the way we talk with each other? And it's funny.

46:54

Interviewer: It's just, it is yeah, yeah. But I enjoy it, though. I like it, because I don't have to feel so robotic and everything.

Interviewee: Right. Right.

Interviewer: But I'm going into the next question. **When Maryland mentions diverse communities, do you believe your Tribal communities included?**

47:22

Interviewee: I mean, I think to a certain degree. Yeah, I like I'm kind of, I'll be real like, like, again, like the same thing with the climate policies. And I'm kind of out of the loop with, what, what's been going on? And like, who's getting the emails on what and who's going to like the function and who's like getting the, you know. I mean, I think again, like the, I have to say, I am very, I like what Governor Moore is doing. At least on this just and I haven't been to any of these things, because I'm kind of like, I'm just so tired of all the politicking, like, everybody go do it. And that's great. And I'm, like, happy that you're going to the meeting now.

Um, but I think no, and also like, respecting and appreciating people who were, you know, like, different people do different things at different times. So I'm really glad that there's those are folks that are been involved. But the fact that he wanted to talk to the leadership, meet with them meet with people have the listening sessions, that's really important. It's part of like, a larger ethic. But yeah, with the diverse communities. I don't know, I haven't seen enough of the literature on it. And sometimes, you know, like, are like, who's at the table for everything and like, where that where that sits? So, you know, maybe Tara can speak more to like how policies you know, how the policies are translating into the interactions for the spaces and the invitations to be in different meetings in places and, versus invitations.

But again, because like not every, you know, everybody gets overwhelmed. Sometimes you can't always take the inventory. You know, it's like, that's a lot of work. Like if you you know, not all of our people are able to do all these things all the time because it means you have to take time off to go to them and can always do it. Yeah.

49:39

Interviewer: And then I'm just like, these are like the last few questions, but how do you what do you think the future holds for your community?

49:55

Interviewee: I'm actually feeling pretty good about us. Even if because Is we there's all the all the all the effort that has been made to and maybe people are going to answer this in a different way and be like, Oh, we're so like, pulled apart and yeah, okay. Yeah. But there's there. Yes. However, I feel like we have more Piscataway to people and younger people involved than we have had. In generations, it's been consistent, hard, constant work, to, to pull to get people together. And even if they're not together, it's like, what are you all doing in your own spaces? You know what I'm saying. Like, if you're doing stuff in your own spaces, I feel like, the other thing is the other thing that I've learned, you know, we're not going anywhere, you know, there will always be Piscataway people here coming back. You'll, sometimes it's like, yeah, we'd love to out you know, sometimes you'd be like, Oh, my, a lot of people. But there's always been at least one there's always been at least one person, maybe five people who were like dealing with things. Now there's many more to the point where people are fighting over it.

I am concerned I'm concerned about and afraid for our land and water, you know, like, because being in DC, right, like you see administration's come and go, they roll, they come in they leave and we're you know, we're here in the door, the sort of like, the DC constant, you know, or like, they're, like, you see, like, appointments and this and that, you know, and it just like, okay, like, yeah, this can be really problematic, I'm very worried about, like, how fragile our, our lands are, they're, they're just eaten up by like subdivisions and expanding suburbanization. That's been a huge, that's a huge issue for us. In this area, you know, just mass expansion, runoff, pollution, you know, it's just like, the gains that we've made.

And this is where I'm very, very thankful to the environmental organizations, very intense work, to restore some health, you know, to, to our, to our ecosystem to our, to our place. Um, I think that there's been, I think we're always at a crossroads. Where if we don't have as many healthy spaces, and welcoming spaces for our young people, they're not going to want to be involved. You know, it's just like, it's like old people fighting over and over again, and anything could resolve it and it's like, over and over again. So Sherry, sort of situation. I do like that many of our young people have more, you know, are more involved with other Native people, you know, it's not necessarily like all Piscataway. You know, what I mean, like, we're really in a place where we interact with a lot of different Native people. You know, it's not just like one Tribe, like, we have this whole, like, network, like, this is where we live, you know, we're kind of there's still like, a rural part of us, but we're also like, very interactive with urban and suburban spaces, too, you know.

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So I feel where I see us, though, is that more and more of us have the capacity and personal resource If not, if we don't get the money, I think part of us is like, we also know that if we don't get the money from the government, or if we don't get who are obligated, I'm not going like Republican

here and be like, are we on it? It's like yeah, I need to pay up like the church needs to like reparations, you know, like, we need the like, really, the stuff that they stole, we didn't even get into the church thing. But you know, what they took from us.

So so there's more and more spaces for people to be able to occupy, occupy and be present on our landscape we do have an interesting possibility like we don't have to move far away to get like jobs you know what I mean? Like a lot of our folks can like work in the DC area. But we also have we also have you know, really economically marginalized food desert places still like like in our in our communities like so it's I don't know I feel very hopeful about with all that said, like, I feel very hopeful about the young people and also like, look like we've been here a long time. Every attempt at erasure, even taking our names away from us, even saying, like, we don't, we're not even here. Gone through like everything for you know, since before 1632, I mean, there was pandemic spreading up since the 1560s. And then we've been totally inundated by everybody else for 400 years. We can change like, physically and language, you know, the way that our lifestyles or fashion or cars or clothes turn in return wars, the whole thing.

The Piscataway people are not going anywhere. You know, that's what I tell like people like I work with Amazonian people sometimes. And I have to say, and something I we talked about sometimes, because you know, is the fears are very real and very present, and like people are actually like, getting killed there, right. And just horrendous stuff got, like, really tough stuff going on. And, at the same time, I'm like, you know, what, we can all talk about like erasure, and it's a huge factor, it's very hard to erase the people, I'm having this conversation with you. We're not supposed to be having this conversation.

So beautiful hearing you speak, you know, about, you know, it's like born for African American and the words that are being used in your language of how to translate that and what that meaning is, and, and the clans that you're born for the people you're born for, and being able to bring in your whole self and your whole lineage, you know, for who you are. And for me to, you know, as a Piscataway woman, to be sitting here in 2024, for being able to say that I'm a Piscataway woman at all is, that's a victory. And that is, that's a that that's an effort. That's a that's proof, it's as proof of it. It's very, it's very hard to fully erase a people. You know, and it, it didn't happen in the most dire hours of our of our, of our Tribe, you know, and our lands, you know, it keeps wanting to be a forest.

I don't know if you've ever like, I don't know what your living situation is. But you know, when people like mow the lawn, and then it's like, oh, all these little trees popping up, and you have to like whack them down. It's like, (our land) or (Arlington) keeps wanting to be a forest. You know, and the Eagles are back now. I'm sitting on the dock a few weeks ago, a little otter came by little Native otter, pop his little head up, it's like the cutest thing, you know? That's not supposed to be here anymore. You know, our eels are not supposed to be coming back or,

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you know, there's our sturgeons. We think maybe you're coming back. I just need a little help.

So it's just had to give something a little bit. And it can, it can come back and maybe it just never left. And it was just hiding for a while, you know, sleeping. So that's that's how I feel about all of it. I tend to be more hopeful than pessimistic. You know. Yeah, I feel I feel more hopeful, you know, doesn't mean like not to be cautious and not to be like, aware, but we already we already went through a period of time.

You know, there was a woman, there was a woman named Grace Fair, fair, cloud Marsh, and she was born in Maryland, but I think it was 1904. Her dad moved the family to New York City to Brooklyn, which is actually I grew up in New York City, and I met her Oh, well, my grandfather met her and then i in the 19 is like maybe in 1950, and she was part of like the American Indian club in New York, there was a American Indian club in New York City in Brooklyn, because there are a lot of Mohawks that that went to go live. There's a whole neighborhood called Little Ghana, woggie there. And so she knew them. And my grandfather was like, he was like traveling up and down the coast. And because he was he was organizing Native people like for the comeback, like, actually with Lumbee to he was very involved with that.

Um, and they met each other. And she found out he was Piscataway. And she was Piscataway. And it turned out that they were cousins. But she said, she told me I interviewed her in the 80s 1980s. And she told me that when she met my grandfather, she was just so amazed because she thought she was the last Piscataway woman left alive on the world. The last person, she grew up thinking that she was the only one left her house, her her dad and her family. And I've met other people like that. They think they're like the last, you know, because like, their family moved away, you know, and they think they didn't, they thought they were the last ones.

Yeah, didn't like going up like that thinking you're the last one. And then was able to reconnect. You know, I met, I've met people like, who, you know, they, they have that in their lineage where maybe they grew up somewhere else, like Philadelphia, or Pittsburgh, or Chicago or wherever. And they're like, this is, I can't remember her name. But she, this woman is. He's an opera singer. And I met her at this at this at this like event at Kennedy Center. And I saw her mother as she was there with her mother who's like 90. And when I first saw her when I first saw her mom, she was just like my aunt. And we started talking. She was like, oh, like, *Oh, you're Piscataway? Yeah, she was like, I think that's part of our family lineage.* You know, I said, Well, *who's your family? Who's your family?* Like, who looks at it? What's the name? And then she told me in progress that we started talking, I was like, you're sick, we're actually related. And this nine-year-old lady burst into a, we were like, you know, getting our name tags, you know, when you walk into any venue, like, right and read the name tag, and she burst into tears, and I burst into tears. She was like, *I've always been looking at it. No, like, I thought that that was true. But I didn't know. And I was, like I said, You look just like my aunt.* And then I'm, like, we're crying with like, the sharpies in our hand and all this stuff.

And so it's just, you know, there still are people out there and want to have them come home, we also have like a really pretty solid core people that, you know, didn't go anywhere, right, or they left and came back. So I don't know, that's like a big ramble answer. But these are really big questions. And I'm still almost all the questions that you asked me, I'm still trying to figure them out, too. Like, I don't feel like I have like an answer answer. I'm just kind of reflecting on what I can say, just from the experience, or like where I am now, maybe a couple of years, I'd have a different answer. That's that's what I'm seeing. Seeing at this point.

1:03:28

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah, that's okay. That's totally fine. Well, but your perspective is very insightful. And it's helping me to, you know, it's really interesting to also hear about the stories that you share and everything. So I am grateful for you sharing that, and everything. Um, I guess just one, one last question. But **how do you want the public to view you and your Tribal community in 2024?**

1:03:57

Interviewee: I think I don't know. Well, I mean, I know. I mean, it's like me. You know, I have like a lot of different roles, but just.....

1:04:12

Well, I don't know, for me, just I think with some level of like, respect, concern, care, acknowledgment, right. I mean, I mean, there's me as like, like in all these different roles in the spaces, but certainly for the Tribal community for Piscataway people as an alive, dynamic present-day people who are the deepest most solid long term caretakers and relatives of this land people who have an entirely distinctive worthy value in terms of history, but also in the sense of like, what we can bring now, you know.

1:05:05

Our, our, you know, what I was talking about, like in terms of like relationships with environmental organizations in formal environment, environmentalism is one thing. But even folks who like, okay, maybe they're not joining the campaign and signing the letter. These are people who are like, on the water on the landscape, like, they know, you know, like, there's still we still have, like, people who have all this knowledge. You can read the like surface and under carnival water, and like, when weaves are changing as well, and Bower they're moving. And like, you know, we still have people like that. And who are very tied to place like, so that really, that really matters.

So I would, I would want people to view Piscataway people, first of all, again, you know, say, say aren't say, say our name. I want people to understand that there is no healing of this earth and of our communities and of who we are as a society without including our people. Because we are at a core of it and everything, we're part of every, we're part of every story that has happened on this landscape. For the past, like how many whatever 1000s of years, and also in the past 400 years, and in the past 40 years and in the past minute, like, and in the next centuries, we're we're like a constant of some kind. You know, even like, with all of the changes and adaptations and change, you know, all of it like, so that's what I think I would hope for.

And I don't just like, oh, you know, we don't just hope for things we have to make them happen. You know, be be proactive, don't just hope like, somebody's going to care about the river, don't just hope that somebody's going to care. To stop, you know, using derogatory mascot names, you know. Don't just hope that the teacher is not going to, like, have your kindergartener not do the, you know, paper, feather headdress thing for Thanksgiving. Like make an appointment, the minute your kid's going to be in the school, and go give them a package and say, *Here's my name, here's my number, here's the information, this is what you need to*, you know, be proud, you know, we have to be proactive about this. And you can't, you can never, ever assume that somebody else is going to do something for you ever. You know, we need to do this ourselves. If there's other help along the way, that's great. We should have it, but don't count on it.

And something that I also learned is like, you know, someday we're all going to be elders. You know, the people that used to do stuff for you may not be there, they're not going to be around anymore. The people who said that they would be interested involved in active may or may not be around. So always be ready to do it. You know, even if it's just you, as I've told my kids, like, you can't, you know, like, we're all here is, like, by I'm harsher than like, we're all cool, you know, but it's just saying like, you we always have to, you know, just always don't ever expect that somebody else is going to do your work. You know, and take care of things like you need to, you know, don't don't ever assume that because if we had assume that like a lot of our you know, our spiritual tradition actually came down to like, one person and my grandfather turkey. What if he had said eff it and left, you know. That would have been really, we wouldn't you know, maybe, I mean, people

would have like, tried to come back but we would have been so much less capable. So you know, you always have to do it, you know, just just do your work, be responsible, be accountable, be joyful. You know, also like you know, the things that we're fighting for, for the rights of

1:09:57

you know, the land to be healthy and intact and breathing in wonderful. And, you know, like, Yeah, we're gonna sit by the river too. You know what I mean? Like, I'm gonna, I'm gonna watch the birds fly, like, you know, and not just, you know, I didn't for the first for like, decades, or I did a little bit and I'm like, Yeah, I think you know, we're part of this, we're part of this too. So it's good. Yeah.

So I'll let you go. I actually got a meeting with a student, thank you for being so patient and also for taking that few minutes to let me take the other call. I really appreciate all of it.

1:10:40

Interviewer: Yeah, thank you so much. And, you know, I look forward to hearing from you and also seeing you in person hopefully.

1:10:48

Interviewee: Yeah, that would be great. Yeah. And do like when you can, like, come come down and spend some time or at least like or maybe over by Baltimore. You know, take some time, greet the waters, you know, say hello, like, introduce yourself. Okay.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewee: All right. Take care, Autumn.

Interviewer: Bye.

Interviewee: Bye.

Ends at 1:11:19 minutes

Kiowa/Isanti Dakota/Ohkay Owingeh Pueblo Individual

“Official Interview Questions

Tribal Community Background Questions:

1. Who is your community?

a. Are you affiliated with a tribe or tribes? If so, how do you define your Tribal community?

Answer: I am Kiowa, Isanti Dakota and Ohkay Owingeh Pueblo. The tribal communities where they are located are: Kiowa (Oklahoma), Isanti Dakota (Nebraska) and Ohkay Owingeh Pueblo (New Mexico). I am originally from Albuquerque, New Mexico.

b. Do you have a tribal community where you live?

Answer: I live currently in an urban community of (the DMV) Washington D.C. area where I regularly interact with individuals of approximately 5000 local Native intertribal community members.

2. How does your Native identity tie to your sense of place/community?

Answer: In order to have a Native tie to our Native DMV community I have to be proactive in organizing Native community events, participating in Native events that are sponsored by other Natives and have healthy engagement with other Natives.

How does your community come together?

a. How are you involved?

Answer: I serve as a resource for cultural networking within our community as well as those outside our community hoping to find resources and contacts within our community.

b. What are the changes you noticed over the years in how your community comes together?

Answer: I have lived in the DMV for 18 years. In this time, I have noticed less cohesion of cultural community participation in Native community events.

3. How does settler-colonialism still persist in its impacts on your tribe?

Answer: All tribes are different. My tribe's are all effected by "settler-colonialism" but at different levels.

4. How is your sovereignty being impacted currently?

Answer: LOL Sovereignty is the ability of a Nation to determine their own future. As Native nations, our tribal governments have "limited sovereignty." The United States still has overriding power to over each and every tribe, or to end relations with tribal nations altogether.

5. Can you tell me a bit more - either from your own perspective, or that of your tribe's - about state-recognition and federal-recognition of tribes?

Answer: Recognition means tribes exist in a nation-to-nation, or nation-to-state relationship. Without recognition tribes do not exist by state and federal governments. Each of my three tribes have federal recognition.

6. What does Indigenous erasure mean to you?

a. Do you believe Indigenous erasure is affecting your own community? If so, how?

Answer: Yes. As Native people in the DMV, we are victims of problematic erasure. A great example is in the media. I don't see people who look like me in commercials or the news. Our local AND national issues rarely receive attention. We just had Native American Heritage Month and on our local new stations I only saw 3 mentions all month on 3 different television stations.

b. Why is it important to address erasure in MD environmental organizations?

Answer: Because environment stewardship is a part of our Native cultures. Environmental stewardship is still practiced by Native peoples, even by the local Piscataway people of the DMV. If we don't have a seat at the big environmental table, we will have no input.

c. What would addressing erasure in environmental organizations look like?

Answer: Identifying qualified Native people to speak on the subject, then following through with funded solutions to the advice and recommendation they give.

Tribal Community's Relationship to Maryland's Environment Questions:

1. What is your relationship to the water and land where you live?

Answer: I understand water and land are sacred because of the prayers offered by our elders and ceremonial people. My ancestors practiced ceremonies to honor both water and the land. I am also an avid fisherman. I take advantage of the water sources that produce fish. Water is life.

2. Do you consider yourself a steward of the water and land where you live?

Answer: No. Unfortunately, I have to pick and choose the issues I steward where I can make positive changes and retention in. I cannot advocate for every single issue that affects Native peoples. It took me a long time to realize this.

3. What do you see as the main environmental challenges your Tribal community is facing?

Answer: Unfortunately, protecting the environment of my tribal communities is low priority, when assessing the greater needs of health, education and welfare of its constituents which take top priority.

a. Are these environmental issues among the biggest challenges your Tribal community faces?

Answer: Because the land bases of each of my tribes are small, the tribal governments have little control of external factors that affect the environment within our land bases.

4. What do you know about Maryland's environmental and climate change priorities planning?

Answer: I am not familiar with Maryland's environmental and climate priorities planning.

a. If yes, is Maryland's environmental planning aligned with your Tribe's environmental planning/knowledge?

b. If no, why not?

Indigenous Peoples relationship with the state of Maryland Questions:

1. How do you view this state? How does Maryland celebrate Indigenous Peoples?

Answer: I view Maryland as a state that recognizes its Native people. It celebrates Indigenous people by awarding funding to individuals, organizations and events for cultural continuance whether it be for the original Maryland Indians or the tribes that have relocated here.

a. What are incorrect assumptions people made about you and your community?

Answer: I am not aware of anyone making incorrect assumptions about me personally. As for our community, the incorrect assumption would be that people aren't aware that Natives still exist and are tax paying citizens of Maryland.

b. How can we ensure that the valuable histories of Indigenous people are more widely recognized and integrated into mainstream education and cultural discourse?

Answer: By adding more in depth and longer periods of Maryland Native History in Maryland school curriculums. Indoctrinating youth is a valuable strategy for ideological and social change in future generations.

c. What historical accounts are not mentioned that you wish to share with Marylanders?

Answer: Piscataway tribal historical locations, historical associated tribes of Maryland, language, foodways, and the road to state recognition by the three current Piscataway bands.

2. When Maryland mentions diverse communities, do you believe your tribal community is included? Why, why not? How does that make you feel?

Answer: It depends on who is doing the mentioning. But in most cases Native people are not included in the public mentions of diverse communities. Again, this is due to not having a seat at the table of gatekeepers and those who make important decisions that affect Native people. It makes me feel not included.

3. What do you think the future holds for your community?

Answer: Both positive and negative change will occur as the Native community transitions to and from the DMV.

4. How do you want the public to view you and your tribal community in 2023?

Answer: In 2024, I would like to see more Native representation and engagement among our National leaders, on television, our local newspapers and social media.

5. Is there anything else you'd like to say? What additional matters do you want to include in this interview?

Answer: I do not have anything else to add.

6. Are there any Would you like to ask me a few questions you'd like to ask me? You're curious about during the interview?

Answer: No. But thank you for asking.

Appendix II

Environmental Interviewees

EPA

Interviewee: I was born and raised in Chicago, Illinois. I am African American, American Indian, and also Caucasian from my heritage, I have spent my entire career which is 29 years and a half in the federal government. I started as a student intern, and I worked my way up to the Senior Executive Service. And I've worked in three agencies for 26 years in NOAA, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, to two years at the National Science Foundation, NSF, and most recently, I now work in EPA Environmental Protection Agency. So glad to be here today.

03:31

Interviewer: Awesome. Thank you so much for your introduction. And thank you for also participating in this question here too, as well. So, um, do you have any questions for me or anything like that?

03:45

Interviewee: Not at this time, at this time.

03:47

Interviewer: Okay, awesome. So just to start off with my first question, my first question is, in your own words, what would you say is your organization's main mission?

03:57

Interviewee: So my organization is the Environmental Protection Agency. And we do have a formal mission, but I like to paraphrase it and say we want to make the world a better place by cleaning up the air by cleaning up the water and cleaning up the land.

04:14

Interviewer: Awesome. Thank you. And then my second question is, what do you see as a level of understanding or knowledge you personally hold about Indigenous people? And it can you describe this to me?

04:33

Interviewee: Sure. So when I worked in the National Science Foundation, I actually served on a committee that was tasked with broadening our awareness of Indigenous people. So I want to say that that was really eye-opening, because there are Tribal Nations that are recognized by the federal government at the national level, but then there's also Tribal Nations and sovereign entities that are recognized at the state level. And then you also have tribes and sovereign nations that are not recognized, but they are recognized by other sovereign nations and recognized organizations. So I think that is the the complexity of it, that there's a lot of intersectionality. But at the same time, depending on which lens you're looking through some organizations, or Tribal Nations or sovereign nations are recognized, and in some cases they aren't. And that equates to funding, especially at the local, state and federal levels.

05:33

Interviewer: Wow, I'm really impressed with how you knew that because sometimes, like, when I talked with my colleagues, they don't know that. And I'm just like, Oh, that's pretty interesting. But yeah, thank you for sharing me with your level of knowledge on that. Um, so, um, does your organization have an existing relationships with Maryland's Tribal communities?

05:56

Interviewee: So I'm going to say, yes, EPA has both a national commitment to sovereign nations and American Indian populations. And then also, we have what's called the regional level, which the regional level includes the entire state of Maryland. So we have individuals at the region who their job is to network to build alliances and to routinely speak to sovereign nations and American Indian tribes, specifically in the state of Maryland.

06:33

Interviewer: Wow, I did not I did not know that. That's cool. Like, I'm really getting into the conversation. So if I get too eccentric, just bear with me.

Interviewee: Okay, No problem.

Interviewer: Um, so what might you see as the challenges your organization faces in establishing some relationships? I know, you talked about how you establish relationships already. But how did you get to that point where you established a relationship?

07:05

Interviewee: Really, it takes time, energy and funding. And so you know, I think the biggest challenge is, is that I work for the federal government, I work at the pleasure of the executive branch. And as we all know, every four years, there is the potential for a change of leadership in the executive branch. So with that being said, I think one of the main challenges is consistency. Because, you know, we, my my job is to enable the executive branch's goals and priorities. And sometimes that shifts every four years or every eight years. So what do we really need to focus on my region, which is region three, we're located in Philadelphia. And while that doesn't seem like it's a long way away from Maryland, in some cases, it is challenging having face to face meetings or having ongoing interaction with some of these particular communities. And then likewise, for the actual communities to come together on a statewide basis, it doesn't happen as often as you may think. So because of that, you really need to have people dedicated to this effort, you need to have people who can take the time for activities and face-to-face interactions, and then ultimately funding to make sure that they have the resources that they need to be successful.

08:30

Interviewer: And so kind of tying back to your answer. So was the timing like a, I guess, was it like a short term? And when I think of short term, I think of like, probably like, two to five years? Or was it like a long term basis of like, maybe like 10 years or more?

08:53

Interviewee: To interact with some of these sovereign nations?

Interviewer: Yeah

Interviewee: I want to say the commitment has been there for decades, honestly. But I think it's a challenge. Just like with any organization, sometimes there's an ebb and flow and funding, some people leave position. So I think as a result, having ongoing consistent communication for a period of several years, can sometimes be challenging. So to answer your question, there has been a commitment to work with sovereign nations and American Indian tribes for decades. However, the number of people who work on it the amount of funding that might be an ebb and flow and it may shift over time.

09:35

Interviewer: And did you do you have like more of the federally recognized tribes that you work with rather than you know, the state recognized and the tribal recognized tribes that you work with?

09:46

Interviewee: I, since EPA is a federal government agency, as you mentioned earlier, we tend to work with the federally recognized tribes now sometimes, a tribe or a sovereign nation is recognized at the local state and federal levels, great. But our main focus our federally recognized sovereign nations and American Indian tribes.

10:12

Interviewer: and that's nationally, correct.

Interviewee: mmhmmm

Interviewer: Gotcha. Um, so do you, so, sorry. So when I bring up the concept of Indigenous erasure, what are your thoughts? Or what does that mean to you?

10:32

Interviewee: Say it one more, one more time?

10:34

Interviewer: Sorry. So I said, when I bring up the concept, Indigenous erasure, what are your thoughts? And or what does that mean to you?

10:45

Interviewee: The eradication or the removal of a culture of a language of a way of life. Those are the types of things that would come to mind when I think of a erasure might also be the, you know, erasing the historical perspective, perspective from textbooks or in class learning.

11:06

Interviewer: Yeah. And do you think, do you see this, like in the professional level of like, the federal organization?

11:14

Interviewee: I'm going to say it's the flip flip of that is that I really think that the federal agencies are hungry to learn more, they just don't know where to start. Or, again, how do you validate a source? You know, you know, simply having a conversation with one person. I'm sure, you know, these terms, primary and secondary sources. You know, is it a primary source? Is it a secondary source? How do you validate the information that you receive? I think that's the hardest part is, how do you know if the information you're receiving is credible?

11:49

Interviewer: Yeah, that's true. That's a good point. Um, so I, I guess, like, my next question would be like, because I know that U.S. Fish and Wildlife, I don't know, where in the region, but they're actually starting to actually acknowledge and recognize, I don't know if you heard the term Traditional Ecological Knowledge, or also known as TEK. So, um, would you guys be? No, do you guys know about that? TEK, or Traditional Ecological Knowledge?

12:20

Interviewee: I don't, but I mean, you know, I can always Google it. But I mean, but at the same time, you know, that's why you have many people with various forms of expertise, you know, who can come together? And, you know, provide you with this type of knowledge, but no, TEK, I'm writing it down. You said Traditional?

12:37

Interviewer: Ecological Knowledge.

12:41

Interviewee: I'm not familiar with that term. But that's not to say it hasn't been used.

12:47

Interviewer: Yeah, yeah. Cuz, um, I was surprised to hear that US Fish and Wildlife was actually doing that work. I don't know what region of the country is doing. But I just thought, wow, so if your

fish and wildlife are doing this is like other environmental programs, such as you know, the EPA also is doing, like kind of going off of that module or framework too.

13:13

Interviewee: I, again, I can only speak for myself. So I'm not familiar with that. It may be in place in different spaces and places. I know that I can say generally, the EPA perspective is to be local meaning going into the local communities talking with those people. And like you said, these are the individuals who have the historical knowledge of that area, in terms of land and air, you know, and water and can provide those perspectives. Is it a formal programs such as TEK? I'm not sure.

13:48

Interviewer: Okay, thank you.

Interviewee: You're welcome.

Interviewer: I'm, so I guess, like, going back to the Indigenous erasure part. So, um, **do you see your organization as being positioned to help counter erasure?**

14:08

Interviewee: Yeah, depending on how you define it. So you know, I think that, again, having relationships in the community and knowing what the issues are, knowing what the barriers are, and knowing how we can support them. Those are ways that we can help support the community and like you said, reverse this concept of erasure. We offer grants for for many types of programs, we have a strong focus on environmental justice. As you've seen over the summer, we have a strong emphasis on measuring water quality, air quality, and then also just making sure that the land is as as sound as it can be and void of pollutants and toxics. So, you know, it's possible.

14:51

Interviewer: Okay, cool. Um, so, so one of my next Questions going off to a different transition?

How is your organization been working to incorporate principles of diversity, equity and inclusion and justice in the workplace? And in the work that you do?

15:15

Interviewee: Okay, so just in general, there is a strong focus on D I, A and J. And I'll explain that in a minute in the EPA. So for us, you know, everybody has like buzzwords that they use best are buzzwords. So d A, and J is diversity, equity inclusion, the A is accessibility and the J, for lack of a better term environmental justice, because we already have an E, right? So so what are we trying to do? Well, one, one of the reasons why we're talking is that we're trying to create a pipeline of future enthusiast at EPA. And that is by working with colleges and universities, trying to have programs focused on, you know, encouraging people to pursue careers in the environment. And I think that has a strong focus on DIA and J as well.

Another thing is, like you said, having representation and having people are at the table, who can speak from a variety of experiences and through several different lenses. And then last, but not least, you know, EPA needs to represent the communities in which we serve and representation matters. So making sure that not only do we have the best information and have it packaged in the best way, but also having people who are a part of the community live, those communities have shared experiences, be able to translate a lot of the technical into the non-technical, so everyone can make informed decisions.

16:46

Interviewer: Thank you. And, um, so how do you see this kind of like DEIJ or DEIA, in your organization as inclusive for like, Tribal issues, or concerns?

17:03

Interviewee: Well, again, the J, environmental justice, because you should have the same quality of life and the same standard of living regardless of your zip code. And we all know that that has not historically been the case. Most of the, you know, wastewater treatment plants, most of the, you know, trash sites tend to be located in or near people who are of a low economic status. Now, yes, that means a plethora of backgrounds. But we also have found when you cross when you overlay like ethnicity, on top of that, it tends to be brown and black communities. So So to answer your question, yeah, we're seeing that, you know, especially with the Indigenous populations, as well, they need to have a voice at the table, because a lot of the things in our environment are directly affecting them. And then it's a domino effect, you notice, I mean, if the environment is of substandard, then health or you know, someone's standard of living is substandard. If that's substandard, then maybe their pursuit of education is substandard. So then their ability to pursue a particular career, get a certain salary live below a certain standard of life, it is literally a domino effect. And we can tie this all back to the environment. So I think that's one of the reasons why EPA has such a strong focus on DIA is that we're realizing that, you know, we can't have success in several of our technical areas, without first focusing on I'm going to use this term, the social and social science and environmental justice aspect of what we're doing. So in other words, everything that we do, it really starts with the community, it starts with people. And it's it starts with those relationships.

18:50

Interviewer: Yeah. And then since you brought the social science up, it kind of makes me curious. So I guess like, since EPA has been known as being like, the natural science realm, and everything, at least as far as I know, that, um, I guess, like one of the things I wanted to ask, like, how, because you said earlier local, like, you want to keep it local to for doing projects. So how has like EPA been going about it with the social science realm, too?

19:24

Interviewee: So I think social science has exploded over the past like decade. And the reason why is, you know, like I said before, having technical expertise and knowing the the, the how is really important, but then explaining the why to people. That's the translation that often gets lost. And, you know, I use my grandmother as an example, my grandmother had a fifth-grade education. And if I couldn't explain the things that I did to her in a way that she could absorb, then the information is lost. And so I now expand that same concept to what I do on a daily basis. It doesn't matter how technical or how wonderful or how much money you have, for a particular activity, if you can't translate it into a way that people understand it, the information is lost. And it's actually to the detriment of that person, that community or that project or activity. So I think it's, it's it comes full circle. But it starts with understanding that, you know, we're here to serve, and we're here to support the communities. And we have to find the best way to translate all this technical stuff into non-technical, easy to, you know, easy to understand information, you know, and I like to say bite-sized pieces is really important.

20:43

Interviewer: Yeah, I, my professor has been teaching me that it's jargon. And everything. I don't know if you use that term, too. Yes. But yeah, is definitely communication is a big thing between agencies and community. So I totally agree. Um, so my next question is Are there specific

opportunities within the work of your organization that focus on an involving Indigenous people or more specifically, members of tribal communities in Maryland?

21:21

Interviewee: Okay, um, I'm gonna say broadly, okay, because, again, you know, we're a federal agency. So there's something from the Biden-Harris Administration called the Justice40 Initiative. Oh, yeah. Okay, so Okay. So that's why I want to say the answer is yes. But on a broad national term. The last part of your question was, like, specific to Maryland. So if I can split hairs for a second, there are several national initiatives that have a strong focus on DDI, a, a strong focus on incorporating Indigenous communities, and a strong focus on lower economic, economic status communities, as well. So I want to say there is an administration priority to make sure that every community is included, and has the best environment as they possibly can.

22:10

Interviewer: And would you say like, also with the Justice40 Initiative? How, I guess like, since they, like emphasize, like disadvantaged communities. **Do you think that the disadvantaged communities could also apply to how state recognized tribes are, because since again, they can't get federal funding? Because of you know, they're not federally recognized?**

22:38

Interviewee: Okay, so can you say that one more time,

22:40

Interviewer: Sorry. So I was saying how, like, in the Justice40 Initiatives, how they were describing environmental justice, and how to support these communities? So **do you think that in the Justice40 Initiative that it could also apply to state recognized tribes? Because since they can't get federal funding, because they're not federally recognized? Do you think that could be applicable? And just in your own terms? Or?**

23:10

Interviewee: I'm going to, I'm going to show my ignorance here. My understanding is that we have a strong focus on federally recognized tribes. So your question was, well, can this also apply to state-recognized tribes? I'm not sure I know that most of our initiatives and activities when we launched them when we work work with when we work on them, it's with the federally recognized tribes. I don't remember I don't, to my knowledge, and I've been in more than one agency. I don't remember working with state tribes that were not also recognized as a federally recognized tribe. Am I making sense? They have to have the designation of a federally recognized you're

23:54

Interviewer: No you're making sense.

Interviewee: Okay. Got it.

Interviewer: All right. No, no, no, I was like, it was kind of freezing real quick. So I was, yeah, go ahead. You can finish.

24:06

Interviewee: Oh, no, I was just gonna say it has to be a federally recognized tribe. If the sound is going out, I can turn my camera off just for a second. Sometimes when you turn your camera off it, it helps.

Interviewee: Yeah, can you can you hear me better or is it still jumpy?

24:26

Interviewer: Oh, yeah, I could hear you better.

Interviewee: Okay, so let's do that for a couple of minutes. Hopefully, that'll help.

Interviewer: Okay. Were you gonna say anything after that, or was that?

24:43

Interviewee: No, that was the end of my question. I was just gonna say I'm going to turn off my camera. So hopefully the signal will be a little bit better if it's still choppy. I do I do have another internet source. But I'm afraid if I switch mid conversation, I might lose you and have to come back on. So let's see how well this works for the next couple of minutes. Okay?

25:04

Interviewer: Okay, thank you. Um, so, um, how you are also saying how earlier about how we can bring people to the table and you know, hear their voices? Um, **what are some things you think your organization's might do to uplift like Tribal voices?**

25:26

Interviewee: Um, sure, first is having listening sessions. Secondly is going to those communities and having face to face interactions, I realized we're on the cusp of COVID. But I do think there is a distinct difference between an in-person interaction and a virtual interaction. So I think trying to have as many in-person interactions as possible is helpful. Because sometimes you have to see with your own eyes, the population or the areas in which you are serving. What are some other opportunities? Providing information/ Like I said, in an easy to package/ Way. I'm trying to think what else? Can you say the question one more time? I just want to make sure I answered it.

26:16

Interviewer: Yeah, of course. So I was just saying, like, **what are some things you think your organization might be able to do to uplift Tribal voices?**

26:27

Interviewee: Um, so like I said, I think we do have several initiatives that are really helpful. Another way to uplift, uplift voices is to help people have access to these communities in different spaces and places. It might be as simple as having websites, having social media pages, but having some way of ongoing communication back and forth between the sovereign nations and the Tribal, American Indian Tribes, as well as EPA as well. I'm not sure am I jumped? Am I am I? Can you hear me? Or am I still scratching and jumping?

27:06

Interviewer: No, no, no, I can still hear you

27:07

Interviewee: Okay, great.

27:12

Interviewer: Um, **so are you as your organization aware of the Maryland Commission of Indian Affairs? By chance?**

27:21

Interviewee: You said my organization? So you can, I'm gonna say that I am. Because again, you know, my organization is 18,000 people. So I don't want a broad brush and make a generic statement. But each, each region is responsible for building ties at the state level. So I want to say in a very generic form of in a very generic form, your answer is yes. The answer is yes. EPA has a focus on working with the states and the Tribal communities in those states.

27:58

Interviewer: Okay. Um, and then I'm going into my other question. Um, so the policies that have been implemented by the state environmental policies has been emitted, if implemented by the state, sorry. **Do you think that just from your own expertise that the environmental planning aligns with Tribal Environmental Planning or knowledge?**

28:39

Interviewee: So again, my answer would be yes. Very generic sense. The reason why hasn't

Interviewer: Did you hear me?

Interviewee: yeah, heard you the reason why I'm hesitant to say yes, is that every tribal community is different. So you're saying is are we aware of those? I would say that we have good relationships with I think it's 574 federally recognized Tribes. Yes, we have pretty good relationships with them. But at the state and local level, like, like we said before, there are sometimes other tribes that might be recognized at the state or local level but not at the federal level. So for the 574 Indigenous Tribes and sovereign nations, I would say the answer is yes.

29:23

Interviewer: Okay. And then for the state, you said, No, sorry?

29:28

Interviewee: Well, because we are a federal agency, we work with the federally recognized tribes, so that's why I can't say yes or no, it's just that because of the way that we're structured, we work with a federally recognized tribes. So I wouldn't have any data for you on the state recognized tribes. If you're saying is recognized this tribe is recognized by the state but not by the federal government. I don't know that I would have any information on how we interact with them. Okay.

29:58

Interviewer: Okay, Um, Thank you for saying that. I'm sorry, if I keep going back and forth. I know you say you're a federal level. And I keep saying like state level. But I was just I guess I'm just also trying to follow up with some questions that I have here on my paper too. So I apologize if I keep repeating.

30:22

Interviewee: Oh, no problem.

30:25

Interviewer: Um, I guess just a couple more, if you can just bear with me. So in what have been your public view of tribal communities in 2023?

30:46

Interviewee: public view? So I guess I just need some clarification by what you mean by the public view? Is the public view like what am I seeing about these different tribal nations? Are you say, are you talking about like social media websites? TV?

31:07

Interviewer: Sorry, yeah, sorry, I should have said the environmental view life, which is public? So I was talking about how the environmental view of how tribal communities in 2023? Like, how, how is your organization. Um, Viewing the people? I guess, no, wait, hold on. I'm so sorry. Don't... scratch that Scratch, scratch that question. I'm so sorry. I was looking at the wrong question. I apologize. I'm.

So since climate change has been progressing, these couple of years, and and then agencies are trying to find sustainable solutions, or planning modules. **What kind of frameworks have you guys been use if you know, if it's allowed, if it's love for me to ask that. And if these frameworks have been also a part of the, like, strategizing the community perspectives, too?**

32:21

Interviewee: So yes, I encourage you to Google EPA climate plan. So we have a climate plan in each of the 10 regions. So there is one for Eastern, not Eastern region for Region Three. And then also EPA, in and of itself has a strategic plan. And one of the pillars, I'll say one of the main, one of the main focus side, like focuses, one of the main focus of both sides is climate. So I do think we have a strong focus on climate, we're trying to show how, you know, weather over time is actually climate, but also just seeing how the landscape, how the air, how the water is changing over time, and what can we do, again, to make sure that there's a safe, healthy standard for all communities.

33:17

Interviewer: Awesome, thank you. Thank you for sharing that. Also a resource, too. I was looking it up as you were talking. So that was basically it. But **is there anything else you'd like to add? Or that I didn't ask you about that you'd like to contribute?**

33:37

Interviewee: Oh, I know that your research is in Maryland, sometimes it is interesting to compare the data you receive from one state to the data of another state. So you know, Maryland is so unique just because of its geography, in terms of you have beaches on one side, you have literally the Chesapeake Bay, that kind of splits Maryland to a certain degree, and you keep going west, and you literally hadn't had mountain ranges. And so that really, the topography is a lot different. And because of that, I think Maryland is very unique. So if there's any suggestions I would provide to you is that many times Indigenous tribes and their culture, their way of life, the way that they operate, is closely connected to the topography. So for I'm just making this up. You said you're from Arizona, obviously a different type of regional climate than Maryland. But maybe you might want to compare some of the data that you receive to other states. And so again, trust me when you do your thesis, there's so much information. I think sometimes the hard part is whittling it down, but it might be interesting to look at another mountainous state and does their information aligned with what you find in Maryland and the western portion of the state.

Someone who has you know, a lot of beaches, a lot of coastline. Um, do their Indigenous tribes and sovereign nations? What do they do in terms of coastal ecosystem management? Things like that. I think it'll just be interesting as you progress to compare what you're learning in Maryland, to either the surrounding states, or like I said, states with similar topography. And then also, as you mentioned before, I know that, you know, your questions were focused on state, but it might be helpful as you move forward, how many state tribes are also recognized as federal tribes, or like you said, how many local tribes are not recognized as a state tribe.

I actually had a colleague, this is about six or seven years ago, who was a part of a American Indian tribe in North Carolina. And he said, it wasn't a recognized tribe, but according to his family, you know, absolutely. And they had their own language, their way of life. But they weren't recognized. And again, when you're not recognized, sometimes you don't get the same services, you don't get the same funding. And ultimately, that can result in the same quality of life. So I would encourage you to just understand the breakdown between local, state, and federally recognized entities. And then also, what do you need to do to be categorized at the local, federal or state levels?

Other than that, I just want to say, I think your research is so interesting. And I mean, I would, I would love to read your, you know, pieces once it's finalized. I know you're collecting information, you're participating in a lot of the, you know, research interview side of things right now, writing is totally different publishing is totally different. But I really do think that this is an awesome topic. And I hope, I hope to share it with everyone once once it's finalized. So best of luck to you.

37:00

Interviewer: Yeah, thank you. Now, I do want to share this information and gathering and I think you also with advice, too, but going back was the North Carolina of the Lumbee Nation by chance?

37:13

Interviewee: Yeah, I think so. I think so. Yeah. Okay, coast is a coastal or is it inland?

Interviewee: I think it's coastal. Okay, then probably yes. And so my, my colleague, I mean, you know, he's biracial, he's Caucasian, and he's a part of this Tribe. But he said his mother was a part of this, this Tribe, and it wasn't even recognized. And so but according to them, they're recognized. So again, that's a big part of this as well as different states, I think there are different qualifications in order, right, in order to recognize someone on the state level, and then on the federal level in another in and of itself. Don't quote me on this, but I think like in the Louisiana area, there's like one Tribe at the federal level. But if you look it up, it says, We are like eight different tribes. You see, I'm saying, so it's like tribes within a tribal system. But I think they did that in order to get the federal agency or federal designation, I think that's a better way of saying it. So anyway, I know I'm rambling a bit, but I would say, you know, cross-check your information in terms of typography, and overall location, cross-check the information in terms of how many of these recognized tribes are recognized at the federal state, local level, or any combination of the three.

38:34

Interviewer: Yeah, I definitely will be doing that, too. I was actually already thinking about it, because especially since I'm from another region and coming into this region, too, and also just recognizing that, you know, there's actually no Maryland federally recognized tribes, but there are state recognized tribes and other tribes that are tribally recognized too. So. Yeah, it's a lot, but it's also very valuable to learn to so yeah.

Interviewee: Absolutely. Awesome.

Interviewer: So do you have anything else you'd like to ask questions about or anything?

39:08

Interviewee: I think that's it for right now. But you know how to reach me and you know, I'm so proud of what you're doing, and I'm proud of the iCARE program that we were able to connect. If I can be of service to you in any other way. Just let me know. Okay.

39:19

Interviewer: Awesome.

Interviewee: Yeah, of course.

Interviewer: Thank you. I'll stop the recording.

Interviewee: Okay.

Ended: 39:27

Chesapeake Bay Foundation Individual

03:02

Interviewee: I joined in January of 2023. So I'm coming up on a year in January. But I have previously been at this organization in various roles, specifically in our Maryland office within environmental protection and restoration. So work a lot with communities on engagement and policy and advocacy work and restoration projects like tree plantings and oyster restoration around the Chesapeake Bay watershed. And then a year ago shifted to this role after leaving the Conservation Fund as a director of conservation initiatives for other urban parks with purpose program. So I am a Maryland native and have lived in Maryland all my life except for going to college in North Carolina. But moved back to Maryland after graduation because it's where my family is from and where most of my friends lives. So I was excited to move back and get a job here as at the Chesapeake Bay Foundation. Not too far after graduation because I was a part of the Chesapeake Conservation Corps program in its inaugural year. So most of my career has been in Environment and Conservation with a focus on engagement and, and people. That is my introduction.

04:43

Interviewer: Thank you so much for introducing and again being part of this work. So just to us moving Do you have any questions so far before I proceed?

Interviewee: No, no questions yet.

Interviewer: Okay. Awesome. So just to start off our first question, again, this is just mainly your perspective and along with the organization, so there's no right or wrong answers here. So first question I want to ask is, in your own words, **what would you say is your organization's main mission?**

05:21

Interviewee: Sure, our main mission is preserving and protecting the Chesapeake Bay. Its waters and land and everything that inhabits the Chesapeake Bay watershed. So basically saving the bay. That's been our mission since our inception.

05:42

Interviewer: Yeah, superheroes

Interviewee: Sure

Interviewer: Um, so **what do you see as the level of understanding or knowledge you personally hold about Indigenous people? People? Can you describe this to me?**

06:01

Interviewee: Yeah, sure, um, my personal perspective is that I know, of various Tribes that are a part of, you know, in Maryland, and who have either migrated to the Maryland region from other places, specifically the Lumbee Tribe that has a very strong Tribal community in Baltimore, Maryland. And also in North Carolina, where I went to college, and also just Maryland Tribes that

are not federally recognized, but are very active in the environmental movement, very active in policy in terms of Land Back and land stewardship. And then within my organization, it has been in the past few years or so that our organization has actually acknowledged, you know, the, the places where Native and Indigenous communities were and are, because many of them have been displaced. But then also acknowledging where some of our organizational properties and facilities, the land that we are on was once inhabited, or still inhabited by those Tribal communities. So we've done a few, some small projects where we've kind of dug into some of that history, but still have a lot to uncover, and to include as a part of those Tribal communities. But I will also say, you know, some of my personal connections are just folks that are very active in within their Tribe and within their community. So that's just my personal connection, because I have friends that are Lumbee or from the Piscataway Conoy Tribe.

07:56

Interviewer: Okay. And so when you were mentioning about land back and land stewardship, because I feel like not a peep, not a lot of people really grasp the understanding of those terms. **So what would you say that, how you would define what land back and land stewardship is?**

08:15

Interviewee: Yeah, well, you know, when it comes to Tribal communities in the way that they utilize resources on the land, it is really as a steward, you know, the earth it is here for us to use and provide, and it provides so much, but also in a way that we don't use it to overly consume. And really thinking about Indigenous ways of inhabiting, the land farming the land, the care and nurture that you put into something that provides to you, even though it is an inanimate object, it is a living resource.

And in terms of land back, a lot of Tribal communities that are advocating for land back is really thinking about, we want to occupy the spaces where we once were. And that might mean that some of the communities that we were in, you know, some of the places where we were raised from, we just want acknowledgement that we were there, but also actually physically having ownership of that land again.

And that is, can be difficult in terms of, you know, what is occupying that space now, but a lot of farmland or you know, open field and things like that, or where there are resources connected to water and access is really important, especially in Maryland, where about 97% of the water, the shoreline and the water access is privately owned, you know, being able to have access to that again and you leave realize the Chesapeake Bay, especially as a resource that were at once was something that provided navigation and ceremony spaces and food and things like that. So just being an advocate for that, but also knowing that there were once there were people here, even though they're there aren't any more in a lot of that land at either private or in conservation.

10:29

Interviewer: Thank you for your definition on that. Because usually, sometimes when I have conversations about land back, a lot of people means like displacement. And it's like that. It's not what it means. But But I do like your, your version. So thank you. Um, so I guess next question is like, more specifically, what do you see, as I know that you said that Indigenous people in the state of Maryland, but as your organization, **what do you see, like Indigenous people in the state of Maryland, like the level of knowledge of it?**

11:09

Interviewee: So honestly, we don't have a strong knowledge. Besides, you know, some of the Tribes that are that we have some relationships with, and I use relationships loosely, as we've worked with some of the Tribal leaders or some members of the Tribe, for certain things, and we're just building we're starting to build some of those relationships.

And there has been some acknowledgment and understanding of some of the history of some of the Tribes federally recognized and others that are in spaces where CBF has facilities. So we have facilities on the Eastern Shore of Maryland and Prince George's County and Upper Marlboro, and all of those, and, and an understanding that history where, you know, Native and Indigenous communities occupied and extended this geography in this space, that some of our understanding, a few staff have done some deeper dives into history and some of the research and also wanting to acknowledge that more in some of our programming, whether that's land acknowledgments, or actually working with some of the Tribal communities on content for, you know, environmental education and other curricula that we're we're just we're developing that we develop and utilize throughout our engagement with the public.

So some of that is just being able to be a storyteller, but also allow, you know, Tribal communities to be a part of this work and be able to tell their own story, and knowing that they are within the same communities where we live, and can, you know, just as you know, we asked for other volunteers and advocates to share their stories and share their support for the Bay, Tribal communities are just as important or even more, because they have some knowledge that we don't, you know, when it comes to the land, and the geography and some of the history of that place. So, it's us trying to be better at being a better partner. So that's where we kind of are at the nexus of that we're kind of in between this fence of we know that we, there are people, you know, they're not a separate group that, you know, we do engage with, because they're part of our community, in any way.

13:59

Interviewer: Okay. And so when you were mentioning, like, some of the relationships, so **what might you see as the challenges your organization faces?** Probably like how you said, semi like relationship with the communities in Maryland.

14:18

Interviewee: Um, honestly, I was with any community, that we as an organization haven't really built those relationships. So, you know, I mentioned my role is new at the organization as the, you know, DEI person and it has taken some iterations of work where the organization itself is really trying to be in a position to leverage some of those relationships to reach the ultimate At goal of saving the Bay, and prior to some of our work with communities of color Indigenous communities, it was very heterosexual and white and male-dominated. And those were the communities that we were reaching out to white people, white donors. That utilize the bay in a different way. Whereas now we're really trying to center all people in our work, and really thinking about the relationships that we have, and trying to build some of those relationships. And really thinking about the **(pause)**

15:45

Interviewee: (continuing) the responsibility of including everyone, because everyone is affected by this, and it is a right to have clean water and clean air. So really thinking about our own privilege, and how, you know, as an organization, as a white LED organization, and what that looks like, and the overall goal of reaching a safe Bay, because there are 18 million people in this watershed, and it just doesn't look like one specific group. If that makes sense.

16:17

Interviewer: No, that makes sense. Um, so I guess like, just to clarify, so your challenge would be just kind of like, especially how you were mentioning, like you reached out to mainly white centric, males, donors, and relationships. So **I guess it's just kind of finding the resources to kind of get the relationship going?**

16:39

Interviewee: Yeah, finding the resources, and also changing the way that we think about leaders in this space. So a lot of the leaders that we look to, for information and for knowledge, are scientists and folks with, you know, PhDs and masters and things like that, that have our focus on science, you know, we're, we are a science-based organization, so looking to them as those leaders in that space. But can we also acknowledge and utilize Indigenous knowledge and place-based knowledge and, you know, folks who might not have all of the degrees but it even if they do have that too, but they still have that perspective of I've lived on this land, I've utilized this land, and I have a different way that I'm stewarding it, and I've seen the changes, even though I might not know the graphs and the trends and the numbers, I still know that the shoreline was much larger before all the storms were, you know, happening more frequently.

So just utilizing both sets of knowledge. And you know, it's not one or the other, but it's using that together. I think that's a challenge of letting some of that pride go as an organization, and, you know, some of that power, you know, shifting power dynamics, and also shifting the where, you know, where resources are going. A lot of organizations, including ours, you know, we go after these big grants, and all these different things for these really big projects. But are we including new partners and new audiences, where, you know, we know that people are being impacted by climate change and environmental pollution.

So you know, thinking about all that, I think part of our challenges, we don't have the connections and the contacts that we would like to have. And also not wanting to be one of those helicopter organizations that comes in and says, "Hey, we're doing this project, we're doing this, we need your help". But really thinking about being open and transparent about what that relationship entails. So just navigating some of those conversations can sometimes be a challenge.

18:49

Interviewer: Yeah, I Yeah. When I first came to Maryland, it I would say it was like a bit of a challenge finding those resources. But I guess like, once I was reaching out, and people were noticing that, you know, I can also like, I'm interested and passionate and everything, that's when I guess they started opening up, but I mean, I could leave some resources to you if you need help with that.

Interviewee: That'll be great.

Interviewer: Yeah. Okay, awesome. So I'll send it to you afterward.

Interviewee: Sure.

Interviewer: But um, I guess the next question I want to ask is **when I bring up the concept of Indigenous erasure, what are your thoughts or what does that mean to you?**

19:39

Interviewee: Means a lot. You know, when you think about history, you think about the the erasure of Native peoples on this land where there were very large communities and knowing that they traveled across the watershed across the East Coast, you know, to different places based on, you know, where the food was or where ceremonies were happening, and then coming back to know that your, your community was overtaken by settlers and erasing the stories through, you know,

overpowering them with, with news stories, or, you know, something I've read recently, where there were names of certain things that then get renamed by, you know, English people and White people who colonized this area. So, you know, settled settled here.

So, just the erasure of that, you know, culture and stories and names, then, you know, there is no placement, you know, being displaced, where your community was. So not really having a tie to the land, you know, having a tie to those ancestors into that story. So when I think about erasure, I think about that, and Indigenous communities, and I think about that, you know, for my own history, as well, my ancestors were descendants from, you know, from Africa before they were enslaved. And I do not know, that concept of where my family is, from specifically, what village what country, you know, so just knowing that that part of my history is erased, because there was there is no connection. So when I think about, you know, cultural erasure, I think about very similarly to African communities, and knowing that that was a very similar experience here in the Americas, for Indigenous and Native people as well.

21:42

Interviewer: That's yeah, I have to say, That's facts. I did like how you brought that up, because, I mean, I'm also half Black, too. So that's one of the things that, you know, I can't really, it's very hard for me to connect on my Black side where our family was from in this in the country of Africa. So it's definitely like, a huge, like, erasure like cultural nature, what you brought up. So.

22:06

Interviewee: yeah, purposefully, to eliminate, you know, eliminate people for power, for resources, you know, for things like that. But that doesn't mean, you know, you hold on to that, because there are ways that I mean, it's fortunate that a lot of Indigenous communities here, especially in Maryland, or other places, you know, have some knowledge of that, you know, there are people that are still around that can tell those stories that know, the Native language, but, you know, a lot of that is being lost to because a lot of those elders are dying. And, you know, some of the newer generation doesn't know, you know, what some of those practices are, some of those cultural things are, you know, those ceremonies, and also the language and dance. So it's really nice to have that whereas, you know, it's been, at least for generations, in my own family, where I have no clue most of my family was born here in the Americas because of that, of that history.

23:10

Interviewer: Yeah, and hopefully, in some way, you know, being in this country, even though like centuries worth of cultural erasure is been inflicted upon the Black community, you know, I just feel like, you know, they're also having the, I guess you could say, like, the current cultures of now, our contemporary cultures. Yeah. And that makes up a lot. So Black joy.

Interviewee: Absolutely. Absolutely.

23:44

Interviewer: I'm so going to a little about the erasure part. So, I guess, like, **what do you think could be done to address or counter erasure?**

24:02

Interviewee: Um, you know, I think the way that history is told there's, you know, a certain ownership and most of the history is told from a Eurocentric perspective. So, being able to tell those stories, and now, some of those oral histories being recorded so that they can share the place and time and the geography of Indigenous peoples. I think it's very important to know, you know, post, I mean, pre-colonial history, and also what happened in between because if you know

anything about history, and my sister's a history teacher, she helps me put this in perspective a lot. A lot of times when we hear about these big things that have happened in history.

Like, you know, Independence Day or whatever, there were other things happening around the world around, you know, the country at that very specific time. So just knowing you know, some of that all history, being able to record that, being able to translate some things I know, that can be difficult, you know, with language, but I think giving the space, and for a lot of those of that have that history to be told a lot of the stories to be told is one way to combat erasure.

Another one is knowing that Indigenous peoples exists. It's not they're not a past relic. And it's something that I think a lot of times people when they're thinking about Indigenous communities, "oh, yeah, Native Americans were here, or they once were". Whereas we're not thinking about them in the present. So just having some knowledge of the history, but also the present, and knowing that they will exist in the future, because they, you know, are a part of the the culture and a part of our neighborhoods. So I think just telling the story, and utilizing the knowledge, the best way that we know how.

26:17

Interviewer: Mm hmm. Yeah, I, I agree, because a lot of times, yeah, Native people are told in a past tense form. And it's just like, saying, like, "oh, they were here, but now they're not". And in reality, it's actually they're still there. But just not seen, I guess, in the, I guess, like American stereotype of a Native person. So,

26:43

Interviewee: You know, it's so interesting, too, because, you know, here on the East Coast, a lot of Indigenous communities were basically assimilated into the contemporary culture, whereas, you know, on the West coast, or Midwest, a lot of Indigenous communities live separately, because they live on, you know, they were concentrated on and reservations. And, you know, that in spaces where they were displaced to, you know, to reservations. So, there are larger communities and larger places, you know, where Indigenous communities live and gather. So a lot of that culture is still kind of maintained. Whereas on the East Coast, so much development, so much of that colonization happened that a lot of Indigenous communities got, you know, either wrapped up into, you know, enslaved communities, or they were assimilated somewhere else, or they were displaced other places. So, some of that pre contact history is was lost, unless you have, you know, some of those oral storytellers, and they're recording that information.

But, you know, think about that, in terms of the knowledge and the history of, you know, even the Chesapeake Bay watershed, how there were practices that Indigenous communities use that did not equate to overfishing, did not, you know, were able to mitigate some of those storms and things like that, because they just use what was on the land, but we don't have that knowledge because it was, it's forgotten, or, you know, somebody knows it, it's in their head.

28:24

Interviewer: And would you say like, it would have to also do with valid tilbud valid knowledge too, as well?

28:32

Interviewee: Yeah, like, you know, how do you how people validate information is one thing. So I think that you know, it's hard when you have different power dynamics, where you have people

who, you know, I studied this, I know, this, you know, being able to basically prove that that is true, is part of the issue and that's part of the challenge.

29:00

Interviewer: And I feel like also to like, I don't know if you're aware of this term, but traditional ecological knowledge?

29:08

Interviewee: Yeah, T, TEK.

29:10

Interviewer: Yeah. And so, um, that's also been implemented in some programs like US Fish and Wildlife Service, and how it's actually giving sustainable like solutions and potential solutions and how it could be used in a manageable way, too. So I feel like in some instances like degrees doesn't always have to be the most valid to be in the knowledge so it has to also do with like observation like Time Observation on the land too as well.

29:40

Interviewee: Yep. Time observation and even using more anthropology. I think a lot of times we are thinking about hard science, like the chemistry of things, the biology of things, the the ecological transition, but anthropology is so important to which is You're very important science that also has some roots in sociology too. So, you know, being able to discover culture and acknowledge culture as well as some of that traditional ecological knowledge is so it's so key. I wish we use that more. Some people are, you know, in terms of like farming and things like that, so.

30:25

Interviewer: So would your organization would implement TEK as part of knowledge? Or?

30:31

Interviewee: I think we would be definitely open to it. I don't see, you know, we, a lot of times, we look to some of those agencies like US Fish and Wildlife Service for some of their, you know, research and knowledge, because they just have a staff that's totally dedicated to that. So we have scientists on our staff, but we also look to other data, you know, for that, and I think that's definitely some data that we would utilize.

30:55

Interviewer: Okay, yeah. I'm sorry, just sorry, going into the next one. So this is like within your realm. So how does your organization's been working to incorporate principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, justice, in the workplace? And in the work that you do?

31:21

Interviewee: Yes, so we are on a very, we're on a spectrum right now. So a lot of the work that we're doing currently is a lot of internal work when it comes to equity, really, train, you know, going through training and visioning as a part of our internal culture. So really, making sure that the staff in our leadership, have an understanding of why it's important and what that means, and how we can utilize that as a part of our organizational model and integrate equity in all facets of the organization, which is really important. So just understanding unconscious bias and understanding the definitions of diversity, equity, inclusion and justice.

But also advocating and working on behalf of communities that have been disproportionately impacted by climate change and environmental pollution. Our internal litigation department has been working with communities for a number of years, and representing them in terms of stormwater management and flooding and overflows and things like that air quality cases. So a lot of our work is centered around environmental justice. But when we think about the bigger piece of equity, and how each department has a piece of that, so internally, what does that look like for our staff and a sense of belonging and well-being for them, but then also, how are we working with and working alongside communities of color and low income communities, and really putting them at the forefront of that work, because they are on the frontlines of a lot of the issues that we're advocating for.

So we are looking, you know, ahead at our vision for, you know, breaching some of our pollution goals, but really centering people in that and not only utilizing science as an indicator, but, you know, people who are impacted as well. So, you know, how are we including those voices are we you know, bringing issues to the forefront of, you know, that are impacting communities, like, you know, toxins and sustenance fishing and, you know, even the economy of, of the Chesapeake Bay watershed and how, for the most part, communities of color and lower income communities and Tribal communities have been kind of left out of those conversations. So we're really going through it, I mean, it's a journey, it's not something that will happen overnight. So we're just really in the last five years or so getting started and really going through some really deeper discussions and conversations and training within our own organization, so that then we can model that and practice that outside.

34:23

Interviewer: Yeah, no, I totally get it, especially when it comes to doing that work. Because especially like people of color have been inflicted upon unethical practices for many, many decades. And in order to kind of like build that you need to build the trust within the community to so it's, yeah, that's how you're able to kind of like work with them too.

34:43

Interviewee: So yeah, absolutely. Just continue to show up, you know, you don't ask for anything. You just show up. You come to the community meetings, you go to the block parties, you you know, are just there and you build those relationships. So then when there is something big that comes up a policy that might affect them, you know, you're advocating for a specific issue, you know that you are working alongside a community or something that they're asking for, you know, there might be, you know, we're dealing with flooding in our backyards. And you know, this is happening, we really need Chesapeake Bay Foundation to support us and advocate on our behalf. And, you know, because we have built some of those relationships, that's how you get things done. So it's, you know, takes all of us, it's not just one group, it's not just one organization, it really takes everyone to really who, you know, who are doing this as a passion project, but also who are doing this for their, you know, for the ultimate goal of of a save bay or a healthy community. So, yeah, it's definitely trust is number one, you know, even trust within our own organization, if you're trusting the people that you're working with, and knowing that they have your best interests and have the same core values that, that you're upholding those same core values, and you're able to work through some of those challenges and understand each other better.

36:02

Interviewer: Mm hmm. I totally agree. Yep. Right on. Um, so I know you touched based on this about how you were saying the Tribal peoples. But just to kind of like specify, **how do you see this kind of focus the DEI work in your organization as inclusive of Indigenous issues?**

36:30

Interviewee: I'm so honestly, right now, we've started a little small when it comes to that, just really focusing on some land acknowledgement and understanding. It is also different in Maryland than it is in some of our other regions. So we have some stronger relationships with different tribes in Virginia. Where we're working with in some of the Tribal communities on landback, or land access, some restoration projects as a part of their, you know, Tribal, their Tribal community work. But we have also worked with some Tribe, Tribal communities, specifically in Maryland, around our environmental education work. So understanding where our facilities are, but also knowing that when we're talking about what's happening on the land, in terms of pollution, and in some of the resources where the waterway is connecting to the Bay, or this forest is connecting to the Bay, we're also acknowledging the Tribal communities that live and occupy that space. So we have not, in this case, worked with Tribal communities on any policy or advocacy work. But I could see that in the future, as we see, you know, continue to build some of those relationships. Yeah, I mean, I think in that case, we're still we're still trying to figure that out, and what that looks like for us as an organization.

38:10

Interviewer: So would you say, since you were saying how you were your organization works with Virginia tribes? Is it because of their tribal status? And when I say tribal status, I mean, like they're federally recognized?

38:24

Interviewee: No, I mean, I really think it's just the relationships. We have just different relationships and Virginia than we do in Maryland. And that's just based on staff and an engagement, not necessarily because of the status either. You know, in Maryland, we're working with a Tribe, I think, that has been trying to get federally recognized since the 90s. The Piscataway Conoy Tribe is that federally recognized yet, but you know, still, I know, they're still working on their status, but we have some relationships with some of the members of that Tribe. But we haven't been involved in any of the, you know, projects that they're working on, or anything like that. Whereas in Virginia, it's just we have a stronger relationship with the Nansemond Tribe, and we're working with them on different restoration projects and education and, you know, touch points, things like that. So it's just just different.

39:25

Interviewer: Okay. Um, so, I guess like, one of the other things I wanted to touch base on is how does this impact the professional in Indigenous people within the organization in Maryland? Because I know how you said that you have like different relationships with some of the Tribal people in some of the Tribal communities. So would you say it's more of like, like a professional kind of relationship like as they're working in like, agencies, versus like, and them just being regular citizens rather like teachers or something?

40:07

Interviewee: Yeah, so a little bit of both. So they are either a part of the agency. So like, for instance, the executive director of the Accokeek Foundation. She works for another nonprofit organization. And we worked with them last year on a conference that we had, as a for a part of one of our departments. So we had members of the Piscataway Conoy Tribe, Chairman, Francis Gray, who's an environmental justice advocate, and storyteller, and then Angela, who's the executive director, they were a part of our curriculum and field experience that day.

Whereas we have it, so most of it is in a professional setting, you know, for information and, and being an advocate and environmental space. And working with those agencies, or the people, you know, individuals, whereas we also have, well, I, you know, then me and others have personal relationships with people. So, you know, I know someone who works for the huge, like the Maryland State Commission on Indian Affairs, but he just so happens to be my friend's husband, so.

Interviewer: Small world

Interviewee: Small world. So I know him, I know him in his professional setting, and the work that he's doing for the state of Maryland and with tribes in the state of Maryland, but I also know him personally, because I am friends with, you know, them as a couple. So I think the other pieces, we know that there are, you know, a lot of different Tribes, you know, in Maryland, you know, that we haven't connected with. And that's just because we just don't have, you know, we haven't met them or, you know, we haven't engaged with them on anything. So I think, you know, that's for the future, I think, you know, if we can continue to grow and to build trust, I think that will really transform some of those relationships. And, you know, I will also say, some of the relationships that we have right now are very, you know, just in the starting getting stages, we've worked with them a little bit on on one specific thing, whereas we haven't necessarily, you know, done like a bigger project with them, or, you know, them being a part of other things within the organization. And I honestly don't think that we have anyone on staff that I, that has voluntarily shared that they are a part of a Tribal community. So, you know, that's another place where we build interest within our own organization to hire staff that are from those various Tribes.

43:01

Interviewer: Mm. Okay. That's interesting. I really liked how you mentioned the commissioner of Indian Affairs. I think I know who you're talking about, but.

43:09

Interviewee: Keith Colston

43:13

Interviewer: That guy is very like, outgoing guy. So.

43:17

Interviewee: He is very Yes. Oh my gosh. And it's funny he that he and his wife are both from the Carolinas. So they travel around the East Coast to different events and powwows. I can't tell you how many people want him to emcee their powwow across the East Coast. So he's a very busy person, but it is downtime. You know, they are really good friends with you.

43:43

Interviewer: Oh, wow, hard to miss guy hard to miss guy. Um, okay, so this is just like, the one section to the end. So we're almost like about done, so.

Interviewee: That's fine.

Interviewer: Um, so, um, are there any specific opportunities within the work of your organization that focus on involving Indigenous people, or more specifically, members of the Tribal communities in Maryland?

44:13

Interviewee: Yeah, I mean, I think all aspects we, you know, the Chesapeake Bay Foundation is a pretty large organization where we have, you know, different departments, different experts, from, you know, the things that keep an organization going from finance to fundraising to environmental

educators to restoration scientists. So I think that there is no shortage of opportunity for us to work with Tribal and Indigenous communities. You know, I also mentioned before it would be really great to hire, you know, someone from any of those Tribal communities as a part of our staff to have a different perspective as we continue to diversify. So in our in our board, there's just, you know, many ways that we can do that.

And then also just partnerships, I don't think that we've actually worked on a project or something, you know, outside of some of the Tribes, Tribal communities who we are working with in Virginia, but, you know, working alongside, you know, communities in terms of restoration or advocacy, you know, we do a lot of policy work. So, you know, yeah, I think there's just plenty of opportunity that we just haven't tapped into yet.

45:27

Interviewer: And, um, I guess, like, **what types of conversations do you have on the topic of Indigenous people in your organization's?**

45:37

Interviewee: Yeah, I mean, a lot of the conversations have been around land acknowledgement. We also, Chesapeake Bay Foundation owns a property in Upper Marlboro, that was once a tobacco farm, but they have also had a historian out at the property that I think walked the entire property to point out some places where there were, you know, Indigenous communities that were on that, you know, on the land and occupied that space. So wanting to tell that full story better, and just acknowledging our role in in history, and potentially, uplifting more of those stories and being able to tell that better. So right now, a lot of the conversations have been around that.

Whereas we haven't, you know, and the other piece is really just thinking about how all communities, including Tribal and Indigenous and community of color can be engaged on some of the work around climate and environmental restoration. So just thinking about all people who can contribute and be a part of the conversation, because, again, like I said, it'll just take all of us, you know, we have not quite met some of our restoration goals for the Chesapeake Bay as a whole as a, you know, Chesapeake Bay community. And it will take all of us to get to that point, you know, and really thinking about whose voices haven't been at the forefront of some of this work, and making sure that we are acknowledging them, but also having the platform in the space and stepping back, you know, and listening to some of that traditional knowledge and, you know, acknowledging their role in in some of the work, you know, that will take to save the Bay. Mm

47:41

Interviewer: Mm hmm. Okay. Um, so, I guess, like, one more question. Um, so go, I should ask this in the beginning, but when you mentioned are, when you say, roll back, hold on, when Maryland, **when the state of Maryland mentions diverse communities, do you? From your perspective? Do you think they're also including the Tribal Nations too, as well?**

48:13

Interviewee: When Maryland, like the state itself?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: Oh, that's a great question. Probably not. A lot of times when people think about diversity, they're thinking about the physical, racial and ethnic diversity, and not really looking at Indigenous communities in terms of, you know, the population that makes up some of some of that. So, yeah, I'm not sure. I mean, a lot of times when people think about diversity, they're thinking, Black and White, you know, specifically in, in Maryland, or specifically in the Americas,

you know, because of the division of White and Black community. So, yeah, I'm not sure that Indigenous communities are a part of that.

49:08

Interviewee: And, you know, could be a number of things, but a lot of times Indigenous people have assimilated into the contemporary culture. So they're not really segregated from some of the larger racial or ethnic groups that people are talking about when they think about environmental justice communities or diverse communities.

49:31

Interviewer: Yeah, I did notice like in Maryland, specifically, and East Coast, um, that is kind of like a Black and White focus lens, rather than, you know, also the Latino, Asian, Native, like, Middle Eastern people. So yeah, it's definitely a challenge, especially when it comes to defining what diverse communities is because I feel like there's a lot left out in it, and I know that you know, diverse community needs to be defined more in a more explicit detail, because I think, you know, in order for us problems to be solved, you know, we have to have those conversations of how do we define this? And how do we go about this? And, yeah.

50:19

Interviewee: I totally agree with you, you know, when you're thinking about people, acknowledging the background, and the culture, and the race and ethnicity is very important, if you're talking specifically about Black communities, name that, if you're talking specifically about the Latino community, name that, you know, you know, for all of those groups, because that means that you acknowledge and understand their presence and, and their role and different cultures have different meaningful experiences when it comes to the environment and to climate and to nature. You know, there are a lot of differences within those cultures, where they experience different things and that they are, you know, a part of different issues and have different challenges within their own community. So it's really important to name them specifically.

You know, I mentioned landback and land stewardship, that's very important to Tribal communities, whereas, you know, maybe not as much in Black communities where we're just wanting, you know, voices to be heard, and the acknowledgement, that no, we are, are dealing with some of the things and have been disenfranchised and disempowered. Whereas Latino communities might feel differently, they might, you know, this is I'm a first generation and, you know, I'm here and I don't speak English, you know, there are just a lot of different challenges that people in those different groups are dealing with. And acknowledging those specific issues and also acknowledging them, you know, specifically as a community, it's just very important to, to show respect and honor and, you know, of that culture. And knowing that each of them have different ways to mitigate some of the issues that we're dealing with, and climate in the environment.

52:15

Interviewer: Totally agree, because every environment for each community is differently and how it's impacted. So It's definitely...

52:22

Interviewee: And there might be some similarities. I mean, here in Maryland, specifically, we have a lot of public housing communities that were once mostly mostly low income Black people, and now they're, you know, Latino, and they're just a mix. So, you know, some of those issues are synonymous with some of those same cultures and groups, but for the most part, there are a lot of different there are a lot of differences too.

52:50

Interviewer: Totally agree, totally agree. Um, so a lot. So is there like anything else you'd like to add, or that I didn't ask you about that you'd like to contribute?

53:03

Interviewee: Um, you know, I just want to add that, I think it's so important. You know, like, you mentioned, building trust. I think in any relationship, whether that's professional or personal trust, is really important. Respect is very important.

And when it comes to the environment, and climate change, you know, climate change is something that affects all of us environmental issues, affect all of us, you know, water and air has no boundaries. So we should not, you know, put those boundaries on each other, because we all deserve the right, you know, for these very important things to thrive and, and to be healthy people. So I just, you know, hope that as an organization, we continue to grow, and that we continue to grow in our relationships and our transparency in the way that we're working with people. And I hope that for, you know, myself, and I hope that for my organization moving forward, and we're really working on it, and I think that there's just a better way, as a community, you know, for the environmental community, but also for communities in Maryland to acknowledge, you know, Tribes and Tribal communities, and really work to build those relationships for all of us. So, yeah, that's all I wanted to add, but I just really appreciate your very thoughtful questions. They were really great.

54:39

Interviewer: Thank you. Um, are there any questions you'd like to ask me about?

54:45

Interviewee: Um, yeah, I'm just curious what your processes I know that you mentioned that you are working on interviewing, you know, folks from different sectors, whether that's from you know, the environment or in with the organizations but also Tribal communities and themselves, or individuals from those communities. So just wondering what your process is and what your next step is for your, for your thesis?

55:11

Interviewer: Yeah, that's a good question. Thanks for asking. Um, so. So the two groups is environmental, and then the Tribal groups in Maryland, and so I'm going to do is, course we're going to transcribe this. And then we are coding the themes of like, the interviews and everything. And then we're going to see like, kind of highlight the themes that were addressed from each interviewees and how, you know, especially the 21st century, because like, I feel like a lot of times when, especially, particularly the East Coastal Tribes, like they're told in the past tense version, and, and I feel like this interview will help, like, highlight the 21st century Native people that are issues that are happening with them, or environmental issues, or maybe just like, kind of like, not even issues, but just kind of wanting to still make a statement and say that we're still here, and we are still like thriving in a way that we are.

And for the environmental communities, I just want them to be also aware for the 21st century Tribal peoples because, I mean, they're, they're probably working on projects that are just Native led focus, and probably wanting, maybe a little help, but they just don't know how to get that help, you know, and they don't really know how the resource goes about it. So just kind of like me not

being I'm not trying to be a hero or something, but just kind of like kind of filling in those bridges. And say, like, you know, this is this, and this is there. And just kind of making sure that you know, a relationship could be potentially establish, so that, especially with how climate change is getting, like worse each year that we need to like really come together and find a compromise in this.

57:11

Interviewee: Yeah, absolutely. You know, that, have you read 'All We Can Save?' Have you read that book?

57:21

Interviewer: Who's that by?

57:23

Interviewee: It is a collection of stories and poems that were put in a book. So the book is edited by a Ayana Elizabeth Johnson and Katharine William, Will, Wilkinson. But it's like solutions for climate for the climate crisis. But all of the stories and all the poems were written by women. So it just really has different parts, where it's really an anthology of writing from, like from 60 different women who are talking about the climate crisis, but also thinking about the root causes of it, and how we can advocate for it, and then just reshaping the solutions and how we address climate change. So it's really just being, you know, that emotional side that women bring to this movement and knowing that we are the caretakers and the creators. And that is, I know, very important in Tribal communities, it's very important in African American communities where the matriarch is the holder of knowledge and the legacy and, you know, that theme is throughout this book. It's just really phenomenal. And I think that it would be a great read for you.

58:53

Interviewer: Yeah, I think I have heard that book. I, I'm maybe thinking of a different book, but it does have like, the book I'm thinking about, it does have a collection of different women and how they like address, like what environment is and how much you know, it means to them on a personal scale. **Interviewee:** Yeah.

Interviewer: Yeah, I definitely always open up to reading books and everything. So I'm always like, adding stuff to my list. So I know

59:19

Interviewee: I know me too. Too many too many books on my list. All right. I'm gonna take some time off. I'm gonna read this.

59:29

Interviewer: Definitely. And, you know, I also got a book from like James Baldwin, too, so I definitely want to get into that.

59:36

Interviewee: What book did you get?

59:39

Interviewer: It was. It's a really thick book. I think it was the bibliography of James Baldwin.

Interviewee: Oh, that's gonna be a good one.

Interviewer: Yeah, but I'm really excited to read it because I'm just like, Oh, I just love what he says a lot times too. So

59:54

Interviewee: Me too. Absolutely. That'll be fun. Well, that's a great

59:58

Interviewer: good Um so I could stop the recording.

End of the recording:

1:00:09

Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake

03:43

Interviewee: So I have worked for Interfaith Partners for the Chesapeake for 10 years. Currently, my title is Director of Outreach. And so I work with communities, mostly in Maryland, in Central Maryland, but I also work with congregations in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, as well. So our organization's goal is to inspire and equip communities of faith to honor, respect and restore our shared watershed. And so we work with congregations all over trying to do that sort of work by engaging them in projects like tree plantings and installing rain gardens and things like that. But then also in programming to just learn about what role that they can take. We focus on polluted stormwater runoff and clean water issues, mostly so but there's a very large appetite. And I may be getting ahead of myself with your questions within the communities that we work to work with Indigenous people and to recognize that them. So that's why I was really interested to have this conversation with you today.

05:19

Interviewer: Awesome. Well, thank you so much for again participating in this, and I can't wait to see our conversation, mutual conversations that we'll be having today. Um, before we proceed, do you have any questions before we go forward?

Interviewee: Nope.

Interviewer: No? Okay. Awesome. So, um, just to kind of like, for the first question, I know, you touched base on this, but just kind of go into detail. Um, I guess in your own words, **what would you say is your organization's main mission?**, if you so I

05:54

Interviewee: Right. Yeah. So I just said, so to inspire and educate communities of faith to restore respect and repair our shared watershed. So we estimate that there's about 19,000 communities of faith in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. And our goal is to try to get convinced every single one of them to have what we call a creation care ministry or agreeing team, and each one of their congregations that they all have a responsibility. And for the most part, you know, every religion has a tenant of caring for creation in some way or another. So trying to reach out and have them embrace that philosophy at any level that's comfortable for them.

So we have congregations that we have urban congregations that don't have very much property at all. So there's not like they can plant on the you know, they can't plant an acre of trees, because they're, you know, sitting on a corner in a city. So what can they do can if they can't do an actual project that will have a stormwater benefit. Just working with them to work on advocacy type of issues, to get their congregations and their their members to support environmental legislation on the either the state level or the, you know, hyperlocal level. So we work with them on the both ends

of the spectrum as far as that's concerned. So it's project work, and then education and programming work as well.

07:26

Interviewer: Okay. Um, so going into, like, I guess, like the main questions, what do you see as the level of understanding or knowledge you personally hold about Indigenous people? And can you describe this to me?

07:45

Interviewee: So I'm a little bit embarrassed that I don't know more than I probably should. But we've done over the last couple of years, we have done some work with some of some representatives of Tribes that are in our area. So I've gone to some trainings and workshops with them. But I, and I read *Braiding Sweetgrass*. So you know, so I've done you know, some work in that I can't say that it's extensive at all, but it is something that we know that our congregations are interested in doing. We we did, we do have part of our strategic plan, we do include a land acknowledgement in all of our organizational organizations programming. So whenever we do a program, we acknowledge that where we are, and this year, we will be putting together what we call an action kit, to help our members of the congregations that are members of our networks, to also learn how to include basic land acknowledgments in the programming that they do going forward. So you know, it's not tremendously in depth right now. But we know that people are interested in that. And we we recognize that as a responsibility that we can help them, meet.

09:11

Interviewer: And so just to kind of like understand, with your organization, so do you guys mainly, like work? Because you do you guys mainly work with, like, federally recognized Tribes, rather than, you know, the state-recognized or Tribal recognized?

09:28

Interviewee: Yeah. So the two Tribes that we've most interfaith interfaced with the Lenape. And Peter's Tribe is now like, he's my closest ally, and I can't remember which Tribe. Well, you know, and you might appreciate this. He's very careful to say that he's a member of the Tribe like I think, you know, that's very fraught within your system of how Tribal members are categorized. So he doesn't sit, you know, he, he'll say his parents are but he doesn't. So, let me just I think it's Piscataway.

10:14

Interviewer: Is it the Nause-Waiwash?

10:24

Interviewee: No let me look it up later. But so he's not Piscataway. Let me see if I can find it for you.

10:40

Interviewee: Want to ask the next question while I kind of dig this up here?

10:42

Interviewer: Yeah. Um, I guess like, what, what do you see as the level of knowledge you hold tied to Indigenous people in the state of Maryland, specifically speaking?

11:00

Interviewee: Basically, that that we have different Tribes and and based on where they are within the Chesapeake Bay watershed. They're here and that they've struggled for recognition. And, and, and that we need to include them more.

11:25

Interviewer: Um, I guess like, my next question is, so how did your organization form relationships with Indigenous communities? And how did you maintain them?

11:38

Interviewee: So I think through doing our outreach, the events that we do, we attracted some Indigenous folks to our programming, and then, you know, struck up the relationship and said, We should do more of this. So that's how we kind of were decide to work together.

12:12

Interviewer: And so what might you see as the challenges your organization faces in establishing other Tribal communities in the state of Maryland?

12:28

Interviewee: Think the challenge has been just identifying people that are willing to work with us. And I think from what Peter has shared with me, you know, there's a lack of trust. Right, that there's just so much you really have to spend the time to make the relationships before we can work, you know, walk together and work together. So just having the time to spend to, for that relationship relations. Shin ship work, I guess, is the way to say that.

13:09

Interviewer: Okay, and so does your does your organization have an understanding of what federally recognized recognition means to Indigenous people?

13:23

Interviewee: Yes, I think so because Peter is very clear to say that the Tribes are state-recognized and not federally recognized. Yeah. And that just has a whole ramifications of whether you're federally recognized or not. And what that affords, what that affords the Tribe.

13:51

Interviewer: Um, do you know any resources any resources that could help? Like, probably, with the establishment of Tribes?

Interviewee: No.

Interviewer: Do you need?

Interviewee: What do you

Interviewer: Oh, sorry. What?"

14:09

Interviewee: What I don't know mean like so. I mean I don't know if you mean, like so. I mean, I wouldn't be in a position to help like a Tribe become a recognized tribe. Is that what the question?

14:15

Interviewer: Oh, no, no, no, no, no, that's not what I was saying. I was saying how, like, the still establishing the relationship with Tribes, like with your organization, and Tribal people. So I was asking if you have like any resources that could help with that.

14:33

Interviewee: No, we just, we just, we applied for a grant with Peter to begin working on that. So we're just about to start that work. And hopefully he can help us with that to connect with more leaders from other Tribes that were already connected with. So hopefully, yeah, well, because money right so he's wonderful and generous with his time but he needs to pay his bills, right? So then we, you know, we found a grant and applied for the grant so that, you know, so that he's spending time helping us that he can actually be compensated for that time. Like, you know, time is the most valuable thing that any of us has. And, you know, we were very cognizant of the his generosity and the representative from the Lenape Tribe to like she spent time and, you know, it's, she's not getting compensated for that. And that doesn't sit, right. Yeah, that people should be compensated for their time and their expertise. So we didn't we just got a \$5,000 grant to help us to work with him so that he gets compensated for that time.

Interviewer: Okay.

15:45

Interviewee: Where am I finding this?

15:50

Interviewer: I'm so just going transitioning to the next question. Um, what, **what do you think are the biggest challenges Indigenous people and Tribal communities in Maryland are currently facing?**

16:13

Interviewee: Good question, um. I think the lack of recognition of their history and how important that is, and to preserve it, you know, so and I'm going to come, comment at this from the stormwater perspective. So that more properties that are flooded, or, you know, so you might have Tribal grounds that are experiencing more flooding than they were before, because of climate change, and the storms are getting right. So that they're, those ancestral lands may not be preserved as they once were, and needing help to preserve that, that would be something that our, our organization would work on with them.

17:09

Interviewer: Okay. And, um, **when I bring the concept of Indigenous erasure, what are your thoughts? Or what does that mean to you?**

17:30

Interviewee: Um. well. Just that there's a certain segment of the inhabitants of this land that do not acknowledge that there were people here before the Pilgrims came, like, right, the whole idea of who's an immigrant and who's not an immigrant, like, we're all except for the Indigenous people. We are all immigrants. We all came here we all right. So I think that that to me, that's, that's a erasure right to not even recognize that there were actual people that were here before that had civilization and had perfectly wonderful way of life and, and knew how to preserve and take care of the land. And and that's not recognized at all. So I think that of that is being erasure.

18:26

Interviewer: Um, and then kind of still tying into that question. Um, **do you think it's happening in Maryland? Do you see it happening in Maryland?**

18:44

Interviewee: Well, I'm gonna go back to the other part of your culture that you mentioned, because you're, you're also a Black person too, like, I know, that, like, historic or the burial grounds, you know, that are constantly be, you know, they're developed over or not acknowledged. So I'm sure that that same situation is happening with Indigenous sacred burial grounds and things like that, that, you know, developers get to do stuff that nobody even knows that that's happening.

19:17

Interviewer: And, um, **what do you think could be done to address our counter erasure?**

19:29

Interviewee: So it's interesting because Peter and I have had this conversation, right. So the whole idea of because we've invited them to come to some events and, you know, do a drumming ceremony or do you know, do different ceremonies and things and he said, You know, it's hard for us to feel comfortable doing this because we are coming from a history where if we did the things that we shared or spoke our language or did our traditions that that could end up end up, you know, essentially and then being killed or imprisoned or like that that was breaking the law. So like to overcome this the, again, that's a trust thing, right the for us to come out in the open, we have to trust that we're going to be safe when we do that and nothing bad is gonna happen to us for sharing this I think. Right?

So I totally get, how that they wanted to stay sort of hidden because it was dangerous to not be hidden to like your bring your practice. I mean, I'll bring it again, it's same thing happens to Jewish people right over over the years, right? So you can't practice your religion, because if somebody finds out you're gonna get killed or thrown in prison or something for your freedom, you know, because you don't have freedom of expression. And I think the same thing happens with Indigenous communities as well.

Alright, so here we go.

20:59

Interviewer: Okay, thank you for that. So do you **do you see your organization as being positioned to help counter erasure?**

21:10

Interviewee: Absolutely. Well, that's yes. So, you know, bringing this to the many of our congregations are very much. If they don't, they don't already have an environmentally focused committee or ministry, they often will have a social justice ministry, and this particular issue is something that comes under social justice, and many of them are becoming more and so we're helping to educate them to be more involved in this in this situation.

Let's see I found something.

21:53

Interviewer: So, so, I'm going so going into a different question. **How has your organization been working in incorporating principles, diversity, equity, inclusion, injustice, in the workplace and in the work that you do?**

22:12

Interviewee: So that was a very strong focus. We have a three-year strategic plan. And so we have a DEIJ subcommittee that took this strategic plan and every single line we may, we came up with, you know, measurable ways for us to know whether or not we're incorporating DEIJ in the work that we do. So we're very much grounded in trying to make sure that all of our work is starts from that position.

Yeah, so we just like our board retreat, this past year was totally focused on the DEIJ training for our board. And I have to say, there were definitely people that were not on board when we started, like, you know, we're, we're supposed to be stormwater management. Why are we talking? You know, they, you know, we want to talk about trees and rain gardens and things not about diversity. And by the end of the day, you know, I think we had some, folks.

Sorry, is that piano playing distracting for you? Can you hear me so okay,

23:18

Interviewer: I mean, I could still hear you. But I was just like, wondering like, if, like, who was playing that?

Interviewee: It's my son. Right, so if it gets to me your problem, I can ask him to stop.

Interviewer: Okay.

23:37

Interviewer: So how do you see this kind of focus the DEIJ work organization has inclusive of Indigenous issues?

23:46

Interviewee: Oh, you broke up there as inclusive of what?

Interviewer: of Indigenous issues?

23:54

Interviewee: Right, so same, right. So same thing, I mean, we focus a lot on all we tried to focus on underserved communities, and we would include Indigenous communities as part of that focus.

Interviewer: Okay.

24:16

Interviewer: Would Indigenous peoples benefit from your environmental organizations? Is the piano bothering you?

24:24

Interviewee: No you're breaking up now, I don't know why it's not. It's Oh, you're dropping, your voice is dropping in and out.

24:35

Interviewer: We tried to see if I can just turn off the camera. Maybe that might help.

Interviewee: Right, right.

Interviewer: Um, what Indigenous people benefit from involvement with Maryland's environmental organizations?

24:49

Interviewee: Absolutely. Yes, absolutely.

24:56

Interviewer: And then going into that, what barriers exist for their involvement?

25:08

Interviewee: I think just lack of connection, connectivity, knowing who to talk to. Financial, you know, again, but having fiscal backing in order to help compensate for the time to do that.

And then. I don't have enough this as much as an issue. So I know whenever we go for grant funding for doing work, I don't know if they might, if hopefully, we'll get that far. But, you know, it's, you know, what's their capacity, you have to be a 501 (C)(3) organization in order to apply right, so are you at that point, right. It's just that's kind of a capacity thing for Tribe, I would think.

And just helping them to be aware of the opportunities that are available to do that, to engage with us to find that funding so that we can work together.

26:15

Interviewer: And because of those barriers, does, does this impact the work of your organization?

26:27

Interviewee: Well, yeah, I mean, so our organization also struggles with capacity. You right, so there's all these grants that are available, you have to have the capacity to write the grant proposal. Right. So luckily, this one grant that we applied for was a pretty easy application. So but yeah, just capacity in general is always an issue, grant writing capacity is always an issue for us.

26:59

Interviewer: And I guess going into the other question is, when Maryland mentions diverse communities, do you believe Tribal community is included? Why or why not?

27:17

Interviewee: I think we think of that, my organization. But to other entities include them. I couldn't say.

27:34

Interviewer: Um, are there specific opportunities within the work of your organization that focus on involving Indigenous people, or more specifically, members of Tribal communities in Maryland?

27:46

Interviewee: Yes, and so you know, in this, you know, I think about it now. So we have done we've incorporated Peter doing, and I'm just looking so he calls it the hood and nice Thanksgiving address. That's what we focused on. So we've done this two years in a row where we've done a solstice walk and, and helping folks understand the significance of the solstice to Indigenous people. And that coincides with, so the solstice is always the same week as Juneteenth. So we've

done a Juneteenth, we've done a combined Juneteenth solstice celebration for two years now in Baltimore City. To help connect, you know, these are two populations that have or have suffered from kind of erasure or being in underserved communities. So we've done that and then the last two years for Native American Heritage Month, we do a learning lab as part of our programming every every month except in the summer and last year and this year, we are focusing on Indigenous communities during those webinars.

29:19

Interviewer: And going into what you were saying so do you I guess like **do you do only events with indigenous communities when it's Indigenous Heritage Month?** Or do you do you just?

29:34

Interviewee: No. So like, we just did a solstice walk. Like I said, we do the solstice walks and include Indigenous people in those and then, you know, we have in the last couple of years done Equinox walks to but we haven't we haven't paired up with Indigenous communities have that would be a thing. No, not just American and Native American heritage month so Solstice also um

30:14

Interviewee: **Do you guys also attend like powwow events that are happening throughout the year annually?**

30:21

Interviewee: I have it but I always want to. It just hasn't worked out scheduling wise and then like Peter, like, I don't always hear about it in time to like, make sure that I set the time aside. And I know that like the big powwow that's here. Well, I guess the bigger one is like in Pennsylvania, so that would be pretty much that would be a big trek for me to go to Pennsylvania, but something that I could do, but I just haven't done it yet.

Interviewer: Oh okay.

Interviewee: And again, it's a little bit like, yeah, do you but so I it's a little bit like you're invading. Hold on one second, because now there's more.

31:17

Three college students and my husband all home, because still break for them.

31:23

Interviewer: I understand. Um,

31:26

Interviewee: where were we?

Interviewer: Oh, it was

Interviewee: I was just talking powwows, powwows. Um, so it's a little bit like is it even appropriate for an outsider to come and watch as opposed to, you know, that feels like it's, you know, I feel like I would need to be invited. As a right, because it's not really a spectator. To me, it's like, that's something that you would I'm not being clear. Right, that's kind of their thing. It's their religious practice. So it's not something that you want to like..... be an interloper at.

32:20

Interviewer: Yeah. But do you also feel like what you were what you said about how you not being invited? And you have to be invited by another Tribal community? **Do you feel like that's also a stigma that's been intertwined with how stereotypes are for Indigenous people? Or do you feel like it's something else?**

32:45

Interviewee: I think it's more for me, I can only speak for myself. Right. So I think it's more of if there's not a overall everyone's welcome to come. I think maybe it's based in a little bit of what we would, you know, was said before about, those things had to kind of happen in the shadows, because they were risky for the population. Right. So maybe there's some legacy of that left over to why they're not broadly publicized, or that it's not, it's not perceived as being open to outsiders, because it's theirs.

33:25

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Yeah. No, cuz I had, like, colleagues and friends say that to me, too, because they weren't sure about how, if they were even an should go to attend a powwow. And I said, No, I mean, if the flyer says it's public, then it's public than anybody could go.

Interviewee: Right.

Interviewer: But if it's like, if it says ceremonial, that's a different story, because that means it's only for the community itself.

Interviewee: Right. Right.

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: Yeah. Technically that's right.

34:01

Interviewer: Um, but yeah, thank you for sharing that. And then going into another So **what types of conversations do you have on the topic of Indigenous peoples in your organization?**

34:17

Interviewee: Indigenous peoples, what organization?

34:21

Interviewer: So I was just saying, **what types of conversations do you have on the topic of Indigenous peoples in your organization?**

34:36

Interviewee: Mostly that we want to be more inclusive and trying to figure out, how do we find them? And where are they? And how do we incorporate them? And and, and let them know that they're valued and there's that we hope that we're making a safe place for them

34:59

you know, how do we express that we in our and the network and the networks that congregations and our networks want to be allies, you know, how do you? Because I mean, there's, and what Peter has told me, you know, so different. They're different religious groups have had a different history with indigenous people, right. So whereas especially on the Eastern Shore, like the Quakers were very much allies or perceived as allies of Indigenous people, maybe some other

religious groups may not have been that way. Unfortunately. And I'm not sure exactly which religious groups he is referring to when he says that, but you know, I don't know much about the history there.

35:57

Interviewee: Yeah, I think it may be could be Catholic, because I know, one of the things I did research and talk to was a lot of Catholics back in the day

Interviewee: Right

Interviewer: (continuing) we're changing a lot of the place base names of Indigenous peoples routes, and a lot of river base routes. And that's how a lot of the names got changed and kind of messed up the whole transition of how they can travel or how they can just go about doing what they do annually. Yeah, I don't know, it could be Catholic, or it could be another religion, like I said.

36:40

Interviewee: Well, I just think in general.

36:48

Right, so you pray to different gods, right? So that in and of itself has reason to be discriminatory to others, right? That that's just the nature of religion, right? So that we're right, and you're wrong. What is that? Right, right. So to get away from that old thinking to respecting everyone else's beliefs, I think that a lot of different organization, you know, a lot of different denominations are evolving in that understanding.

And are willing and are willing, just just the same as you know, just the same as slavery, right? So understanding that there might need to be reconciliation, and what's the word? I'm looking for reparations, right?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: And, you know, if you go back, and I'm just, I'm just making this up on the fly, but I'm like, so it would make sense, right to the Catholic Church, knowing that the Catholic Church worldwide is the largest private property owner in the world, right. So if you extrapolate, that means that they have taken the land right, so that just by numbers, right, they will have taken more land from Indigenous people than anybody else. And there and claimed it as theirs, right?

38:22

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Yeah. And then what you're saying, so **what would you say that would be a Indigenous reparation for them in this in the current time now?**

38:41

Interviewee: Autumn that's a really big question. I don't know like, In my heart, it's like, we should just give everything back. They were better stewards. They respected the land and things were better for the most part, right. But the reality is, that's not going to happen, right. So what is the actual reparation? Just I think they have to determine that

39:23

Interviewer: okay, I didn't mean to throw that out, too. But I just thought, just thinking about just your, your organization's perspective on what our Indigenous reparations will look like or what that will be?

39:39

Interviewee: We were just struggling to get the basic recognition. Right. That they were here and they were stewards, and we should acknowledge that. That really doesn't cost anybody anything. And then when you start getting into, you know, the general understanding of what reparations are, there's money attached. And whenever there's money attached, that becomes a whole big issue. Right.

40:18

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Okay, I'm just going on to the next question. So **what are some things you think your organization might be able to do to uplift Indigenous voices?**

40:33

Interviewee: Yeah, so I think that highlighting having specific programming to do that, and to focus on that, so, so we're doing that twice a year. Can we do more? Maybe, you know, finding those natural ways for us to do that. But like I said, we're at the very least doing land acknowledgments at in your in all of our presentations. Just to raise awareness. So that happens year-round.

41:16

Interviewer: Okay. And just to kind of like, go into another question, um, **do you think Maryland's environmental planning and climate change priorities align with Indigenous people's environmental planning or knowledge?**

41:40

Interviewee: I don't know. I don't know. I don't know how much outreach. Right, because every state everyone has a climate adaptation plan. And I don't know how much has been done to actually include Indigenous people in that planning.

Interviewer: Okay.

Interviewer: I mean, I go, I don't Baltimore County, and I have one other Indigenous person that I'm from the your work would have worked with in the past. I mean, she was at the meeting. She Yeah, I mean, we, their organization. Gunpowder Valley Conservancy organized the meeting. So but I will also say that most people don't know she's an Indigenous person.

42:37

Interviewer: And **would you say it's because of the way her outward appearance looks like or something else?**

42:46

Interviewee: I don't think she calls attention to it.

42:50

Interviewer: Okay. And kind of a little touch touching on that a little bit. **Do you also believe that settler colonialism kind of like impacted Indigenous identity within the east coastal states is still impacting a lot of the Tribal peoples identity today?**

Interviewee: Absolutely. Absolutely.

Interviewer: Okay, guess. **And you could do you think you can kind of describe it to me, if you this way, you can?**

43:31

Interviewee: Just go back to what I said before that, you know, I just think that, just like her like, I don't think she's tells people unless she feels safe and trusts them. Right. So I mean, I probably worked with her for two years before it came out. Right. So I think that there's that whatever still remaining there as far as suspicion or lack of safe feeling safe influences that

44:09

Interviewer: Cool. Um, so we actually reached the end of it. It didn't take longer than it should have. But just to go first, **is there anything else you'd like to add or that I didn't ask you about that you'd like to contribute?**

44:30

Interviewee: I don't think so. We just want to do more. Help us do more.

44:40

Interviewer: **Are there any questions you'd like to ask me?**

44:42

Interviewee: No. Are you gonna go back? So you're in Arizona now. So when you finish your degree, is that where you're going back to?

44:50

Interviewer: Yeah, so currently, I'm in Arizona right now for the holidays. And then I'm going to come back to Maryland and finish up my degree everything so yeah

45:01

Interviewee: yeah you're back there Well that's wonderful I wish someone will you be done

45:09

Interviewer: well thank you I can stop the recording and then yeah

Ends at 45:17

Maryland DNR Forest Service

03:02

Interviewee: I'm the Maryland state forester. So I lead Maryland DNR Forest Service. It's the state agency responsible for forest restoration, conservation and management of public and private forest land and tree canopy. Eight wide we have programs in fire, urban and community forestry. Our stewardship, utilization, watershed, forestry, forest health forest legacy and we're responsible for implementing a number of laws statewide. That particularly around civil roadside tree law Forest Conservation Act, as well as responding to fires, doing proactive, fire risk reduction and prescribed burning, and we manage over 215,000 acres of state forest land

04:14

Interviewer: Thank you, thank you so much for introducing yourself. Um, but do you have any questions before we proceed?

04:23

Interviewee: No, no.

04:25

Interviewer: Okay. Um, so just to go into the first question I have for you, so, um, I guess like you did explain to me about your organization, and everything, but I just wanted to kind of pinpoint exactly. In your own words, **what would you say is your organization's main mission?**

04:49

Interviewee: Restoration, conservation and management of forests and trees within the state of Maryland and connecting people to the land

05:01

Interviewer: Thank you. And next question is, **what do you see as a level of understanding or knowledge you personally hold about Indigenous people? And can you describe this to me?**

05:17

Interviewee: My personal level of understanding for Indigenous contacts. We have, we have requirements as part of our sustainable certification for forest management to maintain contacts with Indigenous groups. So we have contacts on our different state forest sections, I guess I'm more personally aware of some of the ones on the Eastern Shore. And then there's what I've been able to get through personal connections, we have a staff member on Maryland DNR Forest Service, Brad Shaw, who has recently been appointed to the Maryland Commission on Indian Affairs. So he's been helpful in explaining some of the Tribal perspectives and desires for connections. And then I have a friend working at the University of Maryland, who is Native, and has been trying to help me understand what would be helpful ways for us to reach out for, in particular for a forest management and inclusion. And we request participation in an appropriate manner when that's respectful of perspectives and some of the time limitations. Some of the folks have have been pretty excited to be some of the expansion, particularly at the federal level in information about some of the forest management practices. And we're seeing a real change in what's available that way, and a lot of attention being paid to it in a way that I've not seen in previous decades.

07:25

Interviewer: And this, also tying back to the relationship part. So **does your organization work with federally recognized tribes? Or do they also work with like state recognized tribes as well?**

07:42

Interviewee: We would work with either one of those. So that's, that's an area that I'd like to know more specifically about. I mean, it's our forest managers that have been able to identify some of them, you know, participants for like, this big Pocomoke state forest. I couldn't list off the Federally versus state recognized Tribes, for Maryland. And so I would say that's an opportunity for us to have information more readily available, particularly up-to-date information, because I know some of that's changing.

08:25

Interviewer: Yeah, um, just to let you know, there's actually only two tribes under state fit state recognized rather than federally recognized because the state of Maryland doesn't have any federally recognized tribes. But just to let you be aware. I'm so I'm just going into the next question. So how you're also going into about how establishing relationships. **What do you think are the biggest challenges Indigenous people and tribal communities in Maryland currently face?**

09:13

Interviewee: I think they're being asked for a lot of participation when they have the same time today as other folks. And and they're being asked for information that some of the past policies would have made it hard for them to know the degree to which culture and language were very intentionally ripped from Tribes. And then we're trying to ask today's participants or information that had been basically taken from them.

10:00

Interviewer: And then kind of tying into that part. **So when I bring up the concept of indigenous erasure, what are your thoughts? Or what does that mean to you?**

10:14

Interviewee: is that different than what I was talking about? I guess I need to. I may not know all the terminology Autumn.

10:24

Interviewer: Yeah, no, you're fine. So it is different, um, everything but there's no right or wrong answer. I was just asking if you knew like the level of knowledge of what Indigenous erasure means. Does that make sense? Okay,

10:44

Interviewee: I can understand that you're asking the question, but it doesn't really help me. Answer it. It's not something that you know, we have in our lexicon.

10:57

Interviewer: Okay. Yeah. So

11:01

Interviewee: I mean, I may understand the issue, but it does. But I'm not using that term any more than you might understand what I mean, when I say basal area.

11:12

Interviewer: Yeah, sorry about that. So Indigenous erasure. Basically, it just means how, like, just erasure just the word erasure alone just means like how, like a group is being erased either from history or from their culture or anything, and it's just tying into how specifically how that is impacting, like, Indigenous and Tribal communities. So, um, so when I say Indigenous erasure. Indigenous erasure just means how, like a specific group, Native Tribal nations are being impacted with how colonialism still plays a big part in kind of like, assimilating their culture, and how it still plays a big part into their lives. Does that make sense?

12:10

Interviewee: Yeah. And so is that separate from what I was mentioning about the fact that it was those. Well, since colonial times, and certainly more recently, that there was policies that demanded integration that suppressed the use of language, that separated people from families,

all of those contributed to basically loss of culture, loss of language. And then that's not in, in the history. Is it separate from that?

12:51

Interviewer: No, no, you're, it's not separate. You're close to it. But I just wanted to know, from your level of understanding of what Indigenous erasure is, like, because what you just described is perfect, like lines with Indigenous erasure, but I just wanted to know about like, your, if you knew the term specifically, if you knew if it relates to that.

13:17

Interviewee: Clearly, it's, it's not something, you know, front of mine in my lecture class.

13:27

Interviewer: Okay, and did I explain it clearly to you? Or did I?

13:34

Interviewee: Yeah, I think so. I know, I have a lot to learn.

13:44

Interviewer: Yeah, I agree. I am constantly learning all the time. So this is we're in the same boat together. So um, so since I explained about Indigenous erasure. Um, **what do you think it's happening in Maryland currently?**

14:10

Interviewee: That I think it happened in Maryland. And, and we, and you live the results of that, that that history and we some of the stuff we can't get back. I mean, what what I'm seeing through within the state government is an act of desire to better engage and understand what Indigenous issues are there, out of respect communities. But I don't think that we know how to effectively reach out

14:55

Interviewer: and **do you see your organization as a being a position to help counter erasure?**

15:02

Interviewee: Yes, we are.

15:06

Interviewer: Um, **do you think you can kind of describe exactly how you're encountering erasure?**

15:15

Interviewee: We're in a position to counter erasure through. Well, one having reached out previously, I know when we did forest action plan, we didn't get comments from some of the folks on Eastern Shore, about Tribal priorities. And that got included kind of our action plan. In terms of where we would like to go moving forward, one of the efforts that we have underway is to develop a Traditional Ecological Knowledge Fellowship, that would be trying to capture some of the Traditional Knowledge as it relevant to forest management, invasive species control prescribed fire, and put it out and in a way that are the folks who are managing or forest lands, interacting with people can better understand and can can learn what what they don't know, about Indigenous

people, because most people are not aware that there are still Tribal folks in Maryland, we don't have big reservations. You pointed out that there's no federally recognized Tribes at this point. And so it's, that makes it easier for people to say, well, I don't need to consider that. When I think everything that's in our policy, and certainly in this administration, they're trying to place a lot of priority and and say that, yes, it is something that needs to be considered and better engaged. So we've got our sustainable forest certification, that includes voice or Indigenous people. We have the Traditional Ecological Knowledge Fellowship. And then we have a staff member from Maryland Commission for Indian Affairs, and the information that he can bring back back to us. At our most recent forest service annual meeting, we had a presentation really on diversity, our new round park service managers, lady of color, was talking about some of the past the in justices and suppression for the Black community. And so we heard from from staff on some of the issues relevant to Native Americans too. It's coming up in ways that we have problems that I have not seen in the past. That's going very well.

18:32

Interviewer: And just to kind of question about the traditional ecological knowledge fellowship, **is that fellowship directly towards like, Tribal communities in the state? Or is it more as of like, kind of exposing the term and practice?**

18:54

Interviewee: I'm still trying to figure out how we can get it out there, we're hoping to have it be focused on Tribal members. And to and to, for it to be a strong support for education, as well as deliver products that are going to be helped us advance our understanding of including those issues in our forest resource management.

19:26

Interviewer: And **would you probably need like resources to have some type of like engagement with Tribal Nations and stuff?**

19:38

Interviewee: Yeah, what we've been working with is building the networks through the University of Maryland, as as a center that engages Native Americans. So that is one point of connection that we've identified some of the work that we've been doing in around the Piscataway, there's other Tribal connections that are being involved in the restoration at Piscataway Park with Maryland Park Service. So Peter Brooks, Francis Gray, and Angela Stoltz is a contact at University of Maryland. So we're just trying to build that network, and I gave you the contact information for Brad Shaw on our staff. There's our MICA rep.

20:38

Interviewer: Yeah. Okay, that's cool. Well, um, in case if you need any more resources, or advices, I can happily provide that for you in case you need it. But

20:51

Interviewee: Yeah we really anything that you have, and I'd love to, you know, because we're, we're trying to figure out what what is a good way to reach out. And we hope to be able to offer this for more than one year, and I want to build people's understanding of the value that a different perspective can bring. What one interesting thing, from the Maryland Planning Commissioners Association meeting that we were speaking at, about some forest harvesting issues, the panel before us was on it, Native American land use issues and connections. And so, you know, we, they had several different Tribal members, talking about the things that were important to them, that

they would want to have considered and land use. And so they shared some of the traditional stories. And when looking at it from forest managers perspective, when stories aren't just stories, they're a speak to how the people connected to the wildlife and the resources. And there's things that, you know, it's it may not be literal, but there's, there's knowledge embodied in that story. That, you know, maybe it needs some interpretation. But there's, you know, millennia of wisdom in it. So that's some of the thing that I'd love to see brought forward.

22:46

Interviewer: Yeah, I agree. I wish to see more too, as well, especially transitioning from the Western states, which is more visible than transitioning here in the East, East Coast, where it's not as visible as I was hoping it would be. But I'm just being here, I noticed there is effort being made to kind of, like get Tribal communities involved. But most of them, the organization's I talked to, were saying how they mainly focus on federally recognized Tribes rather than state-recognized Tribes, or Tribally recognized. So there's a lot of complexion like complex in that. But I can see an effort being trying to be made.

23:41

Interviewee: Or are you? I'm not aware of what might be going on in Maryland, at this point. But I know that there's been efforts to establish lands again, think there is in Delaware and in Virginia.

24:02

Interviewer: Oh, the land back. Yeah, I did hear about the one in Virginia. I think it was the Rappahannock tribe. Um, Mmm hmm.

24:15

Interviewee: That sounds right.

24:17

Interviewer: Yeah, cuz it was with Cliff Island, I think. And I remember, Deb Haaland was there too, when that was going on? So I thought that was pretty cool. Hearing about that.

24:35

Interviewee: Yeah. And then, you know, some of the things that we're seeing come across our email is, you know, like the, the Yale forestry webinars, a whole series on Indigenous values this this year, and that's like, just tremendous learning opportunities that, you know, those, it wasn't visible before.

25:12

Interviewer: Yeah.

25:13

Interviewee: And, and you look at, you know, some of the forest management issues. And I know I went to Oregon State University and we looked at Warm Springs reservation as an example of just really amazing forest management, I think it's is it the there's a couple of things in the Upper Midwest, Minnesota is Menominee. And there's some just really impressive, like, models of both traditional practice and local economic value being supported through the forestry.

26:02

Interviewer: Yeah, there's a big move, there's a big move in environmental practices. And I think the moves stems from a lot of like environmental movements that had been going on. And

especially since the, you know, climate change has been getting worse over the years. And it's really affecting a lot of Tribal Nations, and they don't want their resources or a lot of their culture that derives from the land to be assimilated or to be destroyed or exploit, exploited. So, I think there's a big push and trying to, like maintain their environments that they have left. And and I think it's important that, you know, Tribal Nations be at the forefront or be at the table in these conversations, because, like, how you were mentioning about your TEK fellowship. There needs to be more of that as well, because, you know, sustainability is what's being talked about. But sustainability means differently for every people or community, or region in the state. So yeah, there's definitely a lot needs to be more talks about stuff like that.

27:26

Interviewee: But that, that's why I'm really glad to see that, that Yale webinar series because it seems like they've identified some of the places where there's some really cool stuff going on, and we all have a lot to learn from it. And they do record it too. So it's, it's gonna be a resource, and not just like in time.

27:48

Interviewer: Yeah. Um, so going into my next question I wanted to ask, um, so **when Maryland mentions diverse communities, do you believe Tribal communities or nations is being included? Or not?**

28:07

Interviewee: Yes. Absolutely.

28:14

Interviewer: And so, going into the other question, um, so I guess like, one of the things you did bring about about, like, how to amplify because I remember you said, amplify voices or uplift voices. Um, so besides the TEK fellowship that you brought up, and how also you have like a Brandon Shaw as part of your group too, as well. Um, so **what are some things you think your organizations are doing to uplift and more East Coastal voices in this region?**

29:03

Interviewee: In the in the past, I'd say the, the primary avenue of communication and sort of check-in with the community was through our sustainable forest certification. Are you familiar with what what those entail?

29:20

Interviewer: No, I'm not really familiar with that. Okay.

29:26

Interviewee: Okay. There's the Montreal process for sustainable forestry. And, and there's multiple systems worldwide, that people can look at to to become certified as a having sustainable forest management, Maryland state forest are dual certified through the Forest Stewardship Council process and the Sustainable Forestry Initiative, a process that's more the US and Canada-based. So so we have to follow that they're both based on the same criteria and indicators from the Montreal process. But there is some difference between the two protocols. And so we have annual field audits in both. And as part of that, the engagement with stakeholders that includes the Native American communities is is part of the Brittini that's involved in that process.

30:37

That is something where even if we had been doing it before, now, we're, we're having more frequent check ins and reminders like, Hey, this is important. And so they check in make sure we're doing.

31:00

Interviewer: Thank you. And, um, one of the other ones, I want to talk about, kind of jumping back a little bit on the relationship. So before you were saying how you're trying to engage with relationships and or establish relationships with Tribal communities or Nations, I guess, like one of the things is like, before before, kind of like getting into that, how, what were the challenges that were you guys were facing when you were trying to engage with Tribal nations or communities within this region?

31:39

Interviewee: One of them is where to start? You know, when you don't know what you don't know. And we do have things like Maryland Commission on Indian Affairs there, you know, there is a sort of mixed Tribe, Baltimore powwow, I mean, so there are some points and connections that aren't that hard to find. The other challenge is just if you start having all of the a federal local agencies reaching out for input, having the members that you're reaching out to have the time to engage in the way that's being requested, can be pretty challenging. So I would say one of the real challenges is how do you how do you ask for encouragement that is meaningful without being asking too much? And asking too much without compensation? Does that make sense?

32:46

Interviewer: No, no, no, that makes sense. Yeah. Um, so, um, just one more question I wanted to ask. So, um, when Maryland has like environmental planning, or initiatives out there, trying to put out towards to kind of help with environment? Do you think in your opinion that they are aligning a lot of the environmental planning with Tribal Nations or communities planning as well?

33:22

Interviewee: I think some of its limited by the fact that we don't have, say, like reservation lands. So it's not as clear to some of the people who might be developing the environmental policy, that that's a needed point of engagement. That don't think there's the awareness on the East Coast, like there is on the West Coast, or, and we don't have the same treaty awareness as what they might, what we might need to be providing for additional hunting, fishing, some of those things that there just hasn't been the same kind of conversation or legal processes, or you don't have that same awareness in the East Coast.

34:21

Interviewer: So do you think if like the tribal peoples here in the East Coast was able to have reservation land, do you think it would have been a lot more easier to have, like the environmental planning aligned with the Tribal communities?

34:38

Interviewee: I think people would be it would be easier for them to understand that they need to be engaged. When we're talking about a watershed scale. Yeah, so the fact that they have relevant, you know, values, and land management information Yeah, I think that's easier to overlook, then, you know, if if they have actual land where you're like, oh, look, you know, this area where you may have a priority is under Native American management. I don't think that you need

to have land to have it engaged. Like I said, I do see, understanding and awareness of Native American issues expanding, it's just, there's just a long way to go.

35:39

Interviewer: Okay. Um, so, thank you for that. Um, so, we actually reached the end. So is there anything you'd like to add or that I didn't ask you about, that you'd like to contribute to?

35:57

Interviewee: I'd just be open to any suggestions you have in ways that we could be meaningfully engage, you know, our Tribes, our local Tribal members. There's a lot of history here.

36:20

Interviewer: Um, thank you. And then is there any questions you'd like to ask me about?

36:30

Interviewee: Where do you where do you go from here in terms of your recommendations?

36:36

Interviewer: Yeah, good question. Thank you. So, um, so what are the things I'm going to be, like, I'll be recommending you after this interview. And everything is like, again, I'm a graduate student. So I've been having like different talks with Tribal Nations, and also with environmental organization representatives. And so what I'm doing is basically doing this thesis project to bring awareness and also amplify a lot of the Tribal communities that most people aren't aware of, because since I've been going to graduate school here at UMBC, a lot of my peers and colleagues and, you know, professors did not, we're not aware with a lot of like how much Tribal communities are, or they couldn't even name, like, two Tribal nations out of like six nations that are here in the state of Maryland. And so I thought it was a big concern for me, personally, because I'm also a Tribal, Tribal citizen, too, as well. So it's very alarming how there's, like not much awareness.

And a lot of the Tribal nations or people that I talked to individuals, they were saying, the Moto, "*we're still here, we're still here*". And, and they're doing a lot of work on trying to, you know, also education, their language, they're trying to maintain the environments, not in the reservation type, but like, the environments that they do have, or they live near off of. And, and it's just very interesting to hear their perspectives on how a lot of guess like, I don't know, if you've heard the term Neocolonialism. So it's basically like, a new version of colonialism, not like how, like colonialism was like back in, like the early, I don't know, 1700s or 1400s, When settlers came here. So it's a different type of colonialism that is still impacting a lot of their identity and a lot of their language and their environments. So, this is just mainly me trying to amplify a lot of the issues that are going on, not just issues too, but a lot of like, like telling a story, like how you were saying like a story of their resistance and how their presence is still here in the state of Maryland or an East Coast rather than you know, extinct or not here anymore. Does that make sense to you?

39:36

Interviewee: Yeah, it does. I mean, in terms of the people that I know, personally, you know, they they grew up, you know, like us in, in schools in some extent, some of the same cultural inputs, but then trying to do their Native American heritage on top of that, and I think it's, it's challenging.

Interviewer: Yes,

Interviewee: or the same way that I felt in, you know, when I was growing up and growing up female, and then going into a male-dominated field, and it's like, I tried to do everything. You know,

I liked to cook and fit, oh, and all that kind of stuff. I did all that. But then also dad was working on the cars, and just some days, you felt stretched pretty thin. So, I guess I'm picturing it like that, like, you know, you are who you are. And you want to embrace all aspects of your identity. So just when you've got so much to work with, it's, it's a big job.

41:01

Interviewer: Yeah, I agree. I mean, I'm just, I'm a graduate student. So I'm not a policy or politician where I can change the rules. But I mean, I, I'm doing as what I can to make sure a lot of the peers that are non-native are, you know, can be allies can be allies to support a lot of these community, Indigenous communities that are doing a lot of the work by themselves. And I don't want them to do the work by themselves, I want them to have that engagement. And they are, they are wanting engagement too, because they can't do it alone. So there is there is a need of trying to make sure that there's like plenty of engagements that are still that can be a long-term engagement rather than short-term engagement.

41:58

Interviewee: Yeah, but if, you know, there's ways to help us understand what's what's the most helpful engagement, what, what are ways to engage that are most meaningful? without being overwhelming or asking too much. That's, I think, the balance we're trying to look for.

42:19

Interviewer: Yeah, there's, there's always a need for that. And, again, I could point you out to that, um, but even if I do point it out, so like, once you start talking with them, it might be different from what I would say, not saying that I was trying to trick you or anything but more as like, I'm, because they're from this region, they know more than I do. I just been here for just a couple of like, almost two years, basically. And, um, I don't know enough to say that this is what they're doing, or this is how they should do it. I'm just kind of like a general information person rather than them being here. their whole lives know so much of what how they do this and how they go about it, stuff like that. But,

Interviewee: um,

Interviewer: oh, go ahead.

43:20

Interviewee: I was trying to find the what the center center was at University of Maryland. There's, there's like the student center, but there it looks like there's also the center for research and collaboration in the Indigenous Americas but it sounds like that's Amazonian studies, maybe more South Americans.

43:48

Interviewer: Yeah, I don't know. I know that they are some Maryland, Native stuff out there. Um, they even have classes that they teach, not a lot classes, just probably like one a semester, but, um, it's more than what my university is doing. But um,

44:08

Interviewee: yeah, UMBC is a bit smaller. But I, you know, I know, my daughter went to UMBC, she well, both my kids went to UMBC. But in she ended up taking a couple of classes over College Park, so I wouldn't even if you're not a on that campus, doesn't mean that you might not be able to access some of those resources. But they have Native and Indigenous student involvement. And I think there's a like a center?

44:52

Interviewer: I think so too. I think there's a club because I know that they do. Annual powwows on campus. And so, um, there, there has to be some type of club but um, I think it's like a Native American club or Eastern Shore Club? I'm not sure.

45:14

Interviewee: Anyway, so so there is some stuff and the question is are people finding it? Like how did? How do you, you know, connect?

45:25

Interviewer: Oh, sorry if I kind of went off of your question, but, um, so I think in my opinion, I don't think most people are aware of the resources that are available. There are resources that I discovered their talks and conversation or just me just researching myself, I'm so the way that this past summer, I interned at the Maryland State Archives, and one of the things is that they, my supervisors, Maria Day and Megan Craynon, were doing the Indigenous Peoples program. And so they were also trying to make sure that indigenous records, such as treaties, historical documents, land, land ownership, or land records, were basically kind of like trying to find information of how to engage with Tribal communities today.

Of course, they recommended a Maryland Commission of Indian Affairs, because they're aware of that. But they're not aware of like some of them unformed, unformal, um, connections and resources. So I would say, in my honest opinion, it's just Facebook, you basically find every Native on Facebook, whether they're Tribally recognized or not. So Facebook is usually the way to go about it. Because there's a lot of groups and like, for example, I joined the Baltimore American Indian Center, and they have cultural classes that is open to the public. And that's how you basically, that's how I was able to engage with a lot of Tribal Nations. And that's how I was able to have interviews was because I was able to go to their cultural class and kind of like, just show up and show out, basically just showing them I'm showing up to these events, because I want to know more.

And that's how they were able to kind of like, have conversations with me. And also does attending the powwows, too. I also did that. And I also was aware of some of like websites that I wasn't aware of such as, like, I think it was called the American Indian, or American, Indigenous DC. So society, I believe, Oh, American Indian Society of Washington, DC, excuse me. So that's like a that's like a community support and cultural education group that was established. They also have a website and a Facebook group. Um, so there's a lot of resources. But again, I don't think most people are aware of it, because most people such as organizations go try to look for like, a website links rather than the informal resources such as, you know, social media, or word of mouth to So yeah, that's, that's basically what to say.

48:46

Interviewee: Yeah. Well, I've been trying to do the Yeah, well, the in engaging the people I know, and trying to build that network.

49:06

Interviewer: Yeah, so um, but like I can, I can share that resource with you. But do you have any more questions for me or anything?

49:17

Interviewee: No, I think we're, I think we're at some time and I know I gotta start figuring out how to get to the next the next piece.

49:24

Interviewer: Okay, um,

49:27

Interviewee: but I appreciate you bringing kind of awareness, visibility to the issue because I think awareness is the first step.

49:34

Interviewer: Yes, yes, I it is and it helps a lot for the communities and also for the individual wanting to learn too as well. Let me stop the recording first.

Ends at 49:48

UMBC & STAC

Interviewee: I am a longtime faculty member at UMBC in the Department of Geography and Environmental Systems. I have been here. This is my 41st year on the faculty. My research and teaching specialties are primarily in things related to water and watersheds. So my background is in surface water hydrology and fluvial geomorphology, which is a study of rivers and riverine landforms and the fate and transport of sediment and water in in the landscape. I have had a longtime affiliation with the Chesapeake Bay Program, Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC), I was a member of STAC from 2013 through September of 2023. I am a past chair, and then had my final two years as immediate past here. And then the typical pattern if you step off after you complete your executive service. So the, the, the only experience I have, probably with the particular things you're interested in is very modest experience during the last year or so in STAC where this became more of a discussion issue.

03:46

Interviewer: Okay, well, thank you for your introductory and thank you for again, taking part in this.

03:54

Interviewer: So did you have any questions for me before we get started or anything like that?

Interviewee: Not really. I'm just here to answer whatever questions you want me to try to answer.

Interviewer: Okay, awesome. Well, let's get started then. So my first question.

04:11

Interviewer: In your own words, what would you say is your organization or institute's main mission?

04:20

Interviewee: Well, I'm a faculty member at UMBC. So our main mission is to educate undergraduate and graduate students to try to train them for future careers and to make sure they get the the skills and the knowledge they need to be successful, whatever they decide to go on to do. Obviously, as a as a research faculty member, my other major goal is to actually carry out research that leads to advances in knowledge in my field to publication that often involves

submitting proposals for grants and working in collaboration with other researchers. Both as researchers and other institutions or with undergraduate graduate students, so that's our primary primary objective.

Now, in my time working with the Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC), that is a group that consists of 30, some odd volunteers, most of them are either natural scientists or social scientists, who either are coming from academia, or from federal or state agencies or from non-governmental organizations, who all bring some combination of expertise that's relevant to the knowledge that's needed to actually engage in and help guide provide scientific advice to the Chesapeake Bay program as part of the Chesapeake Bay watershed restoration effort to try to improve water quality and living resources and just being so that's we all come from different backgrounds, but we all have worked together on a variety.

06:08

Interviewer: So kind of relating back to what you were saying, when you were on the Chesapeake Bay Foundation

Interviewee: Not the Bay Foundation. Chesapeake Bay Foundation is a non-governmental organization. It's a Scientific and Technical Advisory Committee (STAC).

Interviewer: Oh, okay. Thank you for correcting me.

06:29

Interviewer: When you were working at that time, would you say that, even though there was different people working like social science, natural science. **Did you do a lot of like community research or mainly where you kind of focus on like the biological functions of the sciences?**

06:51

Interviewee: So STAC is not primarily involved in community. Community-related work, it's really our job is as experts to assess various issues having to do with the science, it's not all biological. A lot, there's a lot of concern over living resources, but it's concerned over things like, you know. What gets transported from the watershed into Tidewater that might affect the system? But that involves sediment involves nutrients might involve contaminants, it involves looking at things like, you know, effective of climate change on influx of floods, what floods, droughts.

I mean, there's a whole range of effects a broad spectrum of topics that I can't even list them all, for you. And most of what I just mentioned is related more to what I do. There are people who study physical circulation patterns in the estuary. There are people who study contaminants in the estuary, there are people who study the effects of water and wastewater systems that might deliver contaminants to the estuary.

There are people who are concerned about the whole overall issue of how management efforts can be most effective, and the need, for example, to manage activities on the land, that actually contribute non-point Source contaminants into the water, most prominent concern or nutrients, which have had the biggest impact on water quality, and dissolved oxygen and the health and resources in the bay. And so people come from a wide variety of backgrounds with different kinds of peace. But it's almost all devoted toward trying to investigate certain issues that relate to what is happening to the base system.

And that involves trying to understand how the system operates. And then to provide scientific advice to the PE program, we do not give policy advice, we give advice in terms of if you do X, we think y might be what is going to happen, and that you want to be aware of this. And so, for

example, we just issued a major report last May, that was a result of a four-year effort in which we basically said we know that the the Bay restoration effort supported by the watershed partners, which are the six states plus the District of Columbia that are all part of our all governed by the Federal total maximum daily load requirements that are set by the Bay program.

So, there's supposed to be certain targets by 2025. It's become pretty clear they're not going to meet those targets. The question is why are we not meeting those targets? And what are some pathways forward to try to improve, improve the speed with which we approach meeting those targets? And some of that might involve changing some of the decision-making and analysis and, and goals that are involved in the program. There are social scientists as well as natural scientists who are part of STAC because the major part is the question of how we will make decisions. A lot of what happens in the Bay watershed happens on private property can't tell people what to do, particularly in the agriculture, there's actually rules governing even how much data what kind of data you're able to collect, about what farmers are doing on their land.

So there's, there are issues also of equity. It's only in the last three or four years, I would say that diversity, equity, and inclusion issues have been a higher priority for the Bay program as a whole and also have been discussed within STAC. But so that's kind of an overview, but very little of it. We we do sometimes we do or sometimes presentations that are made in order to try to inform the public, but the exact primary job is actually to give scientific advice to the people, decision makers who set regulations and implement them.

11:16

Interviewer: Okay, and just one last question a little bit about that. Um, so when you were saying how you would give, like, advices and every not policy advices but like, how scientific advices.

Would you say that human interferences with the watershed is also taking into account as part of the scientific advices?

11:42

Interviewee: Well, it's clear that the degradation of water quality and impact living resources are a result of long-term human. And when I say human actually should say, post-colonial and post-colonial activity on the landscape. You know, before Europeans got here, conditions in the watershed are much better in terms of impact on water quality and living resources. And it's really the effect of everything from agricultural land use very intensive agricultural land use to the amount of sanitary sewage that was originally not treated until later on, they developed a treatment methods to the effect of, you know, deforestation on the landscape, and how that affects flows coming into the system. So it's really all about trying to understand that we can't go back to the pre-European settlement landscape, there's no way to do that. We are still increasing the population in the watershed, and in fact, trying to account for and to minimize the negative impacts of growing population to the watershed, which includes increasing amounts of urban development, increasing amounts, you know, areas being paved, or roads being built. But also increasing intensity of agricultural land use, you know, 50-60 years ago, we didn't have concentrated animal feedlots that produce enormous amounts of manure that are not very well controlled, that has a huge impact environmentally.

So it's really all about, it's almost all about human impact, we also have to consider the effects of climate change, like climate change itself, also, is due not to just human activities in the Chesapeake Bay watershed, but really globally. And we all know that the developed countries have had the most impact on that. But as climate change goes forward, it's going to affect all these systems as well. And so some of the advice we give has to do with how to take into account some

of those changes, some of which, you just have to figure out how you're going to adapt because you can't stop them from happening, you know, we hope that we will, that they won't be as severe as the worst case scenarios. But we have to recognize that the Chesapeake Bay watershed going forward is going to be a different system than it has been in the last century because of rapid climate change.

14:18

Interviewer: Well, thank you, thank you for sharing that. And my questions. Um, so going forward. **What do you see as the level of understanding or knowledge you personally hold about indigenous people? And can you describe this to me?**

Interviewee: I would say I do not have a great amount of knowledge. I mean, I don't I don't know many Indigenous people personally. I know that there are Tribal Nations within Maryland. I believe it's the case that Maryland does not formally recognize any Tribal Nations. I know there are other states in the mid-Atlantic and Northeast that have come a little bit farther along in terms in terms of that.

You know, I'm, I become a used to have, for the last couple of years hearing, what's that statement that they that they always make at the beginning of meetings, acknowledge, you know, the, the land acknowledgment statements, right. I've actually talked with Maggie Holland a bit about this. She actually gave a presentation about it last year. And actually, the first STAC meeting that I've been at, where we had someone who was coming from, it was actually a, I believe, an environmental anthropologist who was also a Native American, who does consulting with organizations that are trying to recognize and incorporate understanding of Native American, Native American viewpoints. And after she gave her talk over, you know, sort of over lunch, I had a conversation with her about these land acknowledgement statements, because my, I asked her, *"Do you usually use you considered the sort of performative rather than actually accomplishing something?"*

I mean, the thing they primarily accomplish is that where people are not Native Americans to recognize that, in fact, there were people on the landscape before them, but it doesn't necessarily do anything beyond, beyond that. And and he said, "Yeah, we have some problems with the way those statements are commonly used, because they're kind of like, putting a bandaid on something you recognize, but have no actual pathway to do something about it at least does your organization".

16:29

Interviewer: Yeah. So far, the people I've talked to, and people I'm affiliated with, yeah, land acknowledgments can be performative if there's no implement action with it. So.

16:43

Interviewee: Yeah. Yeah. And actually STAC as organization. I believe the first staff member who actually is a Native American origin just joined STAC within the last six months.

Interviewer: Congrats. Um, so I guess like, um, you already answered that. So what does when you were working with STAC? **Does your organization have an existing relationship with Maryland's Indigenous communities?**

17:19

Interviewee: I don't know that STAC does. And actually, the person who joined I believe is from Virginia Commonwealth University. So they are not part of and they are not just as you are here in Maryland, but you're you are connected with Navajo Nation, this person also came from a Tribal Nation that's out west and then got his Ph.D., became a faculty member at Virginia Commonwealth. So he's not necessarily speaking on behalf of the Tribal Nations that are either in Virginia or in the Chesapeake Bay watershed. I think there is interest, though. I mean, let me put it this way over the last year, there has been a considerable amount of discussion about the need to incorporate Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) into trying to improve management efforts. I haven't seen the actual consequences of that yet. But I know that there is talk about the need to do that. And I think there's interest in, in finding ways to do that more effectively than it's been done in the past.

18:22

Interviewer: And do you think like, since you would you say that your people that are in STAC know about TEK? Traditionally Ecological Knowledge?

Interviewee: They're aware of it, that doesn't mean that they actually know the details that are involved, right? They are simply aware that people who are on the landscape for many, many centuries had understanding that we can't necessarily replicate just by doing science, the way that we do that we do it today. So that there may indeed be things that people who are trying to carry out environmental restoration efforts can learn from traditional sources of knowledge that have not learned up to this point.

19:09

Interviewer: Okay, and then do you feel like maybe sometime, that they would probably incorporate that?

19:17

Interviewee: I think there's an interest in learning what could be incorporated into management efforts. Now, I will stop and say that some of the things that would be wise to do may not be feasible, I mean, you cannot undo um, you cannot simply erase, you know, the impact of industrial scale, cattle feedlots.

Or or millions and millions of chickens being grown on the Eastern Shore producing, you know, a lot of waste that is far beyond the ability of the soil to absorb and that therefore, affects water quality. I'm not sure what traditional economic ecological knowledge would tell you about solving some of those problems other than it might be a bad idea to do it. But we don't have the ability to simply, you know, wipe the slate clean and undo some of those things. So I think the question is, "*How could it be incorporated?*" Which I think is a very interesting question. And again, I haven't seen that conversation.

Going beyond the sort of introductory level to the point.

20:24

Interviewer: Yeah, no, I'm just to kind of, just like what I know, so far, mostly, the TEK is mainly place-based. So it can't be like us. Like, say, for example, I'm here in Arizona, a lot of the knowledge that we have cannot be used in Maryland, because it's not, the climate is different. And the water, water, precipitation, everything is so different. So it wouldn't be feasible to use, like our Arizona, TEK versus Maryland TEK. So, um, I think it's just like, depending on which community you contact with Tribal communities, specifically, but yeah, they have their own versions of it.

21:12

Interviewee: But yeah, and I think, you know, they're definitely have been Tribal Nations, and inhabiting this landscape for a very long time, who had a lot of knowledge about you know, the life cycles of the the food resources that the different, say, an address fish species, or shellfish or what have you that were staples for them. And I think what happened is that a lot of, well, we know the history of oysters in the bay, for example, right? It's not was not sustainable, because they basically mined the oysters out of the bay and create a water column of all the conditions that decimated their populations. So that was Europeans who, who did that, right? So. I think the question is, "*what can you do now, in terms of managing in the system as it exists today, that takes advantage of the knowledge that you can get for traditional sources?*" And I don't have an answer to that question myself, I think it's a question people are interested in learning more about.

22:17

Interviewer: And just one more question related to that. Um, so since, um, would you say that specifically, especially in the Western sciences, because there's been a lot of problems on validation. And particularly TEK doesn't have like a credential validation versus Western science, but validation. **So how would you say that especially incorporating TEK in a federal or nonprofit or kind of a big organization? How do you think that would look like? With like, the validation part?**

22:52

Interviewee: I think it's an interesting question. It's not a question I've encountered. You know. I think that when you talk about validation, that implies that you're doing experimental research, and that you have to be able to replicate an experiment. And traditional knowledge is not an experiment that you can replicate. It's a source of information.

I will however, give you just an analogy. And I think it's only an analogy, right? So part of the science that I am familiar with, involves trying to analyze the probability of floods, greater than or equal to some side because those are hazards. And so there's a way to analyze records of we have we have US Geological Survey, maintain stream gauges, we have flow records over time, we can look at the annual maximum flows, and we can then do a probability analysis to say, Okay, how big is the flow that we might see, on average, once in 100 years, for example. And, and in fact, now that climate is changing, we have to that analysis itself depends on actually knowing that the system long term is not changing, and that the probabilities are not changing.

But now that that's happening, now we have an additional problem, because now we have to engage in an analysis that helps that requires us to understand something about how climate is actually altering this thing. But what I will say is that when you do flood frequency analysis, people have developed methods or incorporating information, even if it's not strictly quantitative, about let's say, we know there was a flood 300 years ago that was bigger than the largest flood we've experienced, since maybe it's a lot bigger than as big as the largest flood we've experienced in the last 120 years. And so there's a way to there's a quantitative way to incorporate that into, into, the way you analyze flood frequency. Now, that's a very, very specific example. There may not necessarily be an example of traditional knowledge that says, Well, we had a flood of this size back in whatever this time period may have been. But the point is, there are ways to use non-quantitative information that are shorter in order to try to inform and improve predictions made that actually do become quantitative predict. *How that would actually apply?* I'm not sure. But I would say that the other thing you can do is to say, All right, well, we have various approaches that we use to try to mitigate the consequences of the way the management landscape now, if there are traditional practices that have been used effectively in the past, you could actually probably do

experiment with those methods to show how they change, you know, the outcome on a particular piece of land, for example.

So I think there are probably ways to incorporate it. I can't speak to exactly how or in what arena. I think it just requires some creativity on the part of the people who are asking the questions is that if we can get access to information we didn't have before, *what are some ways of going about trying to assess how can help us?*

26:28

Interviewer: Okay, thank you. Um. So I get (clears throat). Sorry. Um, so **what might you see as the challenges your organization or institute faces in establishing some form of relationship with Indigenous communities in Maryland?**

26:50

Interviewee: So I don't know if I can speak on behalf of UMBC in this regard. I actually don't even know the statistics in terms of how many Native American students or faculty we have. I'm gonna guess it's a pretty small number. I don't even know the I don't know the population statistics in terms of Tribal Nations that are here in Maryland, *how many people were involved? To what extent are they represented?* And I think the general lack of knowledge is the person, right? I mean, *if you don't even know who it is, if you don't know the people that you're talking about, how do you make contact with them?*

Well, you have to know that the state of Maryland doesn't even recognize Tribal Nations by knowledge, right? So here's a lot of there's a lot of progress that needs to be made. before we could even get to the point of figuring out how to better connect institutions. I think it's actually easier for going to an organization like STAC, because they can say, well, these are particular objectives we have, we have a particular job that is involves informing, or providing advice to the Chesapeake Bay Program about management and landscape. And so I think it's not as hard to identify why would traditional knowledge be useful in that respect.

And to find people who are representative of groups that actually have some of that knowledge to connect with. I think it's easier to do that. And if you're just if you're University, your goals are so, I won't say they're poorly defined, but they're so broad. You have to ask the question, *for what purpose? Do you want to do this? Other than simply to say everyone should be, you know, served? Who's, who's living here?*

28:37

I mean, I don't know what have you. I guess you're interviewing me. But I'm curious. In terms of other people who've talked to you have they talked about this with regard to the university as an institution?

28:50

Interviewer: So **do you mean like the talks as in like, better engaging with Tribal?**

Interviewee: *Well people you've interviewed? Has anybody had anything to say in response to this question about the university and how it does?*

29:04

Interviewer: Yeah, I did. I think at least two people brought it up. Two Tribal people specifically. And they were saying, how, *what has your university or any other universities done to actually celebrate Indigenous people?* And, of course, like, did they they also said, *did they celebrate*

Native American heritage month on November? Did they like invite like speakers? Or did they have like some kind of JEDI class dedicated for Native people?

And I said, Of course, I said No, because I so far as I've been here, I haven't seen anything like that.

Interviewee: Yeah. Yeah.

29:43

Interviewer: So definitely a need to be approved improvement, especially if we're talking about DEIJ and stuff. But, yeah.

29:56

Interviewer: But, um, so kind of relating to like the big question. So when I bring up the concept of Indigenous erasure, what are your thoughts? And what does that mean to you?

30:10

Interviewee: Indigenous erasure essentially means pretending like there was nobody here before Europeans got here. Right? In other words, they sort of recognize that there were but but there's, there's two ways of looking at it, like, history begins with European arrival, we don't pay any attention to what were presumably 1000s of years of settlement and things that were learned, you know. But it's also not acknowledging.

There's so many elements to it, right? There's not a, they were treaties that were signed by the US government that were abrogated and ignored. And, and but, erase your hand mean, elimination. I mean, there is certainly a form of genocide that was carried out over historically, in this country. And it also can simply mean, failing to acknowledge or recognize that European settlers, we're not the first ones on this landscape. So an erasure can simply mean that we just don't. Yeah, we just don't recognize it or pay any attention to.

31:29

Interviewer: And do you think it's happening in Maryland?

31:36

Interviewee: I think it has happened. Is it happening more now than before? Probably not. I think it's just a long-term feature, right? I mean, I don't know. You know, if, if we were talking to someone who's from a Tribal Nation here in Maryland, what they would say about that, but I'm guessing they would say, yeah, people don't really recognize that we're even here. And certainly the fact that the state does not formally recognize Tribal Nations is, I think, an indicative indication of what we're talking about.

32:13

Interviewer: And what do you think could be done to address or counter erasure?

32:20

Interviewee: Well, I think the first thing is to actually invite groups, or individuals representative of groups that, that have that Tribal background in history, to inform, you know, decision-makers, politicians, legislators. And I think it's, you know, my guess is, I don't know whether people were kind of spread out or whether there are local groups of people who are who live in particular communities where they have greater representation. But obviously, somebody has to be asking people who have not been at the table to actually come and speak to. That's the first step.

33:04

Interviewer: Um, and I guess I'm kind of also going into the DEI. Like your organization STAC that you used to work for? **How's your organization been working to incorporate principles of DEI in the workplace in the work that you do?**

33:28

Interviewee: I will say this. First of all, that works with the Bay program, We do not tell we do not. We're not governed by the Bay program, but we have certain obligations. And so during the time that I was in leadership at STAC, the Bay program, actually for the first time developed, and this is actually it was EPA, really, but the Bay program is part of EPA developed. What that I think it was a DEI. I mean, there's various ways of, of ordering those initials, but they developed the DEI policy statement, and then they created a workgroup, whose job it was to make sure that that policy statement was implemented.

Probably one of the most obvious things is to stay when you are well, there's there's multiple things right. So when it comes to actions by the Bay watershed partnership, state. Access to resources is something that they can pay attention to, right? But when it came to the organization itself, the STAC or the Bay program, the DEI, principles should inform how you go about in the hiring process, identifying whom you need to reach out to in order to ensure that you get a representative, a group of applicants, right?

so UMBC has put a considerable amount of effort into that over the last, let's say five to six years at least.

And STAC actually opened up its process for nominating people to become members of STAC so that it would not be so much driven by whom people already on STAC knew, because that just perpetuates the same people coming from the same groups over and over again, but instead created a self-nomination process and made sure that when they put out the call for self-nominations, they in they made it so that it reached a broad audience. And specifically tried to make sure they reach for example, organizations that were representative of different groups.

35:50

And it turns out that doing, doing what you can to make sure people who might have an interest actually get the message turns out to be pretty effective. People used to actually say, in academia, you know, well, you know, I'm coming out of the earth sciences and earth sciences. You know, it was largely white, largely male for a long time. Now, it's close to 50/50, male and female, but groups that were not white, were seriously underrepresented. That is starting to change.

Actually, there was an organization or there was a project that was developed by the National Science Foundation to actually try to increase minority representation in the geosciences. Turns out one of our undergraduates, one of our former undergraduates was the person who came up with the idea. And we actually had him and a couple of other peoples working with come and give a seminar in the department a couple of years ago. But the point is, that degree of under-representation really, for all minorities has been the case for a long time. And so people would say, well, there's not an applicant pool out there.

And it turns out, well, there's two ways to address that. One is you train more people who might be interested if they're given the opportunity, so they can become part of that future applicant pool.

And the other is, you actually have to be much more proactive about disseminating the message that you are looking for applicants programs. And it turns out that strategy, if you actually pay attention to it, you're serious about it you implemented does definitely have the possibility of changing who is present, you know, certainly as faculty of the university, and I would hope for other organizations, also, it changes the representation has to be conscious and deliberate.

37:53

Interviewer: Yeah. And also, would you say, kind of both UMBC and STAC, because of how you how climate change is impacting different communities differently rather than a whole size thing. **Would you say that, because since DEIJ has been incorporated, that they're kind of looking at different perspective of how climate change is affecting?**

Interviewee: I think it's definitely the case that when we look at the deleterious impacts of climate change on human populations, it's people who are have suffered some disadvantage. They're either living in landscapes that are more at risk, or they are living in low-income communities that are that are more impacted that I think there's there has become, in the last few years, a much broader recognition that any of these large scale issues have disproportionate impacts. And so we need to recognize that and make sure that, for example, well, I've been involved with groups that are talking about flood hazards, for example. And we recognize now that there's disproportionate impact of flooding hazards, and that that needs to be acknowledged, and that when, for example, the state decides to allocate funds to try to mitigate some of those impacts. It has to actually recognize that it needs to emphasize people from underrepresented communities who have been more impacted.

There are concrete things that can be done. They don't necessarily make the problem resolved. But there are certainly things that can be done to improve over practice practice. Which were basically to ignore this. Yeah.

39:41

Interviewer: Yeah, Okay. Um, I guess, um, the next question. So, would you say, um, what? **What Indigenous people benefit from the involvement was Maryland environmental organizations?**

40:00

Interviewee: I don't know the answer to that question. I don't know the answer.

40:07

Interviewer: Okay

40:09

Interviewee: Because I don't know if you went and talked. Now when you say organizations, for example, because the Chesapeake Bay Foundation, which is a private nonprofit, but has some political influence in the state. It runs a lot of education programs. *What are they doing in this regard?* I just don't know. I hope they're doing something. But I don't know. I don't interact with them very much. You know? Certainly, we've, I've spoken with some folks from them from CBS. DBF, excuse me.

When it comes to other groups, you know, there are many different environmental organizations all across the state.

So yeah. I'm not sure how that I'm not sure. I don't actually have a good answer for you

40:57

Interviewer: Okay, that's fine. Um, so I guess like, um, or are there like, what think? Sorry, **what are some things you think your organization might be able to do to uplift Indigenous voices?**

41:18

Interviewee: I think it's basically what I said already, which is you have to start by recognizing who is there and finding ways to have them come and talk to you and tell you what their perspective is, and and what they have to offer, what their needs are, if they're going to be included? I mean, I think when it comes down and comes to dealing with people who have not been represented in the past, the first thing you have to do is to listen to their voices.

41:48

Interviewer: Um, so when, when Maryland mentions diverse communities do, **Do you think that Tribal communities are involved in that term, diverse communities?**

Interviewee: I think they intended to include that, whether they actually have done anything to make sure it includes that as a separate question. I can't speak for the state. Right? Again, that what I believe I believe it's correct, if there's a lack of actual acknowledgment, by the state recognition by the state of Tribal communities, I'm pretty sure that's what I was told that there are no proclamations that are actually formally recognized by the state of Maryland, whereas I think it was New York State some, some other states, somebody said, there were like six different Tribes that were recognized.

42:40

Interviewer: Mm-hmm. Okay.

Interviewee: Reconition is the first place to start because once you have recognition, then you actually you to act on it, then you basically just recognize, but you interact with the groups you're talking to.

42:54

Interviewer: And then....

42:58

Interviewee: if they don't exist. You know, that nothing happens.

43:03

Interviewer: Um, **are you also aware of like, different resources that are our Indigenous resources that are available in your own work?**

43:15

Interviewee: In terms of like hydrology, and geomorphology?

43:18

Interviewer: Just in terms of like, yeah, like in the STEM or policy law, or anything?

Interviewee: I'm not, I'm not well informed about that. So, again, I can't give you a good answer.

43:34

Interviewer: Okay. And then, um, I guess my next question is, do you think, um, **Maryland's environmental planning aligns with a lot of tribal communities planning?**

43:47

Interviewee: Again, I don't know. I don't know what they've done. And actually, you know, mean, a friend of mine and undergraduate school with used to be secretary of the Maryland Department of Environment, he would probably hit the he's been out of office since 10 years, but he might know more about that than I do. And people in MDE today or DNR Department of Natural Resources, it would actually make sense for people DNR to have some awareness of this. Perhaps they do, I just don't know.

44:24

Interviewer: Okay, um, so basically it and, um, is there anything you'd like to add? Or that I didn't ask about that you would like to contribute to this interview?

Interviewee: Well, I mean, I think it's worthwhile what you're doing? I am. I don't have anything to add of my own. I mean, I think I've just told you, what I'm aware of and what I'm ignorant about. I am curious, what you're going to do with the information you're gathering as part of your thesis. What's What are your goals in terms of what you're going to do with this information?

45:00

Interviewer: Yeah, so thank you for that question. Um, so what I'm gonna do with this a lot of these interviews, is, of course, I'm transcribing them. And then what I'm going to do is kind of like, locate the themes that are going to be talked about. And I'm going to see if there's like, any comparison themes, or if there's like a, something different from the themes that I witnessed. And then what I'm going to do is basically, I'm going to make sure that this is also part put into my thesis paper. And I'm going to make sure that you know, like, this is kind of more like an awareness kind of thing. It's not more of a problem solving. It's more like kind of highlighting to the public of how, how Indigenous erasure is really impacting a lot of the Maryland tribal peoples environments, and also their identity, and especially in the 21st century. So this is kind of just like an kind of highlighting their kind of priorities and issues that they're having right now.

46:05

Interviewee: So how many, how many different Tribal group representatives have you been able to actually interact with? Are you getting good feedback in terms of, you know, other than people like me, people who actually are coming from those perspective within Maryland?

46:22

Interviewer: Yeah, so I am interacting with not just one Tribal community or nation, I mean, interacting with like multiple Tribal nations. Because there's in the merit in the state of Maryland, there's actually I think there's six, but of course, like their ancestral here, but, of course, there's different Tribal people that are not from the state of Maryland, but have come to live here and settled here. So I have talked to some of them. But mainly, I'm talking mainly to the Maryland tribal people that are ancestral to this to the state of Maryland.

And I am talking with org, environmental organizations, and what their perspectives on Tribal engagement and how, you know, if they are aware of it, or if they're not aware of it, so it's just kind of me kind of like, understanding firsthand of what is really going on.

Interviewee: So to your knowledge, are you the first person to actually try to do this, in Maryland?

47:23

Interviewer: So far. Yeah, I actually am, because, um, when I was talking about this with my advisor, and also my partner, mentor, Ashley and Maggie. They haven't really seen anybody really

do something like this. Um, but I did have like one person, her name was I think it was Nicole Brooks. She's from UMD, College Park, she did something similar, but she went on a different approach of kind of like how Tribal Environmental Policy is a thing, and it should be a thing. I don't know if she interviewed people. I don't really know what she did. But it is kind of, but like, with UMBC. Yes, this, I guess I am kind of the first person doing this. And kind of like, I don't know, it's just kind of weird that I'm the first person to do something like this, because I thought something like this already happened.

Interviewee: But you might expect it. But if not, then what you're doing is is even more important, right?

And the things that you learn, may well be of interest to fairly broad audience. So when you talk to organizations at the state level, or even at the level of the whole watershed, excuse me a second, I have to take a call.

48:44

Interviewer: You're okay.

49:16

Interviewee: (continuing) Anyway. Yeah, I think, in fact, if there are groups that are that are interested in the question, how do we go about doing this? The fact that you will have interviewed a bunch of people from Tribal Nations or communities and have are able to sort of collate and articulate what are the things that they had to say, if they heard that anywhere else that's going to be really valuable information/

49:44

Interviewer: Yeah, no, I think it's very important because I think, because most of them just on the environmental organization part, they kind of like, haven't heard anything like the authentic voice of tribal nations. I mean, we kind of just like assume and also like heard it from a non-Native person. So it's, I think it's important to hear it from a tribal perspective and lens, because a lot of the Chesapeake watershed, because I always say waterways is important because of X, Y, and Z. And I thought that was very important to highlight that, even though yes, it may look like a social issue. This is also an environmental issue as well.

50:28

Interviewee: Yeah. Yeah

50:30

Interviewer: But, yeah, but But would you like to, is there any questions you'd like to ask me?

50:36

Interviewee: Well, I just did.

50:38

Interviewee: I know I just want to be part of the interview. I'll just be interested to hear what you come up with, you know, when it's all done, so Okay, good luck with I hope hope it goes well.

Interviewer: Yeah, thanks. Um, we can I ask you one more thing, but let me stop the recording first.

50:57

Interviewee: I have a meeting and start to three minutes. So let's do it quick.

Interviewer: Okay.

Ends at 51:01 minutes

Chesapeake Climate Action Network

00:51

Interviewee: I'm executive director and founder the Chesapeake Climate Action Network.

01:00

Interviewer: Thank you. Um, so just the first question I wanted to ask you was, um, so **what is your organization's main mission?**

01:15

Interviewee: Our goal is to promote awareness and solutions associated with global warming in Maryland, Virginia, and DC.

01:26

Interviewer: Okay. Um, and then, um, **is that particularly in like, learning about how the, how global warming is affecting different communities in the region?**

01:42

Interviewee: That includes learning how climate change is impacting communities across the region, whether it be sea level rise, or interior flooding, or heat waves, or agricultural impacts, or urban heat problems, all of all of that.

02:04

Interviewer: Okay. Um, thank you. And one of the things I wanted to ask is, **what do you see as the level of understanding or knowledge you personally hold about indigenous peoples? And can you describe this to me, please?**

02:23

Interviewee: Repeat the question.

02:25

Interviewer: Sorry. So I said, **What do you see as the level of understanding or knowledge you personally hold about Indigenous peoples? And can you describe this to me?**

02:38

Interviewee: Indigenous people anywhere or in my region?

02:41

Interviewer: I'm in your region, or if you want to just generalize it, what ever. Whatever knowledge you have.

02:49

Interviewee: Pretty broad, pretty broad, open-ended question. I will try to be more specific and talk about Indigenous folks in this region. I have read a lot about the Anacostia people of the Piscataway Tribe here in the DC area, I have a real interest in that history and archaeological site. And just understanding the Indigenous culture in history of the region that I live in.

In terms of climate change, we have historically worked closely with Indigenous leaders, especially in Virginia who were fighting the Mountain Valley Pipeline and the Atlantic Coast Pipeline, which goes through some sacred Indigenous communities, disrupts farmland owned by Indigenous people. And so we be historically we're in alliances in coalition with some of those Indigenous leaders in Virginia especially, and to some degree in Southern Maryland, fighting some other fossil fuel infrastructure projects.

04:23

Interviewer: And so **would you say that you have existing relationships with Indigenous people in the region?**

04:31

Interviewee: I would say I know some Indigenous leaders. I don't know. I would just say, know some would like to and have worked politically with some and want to continue to elevate you know, the concerns of those communities

05:00

Interviewer: And I guess like, is it because like some of the Tribes, especially since Maryland doesn't have any federally recognized Tribes? Is that **would you say it's because of the recognition that they don't have the federal recognition? They don't have that you're not able to kind of work with them?**

05:18

Interviewee: I don't know that that's a problem. I think it's a problem for them in some ways. So I don't know, I guess I don't have an answer for we tend to reach out to affected communities when it wherever it makes sense. Um, and I'll just leave it at that.

05:45

Interviewer: Okay. And I guess like, one of the things I wanted to ask was, since you work with Southern Maryland, **what would you say are the biggest challenges those Tribal communities are currently facing?**

06:05

Interviewee: Um, yeah, recognition for sure. These are Piscataway people and subgroups of Piscataway. Recognition you know, the ongoing effects of colonization and fragmentation of culture. Being appropriately honored being a brought to the table on major policy issues. Those are those are some of the biggest challenges.

06:49

Interviewer: And just like how your naming a lot of those terms and our words, **would you say that ties into the concept of Indigenous erasure and how that's like impacting them today?**

07:04

Interviewee: If you know, yeah, Indigenous erasure. Yeah, big problem. And that's what I hear from the Indigenous leaders themselves that, you know, people have lost their sense of identity.

You know, the effects of centuries of colonization have taken their toll, especially on East Coast Indigenous people.

07:30

Interviewer: And do you think that it would effects their waterways too, as well? Since, you know, not just also colonization is happening, but also how climate change is very accelerating at an alarming rate.

07:47

Interviewee: Yeah, I mean, sacred areas are disappearing because of sea level rise their sacred areas and Indigenous homeland that's eroding along the James River. Parts of Southern Maryland. And yeah, flooding, changing and changes in precipitation patterns, changes in animal behavior in popular hunting areas. Effects on farms owned by Indigenous families. extreme precipitation. Yeah. Big effects.

08:35

Interviewer: And then, so how does you see this kind of like going into like diversity, equity, inclusion and justice work? How do you see this kind of focus the DEIJ? Work in your organization as inclusive for issues, Indigenous issues?

08:57

Interviewee: I mean, we definitely prioritize, you know, diversity, inclusion and justice issues. We have an internal committee on those issues, were committed to diversity. I don't think we've ever had a person of Indigenous lineage work for us might be wrong. I don't know that we've had many apply for jobs. So it is certainly something that we're conscious of wanting to deepen our own education around, which is why i i just finished a book called "A History of Indigenous People of Washington DC", because I wanted to be better educated. So it's a priority. I feel like we have more to do

10:02

Interviewer: And since would you say that there probably like specific opportunities within your work of organization that may be presented to the Tribal? People, Tribal communities in the region?

10:21

Interviewee: I don't know that we have anything specific that would that would directly apply to Indigenous communities that would? I don't, I don't know that we have anything right now.

10:37

Interviewer: Okay. Um, so I guess like when, when I mentioned this, when Maryland mentioned, like diverse communities, do you? Do you feel like they're including Indigenous people, when they mentioned diverse communities?

Interviewee: Yes.

Interviewer: And do you. Can you describe it to me a little bit, if you don't mind?

11:06

Interviewee: Describe what?

11:07

Interviewer: Can you describe like, what you what your answer like how you said, Yes. That there, including Indigenous people within the diverse communities?

11:18

Interviewee: So describe what people presumably mean, when they want to include Indigenous people when they say diversity?

11:28

Interviewer: Uh-huh, yes.

11:32

Interviewee: I think they I think it's obvious what they mean. They want to be inclusive of not only larger racial groups, but also just Indigenous people. First Americans, wherever they are, wherever they can be included.

12:02

Interviewer: Okay, thank you. And so I guess like, want to, I know, you mentioned briefly you touch base on this a little bit. But just to go into, I guess, more detail. What are some things that you think your organization might be able to uplift Indigenous voices?

12:23

Interviewee: What can we do?

Interviewer: Yeah.

Interviewee: Learn more, reach out more. seek input from more. You know, we tend to be an alliance with Indigenous communities who are more fighting against things, when we're fighting against pipelines or new proposed power plants that would affect local communities. But we do less to engage Indigenous communities on major solution legislation. So bills to increase solar and wind power and things like that. So I think we need to be better at reaching out on not just more on defense, and we're trying to stop stuff, but also when we're trying to pass legislation.

13:20

Interviewer: And would you say that you would probably need more like resources to help you with the engagement?

Interviewee: Always.

Interviewer: Yeah, I mean, I can point you to some advices and resources that could probably help with the engagement part,

Interviewee: Sure

Interviewer: (continuing) just so that I'm sure. It'd be better and everything. And so I guess, like one of the other things I wanted to ask was, I kind of did skip over it. But just going back to the erasure part, I guess, like, one of the things I wanted to ask was, do you see your organization as being a position to help counter erasure?

14:11

Interviewee: I don't know. Possibly. Yeah.

14:17

Interviewer: And would you say it's more like kind of, I guess, like a future sense kind of thing rather than the current?

14:26

Interviewee: Yeah, that sounds right. Yeah, we, every year, we're more conscious of this issue. And, but we still have a lot a way to go. So I would say yeah, we got more to do.

14:42

Interviewer: Okay. And, um, I guess like one of the things I wanted to also ask, just one more question, I guess, is that um, so I guess like, when you guys are, **what type of conversations do you have on the topic of Indigenous people in your organization?**

15:08

Interviewee: What kind of conversations?

Interviewer: Yes.

15:16

Interviewee: Really don't have them. I mean, if you're saying do we have dedicated meetings where the topic is outreach or relationships with Indigenous communities in a region where that is the main thing that we talk about? We have not had those specific, intentional conversations.

15:44

Interviewer: **And would you say it's just because of the current projects that you guys are working on? Or is it just like, it just never occurred to you?**

16:00

Interviewee: I mean, we, we have had lots of conversations that involve Indigenous concerns and Indigenous voices, in the context of campaigns in the field, real threats to real people. How do we get Indigenous leaders to come to a press conference? How do we take their concerns and elevate it to the larger community? How do we set up meetings with affected Indigenous families with polluting companies, et cetera? But just a conversation on improving our inclusion? Or relationships with Indigenous communities uniquely? We have not had that and we probably should.

17:03

Interviewer: Okay, um, I guess, like, just, **is there anything else you'd like to add? Or that I didn't ask you about that you'd like to contribute?**

17:17

Interviewee: Um, So Autumn do you go to UMBC? Is that right?

17:21

Interviewer: UMBC. Yes.

17:24

Interviewee: UMBC. And you're an undergraduate?

17:26

Interviewer: No, my graduate.

17:30

Interviewee: What are you studying? What is your degree path?

17:33

Interviewer: Geography and Environmental Systems

17:38

Interviewee: Cool. And are you from Maryland?

17:42

Interviewer: No, I'm from Arizona. So like, Southwest. Yeah.

17:49

Interviewee: Got it. What led you to come to UMBC?

17:53

Interviewer: Ah, so what led me to do UMBC was I saw an ad for the program that I'm in. So it's the iCARE program. It's basically like for graduate students that wanted to work on community research involving in the environment. And so that's when I was like, Oh, this sounds interesting. So that's when I applied and then after that next thing, you know, like, I got accepted, and I was like, Oh, I just want to take this opportunity. So that's what led me here. And just because I wanted to try something new.

18:30

Interviewee: How do you like it?

18:32

Interviewer: I like it, um, except for the summertime. I'm not used to humidity at all. I, It's really hard. And just like, oh my goodness, it's just really definitely different for me. I'm not used to seeing like, when I go to Southern Maryland to sometimes I go there. I'm not used to seeing a lot of marshes or swamps. So I'm like, Oh, this is different. This is so cool. Like, I really like it. And not only that, but like I live in northern Maryland or northern Arizona. So it's more rural, rather than you know, a big city so what I came like going through Baltimore and everything else, whoa, this is a city like it's overwhelming, but yeah, it's different.

19:28

Interviewee: It's big. Town, it's beautiful. Where northern Arizona.

19:35

Interviewer: Um, so I am from Window Rock, like Window Rock, Arizona. And that's like between Flagstaff and Albuquerque. Yeah, so it's just right there.

19:52

Interviewee: Yeah, I can't think of anything. Paper is just sort of figured out Are when what environmental groups do in the context of inclusion?

20:07

Interviewer: Yeah, because, um, one of the things I wanted to kind of know, especially since from an outsider's perspective, because I know in my region where I'm living now it's more in like, it's more like industrial artificial. So I'm just like, I was like wondering, like, where's a lot of the environmental spaces and I noticed the further you're out towards Baltimore, the more I guess, accessibility environment you have and kind of wanted to know about especially like the Tribal peoples if they are if they have access to a lot of the environment, or if they don't, and I kind of

wanted to also like have the environmental organizations perspective on learning if the if they have an engagement or not, or what what does it look like? So

21:03

Interviewee: yeah, how do you know Joby?

21:08

Interviewer: I know Joby because he's part of my committee. Um, and also to like we've my advisor Maggie, Dr. Maggie Holland, she is actually talks about Joby a lot and I was like oh, okay, well, I gotta meet this guy. And so next thing you know, me and Joe, we started harping conversation. He's just very eccentric guy. And I was just like, wow, this guy is cool.

21:38

Interviewee: Oh, I think anything else? I mean?

21:44

Interviewer: Sorry, no, it it kind of cut off your what I was hearing sorry. Oh, no, I can hear you. Yeah.

21:56

Interviewee: Um, I think in in saying, you know, I think this conversation is sort of just be you know, there's more to be done. There are just fewer there are fewer organized Indigenous communities and this in Mid-Atlantic then there are last, you know, I used to live in Montana. And now it's just in. So, but I, but they're there. And we have and we've a decent job of coordinating by case. I shouldn't come Indigenous leaders, but I think we ought to be more intentional. That's my takeaway from this conversation. So I appreciate I appreciate having this thought.

22:56

Interviewer: Yeah, and I appreciate you and, um, for taking time out of your day to do this. But **is there any questions you like to ask me or anything about during this interview?**

23:10

Interviewee: Like I just asked him, I asked them all, all the questions I asked.

23:16

Interviewer: Okay. Um, okay, so, but I do like this talk, because it helps me to kind of understand but also just to connect to as well because some of the Tribal people I've been talking to are very eager to have those engagements and in very wanting to you know, have those conversations at the table. So definitely it's it's, it's there so there's some enthusiasm with it.

23:49

Interviewee: I my email address, please send me any contacts or articles to read or anything like that the same might help us do better.

23:58

Interviewer: Yeah, of course, I can definitely do that and introduce you to people that were willing to talk to you guys. So yeah, awesome. And real quick. Let me stop this first, and then I just have something to say. When we stop

Ends at 24:13

Blue Water Baltimore Water Keeper

03:06

Interviewee: Sure. So first of all, I'm getting a message on my computer right now it says my internet is unstable. So if I break up, I apologize. But I'll do my best.

I'm at the Baltimore Harbor Waterkeeper with a group called Blue Water Baltimore. And so Waterkeeper organizations throughout the world are really focused on being like water Watchdogs. So it's a non-governmental group, but it's focused on preserving and protecting everybody's right to clean water. So personally, I live in Monkton, Maryland, which is like in Northern Baltimore County. I live now in the same area that I grew up in. So I moved back to this area to be closer to my parents just a couple of years ago. And yeah, I don't know. I'm happy to talk any more about myself. But um, but that's who I am in a nutshell. Yeah.

04:07

Interviewer: Okay, awesome. Well, thank you for your awesome introductions and everything. But before we move forward, do you have like any questions before we proceed?

04:18

Interviewee: I don't think I have any questions I'm I'm excited to get the conversation going. Because I think Bluewater Baltimore and the environmental community at large does a terrible job at being inclusive. And so I'm excited to kind of like, speak from that perspective so that we can move forward and figure out a better path forward. So I'm excited to get it going.

04:38

Interviewer: Okay, awesome. (Agree to move to the interview questions)

04:39

Interviewee: So like I just, you know, like, I will not be like, I know that we're doing a bad job. I guess we should just start there. But go ahead. Yeah.

04:49

Interviewer: Yeah. Um, so just asking the first question, I know you already touched base on this about being a Waterkeeper. But I guess like what, specifically **what would your or would you say is your organization's main mission?**

05:04

Interviewee: So I think the stated mission of the organization is to protect and restore waterways throughout the Patapsco and back river watersheds. And so Waterkeeper is really delineated by watersheds. So all of the area of land that drains into a specific water body, so it's intrinsically linked to flowing waters, and kind of doing whatever we can to protect those spaces from pollution and amplifying the voices of the people who are living within those watersheds that are being negatively affected by pollution. So it sort of takes water protection from almost like the, the negative space of Amplifying Voices of people who are being impacted, and then bringing it into the positive space of trying to implement changes or change policies, or sometimes suing polluters to make a positive difference across across the watershed.

So I think that's kind of like how I would describe it. I think the the power of a waterkeeper is rooted in connection to waterways and also the people who kind of stand behind that waterkeeper. So like it is, it is a public-facing position being a waterkeeper somebody who can speak truth to power when necessary, somebody who can build consensus and coalition's to move policy forward. But really, at the end of the day, I can't I am worthless, I'm meaningless if I'm not authentically representing the needs of people within the watershed.

06:48

Interviewer: Okay, and then can you tell me a bit more of like how like your organization uses the term Waterkeeper? Like, where did that come from? Or why is that term being used? If you don't mind me asking?

07:03

Interviewee: Oh, sure. Um, so water the Waterkeeper Alliance is, so Bluewater Baltimore didn't make up the term barkeeper. It comes from the Waterkeeper. Alliance, which is a global organization that started with the Hudson River Keeper. So now there are I want to say like 350 Different Waterkeeper organizations all across the world. And the term Waterkeeper is like it's a licensed trademark term. And so we have to abide by a certain set of Waterkeeper quality standards in order to maintain our trademark licensure agreement, basically, with Waterkeeper Alliance.

So it's everything from like, you have to patrol your local waterways for pollution, to you have to have a plan for involving a wide breadth of people within your work. So like you have to have an established justice, equity, diversity and inclusion plan for your organization. You can't just be representing one segment of your watershed all the way to like, you have to be abiding by best financial accounting practices, things like that. So it's both standards in the process of doing our work, but also to protect that trademark legally.

08:32

Interviewer: Okay. Yeah, because I kind of I was like thinking I never heard the Waterkeeper until I came here. So I was just like, that's really new to me. So yeah, yeah. But thank you for sharing that.

08:43

Interviewee: Yeah and there's like a whole lot of Waterkeepers here and the Chesapeake region. I think there's many more, it's more prevalent on the East Coast. And that's probably partially because the movement started with Hudson River Keeper in New York. But there's Waterkeepers all over the US. And so there's, there's like a bunch out west in California and Washington, but um, yeah.

09:07

Interviewer: Okay. Um, so transitioning to the next question. Um, what do you see as a level of understanding or knowledge you personally hold about Indigenous people? And can you describe this to me?

09:20

Interviewee: Yeah, I think my personal understanding is very basic, very baseline low. So I, my only interaction with the Lumbee community in Baltimore has really been through Ashley up to this point. So what I know about the Lumbee community in Baltimore is through what Ashley has

shared with me. I also know that this this area will the area that I live in, like up in northern Baltimore County, is the historic territory and land of the Susquehanna people.

And I also think that there. There is still the Piscataway Conoy Tribe. And I think like a big part of Baltimore, is historically like their land. So those are the two like the Tribes that I'm aware of in this area. But there's probably more. And I am not, I am not tuned in like I don't have personal contacts or friends within the Piscataway Conoy Tribe. I know that the Potomac River Keeper has a close connection with I believe his name is Francis Gray, with the Piscataway Conoy Tribe, but I don't have a personal relationship with him. So that's really the limit of my personal knowledge.

10:47

Interviewer: Okay, and then, um, so going into organization, **does your organization have like an existing relationship with Maryland's Indigenous community?**

10:58

Interviewee: We don't know. So I think one of the things that I've been excited about specifically with working with Ashley, is trying to build my organization's knowledge about the Lumbee people, and hopefully building a connection there. Also, Ashley, and I just, like have a connection organically, which is it's, it's just happened, it was so weird. But anyway, or as an organization, we don't really have like, an existing relationship with any other tribes. No.

11:35

Interviewer: **Do you what do you think the challenge is?** Is that is, like not having you guys, **like be having a relationship with the Tribal communities?**

11:45

Interviewee: So I think I can speak for myself on a couple of the reasons. Well, one of the big reasons why I haven't reached out, it's because I don't want to come to a group of people and try to build a relationship that is like, based on my needs, if that makes sense. Like I can see. Like, yes, it would be valuable for Bluewater Baltimore to have a connection with Indigenous people, because it will help us it will further our goals. And that feels like Sorry, I know this is being recorded, like that feels terrible, that feels shitty. And it feels extractive. And at the same time, that sense of not wanting to like be a burden is preventing me from actually doing the outreach to begin with. And so it's like a, it's a lose-lose situation. Because at the end of the day, I'm not making any connections, I think part of it is time, like capacity. So having all of these priorities in terms of like legal cases, or, you know, passing bills, General Assembly, being a small nonprofit organization, and also knowing that you have to invest deeply in, like the relationship building phase of partnership. And knowing that I can't do it really well, right now is preventing you from doing it at all.

13:28

Interviewer: Okay. And, um, I guess, like going into that, **would you say that your organization would probably need, like resources to have that establishment built?**

13:41

Interviewee: So I think across the board, whether it's talking about like, with Indigenous people, or in Baltimore, I mean, we are a majority White-led organization, like this environmental group, Bluewater Baltimore, and we're in a predominantly Black city. And so like, we have this conversation a lot specifically around developing organic and authentic relationships with Black communities in Baltimore. We haven't had that same conversation around building these

relationships with Indigenous communities. But it's the same, it's the same, the same conversation, I think, which is, yes, we need dedicated resources to build those relationships and to invest in partnership building, not just like the outcomes of a grant project, or like the measurable tangible pollution reduction benefits that are typically funded, if that makes sense. So like, our funders, and like the funding mechanism of our organization, is typically these big foundations that are paying us to achieve an outcome. And those outcomes often look like passing a specific bill, or like planting a certain number of trees or, you know, doing a certain number of facilities. And to do any of that really well requires there's intentional community building and partnership building, but like, that's not the work that's actually being funded.

15:08

Interviewee: Okay, I'm, I'm more than happy to happily to give you like resources that could help maybe get the resource but like afterwards if you don't mind, but

15:20

Interviewer: Yeah, I'll be great.

15:23

Interviewee: Awesome. Um, so I guess like going into my next question. Um, so **when I bring up the concept of Indigenous erasure, what are your thoughts? Or what does that mean to you?**

15:37

Interviewer: Um, so I mean, I think it's manifesting in the fact that I have no knowledge about Indigenous peoples in this area, other than the three groups that I mentioned earlier. So I don't know exactly what you mean, when you say Indigenous erasure, but to me, it's, it looks like not having a common understanding about the history of the people that were here, you know, before European settlers.

16:07

Interviewer: And...

Interviewee: It also, oh sorry, go ahead.

Interviewer: oh, no, no, no, go ahead. Go ahead. Sorry.

16:10

Interviewee: Okay, I think it also like bringing that into the present sense, is, like, I am not, I don't know if any of my current partners that I work on, like environmental issues with, right, like community groups, or like, I don't, I don't know if any of those people have Indigenous ancestry. Like, that's not something that they have ever shared with me. And so I am going to make an assumption that they don't have Indigenous ancestry, but I actually don't know that. So like, I think that's part of the erasure as well is like, both I have no idea whether or not I'm currently engaging with Indigenous people, and I just didn't know it. But also, like, we're not being intentional about pulling those groups of people into decision-making about, like, what bills we're gonna support, just to bring it to legislation, or like, where we're going to be planting trees or things like that.

17:14

Interviewer: Okay. And then, um, I guess, like, since I know, You've mainly kind of set a little bit, but **do you think it's happening in Maryland now currently, like the Indigenous erasure part?**

17:29

Interviewee: I think yeah, absolutely. And I think that's evident by I mean, everything that I just mentioned. But I'm actually really interested, I know this is going off the script. But would you mind telling me what you mean, when you say Indigenous erasure? Would that be helpful? Or is that gonna, like, influence the rest of the questions?

17:48

Interviewer: Oh, no, no, no, like, I, this, it'll be fine. If I like, define it for you.

Interviewee: Okay.

Interviewer: So like, when I say, Indigenous erasure, I'm mainly like, basically just talking about, like, Indigenous people how, like what you said, like, their stories or histories are being erased, like, say, for example, like you're in like, a history class. And basically, you're kind of told their perspective of like, European, like, history started with Europeans. And then that's how we are able to, like, have all this stuff. But then after that, like, you leave out the part where there was a living, functioning society before even the Europeans came to this continent. And even now, like kind of how like, like what you said, you have little knowledge of, like Indigenous people. And that could possibly be like, how a lot of stigmas and stereotypes are still playing into that, like, into their livelihoods. Like because they're being dismissed, their authenticity is being dismissed, rather, the stereotypical it stereotypes is still being like, uphold like putting on a pedestal, if that makes sense. Does that make sense to you?

18:59

Interviewee: Um, the last part that you said about the authenticity? Can you say more about that? Because I feel like I'm not understanding that part.

19:07

Interviewer: Yeah, no. So when I'm talking about authenticity, I'm talking about like, how, for example, like, I don't know if you heard of the term TEK or Traditional Ecological Knowledge. Now, yeah, so that's basically traditional ecological knowledge basically means or Indigenous Knowledge is basically what like, you don't have a like a degree or credentials or anything. You basically have knowledge of, like observation of the land, water resources, how it changed. What influenced it, is there like, is there something good happening or is there something bad happening? So that's what it means. It's like a generational thing, but it's ever it's ever changing. There's really not one term because depending on what region you're at, that's how it's going to also change and I'm So like, when, again, going back to the authentic authenticity is like, when Tribes like mentioned about, like their Traditional or Indigenous knowledge, there are a lot dismissed because again, they don't have the credentials, they only have to get PhDs and stuff like that. So again, that's like, their experiences and observations are just like, overlooked. And it's like, nope, invalid, not not there. Versus like, say, like someone that moved in that read books about the place, they're more like, gonna have like, a lot of backup and support, basically. So does that make sense?

20:39

Interviewee: Yes, I think the the term I'm more familiar with, but I think it's like, not exactly the same, but similar is like lived experience, which like that, that resonates with me. So yes, thank you. I appreciate you know,

20:50

Interviewer: you're welcome. Sorry, if I made that complicated.

20:53

Interviewee: You did not. No. It's very interesting. And I hope I didn't derail us so keep going.

21:01

Interviewer: Now, you're fine. But um, I guess like, so. Would? Sorry? would **do you think that your organization could be like in a position to counter erasure?**

21:16

Interviewee: I do. So I think that, you know, Bluewater Baltimore is what 14 years old at this point as an organization. And then we were formed as a merger of five different organizations in 2010. So some of those legacy organizations are even further back. And I think that we are, I would consider us a well resourced organization, even though like we're nonprofit, we're scrapping for our money just like everybody else. But I still think that we're a well-resourced organization. And I think that we're positioned to kind of change the way that funders are funding. And I've seen that in practice, like, over the years, I think, especially since like 2020, we've been intentionally trying to write in more funding in our grant proposals for direct pass-through funding and stipends to community partners.

And I think that we have the opportunity to do that specifically for Indigenous groups as well like to bring them to the table in some of these programming initiatives that we're doing, but also like decision making, processes that we're going through and fund their time to do that, because like, you can't just ask somebody to like be a part of something without funding them, and like, actually, like, resourcing them, so I think we are in the position to do both of those things. I think we're well-poised to do it. Yeah.

22:39

Interviewer: Okay. Um, and then, you did bring up about the diversity, equity, inclusion and justice part. So I'm going into specifics, **how has your organization's been, like working to incorporate principles of diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice in the workplace and in the work that you do?**

23:02

Interviewee: So I think one of them is what I just talked about, which is changing our approach to grant not grant making, what's the word for seeking out grants, which is that we want to be doing some pass through funding to the communities that we're working with both to support their partnership, but also just to infuse funding and resources into the communities that we're working with. So I think that's one very tangible way that we've been promoting more authentic inclusion and amplifying some of the voices that otherwise don't have the resources to spend with us.

I think one of the things that we've been doing is utilizing mapping to identify what neighborhoods in Baltimore specifically are being unjustly overburdened by pollution, and then focusing our resources in those areas. So we've been able to use maps through like the EPA database of industrial facilities that are that have like different types of permits. But um, basically facilities that are discharging pollutants into neighborhoods, we can map those, and then we can use that information coupled with demographic data. And like environmental justice index scores, which are mostly created by proximity to air pollution, that's like mostly how EJ indices are developed to identify like, high-risk communities basically, is what it is like the word that I'll use, which means like communities that are overburdened and underserved, and that we can have some type of impact in that are experiencing pollution.

We've used those mapping tools to to tried to identify like, where to do engagement activities and where to plant trees and things. But we haven't used them to the best of their ability. I don't think so I think that's like an ongoing process. But that's one of the things that we've done.

25:14

Interviewer: So, is it kind of related to like the Justice40 Initiative?

25:20

Interviewee: Um, so I don't know. Because I that is really familiar to me like Jay40. And also, I don't fully understand it. I'm not sure.

25:32

Interviewer: Yeah, okay. No, because I asked, because, so far my other like, colleague is actually learning about the Justice40 and how she's also like, wanting to know if, like, the federal money is actually going into communities that actually are, you know, "underserved" or anything and how it's being distributed. So she's trying to look at that. And I thought that was pretty interesting and how she was going about it with her project.

25:57

Interviewee: That's, yeah, it's it's interesting, like, that's one of the tactics that we've taken to effect change like So specifically, we're working on the issue of sewage backups in Baltimore. That's like a big issue for us. And it's weird because like the the transformation of or like the timeline of Bluewater Baltimore getting involved with sewage backups has been interesting, because it's not directly going into like waterways, but it is directly impacting people's lives. And one of the ways that we've been able to affect change on that issue is by having some Hopkins students do like an analysis of who is experiencing sewage backups. And we found through that data analysis that if you live in a neighborhood with a higher percentage of Black residents in Baltimore, you are statistically more likely to experience a sewage backup.

And so like, the easier way of saying that is that if you are Black, you are more likely to experience a sewage backup in Baltimore. And it's because of historic disinvestment in underground pipe infrastructure. And also, because of redlining, like the areas where housing has historically been available to Black residents is in lower-lying areas that's more prone to flooding, which is like a contributing factor to sewage backups.

So like after doing this analysis, and like looking at it from an environmental justice perspective, we've been able to make some like really big strides in the city's response to sewage backups, and shining a light on it as like an environmental justice issue. So anyway, that's been something that I've been working on for years, and it's something I'm proud of that Bluewater has kind of like stepped outside of its comfort zone, to really tackle that issue.

27:43

Interviewer: Okay. And kind of like, I should have asked this earlier, but um, I guess since you were saying how the organization doesn't have any Tribal, like relationships, would you say the reason why they don't have Tribal relationship is probably because of Tribal status. So when I mean Tribal status, like the federally recognized Tribes, versus state-recognized Tribes, are you familiar with that?

28:09

Interviewee: So I don't know that that plays into it, because I'm not even aware of the distinction. So keep? Yeah, I don't I don't think that's part but maybe it is part of it. I just don't understand why. So.

28:23

Interviewer: Yeah, no. So when I say federally recognized, so I don't know if you looked at like a map of like the whole United States and how you kind of see like, where, like reservations are, or everything. So if you do look at that, usually most tribes that are federally recognized, are like reservation based and also have like privilege of having getting federal funding and also having different organizations in their tribes and having different departments and everything. And, yeah, and then the first state recognized they don't actually get federal funding, the state only recognizes them, but the federal government at the federal level, they don't recognize them at all. Wow, okay. Everything So, yeah, cuz some, I guess, like, for example, like the EPA, like they only work directly with federally recognized tribes. They don't work sometimes, I guess, just from what I heard, but I think they work sometimes with state recognized tribes, but most of the case it's not,

29:28

Interviewee: Right. No, I didn't know that.

29:31

Interviewer: Yeah, I, I was really surprised about it. But again, like we're still we're all learning somehow in some way. So. But yeah, I just thought I should ask just because in case you were aware of it.

29:43

Interviewee: So I wasn't aware of it. I don't think that's a big piece of the reason. I mean, I think, speaking for myself, I don't know where to start. So I think the way that I got I connected with Ashley was actually through another Waterkeeper. It was Jeff Curry, who's the Lumber Waterkeeper down in North Carolina, and I was talking with him at a conference. And he was like, *You should meet my friend Ashley*. And that's like, how I got connected with her. And so I think not to put it on anybody else. Because it's nobody else's fault, you know that we don't have these, we can do a better job of reaching out and finding these connections. But I also feel like I don't really know where to start.

30:34

Interviewer: Yeah. Yeah, though, that's, that's totally fine (*it wasn't fine that there are no connections, it's a tick of mine to say that after not knowing what to say*). Like, we're all learning in some ways, and somehow, but that's why I'm also interviewing too, because I just want to know if most organizations in Maryland are actually making these conn connections or not. So, yeah, we're still learning.

Interviewee: Yeah.

Interviewer: But, um, so I guess like, one of the other things I wanted to ask was, um, say if like, you know, if your organization's did have like a relationship or with the Tribal Nations, **are there like specific opportunities within your work organization, that focus on involve are opportunities that could be presented to Tribal peoples, or communities?**

31:23

Interviewee: Opportunity. So I think a lot of the work that we do is about green stormwater infrastructure implementation. So anything from planting trees in neighborhoods to like doing larger scale, like bioswales, something that collects and then filters out stormwater. So I think if there's an

intersection there between like an Indigenous community that is experiencing some type of either like, lack of trees in their neighborhood, or like flooding in their neighborhood, or sewage backups in their neighborhood, or a specific facility that's polluting the water in that neighborhood. I think that's the nexus that's like the opportunity between them and Bluewater Baltimore.

32:17

Interviewer: Oh, oh, you'll definitely get some connection there. Because there is there is some from the Tribal people I've been talking to. So yeah

Interviewee: awesome.

Interviewer: But we can discuss that after....

32:30

Interviewee: I mean not awesome because they're dealing with it, but I'm excited to make more connections. Yeah.

32:36

Interviewer: Yeah, I'm excited also to, but we'll see how this how this goes. But, um, I guess like, um, what I guess like when Maryland mentions diverse community communities, do you believe that tribal communities or people are involved in that term when Maryland mentioned that?

32:58

Interviewee: Like the state of Maryland?

Interviewer: Yes.

Interviewee: Um, I believe that they are. But I gather from your question that I'm probably wrong. So I, so I, I am currently under the impression that that does include Tribal communities. Yes.

33:16

Interviewer: Okay. There's no right or wrong answer

Interviewee: Okay

Interviewer: I just getting your perspective and opinions. So you're fine.

Interviewee: Okay. But, um, so I guess like what are some things you think your organization's might be able to do to uplift Indigenous voices?

33:35

Interviewee: Um, so I have probably like an out dated like, preconception that Indigenous people and like, feel free to totally tell me that this is terrible or anything, but I have this conception that or this idea that Indigenous people have a strong connection to like streams and rivers. And that is like an like, an something that is important to them. And we can you say the question again?

34:11

Interviewer: Yeah, no, you're good. So I asked, what are some things you think your organization's might be able to do to uplift Indigenous voices?

34:20

Interviewee: So I think that, you know, in Baltimore, especially our streams and rivers are so polluted and they're being taken advantage of by industry, and they're being used, right. And I think that we have the opportunity to lift up Indigenous voices that are like, inherently connected to surf

to like streams and rivers and help heal some of like the water pollution that's happened. But I, I think that's also like, that's making a lot of assumptions. Yeah.

35:02

Interviewer: Well, you're not wrong about the streams and waters being importance because a lot of their Tribal names comes from like the water itself, like the Piscataway, I just learned that it means I think it was like, *blend in the waters*. And so it's pretty interesting that a lot of them are wanting to connect with their waterways. But of course, like bureaucracy processes is being placed on where they can't really connect where, you know, their ancestors did, or you know, their grandparents did like probably like 50 years ago. So, yeah, it's very challenging for them in that aspect.

35:40

Interviewee: Yeah, I think it's so interesting, because I think we have like this common goal of clean water. And in some ways, it feels like it has felt to me like, oh, that's exploiting people's, like, innate need for clean water. But it's like, that's like exploitation. That's, that's amplifying what everybody needs and feels. Anyway. Yeah.

36:07

Interviewer: No, you're good. But, um, so I guess my next question is, um, I know that you said that you don't have as much knowledge as of for Indigenous people. But just from again, your perspective and your opinion. **What do you think are the some of the things that would be like a good reparation for Indigenous people? Like in Maryland, specifically?**

36:33

Interviewee: Reparation?

Interviewer: Yeah. Oh, um, like when it comes to water, like waterway recreation?

36:40

Interviewer: Well, I'm just talking in general out.

36:42

Interviewee: Oh, I mean, I think Indigenous people will probably would enjoy the same types of recreation that I would I mean, I think like hiking in open spaces. You know, the ability to go swimming in in local waterways, which, you know, I think there's been a lot of focus recently on swimming in the harbor, which I think ultimately, that's like what we're driving towards. I don't think we're there yet. But I think that's what we're driving towards, like, kayak, just being on the water and having a relationship with water. So kayaking, like fishing. I mean, anything like that. Yeah.

37:23

Interviewer: Okay. And, um, do you also believe that **when Maryland's environmental plannings models or frameworks are aligning with a lot with Tribal environmental issues or priorities?**

37:41

Interviewee: Um, I don't know, because I don't know what Tribal priorities are. So I'm not sure. I don't know.

37:52

Interviewer: No, you're fine. Um, so I guess like, one of the other things I wanted to ask was, how you were saying earlier if that Waterkeeper was like a licensed term and stuff, but, um, what would you say that the Waterkeeper is kind of like, similar to how maybe the practices of like Indigenous people have done like to kind of like protect and clean the water. And also being able to kind of like, know about the you know, observation. And also, knowledge is of the tea, or traditional ecological knowledge, stuff like that?

38:36

Interviewee: I think it's very similar. So even though I don't have specific knowledge about very much about Indigenous cultures, and Indigenous Tribes, specifically, like, it feels like the same spirit across like the work that I'm doing, and the needs and desires of Indigenous peoples. And maybe I'm getting that wrong. But it feels very similar. One of my good friends, John Wathan, he's the Hurricane Creek keeper down in Alabama. And he spent, he stood with the Tribe at Standing Rock. And he told me about it a couple of years ago, and he said, It was the most spiritual experience he's ever had. And he said that, like, it was like being home, even though he was clearly not in Alabama anymore, because he felt like he was surrounded by people who had that same like Waterkeeper spirit. So I do think it's, it's, it feels very similar to me. And I'm saying that without having much knowledge about Indigenous Tribes, so that's for what it's worth.

39:47

Interviewer: Yeah, no, you're good. Like, again, like, water is life throughout everywhere. So I think it pertains to, you know, even though we're living in the modern age now, but it's still very are irrelevant to even most people and communities as well. So, um, so, I guess like we, we did reach the end. But is there like anything else you'd like to add? Or I didn't ask you about that you'd like to contribute?

40:19

Interviewee: Um, not that I can think of. I'm excited about next steps. And it sounds like maybe you have some connections for me to follow up on, which I'm excited about. But I don't think I have any other specific questions. Yeah. I just appreciate you reaching out to me. Thank you.

40:40

Interviewer: Yeah, of course, of course. But, um, but you don't have any questions about like, anything to me like you want to ask about during this recording or anything? No.

Interviewee: I don't think so. No, nope.

Interviewer: Okay. Well, we can let me just stop the recording first, and then we can talk a little bit if you don't mind doing that.

Interviewee: Sure.

Interviewer: Okay.

Ends at 41:10

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