

## Interview Transcript: Esther Stutzman, and Shannin Stutzman

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**A note from the writer:** Native communities have a long history of being multicultural and multilingual. Throughout this collection of interviews, listeners will hear words from 5 different Indigenous languages. Unfortunately, transcribing all of the spoken words in these interviews is beyond my skill-set. In this interview, Esther and Shannin speak words and phrases from the Kalapuya language, which was historically spoken in Willamette Valley. For the present, a star marks each unidentified Kalapuya word or phrase in this transcript.

Princess: [00:00:11] [speaking Western Shoshone] So, what are your guys's names?

Esther: [00:00:17] I'm Esther Stutzman, and I'm Coos–Hanis Coos, and Komemma Kalapuya.

Shannin: [00:00:24] And I'm Shannin Stutzman, also Hanis Coos and Komemma Kalapuya.

Princess: [00:00:27] So can you tell us a bit about yourself and your ties to this area?

Esther: [00:00:33] On my mother's side, which is Komemma Kalapuya, our people have always been here. We're the Komemma, which is the southernmost Kalapuya group. There are three distinct groups, but we're the southernmost, and so, we always say we've been here since the world began.

Shannin: [00:01:02] Basically, the same thing that she said. I was actually raised in Coos Bay, so I had more of a raising of my Coos background, very coastal, things like that. Then when we moved back over to the valleys, we always learned a lot more about the Kalapuya. But I was raised my whole life traditional, going to pow-wows, and drumming and dancing, salmon, festivals, and all that kind of stuff, so...

Princess: [00:01:30] How did you become involved with the development of the Kalapuya dictionaries?

Esther: [00:01:35] Oh, it's been a long journey. Born and raised in Coos Bay, and went to school there, and got married, and my husband was in the Air Force. So we moved around. We wound up in Everett, Washington, and then when my three girls grew up and moved out, we kind of looked at each other, my husband and I, and we said, what are we doing here? Our home is in Oregon. And so we moved to Yoncalla, which is the land of my mother's people, the Komemma Kalapuya. And being a person who's always worked with schools, specifically with Indian Education programs since 1974, I thought, well, it would be really nice to start introducing some really specific Kalapuya history and language into the schools... I could not find one source of the Kalapuya language. It had been heavily advertised for years that the Kalapuya people were extinct. And that began the journey of trying to find everything I can about the Kalapuya people, and specifically about the language, which was non-existent. We have no fluent speakers.

Shannin: [00:03:05] And then what was it about, seven years ago?

Esther: [00:03:09] I think so.

Shannin: [00:03:10] This man named Paul McCartney, not the singer, got a hold of Mom and said, I've been studying your language for several years now, and I think it's the most beautiful language I've ever heard in my life. Would you like to learn it? And we were like, yeah, hello. So we met up with him, and ever since then we worked together to collaborate, and he wanted to make a dictionary with all the words. And the man was very, very precise, so there's three dialects. There's Tualatin, the Santiam, and the Komemma, and he was giving each word, he would give [it] for each dialect, and then he'd give examples of each one.

And sometimes he'd even include the Chinuk Wawa, so if you do look at the dictionaries, you'll see, like one word [entry] is huge, because he is so detailed about it. So we worked for, I don't know, about three or four years with him, and we finally got to "Z" and done with it. And then we were able to talk about, you know, getting it printed and published and all that.

Esther: [00:04:18] And the printing of that big of a dictionary is 3,500 pages. But he got some estimates on it, and it was so expensive that he was going to mortgage his house.

Shannin: [00:04:33] And he wanted to donate all these, he didn't want any money, he wanted to donate to all of the universities, the colleges, and things like that, so...

Esther: [00:04:41] But he got very ill and entered the hospital, and in days, he passed away.

Shannin: [00:04:50] And we were like, what the heck do we do now, you know?

Esther: [00:04:53] We took over the project and decided that it was his last wish for it to be published. He even picked out a publishing company to do that, and when we saw how much it was going to be, we about fell through the floor—\$18,000 to print 150 copies.

Shannin: [00:05:16] So we ended up just choosing to do 100. So my youngest daughter, Aiyanna, she's like, “Oh, well why don't we just make a GoFundMe?” We're kind of new to the whole internet thing, so she put up a GoFundMe. And in under two weeks, she raised \$10,000 for the printing of the dictionary project. And we were able to get that first 100 printed off. So there's four volumes, there's two English to Kalapuya, and two Kalapuya to English.

Princess: [00:05:46] Did you have any tribal backing when you were doing this endeavor, or was this purely something that you had to go in your own pockets or crowdfund for?

Esther: [00:05:56] No, it was purely, we as a family and individuals within the Kalapuya people, we have a lot of interest and support from people who are non-Native and also people from other tribal groups that have supported us and backed us and helped to raise money.

Princess: [00:06:22] Were there any outreach to the local Indigenous tribes in Oregon about this, or was that not something you guys wanted to explore, or something you attempted to do?

Shannin: [00:06:35] Well, I don't think that anyone really knew about it, you know what I mean? So we just put this thing together, not that we were wanting to keep it to ourselves, it was just kind of how it happened. It was just us with Paul working it out and publishing it. So we didn't reach out to any tribal people or any other [groups], you know what I'm saying? Paul was our main person. He's had so much knowledge in it, so we just took it, we just said yes through everything, and he let us do it, you know?

Esther: [00:07:07] One of the things we wanted to make sure of was that the efforts of his work and our work weren't taken advantage of. And that's why we kind of kept it close to our work. There's a lot of problems with...

Shannin: [00:07:31] ...copyrighting, people taking things and saying it's theirs, or look -what-I-did type of things. So that's why—she [Esther] is very traditional in that, like, [with] storytelling and songs, she does not like them recorded or written down. Because people do that, they'll take it and change it around and say, oh well this is my story about this and that. And Native people never—we didn't write anything down. Everything we've learned was oral or taught by watching, so we never did have things written down. People just—they'll copy it, just make it their own to try to get the credit for everything.

Esther: [00:08:06] A lot of cultural appropriation. So we were trying to steer clear of that, not that we were trying to just keep it to ourselves, but so that we would have control over how it was done and how it's dispersed.

Princess: [00:08:19] I was wondering if you could tell us a little bit about your project and how far you guys are on [it]? Do you have a curriculum? Is it more oral based right now? Just love to hear anything about it.

Esther: [00:08:31] We are currently in the infancy of learning about the language. Our problem is that we do not have fluent speakers. And those ethnographers and linguists who collected the language early on were from different countries. They heard the language differently, and from what I hear, there were often a lot of arguments between these people about how things were pronounced and how the sentences go together. And so we have to sift through all of that. But as our friend Paul said, "It's your language. Standardize what you want." And that's what we've been doing. And quite frankly we're somewhere between kindergarten and third grade on learning the language. We know enough about the structure of sentences. When Paul passed, we were just learning about how to do the tenses—future, past tense, and that sort of thing. He was brilliant with the teaching and all of that sort of things. So we do not have a curriculum yet.

Shannin: [00:09:26] We put together a small curriculum for—we did six graders for nine weeks at the school [where] I work in Yoncalla. And it was, we did write some of it down, just like numbers, colors, animals, "I hear," "I see," just so the kids can—we may not have spelled it correctly or whatever, but it was nice for them to have something to hold onto, to go over. But we did that for six weeks—nine weeks—with six graders. And they loved it, they just loved the fact they could see me at the store and say "Qapai," you know, say hello, and...

Esther: [00:10:29] And we stressed to them that they were the only six graders in the entire world who could speak parts of the Kalapuya language. And they were so proud of that.

Shannin: [00:10:39] They thought that was really cool, yeah. And then of course, for our summer camp that we've had for 47 years, mom put together this—you know, because each adult that works at the camp usually has, like, their specialty, so language, drumming, something like that. So she wanted my youngest daughter to do the language. And she [Esther] says, okay, here's what I have for the language. And so she wrote down all the history, and all these things. And my daughter looks at it, and she just tossed it to the side. She said, "No, nobody cares, mom." She's like, "Nana, these kids are on summer break, they don't care about that. They just want to know how to say it; they don't care how it's spelled, where the little accents are, they're not, the history, they just want to learn. So just let me take over." And she did, she kind of tossed it to the side. That summer she taught them all Kalapuya, but it was more like, she was up there dancing around and orally doing it. She wasn't handing out pieces of paper and things like that. Kind of

maybe crushed her [Esther's] feelings a little bit, but she got it done, you know. Before she graduated from high school she was speaking Spanish fluent so she's really good at languages as it is, so.

Esther: [00:11:38] But one of the nice things is that we have had a couple of classes with people. We had about a dozen people in our first class. and all we did was explain the basics. It wasn't anything like making paragraphs or sentences, but teaching them things like how to say hello, how...

Shannin: [00:12:00] Communications.

Esther:[00:12:02] Yeah, that's sort of thing. Colors, numbers, so they could at least pick up parts of it.

Shannin: [00:12:12] Well the pronunciation guide, that's—we don't really have an alphabet, we do have the pronunciation guide, which helps you there.

Esther: [00:12:13] Yeah. And then COVID, which stopped our classes in their tracks...

Shannin: [00:12:18] And camp, and everything else...

Esther: [00:12:21] It stopped our progress, literally. One of the things I want to put together is a curriculum guide to the language. But also one of the things that is kind of holding us back is a little bit of our own hesitation and self-doubt as to how we're doing it right. But right now, we're working with two people. One is, we know that one is a linguist. The other one is a—I guess you might say, an amateur linguist in a way. And they are very, very, very willing to help us put the structure...

Shannin: [00:13:05] Yes.

Esther: [00:13:06] Into the language initially so we can speak it with confidence.

Shannin: [00:13:10] And they're specialists. the man that came down, he's like, now I heard it, and I heard there's this glottal stop, it's not really a glottal stop, what is it?

Esther: [00:13:17] I can't remember...

Shannin: [00:13:18] A glottal pause. And I mean he's that good, that he's like, "Now I hear that, I know that it's this and that." We're just like okay, well. So we do have people who are professionals that want to come with us and spend their time.

Esther: [00:13:29] They are, they're wanting to help us. So while we frame that, and of course summer is really a busy time for everyone. So when fall officially gets here, we will be getting together with these couple of people and the interested members of our community. And we will be doing classes. But we have one other really exciting project. We are going to put together kids' books—not storybooks—but you know, those kind of cardboard books...

Shannin: [00:14:04] The thicker pages.

Esther: [00:14:05] Like the first grade, kindergarten [type]. And we're going to do, like, one for trees, one for fish, one for birds, colors, numbers. We already got a quote on it, so we know how much money we're gonna have to raise. And we are having the kids in the schools draw, illustrate the books instead of having some professional artist.

Shannin: [00:14:31] So, so far we got three different school districts that we've worked with that have drawn, say, something that's red, or something with five of, or an animal or something like that. So we've got some pretty cute drawings that we're gonna, a bunch of us will vote on to see which one we want, and we'll credit that child. But there are, some of those kids, every time I see them, "Did you judge it?" You know, they're very excited about it so...

Esther: [00:14:52] And her—you know [Shannin's] daughter who did the fundraiser, is going to use that as one of her projects at Southern Oregon University. And she'll get credit for it, she's going to put the whole thing together, hand it to us, and we hand it to the printer.

Shannin: [00:15:12] So that will be exciting.

Princess: [00:15:14] That sounds so awesome. Well, what was it like when you approached these schools to ask for the children to make the illustrations for your books?

Esther: [00:15:25] Well, we do all kinds of presentations. Usually we'll get called by a certain school that would say, can you come talk about Kalapuyas, or tell stories? And we usually say, well, if we could spend a couple days there, then we could have the kids do an art project... And teachers love art projects. So we usually manage to get that in there.

Shannin: [00:15:50] And for the Crow School District, we did the after-school program. So Wednesdays, they had a half day, and the kids that couldn't go home at that time or whatever, they'd come into this classroom. We had—oh my gosh—a lot of kids. But we've been there for... eight weeks? Eight weeks, every Wednesday. And so we had one classroom to where, you know, they come and have a snack and then we would, did everything, from storytelling to drumming

to language. And then on their free time, or if they were done early, then they would then do that. And then we did—what was that school?

Esther: [00:16:28] Territorial.

Shannin: [00:16:29] Territorial Grade School, we did their classrooms for three weeks, four weeks, or four sessions I should say. And so the same thing, and so our last session was specifically drawing pictures for the books.

Esther: [00:16:42] And she works in the Yoncalla School District with the Native kids and an entire classroom. So she'll be collecting more pictures.

Princess: [00:16:52] Another question I was wondering, are these school districts—the demographic mixed, or do you go to the classroom specifically for Indian Ed, or how does that work?

Esther: [00:17:04] They're pretty much mixed. Not many school districts in Douglas County where we live have Indian Education programs.

Shannin: [00:17:13] I think it's just us and Roseburg, right?

Esther: [00:17:14] Yes.

Shannin: [00:17:15] That's the only two in Douglas County. So, a lot of these kids, you know, they're in the Indian Education program, know nothing about their traditions or their roots. They just, well I know that I'm this tribe, but they were never raised traditionally. So that's part of our job, my job, is to not only make sure they make it through school successfully, but learn at least some respect and some culture, real general, you know what I mean? And if they really want to get into it, we can kind of help them narrow it down to whatever tribe they are, if they want to get regalia or you know, something like that. It's very rare that we actually find a Native student that has cultural background and knows their traditions. So, it's always a mix.

Esther: [00:17:54] She hosts cultural classes. we're gonna be setting them up probably once a week, drumming and dancing and do some arts and storytelling, a little bit of everything. we've worked in so many schools for 40 years that sometimes when we will meet one of the kids, like in a grocery store, you get these strange reactions. Like maybe they think teachers don't shop for food... But something like, "I know you, you're that Indian lady!" or they'll make some remark, like one little boy said to me after I told them about my great-great-grandfather being a headman at a village, he says, "I know you, your Grandpa was the King of the Indians!"

Shannin: [00:18:51] Yes, they were like, this other kid said, “I remember when my Grandpa and you used to hunt werewolves together...”

Esther: [00:19:00] Yeah.

Shannin: [00:19:01] But yeah, when you see them out in public, they look at you like, it's, we're pretty good at saying, “Did I come to your school?” yeah, that's real general, so it's easy for us to say that, but with adults, it's not so easy...

Esther: [00:19:11] Or we teach some short little songs in not only Kalapuya, but in other languages, because we do music education also, and they'll come up to us and say, “I remember that song!” And they'll start singing it. So they're really proud of, I think, of being able to have that knowledge of a different culture, which makes us feel good.

Shannin: [00:19:36] So the, yeah, this, the curriculum we did for the sixth grade class, this right here is like an example of that mom put together, that are counting.

Princess: [00:19:44] Can you hold it up a little higher?

Shannin: [00:19:45] In Kalapuya. Hold it up from your face. [Esther holds up a sheet with the Kalapuya words for numbers 1-10]

Princess: [00:19:48] Awesome.

Shannin: [00:19:50] So it's Tauna, Gami, Pshin, Tapa, Wan. [One, Two, Three, Four, Five]. Kind of weird how five is Wan [which sounds like] one. So that's just her way, I think it's a good way to put it out there, you know. I mean, for kids to have a visual and something they can touch, you know, I mean, other than just the oral part of it.

Esther: [00:20:10] And they, they learn it pretty well. We even do math with it. You know, we'll say, what is Gami plus Tapa? They give us the answer in Kalapuya. So, we can do a lot of fun activities like this.

Princess: [00:20:26] Yeah, it looks like a really good learning tool.

Esther: [00:20:28] Yeah, I think so.

Shannin: [00:20:29] Well, she's a former teacher, so, you know, she's pretty good at it.

Princess: [00:20:33] I was wondering, from your perspective, what is it like to learn Kalapuya as adults versus what you're seeing in kids learning Kalapuya?

Shannin: [00:20:44] Kids are sponges, their little brains are still growing, so they just absorb all that. And they get, they're very good at it. And I'm not, I'm not very good at this. I'm sure if someone were a fluent speaker and I could speak with them back and forth, it would be perfect for me. But it's really hard for me to learn this way. You know what I mean? Mom's really good at it because she's a teacher and English major. And she likes to have it all organized on paper, but I'm, I'm not the best at it. She's, the kids just suck it up. I mean, they all do really well. They remember stuff more than I do. But it's hard for me as an adult. And mom's speaking like three different languages, I'm sure it's a little bit crazy...

Esther:[00:21:28] It is. It's, it's crazy for me with my 81 year old brain to absorb all of this. I learned Spanish when I was young. I was going to be a Spanish teacher. That was one of my goals. And I got married and moved to Germany into a village where no one spoke English. So I got it by immersion very quickly. So I speak German also. And when I, when we came back to the states in the early seventies, I started learning Chinuk Wawa because they were just then starting to hold classes in different places. And now Kalapuya. And my brain is not knowing what to do. So that's, I'm having a very difficult time.

Shannin: [00:22:20] She wants to structure it like English, like, say [for] example, you say “Shannin went down to the river.” Well, our language isn't like that. It's just Shannin [...]. “Shannin go river.”

That's it. You know, it's hard for me because the verb never changes, like sit, sat, sitting—just one word. There's several examples, like the word berry is *kayana*. But because it starts with a K, you put an -an in front of it. So it's *ankayana*. So I'm confused as to why don't we don't just spell it ankayana, you know what I mean? That's some of the things I don't understand about that. That part. And then that's just present tense. There's no male or female separation. There's basically just one, one thing. I don't even know about the past or the future tense.

Esther: [00:23:09] Yeah, it's a whole new set of rules, a complete new set of rules.

Shannin: [00:23:13] And then it's the type of language where you could take like, three words if you want and put it into one big word to where it's like, instead of saying “the black dog,” it's all “the-black-dog,” all, you know, pushed into one word. So it's, I'm still struggling a lot with it. But I just kind of use my, I rather listen to it and repeat it back and forth and try to do it. Definitely.

Esther: [00:23:34] One of the sources we have is a publication called The Kalapuya Text. It was put together in the early part of the 1900s by some ethnographers and linguists. And it was written down as they heard it. There were no recordings of it. So we started to rely on that. And then when we heard some of the recordings, because we have one recording of the Kalapuya language, it completely conflicted.

So for example, like I said, the number two is Gami. So it's kind of a G and a K together. So one person heard a K, one person heard a G. So it's Gami, like that. It's kind of hard. So the recording we have is of a shirttail relative, John Hudson in 1953 on the Grand Ronde Reservation.

And the man [recording John] says, "Hello." And then our relative will say "Qa'pai. Qa'pai." He has to say it twice. And then the man says, "Goodbye." And then he'll say, it's very, the man is very like this. And if he [John] doesn't answer in enough time, he's, the guy just kind of was like, well move on to the next one. And, you know, he's very particular about it.

And then we have the recording of the songs. And at the very end of the recordings, you know, we have, it's all from body parts to language, to, "he walked," "he ran." And then at the very end, he asks him, can you understand the different dialects of the Kalapuya, which are the Tualatin and the Santiam, being Kalapuya or Komemma. And he says, yes, we can understand the two northern ones, but they have a really hard time understanding the Komemma. We're the southernmost. And I get in my head, I always think of, like, people from like Louisiana that have that real thick accent, they kind of have their own lingo. So I kind of think of it that way, that the Komemma people kind of had their own little way of putting words together that, you know, we're such a small group, a little bit further away from the rest of the groups, they really couldn't understand this as well. But I thought it was really interesting to hear that.

Esther: [00:25:44] And that's one of the struggles we've been having, is that Paul McCartney gave examples in all three dialects in the dictionary. And the least amount of examples is with the Komemma, the Yoncalla language. I would like to resurrect our language using Komemma dialect, but there's not enough information there. So we normally borrow from the Santiam [Kalapuya] because that's our closest neighbor. But as Paul said, "It's your language, standardize it as you will." So that's going to be something to work on.

Princess: [00:26:26] I also think there's importance to language revitalization, but language is continuing to evolve. So like you said, you know, it's your language and you create the standards and the rules for it. It's so interesting to hear your guys' whole process.

Esther: [00:26:41] And I'm sure this is going to be a process that's going to go on for several generations.

Princess: [00:26:48] Do you see a connection between language revitalization and other issues tribal communities are working on, like land stewardship, historic preservation, and cultural wellness?

Esther: [00:26:59] Absolutely, it all goes together. One of the things that we're going to be doing is that on our traditional land. We're going to be naming places like creeks and mountains and meadows. Nothing that's going to be geographically changed on the map, but this will be for our own use. And the methods that we use to preserve the land will have certain names in Kalapuya. Part of the things we want to do on the property that we have, she [Shannin] wants to start a worm farm and its name is...

Shannin: [00:27:42] Chah Plitsak [...\*],

Esther: [00:27:45] Which means the “place of the worms.”

Shannin: [00:27:48] “The raising of the worms.” And our property is named *Chah Tumenma*. So basically it translates to the land of or for the people, the Indians. So when people say, well, where are you from or who are you, they would say *Chah Tumenma*. So the property that we were given back in the Land Back act is called *Chah Tumenma*.

Esther: [00:28:11] And that's an interesting subject, segway...

Shannin: [00:28:14] Everything, language and food and plants and everything...[laughing together]

Esther: [00:28:20] We live on the exact same land where our ancestors have lived since the world began, the Komemma Kalapuya. In fact, our sacred site is less than a mile from where I live outside of Yoncalla. And several years back, I think about three years back, a man came to us and said he wanted to honor the Land Back movement and give us some property. And I thought, oh, you know, a couple three acres would be really nice—207 acres of pristine forest, old growth,

Shannin: [00:29:06] Old growth, a creek.

Esther: [00:29:07] A creek, it's beautiful. And he has gifted that to us as a family. He's had to, he wanted to put it into a land trust because he didn't want us to sell it.

Shannin: [00:29:23] Yeah, our promise to him is that we will never sell it and we will never clear cut it. It's been four years. These amazing people that we've met through all of our presentations that are helping us, because we don't know anything about the health of the forest. So we met

some great people and they came and did a whole survey. They walked the whole 207 acres and put together this health plan. And there's 14 different zones on that property. And so he had to write up a plan for it. So in the goals now, future goals to keep the land healthy and the future of it healthy. So that was a lot of work. We've had a lot of people volunteer to come out and do some planting. We did the camas planting last year up in the meadows. We did, we had a lot of people, "Oh, by the way, someone's going to come by and plant a bunch of elderberry bushes in your front yard." Okay, you know what I mean? So it's really neat that we have these people to do that. And that's also with our native garden that we're going to be doing. We have people that are garden people that test the soil and make the raised beds and do all that. And in that, I'm working on language to name the native garden, which we still haven't figured that out. Maybe possibly, you know, and everything will be like in Kalapuya, you're like *andip* is camas and then underneath will say camas [in English]. Things like that. What else?

Esther: [00:30:38] *k'lau'p* is mud. I love that word.

Shannin: [00:30:39] [Laughing] She loves that word.

Esther: [00:30:42] It sounds like the word... *k'lau'p*.

Shannin: [00:30:44] But I just think that we eventually want to get back to the traditional burning of the undergrowth. And of course the camas process of it, harvesting and planting and all that kind of stuff, the bakes.

Esther: [00:31:00] See we are—we meaning the group we're talking about—we're a very, very small non-profit. And it started out as a group of people who wanted to hold summer camps for Indian kids. Because it just wasn't, the culture was not being taught back in the early 70s. So we started a non-profit and that way we could apply for funding for camp. And that's how it all started, with just mainly my family and a few friends. And it started growing, that a lot of people from different tribes, non-Indians, were joining us. And when we were donated the land, it was almost overwhelming. Because none of us at that time knew anything about taking care of the land in an Indigenous way. I mean, I've grown gardens before and I know about, you know, not polluting and that sort of thing. But we decided we wanted to get back to the traditional Indigenous ways. Luckily we found some wonderful people who are forest managers and traditional burn practitioners.

Shannin: [00:32:21] Tree specialists. Botanists. All that.

Esther: [00:33:23] Yes. And we brought them on the Board, and we have a very strong functioning Board of Directors. And so many people who have volunteered to help. We had an event last year, a friend of ours brought 600...

Shannin: [00:32:44] Well, she says—we got to know her very well—she's like, “So Shannin, I was thinking we could plant a couple, some camas on the property, that'd be cool.” And I'm like, “Yeah, absolutely.” So she's like, “Well, I'll walk around and see where I...” “Okay.” So then she calls and says, “So my friend's going to drop the camas off. There's 600 of them.” And I said, “Wait, what? What happened to you and I going out...” and she says, “Oh, well, there's much more.”

So this little planting of a handful of camas turned into this event that I, in turn, put up the canopy, set up the tables, we ended up doing a registration, having a meal, having three different sessions of planting, a nature walk, and then us doing a history [presentation]. And it was kind of unnerving for me, because it was supposed to be just her and I going and spending a day out doing things. But now, it turned into this event. And then this year we were talking, we were going to plant the camas in our native garden. And I said, “Let me know right now if this is going to be something just you and I are going to do, or we're going to end up inviting everyone again.” And...

Esther: [00:33:44] And she brought over a thousand camas bulbs.

Shannin: [00:33:48] And so we went from, again, from just planting a small raised bed to...

Esther: [00:33:54] An event.

Shannin: [00:33:55] Yes. So again, we're doing the registration and the food and the catering and all that kind of stuff. So we're learning.

Esther: [00:34:04] It's snowballing, It's really getting to the point now where these people who have volunteered to help us, we're taking advantage of that, calling and then saying, “Hey, you know, what do you know about...?”

Shannin: [00:34:18] And they've also become really good friends of ours too and family almost.

Esther: [00:34:23] Yeah. So we're really very happy, we're going to have our summer camp there next year. Last year was 108 [degrees]...

Shannin: [00:34:33] 108, so the school advised from the heat not to do it. And then this last summer we had everything ready to go, but we only had two kids sign up to be campers. I think, she was a former camper of ours years ago. And I think that people nowadays have a hard time letting their kids spend the night somewhere. But to come out to the woods for a week, they weren't having it. And it's also, you know, for them to fill out a piece of paper, put it in the mail

and mail it off... I mean, because they don't even have to be responsible for anything. They just have to know their name. They walk up and say their name. It's checked off a list. So when we had our pow-wow, I gave them all a ticket and I said, here, bring this to the pow-wow and you'll get a free piece of fry bread. That's your responsibility. We're not going to check your name off the list. And we had—she said, “How many of these things did you give out, Shannin?” I said, “I gave one to every student in the school,” you know, and the ones that showed up, you know, and I wasn't going to, I don't, I don't have a list of kids. I don't know if you go to the school or not. We're not going to just check [for them]. So I think kids nowadays really need to learn responsibility and not just, you know, everything's written down for them. So that's another part of the camp, was the parents had to be responsible too and fill it out and send it in. But [only] two [campers], you know..

Esther: [00:35:45] But we're going to be involved in some outdoor schools and day camps on the property this next year.

Shannin: [00:35:52] Yeah. And it's raw property, there's no water, there's no electricity. There's no structures. So what we'd like to see is any, any of the trees or vegetation, whatever that needs to be, you know, thinned out because of the health of the forest, use that to build the kitchen, use that to build bathrooms, you know, and things like that. So we're trying to keep it all in one.

Esther: [00:36:14] Use that to build the longhouse.

Shannin: [00:36:16] Well that's across the street at the native plant garden.

Esther: [00:36:17] Yeah.

Shannin: [00:36:18] So, yeah, we have a lot of plans. Dreams.

Esther: [00:36:20] We have a lot of dreams.

Princess: [00:36:23] It sounds amazing. How long again have you guys been doing the camp?

Shannin: [00:36:28] 47 years. I was two years old [when it began], so 1974. I mean, the last couple of years we haven't had it, COVID hit. And then the camp that we were using the property was sold. And then right when we thought we were just gonna, not sure what to do, is when we got the land given to us. But 47 years, I can remember being too young to be a camper—because you have to be in fourth grade—being a camper, then being a youth counselor, and then an adult counselor, and now I'm the Director of the whole camp. She [Esther] stepped down, she's just the resident elder. The scary person you don't want to go talk to when you're in trouble, you know. [laughing together]

Esther: [00:37:07] Yeah, we had anywhere between 50 and 80 kids every year who went to camp for free because we did fundraising, massive fundraising. We had at the time a very thriving frybread Indian taco business and we went to pow-wows and events.

Shannin: [00:37:27] And the kids are the ones that did a lot of the work. So they raised their own money. But this camp is very structured. It's very strict, you know, no electronics, no candy, no gum, no coffee, you just come with your clothes and you know whatever. In the morning we'd sing the opening song, we'd have breakfast and after every meal the kids had a job to do, like clean the kitchen or put the dishes away or something. and then we had several scheduled activities timed, that's her [Esther], and then we'd have lunch structured, and then we'd have, you know, whatever in the afternoon.

And I think kids really like structure, they really like knowing what's going to be next. Because a lot of kids are just hit with, "Let's go," or, "No, you can't do that," so we train our counselors for three or four days on what they're going to be getting into. Some of them, no matter how we train them, just are still blown away by it, but I think the structure is something that every kid needs. But there's some of those kids that come in there from, like she said it's free, some of the parents are just like, "Oh cool, I'm just going to dump my kids for a week," you know, they come from homes that are...abusive, you know, alcoholic and...

Esther: [00:38:35] Less than adequate.

Shannin: [00:38:38] These kids, it's the most love, the most attention, the most respect, they've gotten in their entire life, you know, and they don't want to go home. They don't want to go home. And it just breaks my heart because you can see it when they're there. Even though they're acting out or, you know, doing something stupid, you can see that, you know...

Esther: [00:38:56] But we're going to do it again. We will. And we're going to start, um, doing some fundraising. We have one organization who's going to match whatever we raise by March, so that's going to be our goal. And I write grants.

Shannin: [00:39:19] She writes grants in her sleep.

Princess: [00:39:20] I'm glad that you've been able to provide summer camps and places to be and have such constructive learning, whether that's cultural or just ways of being in general, so.

Shannin: [00:39:30] There's a lot of those kids that have adopted us, we haven't adopted, and they're grown adults now, some people are in their thirties or their forties and they're still like, okay, what time are we going to the pow-wow, or what time do I need to be there to help you

guys set up, or what should I bring, which, you know, shows us that we've taught them well, you know what I mean,

Esther: [00:39:47] It's been long run, but we love it.

Princess: [00:39:51] Would you like to talk about any other language and cultural heritage work that has been meaningful to you, or any work you hope to see happen in this area?

Esther: [00:40:01] When we had our camp on the Rogue River, on 19 beautiful acres that were donated to us for our use every summer, we taught parts of the Tutudene language, which is a language of the people who live right there. My oldest daughter is married to a man who is part Tutudene [Tututni], and they did some language revitalization quite a few years ago. And so we thought, well, we have 50 or 60 kids here on the river for a whole week, why not teach them the language of the people who once inhabited there?

So we did some working in Tutudene, and every year at camp, we like to teach the kids some words from different cultures—Lakota, Cherokee...

Shannin: [00:40:58 ]Chinuk Wawa.

Esther: [00:40:59] Chinuk Wawa. Not that we're experts in it, but we know people who can speak it and can help us. So using the words at camp, I think, is really, really important.

Shannin: [00:41:12] And then we associate those words, we try to with like, when we do our nature walks, we'll say, well, this is camas, but it's also called *Andip*, and so they get to know things and the native language, too, and their uses, so, mm-hmm.

Esther: [00:41:26] Yeah.

Princess: [00:41:27] So what's it feel like for you guys to be able to learn and speak Kalapuya?

Esther: [00:41:34] Difficult. As I said before, my 81-year-old brain doesn't work as fast as it used to. To me, it is extremely difficult. In fact, learning the language, I think, is one of the most difficult things I've ever attempted. Just because of so many past experiences with teaching and knowing languages and learning that I have to set aside some of the rules and habits that I had to learn this language. but to me, it means a lot, because we live on our ancestors' land. I think they hear us when we speak.

Shannin: [00:42:22] I'm not very good at picking it up, but I think, you know, I try to throw in those words in my everyday life. You know, I'll say something like, [\*], or something like that.

And we've got several people that are doing the language with us that are just absolutely—my youngest daughter, and then my really good friend, which I call my brother, Matt, he just, he gets the language. And he'll call me and just go “[---], what did I just say?” and I'm like... He picks it up so well, he knows all the rules to it. And I think it's really neat, because he's very helpful, and so is my youngest daughter. But I struggle also with it. But it's something that feels really good. Because I can just kind of say anything I want in Kalapuya, I could even cuss at somebody, I guess, if I wanted to, and they wouldn't know what I was doing. I mean, it would be really cool if I could at least have more than just a “Hi, my name is Shannin, what's your name, how are you feeling?” More in-depth conversation with somebody in Kalapuya would be amazing.

Esther: [00:43:21] Just wait a few months, we're going to pick it up, we've got some meetings with some linguists, after school it starts.

Shannin: [00:43:29] You guys can do all that, like, detailed stuff. I just, when you're done, just teach me how to say it, and I'll be good. It's a lot easier for me that way.

Princess: [00:43:38] Do you have any tips for people that are trying to learn their tribal languages?

Esther: [00:43:44] Surround yourself with people who know the language, know of the language, who are familiar with the history of the area, the history of the language, it's really important that people who are speaking the language know something about the people who used to speak it. That's why when we teach this in the schools, we don't just go in and say, okay, here's a list of numbers from one to five in Kalapuya. We tell them the history, you know, who the people are, where they came from, what happened in the 1850s during the treaties, this is the situation now, and this is a language that has been sleeping for all of these years. So, laying that basic groundwork of the history and the importance of having the language back. And we always tell them how that makes us feel. When we speak the language, it makes us feel really good.

Shannin: [00:44:51] And if you do have people [from your tribal community] that are speakers of the language, I mean you're so lucky to have that, because, you know, it's just like.... Like she said, my sister and her husband, they learned his traditional language [Tutudene or Tututni], but they had five elders there that, you know...

Esther [00:45:06] That spoke it.

Shannin: [00:45:07] You couldn't speak English at all. You had to learn as you went. And so my niece and nephew, their little sponge brains picked it up so quickly. And my sister would say, “How do you say this again?” you know. Just feel lucky that you have that, because we don't have really [any fluent Kalapuya speakers] here that can say, “Oh, you know, this is this.” And a

lot of times, you know, with Native people, they'll say, "Oh, that's called this because..." And they'll tell you why it's called that or the reasoning for it. Or maybe it's called that only in the spring because of this, or, you know, stuff like that. So just feel lucky and just listen, listen, listen, listen.

Esther: [00:45:38] Yeah.

Shannin: [00:45:39] I always take notes and write them down, so, for future references, but, yeah. It's challenging because, like, you know, like every language has its own form. They say certain things with their mouth, you know, like, I know a lot of –my friend from high school, she's [from] Laos, and they don't have the "F" sound. She says a P instead of an F, you know, say "fish," she says "pish," because that's just something her, you know, her people never did. And, like, our language, they wanted, they called one of my relatives Paul, but they couldn't say that, so it came out BL, just because my people never had that P sound, so it was more of a BL. So it's almost like, you know, hereditary, what floats down is, there's some things that are easy for us to say in our language that other people may not be able to say. So it's just kind of strange how, you know, things like that happen.

Esther: [00:46:31] And I have to remember constantly to set aside the rules of grammar...

Shannin: [00:46:40] In English.

Esther: [00:46:41] In English, and German and Spanish. German is easy, but Spanish, you know, there's a lot different rules and word orders and things like that, so when I'm really in a mood to study Kalapuya language and learn it, I have to completely forget or put aside what I've already learned.

Shannin: [00:47:03] She's the woman that's got all the sticky notes all around her house, like, yeah, on the stove, on the microwave, on the mirror, in the bathroom, north, east, south, west, she's got, it's like that movie, *The Color Purple*, when she's learning to read... You know, it's all around her entire house in Kalapuya. So I mean, that's a good way to learn.

Esther: [00:47:21] It is. The stove, that's [\*].

Shannin: [00:47:24] Yes. That's how she knows it, because there's that sticky note.

Esther: [00:47:27] It is there.

Shannin: [00:47:28] Yep. So, that's a way to learn, too, but yeah.

Megan: [00:47:30] Is that what they call a language nest, when you label things?

Esther: [00:47:35] I don't know. It just, to me, seems easy. Every time I go through that doorway, I know that that's a certain direction.

Shannin: [00:47:45] I need to do that, maybe that'll help me also.

Esther: [00:47:47] Could be. You never know.

Shannin: [00:47:49] Yeah.

Esther: [00:47:50] One of the funniest things, I don't know if you want to film this, but Paul McCartney, when we first started having our meetings with him, he gave us a couple pieces of paper, and we looked at it and we were like, "What?" And it was a list of every dirty word that he could find.

Shannin: [00:48:16] And vulgarity.

Esther: [00:48:18] Vulgarism.

Shannin: [00:48:19] Sorry.

Esther: [00:48:20] Yeah. And he said, now you won't waste your time looking em up.

Shannin: [00:48:26] That's part of the language.

Esther: [00:48:28] My youngest daughter, the one who was ex-Navy, has no problem with words at all. She wrote down on a sticky note...

Shannin: [00:48:38] ...no filter, in other words...

Esther: [00:48:39] And she went to get her car serviced. She put this sticky note on her dashboard, got out of the car to have it serviced, and she came back, and the guy who serviced her car looked at her in the oddest, funniest way. Because he saw at least four really dirty, filthy words that she was trying to remember, sticky-noted to her dashboard. But that's how we learn.

Shannin: [00:49:09] And then my youngest daughter was making, I do a lot of crafts, so she wanted to make her a sign for Christmas, and she was sitting there trying to think of, she's like, "Well, how do you say 'kiss my butt'?" And so she made her a sign in Kalapuya, but she made it

really pretty and flashy. But nobody knows that this beautiful, flashy sign says that saying on it, so it's fun. We have a good time with it.

Esther: [00:49:34] We do.

Princess: [00:49:37] Did you have any mentors or role models growing up who have helped shape you?

Esther: [00:49:34] I think my elders, a couple of elder aunties that were really bossy, but...

Shannin: [00:49:53] But you're now known for your stories...

Esther: [00:49:54] Now I know what they were doing. I realize that now, it took me a long time. My dad was a real big influence on my life. Some of my uncles too.

Shannin: [00:50:07] Uncle Joe.

Esther: [00:50:09] Yep, My uncle Joe, he was a fishing boat captain. And he ran a boat out of Depot Bay. And he would put me on that boat and we'd go out of sight of land and he would have with him a couple of cases of beer, and he'd drink all of that beer all the way out in the ocean, out of sight of land...

Shannin: [00:50:37] In a tiny boat, you always told me...

Esther: [00:50:39] In a tiny boat, usually a 12 foot aluminum boat. And he would pass out, and I'd have to bring the boat in. So I learned how to do stuff really early. But yeah. It's my elders, definitely.

Shannin: [00:50:58] Me too. There's very rarely I learn something from my peers, but same thing. From her, and like she said, the group that started our summer camp years ago, there was a handful of people that—I just call them aunties and uncles—and same thing, I didn't know that sitting there, hanging out with them this whole time, they were teaching me, educating me. I just thought, having a good time, you know, sitting around in the backyard on a drum. All day long, they'd have these gatherings and our friends, doing this drumming. Sitting in the backyard, we had those visor sunglasses, the sunglasses that flipped up and down and we'd sit there and we'd be drumming, and I was by her side this whole time, just listening, learning all the drumming stuff. You know what I mean? Same with the stories. You know, every time she went to something, storytelling, I was right there. You know what I mean? And I just, and to this day, I'm still like, oh wait, you've been teaching me this whole time. And I'm 51 years old, you know, I mean, so. Elders, basically.

Esther: [00:51:55] Yes, but I've almost completed passing the baton.

Shannin: [00:51:59] The only thing I learned from kids is some stuff with technology, but yeah, mostly my elders.

Princess: [00:52:06] Thinking of the up and coming generation in the Native community, what are some of the challenges that you think they will face, and do you have any advice for the younger generations in the community who want to learn their ancestral languages? We kind of answered that part, but the first question, if you would like to answer.

Esther: [00:52:23] I would just like to advise the next generation, listen to your elders. Listen to them. That's so important.

Shannin: [00:52:35] Mine would be, well yeah, listen to your elders, but teach your children respect. Teach your kids that you're the boss, you're not the best friend, because nowadays these kids are so spoiled, and so, "My kid, they won't do this," or "I can't get them to do that," you know. They need to have that voice of authority. They can't be their best friend, they can't be their homegirl, or their little tech buddy. Kids need to realize that, or parents, that there's a reason why we say, listen to your elders and respect your elders. Because if you don't, I mean look, if they're our future, they're going to be figuring out where we go as old people. And if, you know, we can't even ask them to get down off a desk, and they're not afraid of the Principal, how in the heck do we...you know what I mean? So I think that people need to kind of look back in time and look at the whole authority figure, and respect, and elders.

And put down the technology, you know. You can spend all day out in the woods, and learn about stuff, and then go home, and look up on your phone, you know, what it means, or where did it come from, or what's the use of it, but just spend some time without your technology. Go to a park, and climb a tree, you know what I mean, or something like that. We have 207 acres, come to my house, and you'll walk across the street, and go play in the creek, you know what I mean. Look for stuff, don't just, you know, surround yourself, and rely on that phone for everything in the world. I mean, that's why I think I'm like the last generation to be like, Generation X, to be like, oh, I know about that, and I know what that is. Cuz you know, trivia, I can't, I never was able to look it up on my phone, I can't ask Google on that thing, you know. And I still struggle with it to this day, you know. But they just need to set it down, and step outside for a while, or sit down and listen to their elders. Because if they continue to rely on technology, we're going to have one of those strange, weird, solar flares, and they're not going to have anything, then we're going to have a bunch of dummies, you know, that don't know anything unless they can push buttons. And so I just really think that it's important that they step away from those, and learn like we did, you know.

