

Kunu Bearchum Transcript (Film Crew Interviews)

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Kunu: [00:00:11] Hi, my name is Kunu Bearcham. I'm Northern Cheyenne on my father's side, and Ho-Chunk Nation and German on my mother's side. I live here in Eugene, Oregon. I have relatives and family in Springfield and throughout Lane County. I was born in Eugene, actually, and um, I was raised in New Mexico, and then came back to the, to Oregon, um, after I graduated high school.

Princess: [00:00: 42] Awesome. And we wanted to know, what is your role in the Native community currently?

Kunu: [00:00:48] Yeah. Um, so currently I'm, I'm here in Eugene. I lived in Portland, um, previously for about 10 years before the pandemic happened. Um, I got a few different multimedia degrees there and started my video production, multimedia production career up there.

I worked for a non-profit called Wisdom of the Elders, a Native-run non-profit, and I did some filmmaking for them, and event production, community building work. When the pandemic happened, um, at the time, my wife and I, we had just started a family, we had a two year old son, and the city was just really crazy up there, so we decided to move back um, kind of out of the rat race and just the wildness. Kind of, you know, how the pandemic had transformed cities and it was just, it was a weird time.

So, um, but since, since moving back to Eugene, um, I've been working primarily with the Native Youth Wellness Program. And with Roshelle, uh, soon to be Dr. Roshelle Wieser-Nieto and, um, you know, the crew at Native Youth Wellness Program. Uh, it's been amazing. Um, it's been really awesome to work with her, almost three years now. I think it's about two and a half years. And, other than that, um, as far as being a member of the, the community, I, you know, I try to show up whenever I can. If there's like a community dinner, um, something like this with the Illumination Project.

I think it's very important to, um, you know, just realize that, like, we're living in this moment now, but this, what we're doing and how we're living is, is history. You know, we are, there's this term going around in Indian Country right now that I really love and it's called, you know, "Be a Good Ancestor." You know, an idea that, you know, in tribal communities, we talk about the concept of seven

generations and when we think about making decisions, you know, we think about how it would affect seven generations down the line. And, you know, being aware of, you know, the seven generations before us that, you know, what, what they had to sacrifice and decisions they made for us to be here today.

Princess: [00:03:16] Thank you. What's the importance of hospitality during interviews and/or bringing gifts in exchange for knowledge and thanks within the native community?

Kunu: [00:03:27] Yeah. So this idea of, um, kind of honorariums or gifting, um, for, um, for knowledge or for, in this example, an interview or, or time, you know, just in general, the idea of it being an exchange, um, and it being non-extractive.

And this is something that in Indian Country and a lot of Indigenous cultures is very much a part of. It's just a part of our ways of being. You know, if you're going to go and spend time with an elder or a culture bearer, or someone who has some sort of knowledge, um, that you're seeking, um, you go with a gift.

You know, a lot of times it's tobacco for prayer or, um, you know, different medicine plants. Um, money, you know, uh, food, you know, something, just, you know, a gesture, a gift. Um, so it's an exchange.

And it's actually something that—some of the work that I do is with Oregon Public Broadcasting—and um, I do video production with them and do some journalism work with them. And one thing that is really cool with Oregon Public Broadcasting right now is they are kind of teaching their whole staff on this idea of non-extractive journalism, which is this idea of gifting and spending time and energy with a community. Specifically, Indigenous people, Native people, it's just something that is, it's a part of our culture, um, to have that exchange, um, and it's something that isn't a part of Western culture. It isn't a part of, um, you know, the dominant culture of American society. I think especially for journalists and people who, you know, come from these institutions where they feel like the institution is bigger than the person. And so the person doesn't have an equal standing and it's kind of like, oh, you should just be lucky that I'm, you should be grateful that I'm here interested about you, you know, you and I should, you know, and, um, and there is not an idea of an exchange. And it's, it's like journalists, museums, institutions. Um, yeah. You know, there's this, this idea that that organization is bigger than the individual.

And so I think it's important for us, uh, when we're doing this Illumination Project, um, in the tribal community to, um, kind of, you know, stand on that and say, no, this is important to the way we do things, um, and, you know, benefit of the doubt to the organizations and the journalists, it's like, that's not, that's not, um, I guess, the normal way of doing things, uh, in this American society. But we can change that, and we are doing that. Thanks to you, and to us, too. Awesome.

Yeah, um, so just last minute, um, thoughts is I'm really grateful for Mindy [Linder], um, and Maddi [McGraw], and, um, you know, the team there at the Springfield Museum for, you know, having the,

the, kind of, the thought and, you know, just the open-mindedness of including, um, you know, non-white communities and people in the museum and their archives and their work.

Because, uh, yeah, it was like, a few years ago, I met with Mindy at the museum. And it was like, wow, like, look at this, there's like, it's like 97 percent white guys in the entire museum. Like not even white women, just white guys. And, you know, if there was somebody that wasn't some prominent white dude, they didn't have a name, they didn't have any identifying information. It was just pictures of, you know, these white guys that were, you know, the settler community coming into the valley and, you know, doing what they were doing.

And so, I think when I went and walked through the museum in there, I saw like one or two pictures of Native people. There was no identifying anything. It was just like Indians on a horse or like, it was like, well, I don't know if you're, what the band was in Warm Springs, but it was, um, what's the band that was in the valley here? Oh, Kalapuya. I don't even think—maybe it was Kalapuya. But you know, it was, it was just like Kalapuya Indians on horseback, you know, and it was like, there was...yeah, and I, you know, as I've gone through the valley here, and I've gone to different, like, state parks and, you know, wilderness, that there's always, like, a picture of an Indian, or of a, you know, maybe like a village, but they're way off in the distance. And you never know who the person was or anything about them.

So um, yeah, I'm really, um, grateful that the team there at the Springfield Museum is changing that, you know, for future generations.