Interviewee: 9962.

Interviewer: Good job. Where were you born?

Interviewee: St. George Island.

Interviewer: And where did you grow up?

Interviewee: St. George Island.

Interviewer: You're doing great so far. How long did you live there?

Interviewee: Until 1998 so from '62 to – I lived there meaning, yeah, I was a resident there because I went to school. I was always going to school. I lived there until 1998 but I would say '98.

Interviewer: That's great, and then after you left there, do you mind restating where you wen after that?

Interviewee: Yeah, I moved to Juno, Alaska.

Interviewer: And then after Juno you came to Anchorage and you've been in Anchorage since?

Interviewee: Moved here in '06 so yeah, eight years in Juno.

Interviewer: Great, what's your first language or what language did you grow up speaking?

Interviewee: English.

Interviewer: And your current marital status?

Interviewee: Married.

Interviewer: What's the highest grade of school you completed?

Interviewee: I have a bachelor's degree in education.

Interviewer: How many people live in the house?

Interviewee: Right now it's just my husband and my mother.

Interviewer: And where would you like to live for your remaining years?
Interviewee: Where my daughter is, she lives in Boise. I'll be moving near my grandchildren to be, hopefully.

Interviewer: Great, and I think I have your home address. Those are the first round, you did great. So you were identified as an elder by the community, how did you get to be an elder? Maybe tell us a little bit about –

Interviewee: I was identified as an elder by the community because I'm 55.

Interviewer: That might be it.

Interviewee: It's probably because of my age.

Interviewer: Well, I guess maybe do you consider yourself an elder and how did you –

Interviewee: No, I do not consider myself an elder. but then when I think about it I do because I have so much – I don't want to say – I'm really knowledgeable in our language and our culture and I've worked with elders, I've taught on the island, I taught on St. George for a number of years before I moved away. 15 years on the island I was teaching. And then with APAI, I was a huge resource for them when I worked with them.

You guys weren't the first, I was probably within the health department interviewed maybe four, five, six times and with the cultural heritage department, I've been interviewed. I think that's why they're __. Like I said, it's just how to become an elder, it's probably because I have had all these years with my parents.

They taught me a lot growing up and then being able to care for them, that's just the highlight of my life right now, just caring for my parents. That's my reason for leaving APAI. I don't know, I guess that would be it.

I do have a lot of knowledge in the culture and the traditions, plus I have my faith which is Russian Orthodox and I'm a huge believer in that area from __. And everything that was passed down to me from my parents I still keep today. I don't know how else to answer that.

Interviewer: I think that's a great answer.

Interviewee: How does it feel to be viewed or to be thought of as an elder in your community?

Interviewer: It's an honor, I can't say it isn't. There are times you think of elder, that's why I said that at the beginning. I'm not old yet, why do they call me elder? Because I have a couple of people that __ that work for me. She was like totally offended that someone had called her an elder and I looked at her like, really? I didn't think that was such – I mean, we are 55 and she goes, "I'm not 65 yet, that's not an elder." I said, it depends.

But it's an honor. I really, really appreciate respect within our communities for our elders. I don't see – how do I say it without sounding offensive? You don't see a lot of elder respect today within this generation of the students that are in the schools. Like I said, when we were growing up in the school setting, you couldn't speak the language. I remember in first grade – I'm a fluent understander of our language.

And that was in first grade and I said something to one of my classmates and I got hit for it. It was a wakeup call for me there. I never was hit before so I was like, well, what happened, what did I say? So after that, it became that I'm not ever speaking this in the classroom again. But I went home and I told my folks and there was little they could do because of the government.

So, the kids and I were talking about, my classmates were talking about it that one day and I said don't talk __ and they were like I know, we're not because our parents told us not to. So when I went back to the island after college and started teaching, there was an elder who was teaching us in grade school, the later years that I was in grade school.

From sixth grade to eighth grade we actually had an elderly lady who came down and she taught us the language and then they brought the arts and crafts and culture into the classroom. But after that, no one really talked the language so when I got back, I was like, "Who's doing the language and the culture in the classroom?" There wasn't so I said, okay, let's bring it back, and so we worked hard on that.

My dad helped me. He was in the classroom with me and we taught the language and whatnot. So I think because of my contributions to the __ culture and curriculum with the Head Start program, I was the director of the program, as well as the education coordinator, I brought a lot of that back to the classroom in the sites, __ __ Point, St. Paul in Alaska. So, again, it's a huge honor. I am glad, I'm really happy that they finally see me as an elder. Did that answer your question?

Interviewer: Yeah, it did. Thank you. I'm going to ask a question about __ here in a little bit because of something you said. I am interested in how you would define an elder. You had said something specifically about age or it being someone who is old and I wonder how you would define an elder in your eyes, or maybe think about an elder when you were younger. What was an elder then?

Interviewee: Well, to me, an elder is not someone who is old, definitely. It's someone who has the knowledge and the traditions, they're able to be a mentor, they're able to – I want to say just like a teacher in the classroom.

They are the ones who we turn to for guidance and, again, I can't say enough, just bringing in that traditional knowledge and our Native ways of knowing. I really believe that they are the ones that have that.

Interviewer: Great. I'm going to switch gears a little bit and ask you what do you think it means to age well or age in a good way? Or maybe age successfully?

Interviewee: I hear you. Okay, let's take it from one perspective of maybe how my parents would see aging well and then how I would see aging well. With my parents, aging well is not so much about, okay, what you put in your body because they're gonna eat what they're gonna eat and they have their, how do I say it, their menu, their traditional menus, and that's the way they go and they know it's healthy for you.

But how they see aging well, and I ask them, what does it mean to grow old healthy? And they said aging well or growing old healthy as they said is that I give you what I was taught when I was brought up. So passing on those traditions and passing on what I know, being able to share this and not holding it back. He said if we hold everything back we won't age well, we won't be healthy.

You keep things locked up inside you and it's not a good thing. We need to make sure that we're always telling stories, passing this onto the new generation. So that's how they see it and making sure that they keep eating their Native foods. That was an eye-opener for me when I first heard that because as a teacher, I always tell the students we want to make sure what goes in our bodies is good stuff.

That to me still holds true definitely. I have to be honest, I'm not a

big fan of our Native food. I'm slowly getting myself back into a lot of it. I just don't eat a lot of Native traditional foods, I'm slowly getting back into it. Aging well for me, I take care of myself by eating well. That's how I see it. I exercise a lot, I try not to stress out. However the other part is, I want to make sure I share all this knowledge with everybody as well.

When I see those that are the same age as me that were in the community, when I see them today and I ask them about what you are you doing to help our __ right now? What are you doing to help __ sharing? I said that's a great story, why don't you share it? No. That's where I feel like you really want to talk to them about getting his out.

Because I said, look, your parents shared something with you that it would be great for everybody else to know. We would know this. If we knew this it would be kind of like, wow, that would be something to share. Because I know there are people in our communities that have to share that have not shared.

So for me, exercise, maintaining, keeping healthy but in that way, mentally, physically, spiritually. But I think the biggest for me is, I can't stress it enough, the opportunity to take care of my parents. I am getting so much from them and at times it is stressful but then again, it's what I was taught to do.

Interviewer: Can I ask you a personal question about your preference for Native foods? You said you had lost a preference or you didn't have it for a while and now you're coming back to it? Can you explain a little bit more about that? If it was moving around and why?

Interviewee: Well, I grew up with all the Native foods. Going to school, college and whatnot, I went to school in ___. It's the boarding school. We ate food down there but we didn't really have a lot of it there, at boarding school. I got my first introduction to mucktuck. I was in the dorm going what is that smell?

And then they told me and I was like, wow, I tried it and it wasn't something that I liked at the time but I didn't knock it, I thought that was great if we could bring in that. So a couple of our friends, we were able to bring down seal weed, and seal from Southeast Alaska in the Purple __ Islands are totally different so I was like this doesn't taste like seal so something is different. But you know, mom's cooking is always the best.

But over the years I guess going to college, you're away from

home all the time and then when you come back, you're just like okay. Like I said, I lost my, I don't know, taste for it. I didn't put a lot of thought or whatever into our Native food back then. My mom still cooked what she did and if I didn't want it, I wouldn't eat it. So that was that and she didn't force me.

My husband, he's from Pittsburgh, he'll eat it all if he has to. He loves it, and then going back to the island and having the opportunity to teach and then teaching the culture, it was more or less, Bonnie, you've got to do this, you've got to start getting back into your Native ways of life, the way you were brought up.

And so I had a sister who could cook anything and so she kind of taught me some of her menu and her recipes. And so I had to do it and I kind of got back into it there, and then when I went to Juno, there you go again, I'm losing all this. And then I worked for __ Central Council for a number of years there too and so I was getting back in but it was more the Southeast cultural foods, the salmon and whatnot.

So, moving here working for APAI, people asking me, how do you make this and that? I'm looking at him going, uh, and they're like you don't know? They gave me this look like they were appalled. You don't know? And I'm like, mm-mmm, don't know. You have to understand one thing, though. I don't know where that book is, ___.

When you look at that book, you think, oh, okay, all the communities have pretty much the same traditional foods and whatnot. St. George was heavily Russian influenced so we grew up on a lot of the Russian recipes too. There was not a lot, because I had never heard of braided seal gut or whatever. When I was at the Culture Camp I asked Josie, what are you doing and she told me and I was like, well, we never did that.

And my mom said as long as she grew up, she doesn't remember anyone ever doing that on the island. So a lot of that stuff was new to us and, again, being that my parents pretty much ate the traditional foods, my niece will send me seal every year, my dad was the only one that ate it.

My mom lost – she doesn't like fish a lot anymore, she just doesn't like any of the Native food as much. But I and my husband will cook __ will cook my halibut only different ways. Salmon, I didn't grow up on salmon so I didn't know what salmon really was and the different ways until I went to __ boarding school.

So, it's very limited. So that's how I pretty much am getting myself back into it. I have to make myself try and I've already passed a few recipes down to my daughter, at least she's willing.

Interviewer: Thank you. I think you spoke to this question quite a bit already but just how did you learn about aging well and who provided an example for you? And I know you spoke a lot about your parents and learning from them. Is there anyone else or any other ways that you learned about aging well?

Interviewee: A huge part of it was working with the staff at the APIA on the __ book. We discussed and had meetings and I was like, wow, and finding out about the recipes and how some of us were doing it right, some of us weren't, that type of stuff. But aging well, coming back to APAI to where my heart and soul is within my community, within the region, and I was able to really learn a lot from working at APAI and the contacts that I had in the communities.

When I went to Alaska, it was like open arms, I'm not saying – because a lot of people knew who I was and my parents and stuff. So I was eating out all the time and getting invited out. St. Paul the same way. Going to Sandpipe, totally different because no one knew who I was. But their recipes and their traditional ways of knowing totally different from Alaska St. Paul.

So bringing that back into the community was tough and telling the Head Start teachers, "Where is this in your lesson plans? Why are you not doing this?" They're like there's no one here that really knows the language. Okay, we need to bring it back, that type of thing.

Interviewer: What is your day-to-day life now? You talked about working for APAI?

Interviewee: It was a real hard transition for me, real difficult. Working every day and doing what I loved at APAI and then all of the sudden that got cut off because I had to stay home and take care of mom and dad full time. My day to day is just getting up in the morning, I try to walk a couple of rounds here and there in our area and then mom doesn't get up until 9:00 AM anyway.

She sleeps late, to me that's late and then I just get her breakfast going and making sure she takes her pills, and then I do some work for APIA on the side. I'm still on call with them, I basket-weave, I

do a little bit of __ sewing. I'm trying to work on something for my daughter to finish that one up but really, I'm caring for mom, it's a full-time job. I have to make sure that her medications are correct, the hospital will call.

I do all the meetings for her so it is. And then what I do is when my husband comes home and I need to do this more often, it's like I just leave for an hour or two. I don't do that enough because really maintaining that, being home all day gets hard so that's really what I do. I don't do a heck of a lot. I do a lot of reading, a lot of __ again but we're talking about just traditions and that's probably it.

Interviewer: It sounds like you are very busy but just at the home so sometimes –

Interviewee: Yeah, it doesn't seem that way.

Interviewer: So as you've gotten older, how has aging changed your relationships, either maybe your community or your family or with your parents or your mom?

Interviewee: Definitely I'm not as sociable as I used to be. I don't go out or do anything that I used to do a lot with my friends, I have a lot of girlfriends here. I've made a lot of friends here at APA and we all try to meet up and have tea or a coffee or maybe a night out. But I can't, a lot of that's changed now. I'm more responsible and I have a lot of responsibilities with mom. The question again was?

Interviewer: How have your relationships changed with aging? And I think you spoke to it a lot about your work with APIA as a knowledge barrier and a teacher.

Interviewee: That's pretty much what it is now. A lot of my contacts are people who have questions for me like you guys and a lot of my friends or those who are more in tune with the culture, that's our interests. I find myself being pulled to those acquaintances who have an interest in our culture and whatnot. And as far as how is it with my parents, a lot of it is respect though. I find myself contacting elders whose parents have passed on that are older than me and I ask them questions.

I'm finding myself calling them and saying, hey, do you have a few minutes? I want to ask you a question about so and so or blah-blah-blah. Because I want to confirm Mom's story or whatnot so

I'm like okay. The other thing I do I want to make sure is that I try to write down what I can about what my parents have taught and stories and whatnot, and I videotape them sometimes and then we watch it together. But that's about it.

Interviewer: That's really neat. Can I go back and ask about your basket-weaving?

Interviewee: Mm-hmm. I don't have any up here but those are the ones that have been gifts for my husband and I. I don't have any that I've –

Interviewer: So the baskets that you do weave, are they grass baskets?

Interviewee: I just don't have the grass, the opportunity to get the grass. It's like Sharon Tate, she taught me her – initially, I was taught the un-Alaska stuff from this gal. She came to the island many, many years ago back in the early'90s when I started learning the un-Alaska, that stuff.

Now, Sharon Tate taught our teachers at APIA during the culture camp and whatnot so I started __ at wholly I can't it her way. She keeps saying, Bonnie, you're holding it wrong. Just let me do it my way, it will still come out the same but there again is a respect. You've got to do it the way she is – but it's very hard for me.

Interviewer: And are they similar too? Grass is very thin?

Interviewee: Mm-hmm, but I use rafia right now. I don't sell my baskets, I give them out as gifts to family and friends or whatnot. I don't think they're good enough to sell. However –

Interviewer: We saw it when I was in St. George. I spoke with a woman who is making seal throat baskets.

Interviewee: Jessie, Jessie Lutano, yeah.

Interviewer: It was fascinating because it was something that she had said she picked up not really from her parents but –

Interviewee: From her mother as well.

Interviewer: Yeah, re-learn on her own a little bit. But I was wondering if you were also doing –

Interviewee: I do that too. My mom used to be great at that and she would sell hers to the museum __ in Sitka. So Jessie's mother-in-law and my mom, they would do that and so I still have a lot of the throats. They use the throats and then we'd have to rub them down to make them supple so I just have to get back into all that stuff but I'm hoping to do that once I get more time, some downtime.

Interviewer: So it seems like you already spoke to this, there are lots of things you do to help you age well. One of the things you said was this basket-making or craft-type activities. Are there other things that help you to age well that you haven't spoken of yet?

Interviewee: I don't know. Like I said, I think exercise is important, it's huge and I know a lot of people that are in my age group too I keep telling them because they're always like, well, you look really good, how are you keeping so thin? and I'm like you've got to move, you've got to exercise. And then they talk to me about their diabetes and I'm like, "My mom had diabetes for years."

She was diagnosed when she was in her early '40s and about 15 years ago she was diabetic free. the time is the thing is all she did was take the pills and she kept herself healthy. She watched what she ate but she made sure it was in moderation and all that. And the thing is, too, is that she would always keep moving.

I remember my mom, she was always chubby, we called her chubby but luckily she kept moving, she was always moving. What drives me too is seeing the obesity in our little three to five year olds, we have problems in our communities and working for APAI.

And then trying to get them back on track with how – Grandma and Grandpa take care of them a lot in our community so what happens is they feed them what they want, they give them what they want and it's a bag of chips and we're like no, no, don't give them that. But I feel that passing this information on, again, I can't say – through cultural and traditional ways of knowing within our region is vital.

When I tell someone about what I do, I cannot not say something about our culture or the traditional ways because to me I think that's really important. We're known because of our region, we're known because of the ways and the traditions that we have, and spiritually, I think for me it brings me back to where I'm from because a lot of times the Western society or the Western ways they pull you, they have more of today within our region than the

traditional ways.

You see it, the kids are sitting there playing their videogames. Good example, my niece, her little boy or her little girl too has just – when they come stay with me I'm like let me have that, let's go out and do something.

You bring that to their attention because I feel like those videogames and all the electronics today, they bring in nothing but problems for the children later one because their lack of attentiveness and they don't seem to be listening to anyone anymore. Okay, I'm rambling.

Interviewer: No, I think it's so on point. Why do you think that some elders age well and others do not?

Interviewee: I think I've touched on it already.

Interviewer: I think you have also.

Interviewee: They need to bring it back to where they came from. If you don't know who you are and where you're from and what you've been taught, I feel that's a foundation of – because when you think about our Native people way back when in our region, I know they didn't have – I think the average age when people passed on was in the 70s and, look, my mom, she's in the 90s right now.

And I think aging well means to take care of each other. If you can't take care of each other within the community, I don't see that community and the people thriving. You really need to come together, talk about your needs, talk about your concerns but you've got to bring it together. There's a moving company –

[Side conversation]

My mom's bed, there was a big rip on the side when they brought it in and I said ah. So they're going to bring in another one but it's __, thank God. All right, so as I was saying, aging well, especially in the community, like I said, in our regions you have got to be a huge part of that community, you've got to really bring the community together because if you don't, I think you're gonna find yourself alone and you really need to have others help you out.

For me, when there is an elder in the community, you need to do everything you can to possibly help that person, that elder, and seeing to their needs. I don't think if they were on that island or

the island of St. George, if they stayed there I don't think they'd be alive today unfortunately. Because the lack of transportation going in and out is foggy and then the medication, if you're not taking your medication that's what happens.

And I think a lot of our elders sometimes get neglected in that way and that's what I told them. And you hear from the doctors that they don't recommend that they go back because of this and as much as it hurts them not to go home or stay at home, I feel that it's to prolong their life and they need to stay, they need to be here. But we just need to be there to help them and they need to be in a familiar – they need to be in a setting where they're not just sitting there all day.

You have got to keep them active. Mom, she's laying there, okay, I'm gonna be taking her out doing something with her walker. I'll take her to the Sears mall or whatever they call that place now, but I'll have her walk a little bit, getting exercise in. But letting her do a lot of things that she's most familiar with. She likes playing her word searches, she does that. We'll sit here and I'll pull out beyond pictures and then we'll just sit there and talk about these pictures.

She's at the point where she can't remember what happens sometimes yesterday but she sure can remember what happened back in 1942 or when she was growing up. A lot of those memories are coming back. But again, keeping them active, keeping them in what they're most familiar with, the element, that area.

In the communities, a lot of times we tend to get wrapped up in our own families, in our own activities and our jobs that there are elders out there and forget oh, my gosh, I didn't go and visit so and so. So it's important to keep that in mind.

Interviewer: Are there things that help you identify or that we could look for to identify an elder who is not aging well or is aging poorly?

Interviewee: Well, the last one was really important to me. Like I said, make sure that elder is not alone in that community. There's someone there that's able to come out and do stuff, visit. It's huge and you can go visit them or take them out to community functions. Who doesn't want that?

I know there are elders who love to go out and then all of the sudden they're not able to because they don't have transportation, they don't have family, immediate family there. And then using

them as resources in every aspect of activities in the community. There's school, yeah, but what we're doing now. Unfortunately I would but mom can't hear anything. She's at that point where her hearing aid is way too old for her to – it's just not working for her.

Interviewer: Thank you. I think you already answered this a little bit but about what it means to be an elder and in an elder's role? And I think you really spoke to that already but I just would ask it again if you want to add anything to that?

Interviewee: I think I said it, I think I pretty much said all I wanted to say.

Interviewer: I think you did. And this is kind of a different way to ask the same question is how do you know if someone is an elder or not? And we did talk about age as someone who gets to a certain age and that seems – is there anything in your mind that –

Interviewee: Definitely for me it's their knowledge of traditional ways, their knowledge of the culture, their knowledge of how experienced they are. That's how I figured, man, that person knows a lot. And again, I say it's not age because I know of a person more than I am that knows a lot because of her experiences within that community.

Interviewer: Do you think elders in your community are aging well? And I guess when I say your community, it might be your group of elders in Anchorage through APIA or it also might be your St. George community or any of the communities you're a part of. Do you feel like the elders are aging well?

Interviewee: I don't want to speak for anyone but I don't live in St. George anymore for a number of years so off the record, my concern is the alcohol is still huge. There's a lot of people my age that are still drinking, a lot. Don't get me wrong, I have my wine and glass of wine here and there and stuff, but to see the amount of alcohol that goes into a community so small, it hampers a lot of the activities for the children – or actually, I shouldn't say, it sets how do you say it?

When children see this, they kind of wonder what goes through their minds when they see, okay, oh, no, all this alcohol is coming into the community. Oh, no, that's the bad stuff that's coming in. What's in it for me? It takes away from the children. there's so many more activities you could be doing in the community. And are they aging well?

I think some are because they're active, they stay active within the

community. And then there's half of them that don't want to do anything, that don't want to share, that don't want to – their mindset is, well, why should we say anything when the dang government did this to us? They are still in that mindset, it's hard to get them away. Their parents were the same way and I think I'd say 50 percent are, 50 percent aren't.

Interviewer: Is it different to be an elder today compared to 20 years ago?

Interviewee: I think so to a certain extent because I could never compare myself to what my dad knows, what his grandfather or his father and my grandfather, great grandfather and them knew back then. I think today there's a lack of respect for elders. I don't see how it used to be, the way it used to be back then. Our elders were everything to us and they showed us the way.

You had nothing but the utmost respect for them and by that, I mean for example, after every church service that they had, you had to go to the elder's house and pay your respects to them and say hello if they weren't able to make it to church. But when you saw them in church you made sure you said hello, is there anything that you need that I can probably get for you? And then if you were very picky, you would make sure that you gave them a can of berries or whatnot.

Just things like that. And you just don't see a lot of that today and again, I think within the communities, the first place is the home setting. They learn a lot within their home but again, you also need to like I said, within the school setting, they need to bring in those resources that they have in the community. And I think a lot of times they don't do that anymore.

Interviewer: Why do you think elders move away?

Interviewee: Health, that's it. And a lot of times, I think it's just 'cause their health has declined so much that there's no one to take care of them within the community. So, they are put in homes.

My parents, when you think about it they say your parents, they can go to a home and I'm like no, I've seen the homes, I've been to every one of those homes and I just – not every one, but a lot of those homes and I'm like if my mom and dad were here they'd be gone already because they're not in a familiar setting with people that they know. They leave because of no caregivers.

Interviewer: This is a question that you could answer and maybe you could also answer a little bit for your parents. What has helped with the transition from living in a remote community or village to the city life?

Interviewee: My daughter, family is huge and you've got to make the sacrifice. Families have got to make the sacrifice because it's the right thing to do. Yeah, and for example, I went and visited a couple of elders that were brought from Alaska, she was in a home. Another from St. George, she was in a home and I'm like what do you miss about home? I'm like you wish you could go home?

She's like yes. But she goes, who do I go home to? There's no one there for me anymore. And I'm like you have a brother up there. He's not willing to take care of me. So again, there's that sacrifice that needs to be made.

Interviewer: Are there other challenges that people experience when they move from the village life to the city?

Interviewee: Well, they miss their friends, their acquaintances. The people that they know and grow up with. My parents, they really missed a couple of people that they were always talking to on a daily basis when they came here, my dad more so because he just wanted his independence but even if he did, he wasn't as independent as he thought he was.

And then for my parents, church, their faith is huge and they missed that sense of community within the church and also within the village. They missed the potlucks, they missed the Christmas programs. Things that you don't really see here. It makes it difficult.

Interviewer: So the other elders we spoke to talked about the ocean.

Interviewee: Oh, sure, yeah. I'm saying that definitely, my dad looking out his window every morning, sitting there with a cup of coffee in his hand and greeting people as they walk by. __ __ in his window but yeah, it's huge that –

Interviewer: A sense of place.

Interviewee: A sense of place, exactly.

Interviewer: So, I think you spoke to this a little bit about how aging is different here in a city like Anchorage compared to St. George. Is there anything else that you want to add to that about how aging is

different here? And maybe you could even speak from your experience?

Interviewee: Like you said, for me, when I moved to Juno I was like don't get me wrong, I went to school in Sitka for four years but Sitka is a little more spread out than Juno. You're up against these and oh, my God, I feel suffocated here, my parents do. I said it's gonna be tough to get used to the landscape and all this stuff here, the rain, the constant rain, that type of thing.

But I said I need water and we'd have to have a channel, they have that channel that goes right there, __ channel going up. But I said I need to get out of the water so the first thing we did was we found our 20-footer from St. George sent down and we always were out on the water. So I have to go to Homer at least twice a year or __ or __ and I have to fish, it's a part of my daily life.

On the island, halibut fishing was something that was huge, although I didn't go out as often because women didn't do that a lot back then. So, yeah, a lot of it is like you said, you miss the water, the fishing, your activities that you normally do there. Because down in Juno I was able to just go out my door and go to the glacier and to the hikes along the glacier area. But here you have to drive to go somewhere pretty much. So, yeah.

Interviewer: One of the things that we haven't really explored very much and you just kind of raised an interest for me is this idea of general and I don't want to get too far down that but you talked about going out fishing was something a lot of women did. Do you feel like that is something that's changing?

Interviewee: Oh, heck, yeah.

Interviewer: For the culture or something that's just changing for you and your perspective and your position?

Interviewee: See, like I said, you didn't see a lot of women fishing but I knew there was a couple of women that were my mom's age that used to go out fishing with their husband. And I remember that raised some eyebrows when I was a kid. Like, what's wrong with that? But yeah, it was just not a thing that the women did. Sure, you came in but we cleaned the fish and whatnot.

Today, I see a lot of women going out fishing, I go fishing. I think that because why did it change you think? The reason I think it changed is because there you go. You're losing a part of that

tradition and the culture in that way so instead of going to an elder and asking, hey, is it okay if I go fishing, it's just like who cares, I'm going. That's that attitude or mentality.

Interviewer: Yeah, it's interesting. That's something I would like to explore more I think at some point because I think that's a unique thing. Are there things from the village or being out in St. George that people in town here wish they had access to, more access to?

Interviewee: Well, definitely the seal meat, the halibut, because it's tough to get it here, you know? More access to just – I'm trying to think of –

Interviewer: I think you said earlier church was one of the things that maybe it's hard to get the same access to.

Interviewee: For me or for myself, and I'll speak for my parents too, we have the cathedral here, the __ cathedral in Turpin, and then you have some of these chapels. Well, we were going to this smaller church called St. Alexis and as parishioners of St. Alexis, my parents prefer going there because it's a smaller community. They like that sense of community and it's small, they know everybody, everybody knows them and they're to sing more of the traditional songs in that particular church.

That's what makes them feel really at home as to when we go to the cathedral it's huge, it's overbearing for them, it's just like they can barely hear sometimes because of the choir. And they're not really participating in a sense. They sit there but they like that smaller community. So, for us we miss just having a church where you know everyone and then here, it's hard to find a church. Right now, St. Alexis was at APIA for a while, we were using the first-floor conference room and because we're not able to find a place of our own yet, we had a couple of buildings that we leased but the leases were not renewed so weren't able to go back to those. So it's been difficult to find a building. With APAI it's okay but it was my place of work so I was like hmmm.

My parents loved it because they had people around them that they knew, I just wasn't crazy about it. But apparently we're going back. Someone put a bug in my mom's ear about that. She was telling me about that and I was like, oh, no, __ told her so anyway. Yeah, it's that type of thing. You have a sense or you just want that community and I love to be in a place where I see familiar faces as well. I miss those familiar faces.

Facebook is one thing but being able to go to APIA for the

potlucks and seeing them and talking. It's hard though when you have that separation and you haven't seen them for a number of years and you're like, okay. A lot of people are hesitant to speak about stuff like this. They don't want to. I'm more open like, hey, how is __, blah-blah-blah.

Interviewer: A few other questions, do you have advice for people who want to age well?

Interviewee: Yeah, move, definitely start moving, get into an exercise program whether it be physical but also something that's going to help your mental health as well and then spiritually, physically, that type. But always bring yourself back to where you came from, your village, your community. I can't stress enough what you remember as a child. If you don't find somebody who does.

I'm here, I always tell people at APIA, you want to help me make this, help me do some work, come over to my house we can do it, that type of thing. In passing one thing I wanted to say was a great elder or being an elder is passing on those traditions, that knowledge. You've got to do it otherwise we're gonna lose everything, we're gonna lose it all.

And we've already lost some, it's unfortunate, there's some things that my dad was talking about that he can't remember as well but it's gone because those key people that knew how to do that are not there anymore. They're gone and it wasn't passed on.

Interviewer: How does that make you feel, sharing that knowledge with younger people or with youth?

Interviewee: What do you mean?

Interviewer: Emotionally, how does that feel to have that opportunity or I guess some people might see it as a responsibility?

Interviewee: I love it, I'm ecstatic, I'm happy. That's what drives me. When I was teaching on the island those were the best years of my life, that's what I said. Those were the years. I'll make one thing clear, though, it's difficult teaching in your own village because sometimes people come down hard on you because they have a different – maybe you're like, well, that's not how my taught and that's not right.

Or they're saying that's not right, that's not how we do it here and I'm thinking I have a well-respected elder here, there are two of

them, but you come into the community and you're gone for a number of years and you come back and they say, well, you don't know what you're talking about.

So, it's difficult, I can't say those were all great years on the island because it was hard because I was critiqued a lot as a community member. And parents depended on me but I couldn't break the law for them. I told the school, I can't do that, that's just not something that as a professional in education, mm-mmm.

Interviewer: What do you feel is the most important thing you would want to share with youth or that you can share with youth?

Interviewee: I think I would tell them to absorb as much as they can about the culture, traditions of __ and our way of life because one day we're going to find it's not there but it's gonna take them.

And that's the thing, if we can get them to understand that it's gonna take you to keep this going, listen, be respectful, go out and seek those resources that are in the communities and don't quit, keep it up. If you quit then you'll probably find yourself say later on, oh, man, I wish I didn't. And the huge thing is sharing this knowledge. If you have it, share it.

Interviewer: I think we have touched on nearly all the questions that we wanted to ask. Dr. Lewis, do you have any other questions that you're –

Dr. Lewis: No.

Interviewer: There anything about aging or being an elder that you would like share that we haven't asked yet?

Interviewee: No, I think probably that's about it. And the thing is, well, one thing I want to say is that like I said, I do what I can at home but I'm not active in it anymore as much as I was at APAI. Granted, yeah, I was in the administrator position but I was always working with the other coordinators, education coordinator, the health coordinator and looked at the different content area coordinators.

But I'd be like, okay, where's the tradition here? Where's the cultural part of this? What's happening here? So I was always engaged in that with them. So you could see where I'm finding myself going, uh-oh. So it's a difficult transition not to have that something that was part of my life for how many years?

Interviewer: It seems like maybe another way to think of the challenges, you don't have to the structured way in which you're responsible for it and you're having to find ways to go out on your own or people are going to have to find it on their own to give that same sort of gratification or involvement.

Interviewee: So hopefully I'll be able to go back and do something in that respect.

Interviewer: Do you have any other questions for either of us about the process?

Interviewee: So you're saying you're going to write up a paper on it? and where is it going to?

Interviewer: APAI. As far as I understand it, the way that it has worked in the past is that we kind of look at all the –

[End of Audio]