Dr. Ashley Atkins Spivey
Pamunkey Indian Museum & Cultural Center
King William County, Virginia

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Interviewer: Jessica Taylor
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[START INTERVIEW]

JT: Okay, this is Jessica Taylor and Patrick Daglaris with Dr. Ashley Spivey—

Spivey?

[00:00:07]

AS: Spivey.

[00:00:07]

JT: Okay. I knew it you as Ashley Atkins. [Laughter] So, when and where were you born?

[00:00:13]

AS: Oh, wow. Okay. We're starting all the way at the beginning. [Laughter] So, I was born on August 16, 1984, in Richmond, Virginia.

[00:00:23]

JT: Okay. And what were your parents' occupations?

[00:00:27]

AS: Gosh. At the time that I was born?

[00:00:29]

JT: Um-hm.

[00:00:29]

AS: Okay. My mom worked for the state of Virginia. Don't know what agency, but I know it was the state of Virginia. And my dad, at the time, was a jeweler at Morton's Jewelry Company in downtown Richmond.

[00:00:42]

JT: Cool. So, what kind of food would your parents make at home?

[00:00:45]

AS: Let's see. [Laughter] I know where we're going. [Laughter] I mean, growing up as a kid, I mean . . . sorry, I have food in my mouth.

[00:00:55]

JT: No, that's great.

[00:00:55]

AS: I just ate, literally, before you guys got over here. Sorry. [Laughter] You'll, like, edit this, right? [Laughter]

[00:01:01]

JT: Yeah.

[00:01:02]

AS: Okay, good. [Laughter] I mean, growing up with my parents, we had, like, your typical kind of American fare. My parents divorced when I was young, so for a while, it was single mom fare. So, I'm assuming you guys can imagine what that is; what you can ever get together. Just typical white bread America, American cheese kind of thing. But what was different about that, though, was coming here. When I was a kid, my grandparents lived here. My mom's parents lived here. And I definitely had a different experience in terms of what we were eating down here, 'cause my grandfather grew up living off the land, so he had his own garden, he would fish, would hunt, would trap. So, we had all kinds of different things when we would come down here to the reservation. So, I was exposed at an early age with kind of, I guess, a truly indigenous or local diet when I was a child, so.

[00:02:04]

JT: Um-hm. And what kind of stuff, specifically, would your grandparents make when you came down here?

[00:02:06]

AS: Yeah, so, one of my favorite things is salt herring, which is a thing, I know, in the South. But salt herring, salt shad, wild turkey, definitely all kinds of different shellfish, local mussels, crab. We get crab all the way up here during August through October, so crab was definitely, definitely a big part of my diet for that season. Every kind of fish you could think of: cat, rock, shad, as I mentioned, herring, alewife, whiting, everything. In fact, you could get out of the river eel, definitely. My grandfather liked to smoke eel, so that was always delicious. Then, just fresh

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fruits, vegetables. And also, my grandfather, who I kind of look at as my teacher, has a really wide variety in terms of knowledge with the local, indigenous plant life, so I grew up walking around the shoreline or the woods with him. He'd just be like, "Here, try this. This is this, this is wild cherry. This is sedges. Sedges have edges, remember that." [Laughter] "It helps with your stomach if you have an upset stomach." Those kinds of things, when we would come down here. I didn't really put that together as not being normal until I got a little bit older and realized, actually, it was really special. And it was something that, actually, not a lot of people from my own community got, even though they lived down here. But I think, with my grandfather growing up down here, he moved away for a bit and then came back, just trying to keep that knowledge alive, that I really tried to start documenting that and going out with him as I got older, to try to remember it myself, to share it with my kids.

[00:03:48]

JT: Yeah. How did what you have vary by season here?

[00:03:51]

AS: That is a good question. So, for example, the fish totally was dependent on seasonality. Shad is, like, one of our biggest fish. That's the thing that I grew up knowing and hearing about my whole life: shad, shad, shad, shad. We have a shad hatchery, for example. So, that season is typically, depending on how severe or mild the winter is, March through late April, early May. And that's the season that we would also celebrate the end of the shad run. So we have an annual fish fry that the community holds to kind of celebrate the fishermen and what they caught and how well our hatchery has done. So, shad has definitely been the biggest part of my life, in terms

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of being a part of this community. And, of course, just your local seasonal stuff that he would grow himself or that would just be growing around. Definitely spring through summer, we would always have fresh fruit, fresh vegetables, both from the garden—the cultivated garden—and then, also, things that he would just collect on his own. Then, turkey, deer, that's more of a fall—well, turkey season, actually, I think is right now, but he wouldn't typically follow the seasons. [Laughter] Still a question of whether or not we have to by law, but definitely venison, grew up with eating venison. So usually, it's an annual round, really. There's different things available at different times. And of course, with the advent of certain things like salting and smoking, they were big smokers. They smoked everything. [Dog shakes] [Laughter] So, they just knew how to get what was available all year round. In terms of seasonality, that's not something that we follow as much as we used to, especially during my grandfather's generation, 'cause people just don't live that life anymore. So, he would have so much more knowledge about what seasonality was like in terms of what they were catching, when they were catching it, but they would also have domesticated animals, too. They totally adopted a non-Native or a European way of homesteading. So, pigs, cows, chickens, that kind of thing, was a big part of their lives, and even my mom's life when she was living down here. And what are the other things that he would do often . . . ? The salting, totally, so that they could have fish almost all year round. They would salt to have that. And he would talk about how his parents hated fish. [Laughter] Which was crazy to me, because I loved it, but I didn't eat it every day. They ate it every day growing up, my great-grandparents, so they got sick of it. [Laughter] By the time they were adults and could make decisions and be able to go to a grocery store, unlike when they were growing up, when that was not necessarily available to them.

[00:07:05]

JT: Yeah.

[00:07:07]

PD: I'm good.

[00:07:07]

JT: So, what kind of foods and vegetables did your grandfather grow in his gardens, and everybody else in their gardens, too?

[00:07:12]

AS: Yeah, so, when he was growing up, when he was a kid, the big thing to do was have two gardens. They actually had what they would call a truck farming garden and then, just like their own homestead kind of garden. So, they would grow everything, I mean everything, from different types of melons, potatoes, onions. Black-eyed peas was a huge thing down here. Everything you can imagine, they would grow it. And they would have the garden that was for their home and for their families, and then they would have the truck farming garden, and that would be the garden that they would literally load into the truck—before that, the wagon. My grandfather grew up being on a—what did he call it? It wasn't called a wagon. A horse and buggy. So, he remembers when some of the people got the first cars.

[00:08:08]

JT: Wow.

[00:08:08]

AS: So, he didn't have electricity in his home until the 1940s, so . . . and these roads weren't paved till the 1970s, so . . . [Laughter] You can imagine.

[00:08:18]

JT: Yeah.

[00:08:19]

AS: But they would use the train. There was a train station, a train that goes to the reservation that stops right across the river right here, what is a place called Lester Manor, so they would also take the train. And that's how they would either truck their produce to the 17th Street Market in Richmond, they would sell it locally within the county, they would travel with it on the train. So, it was a way for them to feed themselves and to, also, make a little bit of extra cash on—and whatever they wouldn't eat within their house, again, growing the same types of things: black-eyed peas, every type of melon you can imagine, potatoes, that kind of thing. If they had any leftover, they would add it to the truck farming patch, so they could make money off of it.

[00:09:04]

JT: You also mentioned the venison. Did your grandfather butcher the venison himself?

[00:09:10]

AS: No. He was not a big hunter, but we have several hunters here on the reservation that – they do group hunting, typically. Like, together as a group. They would butcher it together. My grandfather has a really interesting story about how they would do that. And read my dissertation to get the full story, 'cause I'm not going to remember it all right now. [Laughter] But they would do a group hunt, and they basically would divvy up—they would butcher, skin, butcher the deer together. And then, the head hunter, the lead hunter, used to be the chief, but then the chief would appoint somebody later on down the line when he wasn't hunting, would then quarter up the meat. And the head hunter would get the best piece, which is like the tenderloin, and then it would go down from there. Then, what was left over would go to the people, to the families who didn't have hunters. So, my grandfather not being a hunter, would get venison from the group of hunters here on the reservation. And they still do that today. I get venison every season, because my husband doesn't hunt. [Laughter] And he's a white man. So, the Indian men will come down and give us a cut from their hunt to eat.

[00:10:33]

JT: Why didn't your grandfather choose to hunt so much?

[00:10:35]

AS: Well, he is kind of at the cusp of that generation. So, he was born in 1937, and he's at the cusp of that generation where his dad, my great-grandfather, grew up totally off the land. That—everything. That is how they fed themselves, that's how they made money. And it's his generation, my great-grandfather's generation, that starts to actually engage, started to engage more with jobs that were just cash earning, that did not include sustenance off the land. So, for

example, he moved to Philadelphia for a while; he lived in Richmond for a while doing wage labor, but decided, actually, during the Great Depression to come back here to the reservation because they knew that they could feed themselves if they couldn't hold their jobs, which they couldn't. A lot of them lost their jobs and came back here during that time. So, my grandfather was able to—my great-grandfather kind of re-picked up that life again, of living off the land. He was also a guide, a hunting guide; that's also how he made money. He worked for one of the old farms right next to us for over fifty years, guiding for the folks that would come down to that hunt club. And so, that's what my grandfather witnessed, but he also—and he learned a lot. He learned how to trap. He learned how to shad fish. They would net. That's how they'd catch their shad, they would net them. He learned, again, about the plant life. His grandmother was known as an herbalist, that's what they called them. She was also a midwife. So, he was able to learn these things from his grandparents and his parents, but he left at a young age. He left around thirteen to go to boarding school, Bureau of Indian Affairs boarding school in Cherokee, the Eastern Band reservation in North Carolina. So, he wasn't as immersed in that lifestyle as, like, his father's generation or his grandfather's generation, so . . . by the time he came back, which, he went to the BIA boarding school, he actually ended up going to college, one of the first people from here to get a college degree. Lived in Richmond working, had his family, and then decided to come back to the reservation in the 1970s. So, he was away for about two decades. So, that just wasn't a part of his repertoire anymore. He picked up the shad fishing, though; he picked up the gardening, did trapping. But his father was still alive at that time, too. His father didn't pass away till 2003, and he was still doing all of that. My great-grandfather was still hunting and trapping and fishing and guiding up until his nineties. So . . . [Laughter] He was able to learn it as a young person and then still be exposed to it when he came back in his thirties to raise his

family here. So, just, deer hunting wasn't a big part of what he did, because he didn't have to, too, you know? They didn't have to do that, his generation and my mother's generation. You could go to a grocery store. So, it just was, I think, about exposure; lack of it, I guess.

[00:13:54]

JT: Yeah. Um, and how have the grocery stores changed the cuisine on the reservation?

[00:14:01]

AS: That's a really good question. Actually, some of our elder tribal members who were interviewed in the 1980s, who were in their eighties at the time—so they were born at the turn of the twentieth century—actually point to the advent of the big, superstore grocery stores as being one of the downfalls for the lifestyle down here, which I thought was really interesting, because you wouldn't have to spend months and months cultivating your garden. You wouldn't have to do the hard labor that it takes to trap for your meat or to hunt or to fish for your meat. So, I think it just became—it was easier, it was readily available. People were engaging in more wage labor jobs so they could afford to go to the grocery store, and I think it totally changed the cuisine. It definitely helped, kind of, take these practices out of normal, everyday life where food was involved, catching and creating and growing your own food. It still didn't do it totally; we still have people today, like I said, my grandfather and some of the older folks that live down here and even some of the younger folks who have moved back, who are really trying to keep that knowledge alive. It's not every household, but there are people out there who recognize the importance of still practicing that way of life. But it's a capitalist world. [Laughter] We all live in

it, whether we want to or not, and I don't have time to grow my own corn. You know what I mean?

[00:15:38]

JT: Yeah.

[00:15:38]

AS: If I want to make a dollar and pay my bills. So, it's a real struggle, definitely. But it's a conscious one, at least. I think that people see the need to keep certain things alive. And I think when you guys first came in, did you see that garden?

[00:15:54]

JT: Mm-hm.

[00:15:54]

AS: That is just being done? That, the majority of the plants in that are indigenous plants from around the reservation. So, we actually have active programs going on right now to help kind of keep this knowledge alive for the community. My grandfather's been helping with that project, so, yeah.

[00:16:12]

JT: What's in there?

[00:16:12]

AS: Oh, my gosh. There's wild blueberry, there's mulberry, there's this other tree called a paw-paw. What else have they got in there? I mean, all kinds of stuff. I can't list everything off. But . . . and they bought that at an indigenous plant nursery, but they're also going around the reservation and actually taking plants and then re-establishing them in that garden. So, wild cherry, for example. Looking for some of the muscadine, the indigenous grapes like the fox grape and things like that, so . . .

[00:16:48]

JT: So, you could grow corn here or you could buy it at the supermarket, but there are things at the supermarket you can't grow here. So, what kind of stuff do people take from the supermarket and bring back here and adapt to what's already here?

[00:17:00]

AS: [Laughter] Like everything, I guess. [Laughter] I don't know.

[00:17:05]

JT: That's fair.

[00:17:05]

AS: Yeah, I mean, that's a good question. I've never really thought about that. Can you still hear me if I—

[00:17:12]

JT: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

[00:17:13]

AS: Relax. [Laughter] Gosh. I mean, all kinds of things . . . Like international types of foods, you know, that people never would have been exposed to. Different types of fruits and vegetables that are only grown in certain regions that we can get to now, that can come here now, because of the technology. So, what's interesting, you see people trying new things, and then combining, you know what I mean? Some of that old knowledge or old ways of eating. So, for example, the shad roe, the eggs, are considered like a delicacy, right? Everybody wants the roe. And a lot of people, actually, will take the roe—the egg sac—break it apart and scramble it with chicken eggs, you know what I mean? Or, they will wrap it in bacon, and put it in the oven. Or fry it in bacon grease, or something of that nature. So, there's an interesting kind of mix of both. And what's really interesting, hearing about how these – using this old way of making food, using indigenous animals, indigenous plants, and combining them with more contemporary or domestic type of things, you see that in the archaeological record, too, from over two hundred years ago, they're doing it. We dug, we did an excavation just across the way from me, from where I live, and you're finding sturgeon scales, you're finding eggshells, you're finding muskrat jaws, teeth, pig and cow teeth. So, you see, in the archaeological record, in terms of the fauna, the animals, there's a mixture of what people are eating here on the reservation. And they're still kind of doing that today. It's not as much, but it's still there, so.

[00:19:18]

JT: Hm. As far as how food is prepared, for your grandparents, how did they prepare the shad?

[00:19:26]

AS: There's a lot of different ways you can do the shad. Like I said already, they would salt them. That was a way to preserve the fish and have it almost all year round to eat, especially during the wintertime. They would do plank smoking; they would get, like, a cedar plank, and actually nail—they would split it in half and nail the shad to the plank and smoke it slowly over a fire. They would bake it, slow bake, which, that's the term that my grandfather uses. You literally just leave it in the oven at a low temperature for hours. And the reason why the smoking and the slow bake and the salting is so beneficial for, like, a shad or a herring is 'cause they're extremely bony. I would never eat a shad just, like, fried in a pan, 'cause I would choke to death on all the bones. [Laughter] But if you slow bake it, or if you slowly smoke it, or if you salt it, it dissolves, helps dissolve the bones and make 'em really soft. So, I think, not only does it add wonderful flavor, but it makes it edible. And it is a good-tasting fish, when you get past the bones. It's actually one of the better-tasting fish that I think, my personal opinion. My grandfather would agree with me, or I guess I would agree with him. But, so those are the different ways. Some people fry it. Again, that's a more contemporary way to do it. The older folks aren't going to eat a fried shad because, again, the bone issue. So, there's all different kinds of ways you can do it. But unfortunately, I don't know if you and I have talked about this yet or not, the runs are not coming to the Pamunkey anymore. We've had several seasons where it has been—and one year, we didn't have a run at all. The next year we had a little bit more but it was all female. There was no bucks, which of course, we need both to procreate and to get the hatchery running. So, this last season, too, was pretty dismal. They only had the hatchery open for two days this year. There

was no shad at the fish fry. So, and that fish fry . . . is to celebrate the end of the shad run. That's what it traditionally has been. [Bird calls] We have a bird friend, sorry. [Laughter]

[00:21:47]

JT: No, that's great. [Laughter]

[00:21:48]

AS: So, that's a conversation we've been having too, now, today, about what to do, what to do about this, because this fish has been kind of our lifeblood. It's been our lifeline for so long. We're kind of at a loss. And in addition to not having the fish, we don't have the fishermen. We've got three fishermen; two of them are in their nineties. One of them is . . . he's going to get mad at me, but he's not going to hear this. Probably, like, in his sixties. He might be in his fifties. [Laughter] But so, it's just . . . it's unfortunate, because to lose that connection to this animal that has helped sustain us, not just in terms of providing food but providing money—I mean, men made a lot of money back in the day when shad was a popular eating fish, and the roe was popular. They made a lot of money, and they travelled up and down the entire East Coast to follow the runs, from Florida all the way up to Boston. My great-great-grandfather did that, my great-grandfather—both of my great-great-grandfathers did that, and my great-grandfather, followed the runs from January all the way up until June or July, up and down the East Coast. And they made a lot of money. They made good money. And you can't do that anymore. There's just not the market for it anymore, the knowledge. The knowledge of the river, the knowledge of where to put your net, the knowledge of the tide. There's, like, ten different names for the different types of tides, and you gotta know how to throw your net, based on the different type of

tide. I mean, that is some serious local knowledge that's being, unfortunately, slowly lost. So, we're trying to get some program funding to, at least, if the shad isn't there, at least teach the practice. 'Cause they might come back. I mean, I think that we should also—this is my opinion—but we should actively look into programs to help restock the river, so . . . but we'll see what happens.

[00:24:03]

JT: Yeah.

[00:24:03]

AS: I don't know.

[00:24:04]

JT: Where did they go? What's the change? [Laughter]

[00:24:08]

AS: That is the million-dollar question, and there's not one answer. It could be everything from, we have—so, our hatchery, for example, has helped restock the James and the Potomac Rivers. This was back in the [19]90s, when our hatchery was kind of, like, full-on. It was getting funding from the state of Virginia. Virginia no longer funds our hatcheries; the Mattaponi Reservation has one, too. They don't get any funding anymore as well. It could be overfishing at the ocean level, because the shad are anadromous, and they are imprinted, I guess genetically—I am not a biologist—but I think genetically with the signature of the river in which they were hatched

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from. So, if you're catching all of the fish that have that genetic signature for the Pamunkey River out in the ocean before they can come back to the freshwater to spawn, I mean, that could severely impact it. That is one theory that's out there. Overfishing, too, not necessarily from us. I've had a couple of people—not a couple of people—but I've read a couple of articles where people have made comments about the Indians overfishing. I was like, "Oh, so three people?" [Laughter] "Have been overfishing the Pamunkey? Okay." No, that's not what's happening. Definitely people blame the state for taking, coming and netting in our river, again removing those shad who've been imprinted to other rivers. So, again, there's not one answer. What's interesting is that it's not just a Pamunkey River issue. There's several rivers on the East Coast that have been having the same issue. What's really interesting, I met a young man who does this kind of same work that I do, the cultural resource management and preservation work for the tribe. He does that for his tribe, the Yakama Nation, which is out in Washington state, and their rivers are teeming with shad. He was like, "So, what is going on?" He was like, "We don't want the shad." "Well, bring them out here!" They're salmon people, so they're having the same issue we are, but with their salmon. So, I don't know. There's not one answer. Unfortunately, there are several people of the mindset down here who just want to let it go, who I don't think really care, which I think is really unfortunate, because this is our tradition; this is our culture. Who are we without the shad? We are a people without the shad, but it's so . . . at least from me growing up, the shad is so integral to who we are. To think that people aren't going to be eating it anymore or netting for it anymore is just kind of unfathomable. But I think every generation deals with this. So, hopefully, I can help. Hopefully I can do some help, if people will listen to me, but we'll see. We'll see what happens. To be continued. [Laughter]

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[00:27:22]

JT: What has the relationship been like with the state and federal government when it comes to the shad?

[00:27:29]

AS: So, with the state government, we had a positive relationship, I think for a couple of decades. We've had a shad hatchery here on the reservation since the early twentieth century. 1918 is the date that's given for its establishment. And we've actually helped set up other fisheries in the state, because of the men's – not necessarily knowledge of setting up a hatchery, but their knowledge of the waterways and of the fish population. So, we've been kind of at the forefront in helping other fisheries, helping the state get that established. Like I said, we helped with getting—it was a state program, funded program, in getting the Potomac and James restocked. But, unfortunately, that relationship has just kind of waned. We kept getting less and less funding, and then we had a situation in, I think, 2014, when the Game and Inland Fishery folks were confused about what kind of laws were applicable to Virginia Indians. They wanted to, basically, get an opinion about whether or not we have to follow the same laws according to method of taking, seasonality, that kind of thing. And the opinion was not in our favor, unfortunately. Ken Cuccinelli, who is the—oh, my gosh, what was he at the time?

[00:28:52]

Elizabeth Wood: Attorney general.

[00:28:53]

AS: Thank you. Could not think of the word. At the time, gave an unfavorable opinion without any kind of understanding about the history of the tribes in Virginia, the treaty relationship that the state has. And I think—and actually that same year, the funding was dropped for our hatcheries. And actually, for the first time in my life—and I'm only in my thirties, so it's not that long—but there were game wardens down here on the Pamunkey River. Our former chief, who was chief at the time, had a couple of interactions where some of the fishermen were going to be ticketed for selling, for example, because it's not legal—quote, unquote—to sell shad, but that's, again, how these men make money during that season. But luckily, we had the county on our side, and they said if any kind of ticket is written to . . . what's the word? Basically, write these men up for doing this, what they've been doing for generations, he's like, "We're not going to pay attention to that." So, the state backed off. So, the state, it's been an up and down relationship with the state. I feel like every decade, part of it's good, and then all of a sudden, they forget that they have a trust relationship with the tribes and they forget our rights when it comes—the few rights that the state does give us through that treaty, which is to land and water, at least access for sustenance purposes. They forget about that. [Laughter] And have to write another opinion. So, it's been up and down with the state. Federal government we haven't had too much of a relationship with, because we were recently federally recognized. That became official in 2016, so it's only been a little over two years. We did get funding, for example, through FEMA and a couple of other federal grants to basically protect our shoreline, particularly after Isabel came, and to update the hatchery. The update of the hatchery happened in the 1990s. But other than that, there really hasn't been much interaction. But what I'm trying to do, through the program that I've brought to the tribe, which is an administrative capacity building project that's funded by a federal grant, we're trying to basically train people up in natural resource management with the

shad hatchery and fisheries being a core component of those efforts to engage with the federal government, engage with federal agencies, so that we can learn what resources are out there. So that we can establish that relationship, start building it, and get funding. So, that's ongoing. We actually just sent folks to the . . . I'm already going to get it wrong. Fish, national tribe fish and wildlife, I don't know. The conference that tribes hold in conjunction with Fish & Wildlife. So, making good contacts there. So, that relationship is just starting.

[00:32:14]
JT: Okay. Does the same kind of initiatives around fishing for education and training, do you hope the same for things like trapping that your grandfather did?

[00:32:25]
AS: Ideally, yes. Trapping is a whole 'nother story. There's nobody trapping today. I think my great-grandfather was one of the last trappers. That has to do with just the fall of the fur-bearing population. Mink, muskrat, and otter fell off dramatically, at least in this area. Again, there's not that market demand for fur. What's really interesting, again going back to these oral histories from the 1980s that I was able to review for my own research, they talk about how the covered automobile [Laughter] killed their trapping industry, because the woman didn't need, the men and women didn't need furs to wear in their open automobiles or in their horse and buggy or whatever anymore. So, he blamed the covered automobile, which I thought was so interesting. That makes sense, coming from his point of view, literally being born in 1900 and seeing the last eighty years go by. The fall of the market was a big part of that. And then the fall of the animal population, which a lot of tribal members blame farming for, the pesticides and that kind of

thing, just . . . killing off the animals. So, I would love to see something where we could bring back, again, that practice. But the ironic thing is, and actually I write about—this is what I research—the ironic thing is, if it's not lucrative in a capitalist way, it's much harder to continue. The reason why things like trapping and shad fishing and even pottery making, over a hundred and fifty years ago, was something that was done by every person down here, was because of how lucrative it was. They could make money from it. You see the practices today that are falling off, you can't make money from them anymore. So now, there needs to be a new initiative, a new push, a new incentive for these types of practices. For me, it's got to be culture. It's culture, it's history, tradition. It won't pay your bills. Those things won't pay your bills. [Laughter] So, I understand that we might not be able to get the same level of participation that existed even fifty years ago, but I will say that the animals are coming back. We have noticed that. We have mink again. We've got, the otters are back. So, there's the potential for that, at least to do it—if we can't do it for market, to do it in a traditional sense. So.

[00:35:20]

JT: So, if the fur trade has dropped off, then the cuisine associated with trapping—?

[00:35:24]

AS: Yeah.

[00:35:26]

JT: Has also gone?

[00:35:26]

AS: Gone. I will say, though, that my grandfather caught a muskrat a few weeks ago and ate him. And I was mad that I didn't get invited to that meal. [Laughter] But yeah, that has totally fallen off. Again, muskrat meat was something that would be eaten. The furs would be sold, the meat would typically be eaten in the household or it would also be sold to the local county residents. The brains were, apparently, super delicious and a big delicacy. I probably would never eat a muskrat brain if it was put in front of me, but yeah, these things, my generation has absolutely no clue what it's like to eat a muskrat, especially from like, trapping all the way up to the point of preparing it, and even using the skull and the bones for jewelry making. That's what the women did, too. Totally not something that's done at all anymore.

[00:36:33]

JT: With the museum, what do you want people to know about the foodways and, like, what are some of the misconceptions that foodways can help defeat?

[00:36:51]

AS: That is a good question. Well, in the museum, I think that—well, the way that it's displayed right now, you get a little bit of an idea about foodways, at least pre-colonial foodways. What I'd like to see done is to talk about what happens after the colonial period, because I think the misconception with general America, the general public, is that Indians live in the past. And they live in that pre-colonial past, or they should, if they want to be real Indians. I should be wearing what my 1607 ancestors were wearing in order to be considered a real Indian. Where is my leather and my feathers? I think that understanding the ways in which Native people four

hundred years after the advent of European colonization will . . . for people to see that Native people didn't just die off, or their ways of life didn't just die off. Like every other culture in this world, they progressed, they integrated, they adopted, and it was still part of who they were. It's still Pamunkey, just because—they were doing dugout canoes up until the early twentieth century, but they were using metal tools. Does that make it not a Pamunkey Indian dugout canoe? No, it's still Native. Same thing with food preparation. They adopted—I mean, we're in the South here. Soul food is European, African, and indigenous foodways, all wrapped up into a beautiful, delicious smorgasbord of things. I don't think people understand the indigenous contribution to that, to our foodways here in the South, and I don't think people understand . . . the ways in which foodways are an expression of culture, and how—because when people think of culture, they think of the physical, right? They think about, again, what you're wearing on your body. "Where's your feathers? Where're your beads?" These foodways is a much less visible, I think, for the outside world, in terms of a telling of how a people have changed or stayed the same, and both. I think that highlighting that kind of mixture, that adoption, that integration, of these multiple different ways of making a life through food and surviving through food, is a way of talking about the complexity of indigenous life. And now, and over the last four hundred years. I think it's a topic that people can get their brains around. Everybody likes to eat; everybody needs to eat. So, it's a way to kind of help foreground that conversation and talk about misconceptions and assumptions and talk about culture from our perspective. Our culture isn't pow-wow. Our culture isn't, again, something that we wear on our bodies. It's something that we do, something that we live, or at least know about because that's the way that our grandparents lived or our great-grandparents lived and that we grew up learning about. So.

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[00:40:27]

JT: Do you have any questions you want to ask? Anything else you want to add, for the record?

[00:40:34]

AS: I don't know. I don't know . . . I just . . . I don't know how useful my interview will be, but I just hope that people understand how difficult it is for, not just indigenous communities, but small communities, small, rural communities who have traditions—especially when it comes to foodways—how hard it is to keep those traditions alive, and how there are people that really care and struggle to keep them alive. And that we need help in doing that. And hopefully, somebody hearing this will understand kind of that struggle and see the need to, at least, help support efforts from these communities to keep these types of traditions alive. So.

[00:41:32]

JT: All right. [Door closes]

[*END OF INTERVIEW*]

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