Interview of Rudy Ortega, Jr.
UCLA Library, Center for Oral History Research, University of California, Los Angeles Interview of Rudy Ortega,Jr.

Transcript

SESSION ONE (May 21, 2014)

00:00:14

COATES:

: Today is May 21, 2014, and I am sitting with Rudy, Jr. of the Tataviam Tribe. Do you want to give your title and introduce yourself?

ORTEGA:

: Sure. I'm the tribe's—my name is Rudy, Jr. I'm the tribe's vice president, which is the chairman of the Tribal Senates of the legislative branch of the tribe.

COATES:

: Okay, okay, very good. Okay. Well, we want to begin in the beginning, I guess, and to talk about your family, your ancestry, and how your family and that ancestry kind of weaves into the tribal history, I guess. So that's kind of a wide-open place for you to start.

ORTEGA:

: Right. It's a quite extensive history. I'm fortunate in myself, and many other family members, that we have quite a few tribal elders who did a lot of extensive research in genealogy, enough to go back to early 1700s, the time when the first people that were registered and baptized at San Fernando Mission, and that's when we have our documents recorded. Prior to that, it's more of oral history, no real true documentation, because the tribal people didn't keep documentation back then. But I descend from—the families here descend from multiple villages throughout the San Fernando, Santa Clarita, and Antelope Valley, and some members even come from Simi Valley and also from Los Angeles, the downtown area, that are enrolled in the tribe. My family directly, when the Spanish came in, they were negotiating land grants and titles, so we got Encino property, which is on Ventura Boulevard in Balboa, high real

estate today, but it escaped our hands due to embezzlement and other trickery things that occurred with our ancestry.

00:02:00

COATES:

: When did that happen?

00:04:05

ORTEGA:

: That happened in 1857 when they lost the title of Encino. It wasn't protected at all, and it should have. And along with that, we also had other tribal members, similar fashion, (unclear) that descend from different areas. One, Universal Studios, where that's a Rancho Cahuenga, again, you know, high real estate areas. The Chatsworth Reservoir, which is Escorpión Ranch, the the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power owns that. In fact, the tribe still today is arguing, disputing that property to show illegitimate transfer of titleship. Then the city of San Fernando, our members here were actually escorted out of the city. We were banned from the city, which, knowing the history, we always from time to time informed the city council or new city council that comes in and say, "Hey, we were court-ordered, and sheriff walked us out of the city boundaries." So by law, we shouldn't even be back in the city of San Fernando, but our Tribal Office is right across the street from the city hall office. So it's impressive to see that we've come so far and maintain our community. But like I said, my family comes from (unclear) and also from villages in the Newhall area, Santa Clarita Valley, multiple villages up there, and also my family comes from Simi Valley, from the village of Tapu. So these folks descend, they come and created the community, and over time, because of the Spanish folks coming in and moving folks on to the mission, you had villages who traditionally probably didn't mingle or didn't come in because of whatever relationship they had, were forced to embrace one another during that transition time, and then once again when the U.S. came in and took California in their hands. So the tribe had to do that same thing in order to protect land as much as they possibly can. And we lost it.

In one of the records we had, all the tribal captains from the villages signed a petition to maintain at least some parcel of the land of the (unclear) mission of San Fernando in the Valley. Then that's where it also shows history record of our recognition. During the Mission Relief Act, the U.S. government sent an agent to put the tribe on to trust lands, and due to the political climate here in Los Angeles, the scarce of water, the finding of oil and natural gas, they didn't have any (unclear). And because of that, the success of moving us on to a reservation, much at the same time when Morongo and Soboba and all these folks got put on trust lands, our tribe would have been the same here in Los Angeles. Fortunately, it didn't occur. Again, that was because of the political climate that was occurring here in Los Angeles at the time.

COATES:

: And the resources and the value of the property and everything else.

ORTEGA:

: Yeah. We're in the mecca of the largest booming city in the nation, or one of them, and still thriving, and yet in today's climate, we're limited in water. Water resource is a huge thing. So back then, it was the same thing. They were in a drought at the time, needed all the resources. They knew that one of the property that we have today that we named after my father, Rudy Ortega, Sr., was actually a land (unclear) to one of our tribal captains, and he owned the property, but it had a natural spring. So the city needed that water, so that was one of the reasons why we lost property, because of the water.

00:05:53

COATES:

: And when was that happening?

ORTEGA:

: That was in 1891 to 1893 in which that time occurred.

COATES:

: So they were establishing reservations for other tribes to the east at that time, but even then, Los Angeles was still enough of a city that—

ORTEGA:

: Enough of a city, enough of political strength that they didn't want it. The gentleman who fought for our tribe (unclear) San Fernando and the founding of San Fernando, was a former senator of the United States Senate, who became the founder of the city of San Fernando, Charles McClay. So he had the political strength and power, he knew the folks back in the White House, so that was not going to occur

near his property, and that's the truth about it. Unfortunately, we were on the wrong side of the table when it came to the negotiations.

COATES:

: Can you talk about your ancestry within the context of the tribe? Because I know your father was pretty renowned and was the tribal chairman for a long time, I think, wasn't it?

ORTEGA:

: Right, yeah.

COATES:

: And then even going further back than that, I mean, is there that lineage of leadership, I guess, that sort of runs in your particular family? Or how would you describe your family in the context of the tribe?

00:07:5800:09:42

ORTEGA:

: Well, the history, the genealogy, we do come from multiple tribal captains. One of our tribal captains—and that's the reason why when I said earlier we had the Encino land grant, because Tiburcio Cayo, who was a tribal chief or tribal captain, I should say more correctly, he came from the village of Tapu which is the Simi Valley area. His daughters married other Native people, Tataviam, Tongva folks from the San Fernando Valley and Santa Clarita Valley, and then my great-great-grandfather, Francisco Papabubaba, was a sub captain, and so they became ownership of the Encino property.

From there, the tradition of spokespersons or captains continue on, so we have multiple captains. I'm like the traditional or plain style, or I would say would have been advocated as one leader. We had multiple leaders that represented multiple families or villages. So our family line continued to go through, and from there, Maria Lipas, which is Francisco's daughter, she's the one who lost her property of Encino, was head of the family of the Encino village. And then from there, it went to her son, Antonio Maria Ortega. So he had leadership at the same time when one of our other captains, Rodego Rocha and Frank Ortiz, who are enrolled today with the tribe, were also spokesmen for their families. And then from Antonio Maria Ortega, it went to my father, Rudy Ortega, Sr., at an early age. So the tribal elders, which was his aunts and uncles, selected my father to take the next reign after my great-grandfather

passed. And not too long after he passed, my grandfather passed, and that's why my father was selected. They were selected in the old-fashioned way where the elders of the tribe, once they said this is the person to be selected, to continue on. Today we don't have that. We have an election process. We have a democracy. We still have some traditionals and we fight among ourselves, to be honest. The elders said, "This is who we want. We don't care about the election," but we hold the election still, and it's a process.

So after my father passed, my brother was vice president of the tribe at the time, and by tribal constitution, he moved up to presidency, and then I got elected on to Tribal Senate and then voted into vice presidency. Then again every four years we run tribal elections and we select our tribal leader to represent the tribe.

COATES:

: Am I using the proper terms, or is "captain" or "spokesperson" more the term that is used nowadays? Or what is the title? It's president and vice president and things like that, huh?

ORTEGA:

: Actually, to be quite honest, we use them both. The more governmental terms would be tribal president and vice president and secretary. Among the community folks, even though we have those elected officials, we still have our spokespersons and captains. So even though they may not be selected to represent in the legislative body or tribal leadership, among the community family members select their own tribal spokesperson that will come and inform the tribal leaders, "This is what our family wants." So not all the family will come out and speak. They will choose someone who is bold enough or loud enough to represent the family and come out. So it's kind of like, I'd say, just selected representatives.

COATES:

: So you've still got these parallel systems, then, huh?

ORTEGA:

: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

00:11:12

COATES:

: Oh, how interesting.

ORTEGA:

: And it works well, because one of our elders who passed, he was a spokesman for the family, and rather than the tribal government saying, "This is who we're going to select," or run an election to tell us who you select, the family goes themself, and among themself come back and inform us that, "This is who we selected," which keeps the peace. This way they chose who they feel comfortable the most that can represent them when speaking to the tribal government.

COATES:

: So where were you born?

ORTEGA:

: I was born here in Sun Valley, which is not too far from the Tribal Office, and pretty much the time I was born, my father was already been tribal leader maybe for two to three decades and created a nonprofit. So for myself, I've grown up—I was very fortunate to have my father who he was, to have grown up and, I guess, mentored by him and many of the elders to see what the work they've done to ensure that the tradition and customs continue on.

COATES:

: What was it like? I mean, you've talked sort of about the family circumstances that you were born into. I'm trying to get to what were the physical circumstances. What was your home like? What was the neighborhood like? What was the community like?

00:13:30

ORTEGA:

: Our community, we lived in the outskirts of San Fernando and Sylmar, right at the borderline at a dead-end street in a regular suburb house with the four-bedroom home. And the community around us, from what I remember, was predominantly white. Some Hispanics were coming into the community. Over time—the time I reached eighteen, it completely flipped. There was one white family in the neighborhood.

Housing right behind us, it was a dead-end. It was mountain terrain. Those mountains, some of them came down, rolling hills, and became housing. So at the end, the community really expanded from going—I think on our block was about eight homes to about additional forty homes that surrounded us, and that truly did change. It went from where the kids were playing, one, in the rolling hills, because there was no one else, kind of like our huge backyard, and then the street itself is a dead-end street. Then I have older brothers, older siblings and sisters (unclear), so they had, from me growing up, they were in and out of the house because they were much older, so they had started their own families, their own lives as well. But I think we blended in. Folks knew who we were because of my father and stuff, that he would be in parades and all, so a lot of people knew that. But we kind of just blended in with the society that surrounded us. We celebrated with our neighbors or we'd take in other—like my father other side of the family who are non-Native, or my mother, who is Mexican, we'd take on some other tradition and customs, and they had other relatives here. So we celebrated the quinceañeras and all the different activities that occurred around us and festivals. Our biggest thing when we were small was going to the church in Santa Rosa for their yearly festival, the carnival that they had. But I remember my father had a difficult time dragging us out of the festivals at times. It was like that was our Disneyland. (Coates laughs.) We weren't a wealthy family, so we couldn't get to Disneyland all the time, so the carnivals made up for it, so that that was a great time for us.

00:15:49

COATES:

: Yeah. Okay. So living in a predominantly white neighborhood, I've got a lot of questions about that. Did you have a sense of discrimination there or were you pretty accepted in the neighborhood or were you—

ORTEGA:

: You know, one thing I have to say is my father, for what he was, he was friendly and made friends among everyone else, so the neighborhood were pretty much friendly. I mean, they talked to us, and their kids grew up with us. I think the racial discrimination that we had was when we left our neighborhood block, when we went to the market and to shop. San Fernando was still highly predominantly white. There was a lot of racism. My father, he grew up more racism than what I had received, and so I only remember a few incidents where, one, we parked next to a car and the gentleman

come out screaming, swearing, cussing us out that we were immigrants from Mexico, and just moved his car, because once he saw we were just sitting in the car waiting for my mother to come out of the market—

COATES:

: This was at the supermarket?

ORTEGA:

: At the supermarket.

COATES:

: Oh, my goodness.

00:17:14

ORTEGA:

: The supermarket was literally around the block from where we lived, and the time have changed from there. I think it was like Boyd's Market and one of those old markets that no longer exists, and that's what occurred. I remember I was like maybe eight, nine years old at the time. And I turned around and looked at my father, and said, "What did he call us?"

And he was just like, "Oh, he's just an angry person. Just let it go." And from there, that's how my father taught me to say, hey, you know what? Some people just have their own demons inside. Let them deal with themself.

COATES:

: That's pretty unusual for somebody to just literally get out of the car and start yelling.

ORTEGA:

: Yeah.

COATES:

: Even though they might feel that way, most people who feel that way wouldn't have.

ORTEGA:

: Oh, I know. He saw us. He looked directly and me and my father and saw who was in the car, and just had to move his vehicle.

COATES:

: And with kids in the car and everything too.

ORTEGA:

: Yeah, yeah, yeah. So he didn't care. Yeah.

COATES:

: Wow. So if San Fernando was a predominantly white town at that point, was this, like, where your father had always lived? Did he live here because of employment, or why was the family in—

ORTEGA:

: We've always lived here, and prior to him, my father's family had a home on Celis Street, so they've always maintained San Fernando as a residence. Prior to that, it was Encino and (unclear) and a few other areas that they've gone and worked for and farmed, but San Fernando predominantly they stayed. But from my father and my uncle, who still lives and tells me the times, certain areas they couldn't go into. They couldn't go past the tracks. Past the tracks is the white homes down the south where the more minority homes, the Mexicans, the Indians, and so on.

COATES:

: So there really literally is a wrong side of the tracks, huh? (laughs)

ORTEGA:

: There was literally, yeah, yeah.

00:18:46

COATES:

: Where are the tracks exactly here? (laughs)

ORTEGA:

: Well, coming to our city, we're north of the tracks, and then we crossed over that bridge. But I think as growing up, it did started to change. San Fernando, more Hispanic folks start coming in. Just like the restaurants around the city of Los Angeles, diversity started to occur and more acceptance started to happen. I think there's still racism. We still see it. I know when I travel in places, we still get it, my wife and I. My wife, she's Mexican, but very fair skin, light skin, so a lot of folks will gravitate towards her thinking she's white. It's funny to experience—

COATES:

: (whispers) I know what that's about. (laughs)

ORTEGA:

: When we had our first child, the nurses and the doctor came in and said, "Do you need a translator?" to me, and just gave me the hardest time the very first time we had our first child.

COATES:

: Oh, my goodness.

ORTEGA:

: And my wife's like, "He doesn't need the translator. He doesn't even speak very fluent Spanish." (Coates laughs) My Spanish is very broken. Her side of the family teases me because I can't speak it well. (Coates laughs.) But, you know, that was only about seventeen, eighteen years ago, so it's their own folks when they see certain classes, and I fit the stereotype, you know, dark skin, black hair. Must be Mexican or something like that, yeah.

00:20:36

COATES:

: Well, every Indian person tells me the same thing, no matter what tribe they are, it's just like it's what somebody called the default race or something like that as to think, well, they must be Latino, some sort, right?

ORTEGA:

: Yeah, yeah.

COATES:

: So were there other Tataviam people then in the neighborhood or maybe just not in your immediate neighborhood, but nearby? I mean, was there any kind of a Tataviam community?

00:22:12

ORTEGA:

: In our neighborhood block there was no Tataviam, but there were—not too far. For me as a kid, I can get on my bike, and within three minutes I was at a relative's home, because we literally, around San Fernando area, we were outskirt of San Fernando, some in Mission Hills. So I remember visiting a lot of family and going to a lot of homes and stay there for hours, you know, as the adults talk and the kids would on the back and play. Next thing you know, it was dark, and the old trait was that the adults will yell out our names to come back home, and that was the way they'd go find us, just call our name. (Coates laughs.) "You've got to be home now," or, "Dinnertime!" Because we'd go out early. And especially summer, I remember those times that we'd leave the house right after breakfast and then come back into dinnertime. And a lot of it was visiting our relatives, like I said, my cousins. Once we got to like ten, twelve years old, we'd just hop on the bike, and three to five minutes, depending what relative I'm going to go visit, or they'll come visit. A lot of times they'll come visit us because we had the rolling hills, my cousins, and we will just ride with our bikes in the hills.

Then we had a lot of family festivals, weddings, functions like in the park that we'll do together as a community. To us as a kid, we're just thinking we're just having a good time with family, and it was normal for us to see a lot of family members all the time getting together at the park, and we'd literally take up almost a lot of the benches at the park because there was so many of us.

COATES:

: Okay. What was the school like that you went to and all of that? Was it a fairly mixed situation as well, or was it predominantly white also?

ORTEGA:

: No, it was fairly mixed. A lot of the schools we've gone to, they did have a huge mixture. I think what

we had, though, from my experience in growing up, was the commonality and the same stories of many other folks is that, you know, when they came teaching to Indian people, they will say the Indians from this area were all extinct or dead. I remember bringing my dad in and I said, "Well, here's—."

COATES:

: Not this one. (laughs)

ORTEGA:

: Yeah. "We're here." But it was different because a lot of my friends were Hispanic. We did have some white friends. Once in school it was just like you just had to blend in with everyone else, so it was like a loss of identity or take the most predominant identity that was there, and just flow with the chart and flow with everybody else. So I guess it was just not bring any special attention to yourself.

00:24:27

COATES:

: Yeah. So as part of that, was there more of an inclination when you were a child to identify with your mother's Mexican heritage, then, as part of that community, is that what you're saying, or is that—

ORTEGA:

: Well, I think, yeah, as identifying myself, not wholly. I mean, I never really said I was Mexican or any kind, but I would more have the more Mexican friends than I would have the more white friends, because I can relate to more of them, and there were certain things that they will say or jokes they will say that I can understand. Even back then, I think a lot of us, even my friends who were Mexican didn't speak Spanish, so that's why I didn't really retain the Spanish from my mom. My dad spoke Spanish. That was their generation, too; they all spoke Spanish. My great-grandfather, from what I understood, only really spoke Spanish. He didn't really speak English. So school was like we needed to be kind of white, you know. Even my Mexican friends, they didn't want to speak Spanish; they wanted to blend into society. Some of them I remember were a little bashful because their parents, they didn't speak English at all, so they really don't want to broadcast that as well.

COATES:

: But did you assert a Tataviam identity or an Indian identity when you were a child at school, and was that accepted?

ORTEGA:

: That was. I did it. I was pretty proud about that, but it wasn't until my father used to take us out of school, and we enjoyed that, and we used to go dance and perform to other schools to show our culture. It came down to one time my dad had told me, "We're going to go to your school," because the principal had called him. So I went to school and I got summoned out of classroom, and that's when it really got exposed, because I didn't really say I'm Native or anything, just try to flow with everyone else.

00:26:29

COATES:

: Just (unclear), huh? (laughs)

ORTEGA:

: Yeah. And at that point when they saw me, like, "Well, where you're going? Why are you being special? You're getting summons to the principal's office," and so on. First I thought I was in trouble. Then, no. There was an assembly that day, and the school announced it was a special assembly. They kept it secret, so they show the kids the assembly when they came in there. It was a surprise. And next thing you know, all my friends are going in and say, "Hey, why you—?" Then next thing they saw me crossing across the auditorium, they say, "What are you doing?" I was with my brothers, my older brothers and my other cousins, and the next thing they saw me out dancing in front of the school. And after that, I think that's what turned and got me excited is the fact that they didn't ridicule me, but they said, "That was pretty nice. That was pretty cool. We didn't know you did that kind of thing."

COATES:

: So they were pretty supportive of it.

ORTEGA:

: Very supportive, yeah, yeah.

COATES:

: Did it fade away, or did they continue to remember that about you? (laughs)

ORTEGA:

: No, they always remembered, and I had kept those friends all through high school. So when we've gone to different places in high school, being a teenager, being foolish, and teachers will stop us or anything, or somebody would say, "Oh, these kids," or, "These Mexicans," and my friends will laugh, says, "No, we're Mexicans. He's Indian."

COATES:

: But it wasn't like a putdown, huh?

ORTEGA:

: No, it wasn't a putdown. It was more like, "No, make sure you understand he's not—."

COATES:

: Who's who.

ORTEGA:

: Who's who, yeah.

00:28:08

COATES:

: Right, right. So when was this, like in the eighties or something?

ORTEGA:

: When I performed, it was in the eighties, and then high school was in the early nineties.

COATES:

: Okay. So would it have been the same, or was it the same—did you ever hear your father talk about this? Because I suspect he might not have had a similar kind of experience of acceptance of that identity and so forth. Do you know?

ORTEGA:

: Yeah. No, he didn't, and his generation was way earlier, was in the thirties, so it was more stereotype, and if you're Indian, you really didn't get a good job or anything. He actually—there are family members who said—who was first to kind of expose that they were Native American, because you couldn't say you're Indian because you really are attacked. So they all, depending on the shade of the color they took on, and my father said that he was just Hispanic until later in life when he was an adult. So from elementary to high school, he would just say he was Hispanic and didn't really say he was Indian. He used to say at home they used to tell him that he was Indian, and he always had a story that he said that in elementary school the teacher used to make him play the drums or something when they did some storytelling on Indian and cowboys, and he didn't get it why he was always selected to be the Indian.

COATES:

: So the teacher knew, but he didn't?

ORTEGA:

: No, I think it was more, from what he said, he was more selected because of his skin color.

00:29:48

COATES:

: Oh, really?

ORTEGA:

: Yeah. And his appearance. So at home, my grandmother, my father's mother used to tell him, "Well, you are Native. Your father's Native, and they're all Native. You should talk to them, and they would share with you." But at that time they have gone through—my great-grandfather, my father's grandfather, really didn't want to expose that they were Indian, and that was a huge thing in the community when we talked to the elders. It was something you kept at home. You didn't want to say it because the fear of being taken to a reservation, the fear of not getting employed, and they had heard about murders to Indian people. They identified Indian folks and went out, and just it was like a hunt for Native people.

COATES:

: Yeah. Well, that's what I was thinking. If your father, if his era is in the thirties, I mean, his grandfather literally would have come from a time when that was happening, right? So that was a very rational fear on their part.

ORTEGA:

: Right, right. And my father had told me they were told not to say they were Indian or say anything. They were told to speak only English, not even Spanish. When they went out in public, they had to talk in English. So that definitely changed. My brothers, they're more the sixties and the seventies, and there were some—in looking at the photos and stuff, my wife laughed because wherever she gets employed or move from job to job, there's always someone who knows my family or grew up with my brothers or so on. My father kind of embraced being Indian, and we used to go out and dance a whole lot more, so a lot of folks knew who my brothers were, and they didn't even have to say they were Indian. I mean, people saw it. They had the long hair. So they already pronounced that they were—you know, just exposed that they were Indian. And it was the sixties, so that (unclear) was more supportive of Indian culture, and it was kind of the style, so for them it was a lot easier just to blend in because a lot of folks started to dress similar to Native folks.

00:32:02

COATES:

: Even if they weren't? (laughs)

ORTEGA:

: Even if they weren't. They were supporting the style of clothing. So they had a little different—and some of my brothers support, fully support, embrace being Native. One of my other few brothers, it took a little time. Well, didn't like the attention, one, because they used go out and dance. They felt it overwhelming, and just wanted to be like regular community folks. So it was a little bit difficult for some of them.

COATES:

: Just a normal kid. (laughs)

ORTEGA:

: A normal kid. My other brothers, the ones who love attention, they really enjoyed it.

COATES:

: So how many siblings do you have altogether, brothers and sisters?

ORTEGA:

: Altogether there's twelve of us.

COATES:

: Wow.

ORTEGA:

: My father and mother were both previously married, so I have two half sisters from my mother, who's (unclear) tribe, and then I have two sisters from my mother and father. There's three of us together from my mother's marriage to my father, and my father's been married twice before, and I have two older sisters from his first marriage and then five brothers from his second marriage.

COATES:

: So he was quite a bit older, I mean, when you were born.

ORTEGA:

: Right, right.

00:33:28

COATES:

: You're one of the youngest of the multiple families, then, huh?

ORTEGA:

: Yeah. And I have one younger sister. She's the baby of the family.

COATES:

: So you are the eleventh out of twelve, huh?

ORTEGA:

: Yeah.

COATES:

: Wow. (laughs) You got a lot of advice over the years, I'll bet. (laughs)

ORTEGA:

: Yeah.

COATES:

: Okay. What did your parents do? What kind of work did they do? Did your mother work outside the home, or was she—

ORTEGA:

: She did. My mom, she's the one I kind of go to and talk, and I think my father would say I got the business aspects from her. She was more of a businesswoman, self-educated. She came from Mexico. She only went up to a certain grade in Mexico, and then worked for factories and (unclear) factories and educate herself and continue to grow, and then she ended up retiring from HydroAir, which is a manufacturer for airplane parts, brakes and so on. So she was an engineer, not on paper, but in work, and she got paid for it. So she really enjoyed the work, and she's very proud of the fact that she moved up and were able to do so. She's one of those what you would call the "American Dream" stories that people come in and live that, and she truly was that.

COATES:

: In an era when it was possible to do that, still, huh? (laughs)

ORTEGA:

: Right, right, right. And she did. She jumped from sewing machines and housekeeping, and she just continued to just move herself and always on the go.

00:35:04

COATES:

: And always learning, huh?

ORTEGA:

: And always learning, yeah. And then my father, he went to the war. He was in the military, early age, eighteen years old. After he came out, he worked in a couple of places, packinghouses. San Fernando had a lot of packinghouses, orange groves. Then he went into the VA, because he had some time there, so he went into nursing for quite a bit, a while. And after the nursing, he went into—I think he managed a couple places, and then he went—where was it? Oh, managed gas stations, and then he went into the post office and retired from the post office. So he served a number of years in the post office.

COATES:

: And where did they meet?

ORTEGA:

: I think they met here in San Fernando. I don't know the story of how they met. (Coates laughs.) Because I have different versions. I have my mom's version and I have my dad's version.

COATES:

: And they don't quite match. (laughs)

ORTEGA:

: Some parts of the stories match, but not all of it. One is my mother was introduced to my father, and then other one, my father discovered my mother at the same location. So it's like depending on who you asked at the time was—they were probably saying, "I secured your father," or, "I secured your mother."

COATES:

: Right. Who's responsible for this, huh? (laughs) And your father was—I guess "president" is the later term, but he was a spokesperson or something even before that, huh?

ORTEGA:

: Right, right. He was the chairman of the tribe for, I would say, five decades, the longest running in the tribe.

COATES:

: And what did that entail during those decades, his duties? I mean, you grew up with him in that position, right?

ORTEGA:

: Right.

00:37:17

COATES:

: So what did you see of his leadership? What did that entail?

ORTEGA:

: I think in the early part when he was selected, from the stories, from what he told me and other family members in the tribe have told me, there was differences of who should be the lead spokesman of the entire tribe, and that continued on all the ways into—actually into his death, they questioned the time. And this is back then. Our generation said we're going to leave it back there, because we weren't there, and the elders made that decision, made that call. But when he started off, he began (unclear) in securing lands for the tribe. He began pretty much educating folks on the judgment, the California Judgment Roll. Our family weren't recipients on the first two disbursements until the 1968 disbursement, and a lot of it was not truly understanding what it meant to sign up that paper. Was it you're signing your life away and you had to be moved to a reservation, or not exactly known? So they chose not to. The other half of the tribe did sign up and received funding.

COATES:

: Can you talk about that a little bit? What is that, the California Indian Judgment?

ORTEGA:

: The California Indian Judgment Act was the sales of California lands from Indian people, and (unclear) was sold, California was sold and all the lands that were ratified or trust lands that were given to Indian people, the land was sold to the United States of America. Besides they got it from the Spanish, they went and signed a treaty and said, “This is what we find fair value of California and the minerals and the rights and all this towards Indian people.”

00:39:17

COATES:

: And the sale is forced, essentially?

ORTEGA:

: Forced sale. Actually, it was (unclear) sale, because this was later, so this was a lawsuit file. So the Indians of California filed a lawsuit, and it was settlement of the lawsuit that occurred.

COATES:

: So these were sales that had already taken place.

ORTEGA:

: Already taken place.

COATES:

: So is more like an Indian Claims Commission sort of act to seek compensation for—

ORTEGA:

: Yes. So that's what occurred earlier (unclear). Even today, tribal members argue if our elders, our ancestors should have taken it and fought for land instead of money. So, you know, still we try to educate. This was aftermath, so really their decision to receive payment was best option for them, and then to just—it's like a regular claim settlement that they had, and that's what we try to educate our members. So from that, my father got the family signed up in the 1968 judgment. From there, he also created a nonprofit to establish activities, bring funding, secure funding for the tribe. So since the tribe didn't have federal recognition or land or federal support as the other federally recognized tribe did, my father had to think of alternative and innovative ways to sustain and keep the tribe above water.

00:40:55

COATES:

: So there hadn't been any sort of corporate entity before that time, huh? Before he had done that, huh?

ORTEGA:

: Right, right. So that was the first. We had support, like I mentioned in the beginning, was federally recognized tribes supported my father. The chairman of Santa Ynez guided and instructed the formation of the nonprofit and got it going with him. So he was very involved with it in the beginning. He created a lot, so in his early years and younger years, from the mid-twenties to, I would say, the mid-forties, he did a lot of programming, got a lot of things going. Then from there in his mid-forties, it was kind of coasting it. He was really on demand. Folks knew who he was, called if he can speak or dance. Well, he didn't dance, but he'd send us, the kids, to go dance. (Coates laughs.) And just continued that flow of activity in the community. He had Christmas and Thanksgiving turkeys for the families, not just—one thing my father did was not just our tribe that he helped, but he helped others. Then when I started getting involved, it was with the toys. He used to get a ton of toys, and we used to separate them and give them out to churches. He used to go down to Tijuana and give kids down there toys.

COATES:

: Really?

ORTEGA:

: We'd give toys to one of the tribes in Nevada, down to a tribe down south of Barona, we sent toys out for the kids, and this was all pre-gaming, all this, and they extended the reach that my father used to do. Used to go to the powwows. One thing my dad loved was not planned. He liked to plan it in his mind, but he didn't want to plan it with everyone else. So he liked to show up and say, "Hey," to a powwow, "I have gifts for you." You know what powwows do. "I have a community offering." And he loved that, and he used to out there and just put toys all over the powwow arena and all the kids lined up. They didn't know what was going on, and he used to put the toys out there—well, have all of us put the toys out there and then tell the kids that was for them.

COATES:

: Just go for it, huh? (laughs)

ORTEGA:

: Yeah.

00:43:23

COATES:

: So where did he get all of these toys? Was he collecting them? Was he taking donations? Was he buying them himself?

ORTEGA:

: No, he took donations. My father, being a good spokesperson, he went to Mattel, he went to corporations in Los Angeles, some in the Valley, and they would do a toy drive or a collection, and he would speak to them. Then later on when the Marines started doing collection of toys, he had some toys from the Marines as well that he would give out to the community, and he informed that Marines, "Hey, this is who we're distributing it out to. We'll be your reach out to the community." So that's how he received the toys, and from there, the toys—

COATES:

: So he was going straight to the producers.

ORTEGA:

: Right, right.

COATES:

: He wasn't going door to door and asking individuals if they could buy a toy, right? (laughs)

ORTEGA:

: Right, right.

COATES:

: He was getting the big donations.

00:44:32

ORTEGA:

: Oh, no. He did that. And same thing with the turkeys. He made friends with the CEOs of these places. The Marines I enjoyed because he was friends with the corporal, and just to get on the base and see all their stuff was exciting.(Coates laughs.) But he met folks along the way.

One of the companies, the CEO of the company was Norman Cosmetics here in Sylmar, and he used to give my father tons of makeups for the women and he'd just have that out. So the toys went from not just the toys to turkeys, but also stuff for everyone in the community that he wanted to give out to. Even I think one year Warner Bros. gave us a ton of cups. It was the Space Jam cups, that film Space Jam. People knew, just people will come by, and people who moved out of the Valley would come down and visit. We always had that house on Rincon that was a cul-de-sac, a dead-end street that expanded on later on. And after my father moved out of the home, I stayed there living with my family, when they got older, people will stop by and say—different names. They'll call him "the chief," you know. They'll say, "Where is he at?" and just remember, and every time they stop by, they will say, "I remember he gave me a cup," or, "I was a kid in—." And from Warner Bros., again, he had ETs, those little stuffed animals. People would say, "I remember him giving me an ET." Or even down to a little watch that would open up. It was a little plastic watch, like a toy. And people said they remember those things from him. He would just give folks items and stuff like that.

00:46:41

COATES:

: So, I mean, it sounds like you've got sort of like this informal service sector, almost in a sense, that was going on with him and within the community and the tribe and everything. Was it predominantly around things like this, things for the kids and that kind of stuff? I guess what I'm—do you recall other types of service perhaps that might have been around things like education, healthcare, things like this? Was he advisory and—

ORTEGA:

: No. He was big—one thing you asked me about careers that he did, and I kind of blend it in because I'm thinking of paid income, he did some (unclear) which was paid income. What he would do is work for, like, the county community programs for alcohol, some of the other—I think that's where he kind of picked up where to bring services to the community and try to understand what the community needs were, and I think that's what my father did, was not try to do a survey and find out and guess what it was; he actually went out in the community. And since him being from the community, he knew what it cost to raise a family. So he would go out and gather and distribute items, but besides that, what he did, he organized a Health Clinic one day at the church. Since he was a nurse, one of his visions was to have a tribal hospital here that he tried to organize, and we talked all the ways into the mid-2005 or '04 that we talked about. And educational programs, we did youth camp trips. He took the kids out to Catalina

for educational programming. That was his other vision, was to establish a school to teach Native culture and traditions along with the curriculum. So those were some of the things that he strives, but those were the summer-type programs that he had for the kids at the time. Then for the adults, it was the Health Clinics and diabetes program, those kind of things.

00:48:46

COATES:

: Yeah. (laughs) So what was the impact on you being raised in this kind of environment of constantly being called on to dance and seeing your father constantly engaged in this kind of service? Did he involve the kids in all of that as well, that kind of work?

ORTEGA:

: Yeah, he involved us all. I think I gravitated the most towards it, and I found it to be natural, where my brothers, some of them, like I said, some of them didn't like all the attention. Some of them enjoyed it, but then they had their own families. They moved out. So to have my father older in the stage where he was more of a demand, I found it to be natural until I was, I guess, when I got married and told this isn't natural (Coates laughs) to always have an activity on the weekend or always have a meeting in the evening, always having a function going on. It was a lot. So I think for me, I didn't second-guess it. I thought this is what it was. You had to do it. You had to go out there and do it. And then I was told by elders, after I got married, they said, "No, you're selected by your activities." Even if you didn't want to do it later on, but once you're selected in the tribal community to do it, you end up just doing it.

COATES:

: That's it, yeah. (laughs)

ORTEGA:

: You've got to do it. So that's how I've seen it. So for me, it was just an ongoing thing. I did it at early age, like separating toys. And even back then, I'll see a toy I really liked, and I had to put in my mind, "This is for someone else, and I'm here doing a job. I'm here doing a service." So I had to put that toy in a group and give it out to a kid.

COATES:

: That's tough for a little kid, isn't it? (laughs)

ORTEGA:

: Yeah. So it's like those things, we were at the end. We had to get our stuff at the end. That's what it was.

00:50:53

COATES:

: Was your mother okay with that? I mean, this sounds like it takes a lot of time away from family life, or was that—that was family life? I mean, it could have gone either way, I guess, huh?

ORTEGA:

: It was both. When it got out of control where my father was always on the go, it did. I remember my mother telling my father, "You've got to slow it down. You've got more time on the family." My father was pretty well to balance it and mix it blendfully, in my eyes, that you couldn't tell what was—I couldn't tell what was family most of the time and what was his work, because when we'd go to an event or something, there was family. If it's a tribal event, there's family. So to me, I'm like, "This is family event." My mother is like, "It's not family. It's business."

COATES:

: "What about my family?" (laughs)

ORTEGA:

: Yeah. We needed to do stuff for ourselves. And that's the way he was. Like Fourth of July events, we used to go out to the beach, and he had a motorhome, and we thought it was all family, but he invited multiple tribal members that would go out there with us and have them celebrate Fourth of July. And my mother's like, "No. We need it, just us," just him, my father and mother and my siblings, that's it, and not everyone else. So that's why I'm saying, for me, I think it was just blended and what he did was blended.

00:52:25

COATES:

: Yeah. Now, the festivals that you've talked about, are these Catholic festivals? Are they Indian festivals? I mean, what is the nature of those events?

ORTEGA:

: We've gone to a lot of different festivals. Around our neighborhood in San Fernando, they're predominantly Catholic. Going out of the San Fernando area, they were mixed-type festivals. They would probably be the city's festival. We will go out to Santa Ynez festivals, so it'll be tribal festival. And even tribal festival, when you look at it from afar, you really couldn't tell the difference between Catholic and tribal, you know, because they were very close to each other. The only difference is that you have Native dancing at a tribal. You'll have some type of a cultural presentation occurring. But those are the type festivals that we'll see or have done. And then my dad, that's why I'm saying he would blend it, because my father would put up a booth and he would sell different—you know, tacos or something from the booth. And I have photos. My older sister, she works here in the office with us, and I was maybe five years old and I see these photos, and maybe from one and a half or two, when I started walking, to five, I see these photos, and we're at festivals. And from what I remember—and then I look at it and I take a real good look at it, and I see a booth back there, and it has the tribe's name on. So I'm like, "Well, we weren't there to play; we were there to work." Well, at least my father was or someone was there to work. So that was the type of festivals we'll be attending or seeing or going to.

COATES:

: So what is the relationship, would you say, with the Tataviam Tribe and the Mission still? Are most people still affiliated in some way, or is it a complex picture?

00:54:47

ORTEGA:

: It's a complex picture. As a tribal member outside the tribal government, it would be any other Catholic, who select to be Catholic, who'd go to the church and see their relationship as, well, this was once our ancestors' place that was brought in with the Spanish, and go to service there, because they still have some services occurring there, or visit as a tour.

On the political side, there's a huge difference. One, they don't depict or mention the tribe's history there. They just call us Mission Indians. Then when they took out the funeral markers in the back, they just said there's 2,426 Native Americans buried, not even culturally identifying the tribe. There's only one little marker, this eight-and-a-half-by-eleven, that identifies what village was there before, now gone. So we have that on-and-off relationship with the Mission there, and even the archdiocese knows about it. So everyone knows that the monsignor at the mission really don't truly care for the tribe, and know that was one history of time that should be forgotten and left alone and become extinct and just become Catholic. But as members, you know, some of our tribe members have their weddings there. They still, like I said, visited, go to service or Mass, not knowing of the political strife that goes on entirely. They're aware of it, but when they go, they sign up and they pay the fees and do what it is, and they're not (unclear) Indian. When we've gone there, the tours, we had folks from Vatican come down and say, "I want to tour the mission, but I want a tour by the indigenous people."

COATES:

: Really?

ORTEGA:

: And when we're get there, we're still charged the entrance fee, and even the gentleman from the Vatican with his business card, "Hey, I'm here to visit," still charge.

00:56:32

COATES:

: How does this monsignor, this particular one, happen to react when people from the Vatican say, "No, we want the indigenous people conducting it"?

ORTEGA:

: He treats us by charging us entrance fee into the Mission. (laughter) That's what he did.

COATES:

: He doesn't get a clue, huh? (laughs)

ORTEGA:

: No, he doesn't get a clue.

COATES:

: Even the Vatican says this, huh? (laughs)

ORTEGA:

: We had the bishop with us. The gentleman from the Vatican, he was the archives. He was a talented man, and he says, "I want to tour the mission with indigenous people." And when we showed up, this was all foretold, planned with the monsignor, and monsignor doesn't come out himself, because we're part of the tour and we're giving the tour. So since we're giving a tour, we had to pay the entrance fee, and there wasn't even an argument at the gate, because the staff is told, instructed to charge us, and the Vatican and the bishop from the archdiocese in Los Angeles saying, "This is our Mission. We should be able to walk in. We are guests," and it didn't occur. So but from what I understand, the monsignor did later on had a meeting with the gentleman from the Vatican and the bishop, but more welcoming when I was out of the picture or the tribe was out of the picture. But that's the relationship—

COATES:

: Oh, boy. Yeah. (laughs)

ORTEGA:

: —that we have with the Mission right now.

00:57:55

COATES:

: So do most people not attend services there? They don't—

ORTEGA:

: No. A lot of our members, I mean, from what I understand, the Mission itself, I think they have one Mass that they have there, but a lot of our tribal members don't attend. Then when they think of the Mission, they thinking of a time of their quinceañeras because the tribe members do that and—

COATES:

: Special occasions.

ORTEGA:

: Special occasions, a wedding, or they use across the street—well, the tribe uses across the street, which is not part of the Mission, the park grounds across the Mission, for gatherings, and last year we had one of our tribal gatherings there. We had about 140 people are across the Mission. But that's the relationship that we have with them.

COATES:

: So I guess most people are probably just geographically dispersed enough that they probably, if they attend services at all, it's probably, you know, in the town where they live or something like that. Would that be a fair statement?

ORTEGA:

: That'd be a fair statement. Or if they moved out, they'd bring their children or grandchildren back, and they'd show them the Mission, because that's still our history and culture. So they know the history and culture, so they're better explaining it to their kids. To the kids, all it is is building structures, because when you walk through it, again, they have Indian basketry from Arizona and New Mexico, and nothing of Tataviam, nothing of Fernandeno, and we're still here.

COATES:

: Yeah. Is there an interest in revitalizing sort of traditional spiritual practice, or is that—

01:00:32

ORTEGA:

: No, we do. We practice our songs, our dances. We've brought back our Bear Dance to the tribe. So now when we brought it back—it's actually been back for, oh, I would say twenty-two years, and a lot of folks learned that we were practicing again, but we kept it very secret. We wanted to be sure that we're respecting our ancestry, respecting the tradition and customs and religious practice first, and especially with the mixed tribal members' beliefs now. We have folks that are Christians, Catholics, Jehovah's Witnesses, some Jewish, because that's what everyone had married into or married out to. So we wanted to be sure that it's (unclear) and reintroduce the tribe.

So now we have it—this past spring was the first time we invited the public to one of our bear ceremonies, and so it's been more traditionally to—the more sacred traditional ceremony that we've started bringing people in more, and then the tribal folks have been coming in.

COATES:

: Is it more people of the middle-aged and younger generations who are interested in this kind of revitalization, or are the elders also participating in it?

ORTEGA:

: The elders, actually when we brought the Bear Dance, we went to the elders first. We brought it to them. So we've been dancing for them for—well, for the Bear Dance, we've been dancing for them in the spring and in the fall.

COATES:

: So did some of them actually remember it or know something of it?

01:01:43

ORTEGA:

: They know of the aural histories of it. I don't think a lot of them remember the dance itself, but a lot of them remember the aural histories, and that's how we brought it back in the community. And they really enjoy it when they see it, and it shows that we've been working a long hard way, and we're maintaining and keeping our traditions and our customs and revitalizing it all.

So now we have some of our tribal members as singers, and it's growing now so now there's more folks that are singing the songs. And the songs that we learned from were from a recording, 1928—from 1926 to 1928, on wax cylinders. So these are songs that are, from described on the description, they're spiritual songs, they're ceremonial songs. Some songs are funeral songs that we keep some for funerals that we've learned. So now in tradition of the tribe, we designated one of our tribal members to be the captain singer, so he's in charge of retaining all these songs and teaching them and giving us permission to sing the songs when we go out and sing them, and telling us what songs we should be singing, because he's the one that's learning all the stories behind the songs.

COATES:

: Are most tribal members pretty much behind this type of revitalization of traditional spirituality? Is there conflict about that from—

ORTEGA:

: There is some conflict. They support it, but will refrain from practicing it, even to the songs. They won't practice the song because they feel if they're Christian, they should follow one religious belief, and then they can be in the room and be part of it, but they won't practice. Then on the other side, we have—that's just a very small percentage that does that, and then very large percentage is that we're not fast enough. We don't have enough—because learning the songs means also learning the language. So you've got to translate some of the words. So we have our vocabulary words that we got, and it's about five hundred words. So we've learning, we know some of the songs, and because of the songs, we know some of the words, but we're not fast enough to get it out there to teach the kids, to teach not just the kids, but the adults. Adults are really inspired to learn these songs and dances and then the words. And like I said, we don't have enough instructors, and the reason is because our instructors are still learning it. So it's hard to teach someone when you're not really defined and efficient in it yet. So that's the other part. That's the more bigger demand. We're not quick enough or fast enough to get it out there.

01:04:22

COATES:

: (laughs) But you don't have people who are absolutely saying, "No, this is the devil's work. You should not be doing that at all," or anything like that?

ORTEGA:

: No, no. Just like I said, they will refrain from teaching a song. When we say, "Hey, come out, learn the songs," they'll say, "No, I'm Christian, and you're praying to a god, because some of those songs are prayers to god, and we don't know what god." And I go, "Well, you have to learn the language." He goes, "Yeah, but I prefer this right now." And we don't force them. We understand.

COATES:

: So there's enough diversity within the practices of the tribe that people just pretty much respect what anybody else is doing, huh?

ORTEGA:

: Right, right.

COATES:

: Even if they don't do it themselves, huh?

ORTEGA:

: Right. And the folks that we're selecting to retain this information, like myself and a few others, we, one, are not Christian or religious in any other religion, and our philosophy is—or our belief is that if we're trying to capture the true ancestral religion or practices or ceremonies, just like the other folks, we respect, we can go to prayer, we can talk to those folks, but we can't be followers if we're going to be teachers of something that's ancient. So that's one thing that we try to do and maintain. So this way to focus our attention on something.

01:05:54

COATES:

: So is that a shift for you to—when you say that you're not really a practitioner of any other except the traditional at this point, has that been a shift in your life, then, from having been Christian earlier or raised in Catholicism or something like that?

ORTEGA:

: My mother, she took us to both Catholic and Christian. She just found that you had to go to a place of worship. And I think my separation started, I would say, around twelve years of age, where I start questioning and asking a lot of questions. And by the time I was sixteen years old, I seek to go do bear dancing, so I went to Pala Reservation, Tule Reservation, and that's where I went back to learn the dances and bring it back to the tribe. At eighteen, when I did the ceremony to (unclear) the rights to be a bear dancer or a spiritual leader, from there I made that decision. It takes a lot on you. So there's other members now who are asking me. They want to go through what I've gone through, and when I tell them about the lessons and the journey you go through is not an easy path, and making sure you have full devotion for it. Just like a Catholic priest, he's a priest, he will go into another place of worship, but he's only Catholic. And that's what I explain to the folks who are coming and asking us. "Well, if you're going to be the captain singer, you can still go to the place, you can still respect other folks, but this is going to be our path that we take," just like the priest or a Christian pastor or something like that. So that was the decision that I made back then before I was married. (Coates laughs.) Actually, I didn't do the ceremony until it was after I got married, and then my wife was like, "What are you doing?"

01:07:38

COATES:

: Really, yeah. (laughs)

ORTEGA:

: It's like intense ceremonies and time away from family, and so it was an eye-opener for her, but I guess I'm pretty blessed to have a wife that's supportive of the actions or the decisions that I made.

COATES:

: So this kind of—it's sticking in my head. You said twenty-two years or so that the revitalization of the Bear Dance, is that what it was and so forth?

ORTEGA:

: Right.

COATES:

: So what was it for your father in his generation? Did they have any of this?

ORTEGA:

: Spiritual, they had not the dance, but what they had, my father and my uncle and few other people had, was remedies they had that they will do, or my father actually, when the children were sick from their stomach, they used to bring—my sister learned that—would do a massage to the child, and it would cure

them from stomach pain. So my older sister, she does it because my father taught her. So those are the remedies or techniques or things of healing they will do that will still be in the tribe.

COATES:

: So there's kind of a medicine practice that still existed, huh, or it still does, presumably.

01:10:03

ORTEGA:

: Yeah, that we pass it on, and those practices will be passed on to each families that each one of them had. And in talking to different families, each one had a little slightly different technique or remedy that they will do. One would have—each time it rains, they'll go out—well, not just rain, but storm. Each time it storm, they'll do a blessing or prayer, and then they will bless each down of their—or each entrance to their home, and their belief was or the tradition, aural history that had been passed down is that when the storm comes down, that's when the evil will come in. So they would—you know, bad spirits would come into the home. So that's what they will do. They go bless before the storm started—they knew the storm would come—and do that.

Then one of my older cousins will ask for a blessing, will call all of our seniors together and say—and he's the one that will say, "I know when an earthquake comes," or felt that before an earthquake occurs, he will ask for a blessing of his home and his family. Some of them who come new to it, like, "Oh, yeah. That's not going to happen," and a cousin will say, "Just like the animals." All of a sudden you don't hear any birds, the dogs all get quiet, and then Mother Nature happens. And he goes, "We also have those instincts, but we don't feel them anymore because we're so tied up in regular society. But just like the animal has that instinct, we do, too," and that's what he would explain to them. He goes, "So you have it in you if you want to discover it."

COATES:

: If you just be real quiet and listen to it, right?

ORTEGA:

: Right, right. And he would say that, and sure enough, maybe a couple months or a week later, an earthquake will occur. So every time he calls me, I'm like, "Oh, an earthquake's coming, so let's be

prepared."

COATES:

: So they were able to mix that continuity of that tribal understanding and knowledge and everything with the Catholic religious practice throughout your father's generation, your grandfather, and so forth?

01:11:54

ORTEGA:

: Yeah. Each family was a little different. Some families would embrace more the Catholic than the tribal. A lot of the old-timers, the older generation, my father's generation that I've seen, I think went to church just out of custom. It was the other side. It became the new tribal tradition. When someone got married, you do what the Catholic Church asks you to do, and when the funeral occur, you go back to the Catholic Church.

When we started bringing the songs back in, that's when we started mixing the two. So when my father passed, the family ourselves said, "We're staying out of the church. We're doing an entire Native ceremony," but it didn't occur. I began the services, but my father being who he was and knowing so many people, and then the folks who knew us—we made so many friends who are priests, reverends, and so on, so they all came and said, "We'd like to share some words of prayer," and out of respect, we allowed those folks in. So they all came in and did that, and then other tribal members from different tribes came down and offer blessings and songs as well, so we did the same thing. So at the end, it was still that mixture of all the different religions there or here, or became part of the tribe.

COATES:

: But you've got the church representatives coming in as a guest in this case—

ORTEGA:

: Right.

COATES:

: —just as somebody from another tribe have been—

ORTEGA:

: Right.

COATES:

: —so rather than the ones who are conducting the whole proceeding, huh?

01:13:54

ORTEGA:

: Yeah. And that's what changed, too, in the last fifteen years, when we used to go do ceremonies at the Mission church, like it's a Catholic Church, and we were not truly allowed to do any ceremony there. The Catholic priests prohibit it because we're burning sage, we're singing songs, we're doing prayer. But as we started talking to the Mission cemetery, and now they have us down where if someone walks in and says, "I'm Native American," even not from our tribe, they will give them our tribal number and say, "Well, you can talking to these guys because they come in and do the ceremonies." So now they've been more supportive and say, "Hey, this works," especially when the priests have been allies and friends with the tribe, said, "No, this is perfectly fine. We can do the funeral services together." So that we've seen change quite a bit.

COATES:

: Good. (laughs) What about your own education? You were talking about things were changing for you when you were about twelve or thirteen years old in terms of sort of this informal tribal knowledge that you're beginning to become interested in and starting to learn, right?

ORTEGA:

: Right.

COATES:

: But you continue in these formal education systems as well around here.

ORTEGA:

: Right.

COATES:

: And where does that take you?

01:15:22

ORTEGA:

: It took me—doing stuff with my dad, I wasn't too big in education. I thought that you had to be more hands-on and learning from the book, and so I've gone out, and the one career I chose was get an MBA, a master's in business administration, and a marketing degree. I went out for both of them. I finished the marketing, but didn't finish my MBA. Went back, and that was after high school, and the same time I got married early, a young age, at twenty, and started a family really early, too, right after I got married, so it was like all these things hit. Had a job, moved fast, and I got that from my mom, as I mentioned earlier, is like make decision quickly. And the fact of speaking my way through stuff, I got that from my father.

So I managed to land a job in Warner Bros., Disney, L.A. Times, and these folks were very excited to bring me in, and even the Daily News. So I was like I finished my marketing. It got me good enough money, and it was at the time when computers became more advanced in the workforce, and if you knew how to work them, you got a secure job. So I was fresh off of the graduating classes and knew how to maneuver and work really fast on computers in marketing, so that's one of the reasons I was one of their good picks for these firms and companies. So I made decisions who to go work for when I had offers from both the L.A. Times and Warner Bros.

COATES:

: That's great, yeah.

01:17:02

ORTEGA:

: So it's a wonderful feeling. I think that that's probably gone now. I don't know. (Coates laughs). Everyone seems to know everything now, and I think that era has gone for something new to come in. My business degree, I didn't finish. I gone through it, but as I helped the tribe maneuver and receive grants and open its office with my father, he had an office in the seventies and eighties, and then throughout the nineties, we didn't have an office. We worked out of the house. I mean, all this stuff was him just guest-speaking and very minimal activities with the tribe, just the natural annual things like Christmas and Thanksgiving, all these other things.

So when I came in, I helped to further establish the nonprofit to get (unclear) services that we provide today that were like social service programs. And then with the tribe, I helped negotiate a contract, one of the first largest contracts with the tribe, in cultural preservation. So we work with the developer to have them agree to hire the tribe and retain the tribe as a consulting firm. Usually the CR, the Cultural Resource management firms, usually get those contracts. We convince the developer they need to hire us, not them. So we were successful to do that and move forward. So with those things going on and then home life and marriage and children, and my wife who was very supportive for me to do online study along with going to school, just completely didn't find it to interest me. I really want a degree and get it because I can see value for it, but didn't find the place, and I think it just because I was more fascinating what was going on here, and I was hands-on doing the things and just weighed out, and next thing I know I was slipping the classes, and wife saying, "You're paying this money and you're not doing it."

01:19:15

COATES:

: But you may be getting just the same experience anyway just by working. I mean, I've heard recently people say that the value of those MBA degrees is sort of—unless it comes from like the really Harvards or someplace like that, that you can really just learn just as much just by going and doing the job. So everything must have seemed like it was just really compounding when you were in your early twenties, because you've made this commitment to the spiritual practice and pathway and you're learning about that, and you've just gotten married and you're having children pretty quickly, and you're trying to finish a degree, and those were probably pretty intense years, huh?

ORTEGA:

: Yeah. No, they were. I mean, like I said, growing up with my father, I found it to be natural. I had to be on call with the tribe and find a way to balance out my own personal life, and they seemed to blend quite a bit. And my wife at first was trying to find and figure out why there is no time sometimes for the family, and then figured out to blend with it, and now she's supportive and she supports me in the fact that—and she goes out to some of the meetings with me now. And she laughs. She says, "A lot of people thought you weren't married."

COATES:

: You're married to us, the tribe, huh? (laughs)

ORTEGA:

: Yeah.

COATES:

: Yeah. (laughs) So how would you characterize the relationship between the Tataviam Tribe and the surrounding tribes? You've touched on some things like relationships with Santa Ynez or different things. I mean, do you interact quite a bit with the other tribal communities around?

ORTEGA:

: We do. We interact very much, a lot and especially on a project-to-project or an issue-to-issue concern that involves the tribe. For us, we have a really close relationship with San Manuel. So a lot of project that deal with overlapping cultural resources activities, we support one another. Well, they mostly support us because they're the one with the federal recognition. So when it comes to a property on the federal forestry where our tribe can't have a seat at the table, they invite us in. And same thing with Santa Ynez, we have a project with the Department of Energy on the western end of us, and they invite us out to the table, so we have a participant seat there. And then also culturally, the folks from Santa Ynez—Santa Ynez were more tied in, and the reason is my father's first wife was from Santa Ynez,

enrolled there, so her uncle was chairman back in the seventies. He helped—

01:21:38

COATES:

: So you have half siblings probably that are from there as well.

ORTEGA:

: Yeah, they're from there. They decided to enroll with us, not with them, and sometimes I scratch my head and said, "Why?"

COATES:

: (laughs) But they still have family that's there?

ORTEGA:

: They have family. We have family. And in the tribal family, even though they're half from us, their relatives or cousin relatives call all of us cousin relatives. So they're more of a cousin to my sisters than to myself, but they reach out to me as so if we were blood. So that's the relationship we have with Santa Ynez. San Manuel, we have culturally more similar history and songs and dances with them, so we interact with them quite a bit. We try to incorporate or partner-up on some activities that they do, and our tribe has an education department, so we try to team up with what they have going on over there as well. We did the same thing with Saboba, the tribes when they were revitalizing the song, music—I mean the language. They use Herrington's notes, and in Herrington's note, there's a Fernandeno reel, so the tribes down in Luisenois, whatever words they didn't have, they use our Fernandeno words to replace it, since the language is close in hand on that. So that's how we participated and interact with them. Then locally here, the other non-recognized tribe, Gabrielinos, we work closely with the San Gabriel band and the other Gabrielinos as well, but mostly out of the San Gabriel band, we work with them.

01:23:18

COATES:

: And that's Anthony Morales? Is that that group?

ORTEGA:

: Anthony Morales' group, yeah. So we work a lot with them and some sites for repatriation. We got one site we're repatriating right now to bring some of the artifacts back and working with the museums or anything that comes up our way. He usually calls us here if it's more in our neighborhood, and he's been notified, and we do the same. If we've been notifying more in his neck of the woods, then we give them a call and inform them and partner up with them.

COATES:

: I skipped over—I wanted to ask where did you go to school? Where did you go to university?

ORTEGA:

: I went to Platte College. I went there for marketing, and then I was going to CSUN for the MBA.

COATES:

: And you had these job offers right at the beginning when you'd first graduated, you said, and everything.

ORTEGA:

: Right.

COATES:

: Which one did you accept, ultimately?

ORTEGA:

: I accepted L.A. Times, and the reason is because I actually—I take it back. I was about to graduate when I got offered the jobs, and Warner Bros. offered me an internship for associate director, a film director. So I was like I'm doing marketing. L.A. Times is actually what I was in school for, and Warner Bros. wasn't so much it. But I kick myself each time because right at that point that's when they came up with the CGI graphics, the animation films, and Warner Bros. just created their new animation building. They were in construction of the animation building. So my father wanted me the Warner Bros. because he drove me to the interview on the lot. I was nineteen years old. (Coates laughs.) Just because I wanted to finish school, college fast, so I took everything as much as I possibly can to just get it done.

01:25:17

COATES:

: Did you finish in two or three years, then?

ORTEGA:

: In three years.

COATES:

: Three years for a B.A., huh?

ORTEGA:

: Yeah.

COATES:

: Wow.

ORTEGA:

: Yeah. I knew myself, if I took longer, I wouldn't have gotten finished. I knew the MBA, so I just knew I had to get it done. So Warner Bros. was—it was at that time and not knowing what was going on, and I was selected, and I found out I was selected because I was Native. Timing was that the law that passed—I forgot, can't remember what it was, but just to fill in employment of minorities, and they knew I was Native, and the referrals, some of the referrals that told them about me, so they brought me in, and they gave me a whole tour of Warner Bros., and told me, "This is our new animation building that is under construction," and offered me the job and said, "This is what you'd be doing." And I said, "No, I'll just take Times."

COATES:

: (laughs) And so what did you do at the Times, exactly?

ORTEGA:

: I was in their creative services department, so I was in charge of any of their marketing displayments. I was the junior artist, what they called, so I did all the graphics under the direction of the art director, which helped because that's the career I was going for. Then from there, I went to the Daily News, to the Ventura County Star, and then back to L.A. Times, because they were giving me job offers. Ventura County Star—

01:26:53

COATES:

: They were competing for you, it sounds like, huh? (laughs)

ORTEGA:

: Yeah. They offered me three months to move and three months' rent to pay down there and my move to Ventura, and they knew I just recently got married. So I was newlywed and told my wife, "Do you want to go?" And she says, "Yeah." And then I wasn't ready for the move. If I would have moved, I would have moved away from the tribe, and even though it's not that far, but my life would have been over there. So I decided to stay nearby and work down here, and then I started getting closer and closer. Then the local paper here, it's called San Fernando Valley Sun, had an opening for the art director, and I went for it, and happened to be my cousin who runs it—not runs it, but owns it.(Coates laughs.) So out there talking with them, I know all the (unclear).

COATES:

: Yeah, that didn't hurt. (laughs)

ORTEGA:

: Yeah. Was there for a couple of years, and in that same building, I opened the tribe's office for grants. And from there, we were there ten years, and then we moved to our office, to where we're in now across from city hall.

01:28:03

COATES:

: So you've been full-time in tribal employment since you got that grant, or do you still do the other?

ORTEGA:

: No. No, I didn't become full-time employment until 2005. Even with the Sun, I was part-time with the

Sun, but I did a lot of freelance work, a lot of consulting work. I worked for multiple ad agencies throughout Los Angeles, international ones. So I did a lot of stuff. It took me back to the movie business, being in L.A., so I did stuff with Tom Cruise and some big-name celebrities and stuff in the U.K. and South Brazil, things like that.

COATES:

: So did you travel to those places? (laughs)

ORTEGA:

: No, I didn't travel. All my stuff was—it was like I was the ad office here and had to ship all the digital files for the magazines to those areas. So I had to be sure that the product or the devices—and this was a time when Internet service was—the ISBN is when you are wealthy and you had that type of service, which is equivalent to a cell phone sending your data over the Internet on a computer.

COATES:

: Right. (laughs)

ORTEGA:

: So a file would literally take about five to six hours to get transmitted to London or wherever I was sending it to. So my job was to ensure it got there. So I'll start it off in the morning, an hour difference to wait, and so since I was on call, I had to get a phone call at eleven or call at eleven at night to say, "Hey, did you get there at ten?" or in the morning, which was exciting. I really did enjoy that because I got to travel around L.A. a lot and see different companies and work for a lot of huge firms. I was able to see a lot of big CEO companies.

COATES:

: Meet a lot of people and all of that. (laughs)

01:30:08

ORTEGA:

: Yeah. And since I was interested in business so much, I made myself acquainted with the CEOs. I said, "How did you get your business started?"

And the advice is—when I told them I was Native and tribe, and they all shared with me their success or how they got started off. A lot of interesting stories, and I did actually compare a lot of it a lot of our tribal members who were successful as well, like my mother and a few other folks that made something from nothing.

COATES:

: Have you been able to implement that advice on behalf of the tribe itself?

ORTEGA:

: Yeah. I think it was helpful for me to negotiate one of the largest contracts for the tribe. It was helpful for me to help navigate the tribe's petition for federal recognition. It was helpful in branding the tribe. I remember when, my field being what it is, our tribe was the first tribe to have a website, and I was told by that by Morongo. Then Morongo was like, "Isn't it embarrassing, a non-recognized tribe have a website before a recognized tribe that has gaming?"

COATES:

: And a gaming tribe at that, yeah. (laughs)

ORTEGA:

: Yeah, a gaming tribe with a casino running, operating. So we were ahead of the curve on some of those

things. It really was beneficial for us.

COATES:

: Yeah. And what does your wife do?

ORTEGA:

: She's a physician educator in compliance, so she works for Youth Health Works. So she's in charge of making sure the physicians are up to date in their medical billing, up to federal law, and what to charge, not to charge, and what could they charge, and the duration that they have to spend with the patient to make sure they get quality care, healthcare. So that's her job.

01:31:56

COATES:

: And how many kids do you have?

ORTEGA:

: I have four children together. Two girls, the oldest are the girls, and then two boys are the youngest, and ages are six, nine, twelve, and sixteen, and about to be seventeen in a week.

COATES:

: So you have a very active household right now, I imagine. (laughs)

ORTEGA:

: Yeah, yeah. All that and balancing when they're enrolled in sports or—so, yeah, we're happy that the first two are girls because they help.

COATES:

: And why is that? (laughs)

ORTEGA:

: Because the boys are just boys and—

COATES:

: Being boys. (laughs)

ORTEGA:

: —being boys, and every little while we've got to break them up from slugging each other.

COATES:

: So you got some practice before that happened before that came along? (laughs)

ORTEGA:

: Yeah. They're a little bit more daring. They say they can do certain things. And they like the comics.

We can't put a Ninja movie on or a fighting movie on, because they feel they have to act out what's happening in the movie at the time the movie's happening.

COATES:

: (laughs) And I presume that they're all being raised very strongly in the tradition, huh?

01:33:29

ORTEGA:

: Oh, yeah. My son, the older son that's nine, he says that he's not a bear, he's a wolf, and that he's going to wolf dance. He says the Bear Dance is too much work, and he says it's a lot of responsibility. And I go, "Well, you only saw it danced. You haven't known the responsibility."

He goes, "I see what you do, and it's a lot of responsibility." So he's already saying, "I'm not going to be doing all that work," which is good. But he knows the songs. They've been taught the songs. We had music classes, and all of them gone through it. So they all sing it. When they were younger, they sing it, and then when they get into high school stage and with their friends, my daughter doesn't really say she sings it, but proud, because our tribe has the education program for high school kids, so she has friends that are enrolled in the program here with the tribe that go to the school there with her, so she's able to—and she likes it because they do a lot of trips and activities, embrace education.

COATES:

: Well, you talked earlier about you as a child with your own father, and that it just seemed natural to you and that you took to it and you liked it and all of that. I was just wondering if you see already that that is being passed to another generation yet, or another generation coming up that there are those among your own kids who—

ORTEGA:

: All of them know it. I think my oldest daughter and the youngest son will probably be the one more embrace. My oldest daughter, when she was a baby, always (unclear). I had her with me and I took her to meetings, meeting with council members and a few other folks. I'd come in with a rocker or a cradle, or they'll come meet me and she'd be in my office. And the other one, we started getting childcare and my other son, too, the two middle ones, and then the youngest one, he's been same amount of time like

my first daughter with me in my office. Of all of them, I would say the youngest one is the most outspoken one and the one who will probably—I think he's the one that's blended, doesn't know what is normal and not normal, because he met the mayor, he met a few other folks, and the mayor had went to shake his hand, and he just looked at him and turned around and walked away and laughed, and a person in the audience says, "He must be Republican." (laughter)

01:36:01

COATES:

: How did that happen, huh?

ORTEGA:

: And then when it came time for the photo op, because he loves cameras, and he knows there's always a—you know, we always start taking photos. So he runs into the picture and the grabs the proclamation and holds it with his hand with the mayor, who he didn't even want to shake his hand. He still didn't want to shake his hand after. So, yeah.

COATES:

: Getting ready for political life, clearly, huh? (laughs)

ORTEGA:

: He's the one, because we will go to the events, and I will take him, and if we're performing or we're going to go up and speak or sing, we always get to the backstage or we get to a Green Room, and he will always find his way out to the stage and testing the mic, and not a care. When there's an audience there, he will say, "Hello," and introduce himself. "My name is Noli."

COATES:

(laughs.) So my wife's like, "You've got to get him off the stage." So now the older ones have security

detail not to let him on the stage.

01:37:37

COATES:

: Yep. You can tell where they're headed from such an early age, huh? (laughs) Well, we've been going for quite a while, and I think we've gone through most of things I had, at least as subjects for the first interview. Are there other things about your upbringing, your personal history that you think would be important for us to know?

01:39:58

ORTEGA:

: I think anything different or more—I think overall, growing up, being Native from this area and not from a different tribe, I think when people first hear, it's a shocker, and then this huge shock. Even today, even folks who know me or business associates that know me and different venues I go into, and I notice it from a child till now. It's like, "Oh, there's Indians here." And then more shocking, "There's Indians from San Fernando Mission?" And shocking, "There's an Indian office in San Fernando?" I think that was the biggest turn because most people are used to what you mentioned earlier, the folks in the Relocation Act, you have a lot of Indian people who made Los Angeles their home and brought their traditions and customs. And then also we're Hollywood, and Hollywood Indians who portrayed Indians on film, so people have a visual impression of what Indian people should be like. And growing up here, and us just to say who we are, and I think we made a change in our community from growing up and to now, is that we're teaching our kids to be proud of who they are, identify themselves correctly, and not say, "Well, we're Indian," and that's about it, and, "What you see on TV, that's what we do," but to correctly state it and show it. So I think from (unclear) time, and I think everyone (unclear) still a learning curve. I think everyone's still learning about our community and knowing, like I said, that even—I'll run into someone in the street some other time and ask me what I am, or I get identified, especially nowadays, either Persian or Armenian or Arabic, and those people will ask me, "Are you this or that?" And I won't identify them or say what I am, and, again, that's where it gets shocked. "Oh, I didn't know." Because nowadays, besides what's on film, they think all Indian tribes have a casino. So the next statement is, "Are you Indian? Where's a casino?" That's the next statement.

COATES:

: Or that they're somewhere else and that they have a reservation. Total unawareness that, in fact, there are tribes right here.

ORTEGA:

: Right. And that's what occur to my family. We were easily blended into society and able to keep our traditions and custom and culture as much as possible and inherit other customs and traditions for being Los Angeles. We received other folks and we made it ours as well. But that's it.

COATES:

: Okay. All right. Thank you. (laughs)

ORTEGA:

: Sure. (End of May 21, 2014 interview)

SESSION TWO (June 4, 2014)

00:00:34

COATES:

: Okay. So, my name is Julia. Today is July—July. June 4, 2014. We are in San Fernando, California, at the offices of the Tataviam Tribe. I'm speaking with Rudy, Jr., and this is our second interview. I'm just saying it for the record, but as we've just discussed, we're going to try and get into some of the larger sorts of issues and questions and processes at Tataviam today.

ORTEGA:

: Sure.

COATES:

: I think you made comment about this a little bit in the first interview that we did, but I know that one of

the things that you hear, that I hear, that you just hear around a lot is on the subject of identity and kind of a changing identity at least in the perception of the public. What I mean by that is that sometimes I hear statements that, "Oh, I just knew that person. They were Latino," or they were Mexican, or they were something like that, and suddenly they're—and then fill in the blank, whatever tribe or band it is. Can you just talk about that a little bit, the continuity of identity within the tribe, but also the shifts that people have made, perhaps recently, or at least in the way the public perceives it?

ORTEGA:

: Yeah. Well, generally throughout time, a lot of the family members, tribal members throughout the tribe, will usually identify themself as Mexican, white or Caucasian, Hispanic or Latino, and they still do so today as well, because Los Angeles, where our homes are at, there's a lot of intermarriages. Plus, it's easier to go with the popularity and numbers that are much more greater than the tribe. More in recent times, though, we've seen more of a pride, say, of children, the youth, tribal members taking pride in their heritage and the tribe as well, especially the fact that we're able to create programs not just for elderlies or seniors usually would tend to focus on, but general for everyone in the tribe that they are able to participate in. Then for the last ten years, we've been just gradually encouraging the identity of their heritage, giving them more information, information they may not even known about, because a lot of time we're speaking to our grandparents or fathers or parents, they only know so much history, and the tribe here has tons of archives of information, history they may not have known. So we try to broadcast that information out to our members. So the children usually take—you know, they're fascinated of the fact that they're Native, so that's what I think we see as a larger trend.

00:03:17

COATES:

: Is that different from previous generations, the fascination that children have? Do you think that earlier generations had that same feeling about it or—

ORTEGA:

: Yeah, I think probably more so they would have had the same curiosity, but the times are different than they were fifty, forty years ago. Nowadays, everybody's into political correctness, everyone is into, hopefully, racism, try to diminish the stereotyping and so on, so there's a lot more argument publicly-wise. So forty, fifty years ago, it was a trend just to take the hits and not to say who you were, because being Native or being Indian was derogatory or the bottom of the chain of citizens or human beings, and it was a cross. And it wasn't just here in the States. It was also for folks, from Aborigines down south in Mexico or up north in Canada. So Native probably wasn't one of the most focal point, and those who stood up for Natives got a lot of challenges ahead of them to say that they were.

00:04:29

COATES:

: Have you experienced much of that in your adult life, of those kinds of challenges that you've had to—

00:06:35

ORTEGA:

: No. For me, it always seemed to be like—well, I see myself Native first, and then I have other—like my mother's Mexican, and I don't even see her as Mexican; I see her as indigenous. So my perspective is different than probably some other folks. So when someone does make a racial slur or comment, I think my humor or my viewpoint of it is slightly different, so it doesn't really get under my skin. A lot of people have asked me how come I don't get really upset to hear what happened in the missions or upset that someone, for instance, today someone using a Native word, (unclear), incorrectly, "Why doesn't it really bother you so much?" The mascots, I've advocated for the school here, the Catholic Church (unclear) to change their mascots and remove Indian from it. In talking so to the kids there, they've asked, "Why you want to remove the word 'Indians'?" And simply, I just told them, "I don't have a huge concern. It doesn't really bother me. One, I don't come to the school. Two, I don't participate in your sport activities. But I've seen it's important to change it because you are hurting other people's feelings." And the bottom line is it's the old trait of America. We take stuff without asking, and we do that across the nation, not just for Indian people, but to everyone else. As Americans, whatever we like, we just want to take it. It's like going to someone's home and taking a television set, is what I told the high school kids, without asking. Well, that's a crime, right? It's a thievery. You can be prosecuted and sentenced into imprisonment or jail. I go, the same thing for using the word "Indians." Did you ask the local tribes? I know, for example, no one asked my tribe.

And we do that to a couple of things, so it's more of a politeness and appreciation as far as Native religious practices. That's what you're taught. If you're going to do ceremony, you're going to go on to some other tribal lands, ask permission. Depending on what you're doing, you seek that individual and request that, and it's up to that person to say yes or no, because you're entering their home, and that's the kind gesture. I think overall, myself, like I said, I see certain things, and I think just growing up and just kind of focusing on just advocating for the tribe, I don't know, that's how I view things. I know a lot of folks say how come I don't more get upset about certain stuff, but I think there's always someone there to raise a cause.

COATES:

: Yeah, and someone else will get upset. (laughs)

ORTEGA:

: Yeah. I can always support that, but I think there's always—like I've been told by elders, we do the job we're meant to do and the stuff that we follow up with.

COATES:

: Yeah. It's not really your personality, and you're going to be most effective following your own character, your own personality.

ORTEGA:

: Right, right.

COATES:

: Are there instances when the lack of understanding of a Native identity by the outside world has impacted the tribe?

00:09:21

ORTEGA:

: Yeah. I would say entirely (unclear). I remember as a kid, we were known as Fernandenos only and not Tataviam, and then about twenty, thirty years ago, a lot of the tribes started going back to their traditional tribal names, and we went back to Tataviam. So a lot of people, the public—and still to today, we get a lot of people saying that we're Gabrielenos or saying that we're Tongva, saying that we're Chumash, and truthfully, honestly, there's a lot of intermarriages, historically and ancestral, with those different regional tribes, but the tribal band today is Tataviam, and even our own tribal members sometimes says, well, we're more Chumash than we are Tataviam, and that's because of the influence from what they receive from the outside. Folks are saying, well, Chumash are more well known. There's a federally recognized tribe that's Chumash, so those folks are more well known.

Then you have Gabrieleno, which has been, I think, publicized quite a bit, and then for me to follow, there's a lot of folks that participated as the Gabrieleno, Tongva, so they're out there championing the

name and broadcasting it out, publicizing, doing a lot of outreach versus our tribe. We kind of stay in our own territory. So a lot of folks (unclear). Then there's a lot of anthros or historians or anthropologists who documented it and called us western Gabrielenos, so that didn't really help. So when you have people researching or studying us, they say, "Well, you guys are western Gabrieleno." So there's a lot of educational information that we have to provide out to folks so that they learn more about Tataviam.

COATES:

: What are the cultural relationships between Tongva, Tataviam, Chumash? How would you describe all that? (laughs)

ORTEGA:

: Well, I think even from historical times to today, I would honestly say it is what it is the way it is today. We interact quite extensively. We enjoy each other's companies when we're not at each other's ends of the fence. (

00:10:50

COATES:

(laughs.) There's differences because we're humans and we don't all agree at the same thing at the same time. So when that starts, that does create some friction.

But other than that, enjoying each other's companies, sharing a meal together, participating in each other's ceremonies, sharing the songs, that still occurs today. We still do today as well. Both sides, the Tongva and the Chumash, will invite us all to each other. Then when it's political or for a cause, they also invite us out, and vice versa. So I think those always have occurred and always have and will continue to as well.

COATES:

: Are there overlaps of cultural practice and things like that that you all share?

ORTEGA:

: No, there's overlaps. As a younger person, I learned a lot of Chumash songs, and when we did some more study, we found out one of my great-ancestors—it would be great-grandfathers, was a swordfish singer. So when we read more of the documentation, we learned that the Tataviam people will sing the songs for Chumash, and the Chumash people will dance to the swordfish song. So there was those intertwining. And then Tongva folks and ourselves, our languages are more similar, so they will always cross and go travel to each other's villages. So there's a lot of folks that we read and historically that would travel a great distance from village to village, and that was without transportation back in the time. Today, too, there's a lot of people who still travel a great distance to join each other's activities. So there's a lot of share, and then there's also folks who sing with each other that are a mix of either Chumash or Tataviam or Tongva, and they will probably be singing only Chumash songs, or they would sing some Tataviam songs, depending who's the leader of the singing group.

COATES:

: And you've got a pretty extensive cultural revitalization program going on, I think, at Tataviam, don't you?

ORTEGA:

: Mm-hmm.

00:13:16

COATES:

: I know at UCLA we've got a lot of materials that come from it that I've looked at and everything. Can you talk a bit about that a little bit? What was the impetus to start that, and when and who did you go to and—

00:15:52

ORTEGA:

: The revitalization, I think it was always a search (unclear) even my time, but for myself, in the fifties and forties and sixties, it was more like embracing each other, so a lot of folks learned powwow, and

they're still in the tribal community, in our tribal community, in Tataviam community, are powwow dances. But in the last twenty years or so, it was determined to choose the more correct culture and history of the tribe. And in 1993, I was still in high school, I don't remember, seventeen or so, eighteen—it was '92, actually, we got Herrington's reel, and that was before the explosion or right at the time (unclear) the Internet, so they wasn't even available at the time on the Internet. So we had all their songs, traditional songs on there with notes from Herrington, so a lot of stuff that we had too. And then stories and listening to tapes when people are talking on the tapes that we heard, they will go from Spanish to probably the traditional language and then back to Spanish and learn the songs. So that really fascinated me to hear that, because it sounded like my uncles, my father. They will go from (unclear) the Native language, but they went from Spanish to English quite extensively, and so I felt that similarity there to learn a song. So I felt that it'd be best for the tribal members here to learn traditionally what our people done religiously, culturally to maintain it, whatever little was left. There was quite a few elders in the community. A lot of them have passed now, but back then it was quite extensive, that were able to provide information. So what we did is we started audiotaping them, talking to them and asking them what they do for medicine, how they cure people. A lot of them did some special techniques and massaging individuals when they were ill, especially children. So they did a lot of things like that, so we wanted to make sure that we knew that was the tradition of the tribe and the medicines that were passed down, but we also want to incorporate the songs, the dances as well, so we went on a pursuit for that.

COATES:

: Had those medicine practices been ongoing, then, throughout all of this time, or were these things that elders just sort of remembered from their youth that hadn't continued to be practiced?

ORTEGA:

: The one that they practiced was the more effective ones, because when I went and spoke to a few of them, they could not remember certain plants or certain reasons why the elders or their parents or their grandparents would do. They just knew they had some type of plant, they had some type of prayer, or they had some type of ceremony happening and didn't quite understand what it was. So those disappeared, but the techniques that they saw or felt that was important and that were effective, like when the kids had upset stomach or feverish, those techniques they tend to kept and pass on.

COATES:

: What was the process of recording that information? Did they sit down together in meetings and talk with each other, or exactly how did that happen?

ORTEGA:

: Some of it was sitting down just at—I remember one time I was at a Tribal Council meeting, and I just brought the tapes for sitting down with them, and I was probably fifteen, sixteen at that time.

COATES:

: Were you that young?

ORTEGA:

: Yeah.

00:17:28

COATES:

: Wow.

00:19:12

ORTEGA:

: So I was really interested and fascinated about it, and started talking to them. Then just actually on Saturday, this past Saturday, we had a mural unveiling, and some of the elders came in and were talking about just that, just the fact of recording, getting the information. So it was a group session in some points, and some other points we want to go visit the elders, but when they talk to us—and I even had folks from Santa Barbara come over, some college students, interviewed them to record as much as possible, and I remember, because knowing them, knowing the family members, they would joke around or they'll give you false information and they will tap your feet in the bottom just to make sure you didn't say nothing, because you're the younger person. And you knew what they were saying was incorrect, and they were testing the interviewer at times. So I remember then that, and that just spawned in my mind, because on Saturday we were talking about that, and I told my cousin who's older than I—he's in the sixties—and I say, "Well, you're at an age where those other folks were back twenty years ago, and they used to do this," and I did it to him. He just started laughing. He goes, "Oh, yeah, I remember my father doing it." They will just say these things, and I think it was just the fact that, I don't

know, I guess it was their way of joking with individuals and the sincerity. I remember after the interviewers are left or the college students, whoever was doing it, the documentation, I asked them, "Why do you guys take it seriously?"

They go, "Well, they were too serious, and then everything we say, they took it down literally." So it was their way of playing or horseplaying.(laughs.) So we had to be careful or actually every time that we went to an interview, I actually had to speak to the elders first and tell them the sincerity about it, and I had to sit in the meeting with them. So I'd catch them.

COATES:

: Tell them to behave themselves? (laughs.)

ORTEGA:

: Yes, and catch them before they said something that I knew was not correct.

COATES:

: (laughs) So if they were doing this with college students that you all had brought in, right, and they were making recordings for the tribe, right, not for Santa Barbara or UCLA or anybody else, but for the tribe itself, do you know that in fact what it was was—when they were joking and when they weren't?

ORTEGA:

: Yeah, because in sitting down with the students prior to interviewing, I will check the questions that they had, and so then I would visit with the elders first and talk to them, and they're a little bit more sincere with me, or they would joke and I knew when they were joking. I know the body language and the posture, and then I can catch on to that. But the other folks, interviewers who were not used to the community, didn't know that, so I kind of already had the information ahead of time, so that when they came in, it was also an easier way to get them engaging with folks, because a lot of them were resistant to being interviewed. They really didn't like it or enjoy it. Sometimes I'll get my older sister on the spot. I'll have someone who's already interviewing me, and she's in the room or somewhere near by, and I say, "Come and talk to her." And later on, she'll call me up and yell at me and say, "Why did you do that?" Because some of them just are very reluctant to do it. They didn't want to do it. They're hesitant.

00:21:56

COATES:

: Well, I've had that experience myself. (laughs) I know Pamela's really—you know, (unclear) keeps telling me, "This is going to take a long time." (laughs) Okay. Had they been interviewed before? I mean, you talked about the Herrington recordings and all of that kind of thing, and I know that many tribes across this country have just had anthros and others just swarming them for many generations. Had that been their experience? Was that part of their reluctance, do you think?

00:23:17

ORTEGA:

: I think so, because in reading Herrington's notes, I keep going back to it and I keep going back to the audiotapes, because some stuff just didn't make sense or some stuff it didn't really kind of go with everything else, so we go back to it and read it. In one example, we have the word "Pacoima," and we don't know where the term came, "rushing waters," and it's nowhere near—and people in Pacoima, the resident, the city council member says, "We found the meaning. It means 'rushing waters,'" and there's no recording. Then we have our recording from Herrington, and the gentleman was young. He would have been a Tongva in today's times, and he said that it meant "the entrance." So we had these two different words. Then along with that same recording, they tried to interview my great-grandfather, and he was resistant. He didn't want to be interviewed. He was documented in the transcript saying that he was very fluent in the language, spoke it extensively, and in speaking to other folks who remembered him and spoke with him and said that he only spoke Spanish, and he did speak a different language as well, but it wasn't really taught to anybody else.

When we go back and hear the audiotape, we can hear them talking, and we amplify and change the audiotape, and we can hear them. There were three folks on the tape, and you can just hear them talking among themself and agreeing to something, and then one will chuckle, and they go on and then record a song. So not knowing the language or speaking the language, we don't know what they said, because they went from Spanish to Native language, and then they pause and then into a song. So we don't know if the song was a humorous song, but the song was recorded as a ceremonial song, so they couldn't laugh and say we're singing a funeral song or a ceremonial song or a serious song, but before that, they were chuckling. So to me, I'm thinking, well, I think that behavior that my father and my grandfather and all those had, my uncles, I think it was there. It was always there. I seem to kind of have it, too, sometimes. I have other family members or other tribal members say they don't know if I'm serious or joking around. They just can't read me.

COATES:

: Kind of deadpan, huh? (laughs)

ORTEGA:

: Yeah, a straight poker face, I guess.

00:24:49

COATES:

: Where did you all acquire the Herrington recordings? Did those come out of UC Davis and that collection up there, or did you have them yourselves already, or how did that come about?

ORTEGA:

: They were given to my father, and I'm pretty sure it was like '92 they were given to us, and I think they came out of somewhere over in Riverside. I just can't remember the individual's name who handed it or actually mailed it to my father.

COATES:

: So a private individual had these, or was it an institution?

ORTEGA:

: I think it was both. I think it was an institution but a private—an individual friend, institution, who friended my father, made a copy of his own to mail out, because it said "Fernandeno Reel" on there, so that's how we had it. It was at the start when they were going through the Herrington records, and they had said, "We've got the Fernandeno Reel," and it was rough. Everything was really rough. The Xerox copies—or actually not the Xerox copies, the main copies off Herrington's notes and everything else, and they had transcribed it. They would have a transcription from Herrington's notes on to what they were working on. I just can't remember the university's name, but it was their work that they were doing.

COATES:

: Was your father expecting that? Had they let him know that such a thing existed?

ORTEGA:

: No.

COATES:

: What was his reaction when he—

00:26:35

ORTEGA:

: He was pretty excited. He saw it. What he was more fascinating, there was photos from Herrington in there as well identifying certain individuals in certain regions in the Valley. So his fascination was over that.

Then the audiotapes, he just handed over to me and says, "I need you to learn these songs."(Coates laughs.) So he kind of handed it over to me, and then I just started reading the book and reading the transcripts and reading what each song meant or as close to what they were talking about. And even the transcripts were saying they're speaking Spanish and then going Native language, and they didn't—well, there's some mention of a bear, and that was about it. So I guess it was even hard for them to try to capture what they were saying or speaking.

COATES:

: The people who were on the recording, you mean?

ORTEGA:

: Right, yeah, because they were transcripts. So someone listened to the audiotapes as well, or there was Herrington's notes as he wrote down as the folks were taking, and he labeled each song. So that's what they've done, so the tapes that we have says this is reel number off Herrington, so that was that transcription, so we knew each song to each transcription of the documents that we had.

COATES:

: Did he keep this sort of in the family, so to speak? He was interested in the photos, he told you to learn the songs, and so forth. Did it stay that way for a while, or did he sort of present this and take it to the larger community pretty quickly? Or how did that happen that the larger community began to know that they existed and start to work with it?

00:28:40

ORTEGA:

: One, we seeked out someone who was more dedicated. He didn't want to just hand it out, the audiotapes, because back then it was more funding of time, so we wanted to make sure that they weren't erased. So were making some copies of them and handing out to tribal members and family members who were really interested, not just take it because they wanted a collection and put it in their shelf, but that will actually learn it. So it was more of that.

The photographs, there was a huge document, maybe about a couple hundred words in it, that one we took out the words because some of it were translated to English, some of it translated to Spanish, so we had someone who spoke Spanish translate the Spanish into English, so we have more of an English translation. Then we did a file. Then we print those out for tribal members who wish to get a copy and have that copy, and that's pretty much the extent of how we distribute the information out to the community. Then only a few people—we did hand it out to a few other members, but I think it was too soon because this was before more people started doing more bird songs. Only very few people were still—a lot of Cahuilla still did it, very few people on the rez. So a lot of folks up here in L.A. area really didn't do a lot of those songs yet, so it wasn't as trendy as it is today. So they had the tapes for a while. We had one gentleman, one young man who did have the passion and started learning it and now started passing out the songs. Then we did music classes after that, after he got a hang of the songs and learned it. I knew some of the songs, he knew some, but he was the one that we pretty much told him, "You've got to learn them and teach them." Kind of like they did to me, I did to him.

COATES:

: (laughs) So who was doing all the work, the copying of both the photos, the words, the tapes, all of that kind of thing before—

ORTEGA:

: Handing them out?

00:30:36

COATES:

: Yeah, they got handed out to people.

ORTEGA:

: The photocopying was my dad. He loved to make copies, and those who knew him knew that. He would give you a copy, and he had more copies besides that. We had this one organization donate a Xerox copier to us one time, and we installed it in the garage where we lived. It was an old thing. It would get stuck, and every little while I had to go help him and do a clear paper jam, but he would have tons and tons of copying, and I even one time I asked him, "Why you making so many copies? Make copies as you need them." And he says, "Well, you never know," and that was his thing. So he had tons of copies to hand out to everybody. The recording of audiotapes, I was one that was responsible for doing that. He left the technology stuff to me and whatever. He didn't want to mess around with any of that stuff.

COATES:

: And these were on cassette tapes at the time?

ORTEGA:

: Cassette tapes at the time, yeah, so we had to get a dual processing tape recorder.

COATES:

: Because they were on reel-to-reel originally?

ORTEGA:

: Yeah, yeah. So it took a while. We didn't have extensive money or cash flow to buy something really expensive and fancy to record them onto something nicer.

COATES:

: So you guys were just doing this in your own time. You didn't have a grant or anything like that.

ORTEGA:

: Yeah, it was off our own time, our own resources, own dollars, yeah. And then it wasn't till—

00:32:08

COATES:

: That's a lot of work.

ORTEGA:

: It was. What made it easier is maybe about five, six years later, we transferred them over to CD and then to computer audio, and that's when we're able to really define the pitching and audio recording of it and then put them on a couple CDs, and it was easier for us to transfer it. Because nowadays, CDs are really inexpensive, so we can distribute them. Some of the folks, some of the members who got them

moved them over to their iTunes library. So they have them, so you can listen to the music or headphones, they can be listening to the songs.

COATES:

: Are they learning the language that way as well, or is there enough there to really—

ORTEGA:

: There's a little bit of words there. They can learn the language. Learning language is beneficial, or key words, because they will know if a song said a certain plant or animal or like the sun or the moon, it was picked up in the—they knew what they were talking about in the song, so it made that easier. But there's still a lot of other songs that we just don't have words for and are just very difficult to learn. They're super fast. We do have one deer song that we all like that's on the recording, and that's the fastest song in the entire recording. It's just that we just can't keep up with it.

00:33:55

COATES:

: (laughs) How did the people react? How did the community react when these things start showing up and being distributed?

ORTEGA:

: I think fascinating, but I think the culture class or the contemporary Indian, a powwow Indian, has really made the impression in their mind and has been embedded, implanted. So when they looked at our traditional regalias when we had the kids dress up and said these were more closer, realist to our ancestral families, and these are more traditional songs, at first it was slow getting acquainted to it. There were still—turn around and say, "Well, I still like the powwow dancers. I still like the drums." And we said, "Californians don't drum," which was great because we got them to engage with that. It was too much embracing, we felt. Then there was no questions, and then there's no learning curve. But if they questioned us and say (unclear) and I prefer to have—I like this. So we had them engaging with us, and so the kids did learn a lot of songs. Family members learned the songs. So now it's more of a custom. So for every event that the tribe holds, we have our singers sing, and we invite also outside singers as well, singers who are Chumash or Tongva that will come down and sing with us.

COATES:

: So what kinds of changes have you seen in tribal governments as a result of the cultural revitalization, the reclaiming of a Tataviam identity, things like that? Has that led to changes within the organization, the structure of governance?

00:36:26

ORTEGA:

: It changed quite a bit. We have a tribal constitution, we have tribal code, a massive tribal code. Sometimes we even think we did wrong by putting certain laws in there. Our tribal government's broken in three branches now—well, actually two branches and an administrative branch, so we have all that. We still have tribal elders, who act as a council. We have general council still, and informally we keep the traditional ways, which is spokespersons within the families.

Prior to that, there was a lot of challenges and questions of who is the person who is granted the permission to be the next spokesperson for the entire tribe. So there was differences of families' opinion in there, so that made it hard. Then the second part was who is tribal and who wasn't, who was enrolled and who wasn't enrolled, and even still today we have family members says, "I'm enrolled." I say, "Well, your name doesn't appear on the roll, and you need to file." So the files, that even became a conflict. You know, "I don't need to file a document. That's how the U.S. government does it. That's not us. You're breaking our own traditional ways." So a lot of that stuff, a lot of that old mentality and way of thinking did really change. Having our spokespersons—like I said, that still happens. We have family members, and if they came up and said, "I'm the spokesperson of my family," the tribal government doesn't intervene or step in. We allow for that because we know that's our old ways. But more the newer ways with the constitution and laws, it's a little bit more challenging, but also I think through the test of time, it helps out quite a bit. I think there's still a lot of room of improvement, which is good. Not everything's set in stone. There's ways of electing our tribal leaders today through election process versus just by family base or elders. Some elders will speak up and say, "We want it back the old ways and let the elders decide who shall be governing the tribe." Like I said, informally we have that, and informally we have our elected leaders. So tribal members today are learning, and some of them likes it better because they feel it's more of a balance. They always felt the stronger families will always be the rulers of the tribe, or there's always something going on that they weren't privy to or inclusive to. This way now with the election process, they're able to voice their opinion. In their mind, they feel that they do, and then a lot, they do have that.

00:39:15

COATES:

: Do you still see in the election process, though, what you're calling the stronger families still sort of coming through there even to elected positions as well?

ORTEGA:

: Yeah, the more local, the more vocal. In my direct family, we still get criticized that my entire—actually my entire family's in tribal government right now, and a lot of members feel that needs to be changed, and we tell everyone that they can make that change. You know, "You elect your spokesperson for a family. Now you need to vote that person into leadership as well, not just as a spokesperson for your family." But my family, over the recent years, from my father's side and my uncles, if we include my uncles, we are now the second largest in the tribe. There's one family that overgrew us.

COATES:

: (laughs) In terms of how many family members there actually are?

ORTEGA:

: Yeah. That's where my political side starts thinking, wait, I've got to be nice to that side too.

00:40:28

COATES:

: (laughs) But there's probably some degree of intermarriage, also, isn't there, between families, so that it's not clear—I mean, it's clear that you're this family, but you're also that one, or something like that?

ORTEGA:

: Yeah. There's some of them, but the lines are drawn, because they will say they're more on this side than that side because of intermarriages, and then the intermarriages, a lot of the family members, those are more closer in time or prefer not to take a side. They say, "Or I'll take neutral grounds."

COATES:

: Stay out of the politics. (laughs)

ORTEGA:

: Stay out of the politics. You know, "It's too close and can't be divided that way."

COATES:

: So I mean if I'm understanding what you're saying—and correct me if I'm not getting this accurately or whatever, but there's a traditional sort of structure of governance that is centered around spokespersons for families, but then what has recently come about, or more recently come about, are these elected positions as well, so the effort right now is to try to find the way to kind of—

ORTEGA:

: Infuse them together.

COATES:

: Yeah, infuse them together or something like that.

ORTEGA:

: Yeah. It's a little difficult because some of the spokesperson for families are not enrolled in the tribe and choose not to enroll in the tribe. So they will—

COATES:

: And they have this resistance to enrolling? Is that—

00:42:14

ORTEGA:

: Some of them do. Some of them are just—in a political stance don't make sense, and I've told them that. "You're saying you don't want to be involved in politics, but you're the spokesperson for your family, and you're making a decision for them, and your resistance to enroll in tribe, it doesn't make good sense."

Others are just the fact that they find that they will never have a strong place at the table collectively for the entire folks, so that's the reason why some of those members are not enrolled in tribe. It's not that we're blocking them or not including them. I mean, right now our rolls are open and they have the opportunity to come in and show that they are part of the tribe, and they feel maybe by enrolling, some of them, they'll lose that authority as a spokesperson for the families.

COATES:

: Really?

ORTEGA:

: They feel that they have to relinquish and follow the new constitution of the tribe, because they read it and they said, "You don't address it," and that's something, maybe we need to address it.

COATES:

: The constitution doesn't address these traditional roles of spokesperson?

ORTEGA:

: Doesn't address the traditional roles, no. We tried to incorporate it, but we found it to be confusing, too complex, and we know that those who are enrolled in tribe and participating in new rules are engaging with the tribe, and those who follow more the traditional way, some of them are enrolled and some of them are not enrolled. So I think we're trying to keep both worlds comfortable and happy that way. So this way a lot of spokesperson or some of them, they practice traditional ways. They're looked at to do the funeral ceremonies, the wedding ceremonies, so they're looked upon that, and so they've got that title. So that's why we don't really engage that. We try not to keep the culture really entwined with the constitution. Let constitution just handle politics.

00:44:02

COATES:

: When was it developed?

ORTEGA:

: It was developed—actually we worked with UCLA from 1998 to 2000, and then we finalized it in 2002.

COATES:

: And you were a part of that process?

ORTEGA:

: Yeah.

COATES:

: What was that like?

ORTEGA:

: I think when we were going through the process, no one really truly understood the importance of it or grasped the magnitude or the impact that was going to come after it. As a tribe, we selected to pass it in 2002. It was, like everything, really not—I don't know how to—I mean, probably it was the fact of it really not on the radar. They felt how this is going to change the tribe, or we knew we're tribal; we don't need this document. So some folks read through it, and the Tribal Council—that's when it went from Tribal Council to Tribal Senate. We had our own council. So we had some tribal members on council at the time who said, "The tribal chair can't have supreme power." Maybe folks who were against my father or maybe wanted to change rulership said they shouldn't have a supreme power, so that's how the constitution got advocated and passed through. But I don't think a lot of people really truly pay attention to it, until now we're looking it, and we say we can't do this, we can't do that, and then we have a swarm of attorneys reading it for us, and then we have in recent times, some of the tribal legislatures, senators saying, "We're going to interpret the law the way we understand it.

00:45:45

COATES:

: Is there a tribal court that does that?

ORTEGA:

: No, we don't have a tribal court. The constitution has (unclear) tribal court, and so there are ordinances in (unclear). It's just that we haven't got there yet. So resolving issues like that has come down the old way. You know, who is in the room, the elders and the most vocal, wins the battle.

COATES:

: That's always the case. (laughs)

ORTEGA:

: Yeah.

COATES:

: So there are things about that constitution that twelve years down the road are proving a little bit—as it goes into actual practice, there's some things in it that are problematic, is that what I'm understanding?

00:47:49

ORTEGA:

: Yeah. What we try to do is safehold the tribe. We felt that the tribe should always be at a stable foundation. So when we built it up and secured it, we put too many security locks on it that didn't allow room for breathing or comfort, and especially in the flow of Native ways or in just the flow in just in general human being life, I would say. So we've tried to retract some of it. We retracted some of the items. We tried to change the rules. Just for example, enrollment in the tribe. We have family members who are Tataviam, but not on the BIA California Judgment Roll. So in order to enroll, you have to appear on that roll or have someone who is on that roll and a direct descendant from, a lineal descendant. If not, then you're not. And then if you're on those rolls, you have to show that you are from a Tataviam village. So you can't just be Fernandeno on the roll; you have to be Fernandeno with this Tataviam village.

So that changed, so we had family members, who were about two hundred, three hundred people, very upset, because after we wrote the law, not realizing that family's very close to my side of the family. So that was a law—you know, as they put in, I thought everybody was advocating and championing our past, and then everybody on council was as well, and it was an oversight. So now we go back, and every so often, we hear from the family saying, "Have you changed your constitution?"(Coates laughs.) So that's what makes it very difficult. Then after the law has passed and we have tribal attorneys reading it for us, they said, "It's a good thing because you're pursuing federal recognition. You need some staples in the ground with the federal government." So we said to the family and everybody else what the attorneys told us. Then nowatimes—this was maybe five, six years back, and the family still comes around and asks us even today, but now we're like—you know, if we're self-governed, and the BIA doesn't have rules over us right now, the United States government don't have rules over us right now, we're independent, we're truly self-governed, then what does it matter? These are our rules. These are our laws. We determine who's enrollment or not. So now we're determined to change constitution, but now our members—I guess that's where the greed come in or the side of too many Indians in the tribe. So they're reluctant to change the law and says, well, that keeps the gate kind of closed, a smaller gate. So now we have to go back. So that's where we find writing something, law, constitution is really crucial because it does impact later on.

COATES:

: Yeah, it does. (laughs)

00:49:45

ORTEGA:

: Yeah, yeah.

COATES:

: What's the impetus for having a smaller tribe for keeping the gate a little bit closed as you're sort of framing it? I mean, I understand what the internal conflicts within gaming tribes have been sometimes over that, but what's the impetus for a nongaming tribe?

ORTEGA:

: For us, I think a lot of it—and this is being consulted by attorneys and all—was the bigger role you have when you're pursuing federal recognition, your enrollment-based participation level. If you have a huge number of tribal members and only 10, 15 percent participates in the tribe, it's a flag on your petition. But that's where I said to the attorneys, "You need to argue it better," because when you have a look at elections of United States, they have a huge citizenship base and a very small election voting turnout. So their participation level is much lower than what we have as tribal community. So I think that's biased and unfair.

COATES:

: I do too. That's a standard that even other tribes aren't held to, because I'm from the largest tribe in the country, and we have probably 80 percent of our citizenry who don't participate much in anything.

ORTEGA:

: Right, right, right. So that's the hurdle and the thing about going through the petition process. So we're cautious on it, and I think it's just the matter of better arguing it at the end of the day, having good lobbyists, attorneys saying the case. But they don't have control and they're fearful, because at the end of the day, it's whoever's in the department makes the decision.

00:51:47

COATES:

: Right. So the impetus to develop a constitution, was that because you were seeking federal recognition, state recognition? Was it part of that whole effort or was it—

ORTEGA:

: No, it was part of that effort, but also, too, I think it was a part of—as I mentioned earlier, we have families who differ in as who's the spokesman. We have spokesmans of families, then you have spokesman for the entire tribe, and that was the difference of what family we got to say their family's the one's going to be leading the entire tribe. So to eliminate that, that's why we came up with the constitution. Then as well, we've learned—you know, we also understood it's important to have a constitution written up if you're petitioning for recognition. It's not necessary. They don't ask for that. The only thing they truly ask for is rules of your bylaws of enrolling people in the tribe, but you really—constitution's not the—

COATES:

: It's not required.

ORTEGA:

: Yeah. Because if you get recognized, they will make you write a constitution. So we felt we should write our own and get things going.(Coates laughs.) We're a little more aggressive that way.

COATES:

: Do they make you write a constitution if you're recognized, if you gain recognition?

ORTEGA:

: I'm not quite sure. I don't know.

COATES:

: Yeah, because there are tribes that don't have constitutions—

ORTEGA:

: Mm-hmm.

COATES:

: —so I was just—yeah. Anyway, it's a question I don't know either. It's a—

ORTEGA:

: Yeah, it's something to ask.

00:53:16

COATES:

: —question that occurred to me. Okay. When was the state recognition achieved?

ORTEGA:

: State recognition's informal. After Gabrieleno, Juaneno went in as a legislative decision, our tribe went in through the Heritage Commission, acknowledged as an historical tribe. The State of California says, "We don't acknowledge tribes," and especially the whole situation that occurred with the Gabrieleno folks in using their state recognition to pursue gaming rights now without federal acknowledgement. So, the State of California just closed the door completely, and when we came after them, they said they are not going to pass any more legislation because it does not grant formal state recognition. So that's including the two tribes, the Juanenos and Gabrielenos. It's not a full regulated state recognition.

COATES:

: Now, can you explain to me this a little bit, because I haven't talked to anybody that is Juaneno. The people from Tongva, Gabrieleno that I've talked to have not been in tribal government. Both of them have been opposed to gaming just generally, I guess.

ORTEGA:

: Right.

COATES:

: But you're not from that group, so you're not part of that process, but can you just kind of fill me in a little bit on what you're talking about here, the attempt to try to gain gaming as a state-recognized entity that they did?

00:55:27

ORTEGA:

: Yeah. One of the groups from the Gabrielenos has an attorney who filed documents and tried to persuade the state into moving some lands to state-recognized lands, and with that they said that the state had the authority to enter into the tribe for gaming aspects, so that they didn't need the federal

involvement. If the tribe is sovereign through the state, and the state is sovereign through the union, then they can make their own declaration of having a gaming facility.

COATES:

: And this was a non-Indian attorney—

ORTEGA:

: A non-Indian attorney—

COATES:

: —making this argument?

ORTEGA:

: —working with one of the groups of the Gabrielenos who pursue the gaming facility.

COATES:

: And the state did not buy that argument, huh?

ORTEGA:

: No, no, and that's what I think caused— because myself, I've lobbied a couple of State Assembly members and state senators to put a more enforceful state recognition, which would mean the state

caring for the state-recognized tribes, moving some lands to state trusts for the tribes. So when that was occurring at the same time I was lobbying, the state legislatures got scared and said, "No, we can't do that."

COATES:

: So when tribes talk about having the Tataviam Tribe, the Tongva, right, having state recognition, you're saying that's an informal recognition that is more through the Heritage Commission or something like that?

ORTEGA:

: Yeah, it's—

COATES:

: What am I missing here? (laughs)

ORTEGA:

: Well, because state recognition doesn't—if you look at state laws, there's no law that says there's such a state-recognized tribe.

COATES:

: Yeah, there's no authority on—

ORTEGA:

: No authority.

00:56:44

COATES:

: —the part of the state to do that, actually.

ORTEGA:

: They don't grant any funding, they don't provide any resources, they don't provide any care for the tribe off the federal funding that comes in for tribes. None of the state-recognized tribes receives them. So there's truly no state acknowledgement under Heritage Commission. I say that and I know a couple of folks kind of feel like, well, you're not state-recognized. It's more historical acknowledgement. It's still acknowledgement from the state, and that we do have, and that gives us the authority, or it gives us participation in protecting cultural resources and involvement that way. Then the other informal is in the county of L.A., we're able to participate with their government-to-government relationships that may impact tribal members or citizens on their right as being Indian or Tataviam. So that we have, something we do, and we always stay within that arena to protect tribe rights.

COATES:

: Have there been issues for you that you've been involved in of protection of cultural sites or sacred sites or resources?

ORTEGA:

: Yeah, many. We get an average, like many other tribes, maybe hundreds of letters a month that involve reviewing.

COATES:

: Wow.

00:58:31

ORTEGA:

: So what we've done, with that authority, we went to the county general manager and request that we charge a permitting fee that we've been trying to issue out. One, just get it on our tribal books, in our tribal laws, and then to just create the form and resource review permit, so that each ours go through.

So we were able to protect sites that are significant, important to the tribe that minimize impact or no impact. We were able to negotiate artifacts that are culturally to the tribe become the property of the tribe instead of the property landowner. So we enter into contracts in that, so that provides us. So we took more of an aggressive approach that way. Then within the state Heritage Commission, they acknowledge one person as a most likely descendent. We request that the state Heritage Commission determines the entire tribe as MLD rather than one single individual, and the reason is is that the tribe is based on three families, and our three families come from multiple villages that are not together. So the tribal elders (unclear) our best to make the decision who descends from village and also who most likely may descend from a nearby village, who have more cultural significant relationship to. So those are the things that we've done as far a cultural resources and under authority granted by the Heritage Commission to us.

COATES:

: What are some of the specific instances when you've had to enter into that, and what was it like? Were you directly participating in those kinds of negotiations or protests or whatever it may have been? Can you talk about that specifically?

01:00:34

ORTEGA:

: Yeah. I think the (unclear) and the climate—my brothers, my father, and Pamela was actually involved in one of them—saw the climate change different. Instead of picketing with signs up in the front of the area and protesting, we took it to a political arena. We went after our supervisors, whoever's in charge of making that decision. If the Army Corps Water Board, we found who it was, we went to them and stated our case.

Then negotiating the contracts with developers, we sat down with them and said, "It's vital that we're at the table making the decision, especially if it means impacting cultural resources." One of the lines that we've used—well, negotiation was intense for the first one. I don't know how many tribes have done this or do that, is negotiating amount of—well, they hire archeologists, an environmental firm, to do

their study.

COATES:

: Where was this? What was the specific—

ORTEGA:

: This was in Santa Clarita. So we were dealing with a massive land developer, moving to install houses, build homes in the area. So that's where we negotiated with them. We told them that they needed us, our support, so negotiating with them, I would say it would be like more of corporate American than anything else and negotiations. So I think that was a different turn, a pivotal point, definitely, for the tribe, because like I say, not that I know of or heard of anyone else negotiating the way we did for the tribe and its rights. So we got monetary funding for the tribe to enhance our culture—

COATES:

: From the developer?

ORTEGA:

: From the developer. That helped us. Actually crucial because filing for federal recognition is quite extensive.

COATES:

: Yes, it is.

01:02:28

ORTEGA:

: We have no investor. We have no game investor. We're always proud to say that, because that's one thing we get accused of (Coates laughs), which we did our own, so that's where funding come from.

The history, the lands were originally our lands. Whatever reason, the political and history, and the climate had changed. We no longer have the land, so that's one thing we made known to the developer. So artifacts and all that, items, like I mentioned before, become the property of the tribe. So anything found, if it's something that's salvageable or if it's something that needs to get reinterred, reburied, it gets reburied, and then we negotiate where the reburial sites are at.

COATES:

: So this included human remains as well as artifact?

ORTEGA:

: Yeah. If human remains were accidentally discovered, they will get reburied at a site, and we negotiated land for the tribe as well, and we negotiated sites that are known to be cemetery sites not to be impacted, so they become open space. So as a developer, they thought us a headache, because losing land, keeping more open space is less return for them. The artifacts, at first they were a little hesitant, said, well, it's there's because it's on their land. As we told them, what significant value did they have for you? "They're priceless to us. What value do they have for you?" So that's how we're able to negotiate our terms. At the end, the tribe and the company have become close and understanding to each other. But at first, it was a lot of resistance.

01:04:19

COATES:

: Yeah. Those are my questions. How did you overcome that? Because in my experience, these kinds of companies are not—I mean, and not being federally recognized, not having certain federal laws on your side, right? How did you hold their feet to the fire on this?

ORTEGA:

: The fear of us going public, going more in the paper, the fear of them finding more artifacts or anything like that really impacting their case. At the end of the day, I think one of the things, the way we were able to be successful was the tribe and myself and everyone else, part of the team that was negotiating, said the company has an interest and an agenda, and our tribe has an interest and an agenda, and how can these two have a parallel track and what's the meeting ground of that. And of course they have a lot more than we have, and our interests may be quite different from each other, but where can we meet down the line so that everyone is successful and content and be able to move forward. So that's what we did when we went into negotiating rooms, is that it was all their side, and they didn't want to listen to us, and so we said, "Well, don't listen to our side, we won't listen to you, and it looks like we're not going to go anywhere, and it's going to be a mess. And we don't want a mess; we want a relationship." So I think one of the things we were champion was, "Let's build a relationship." Nothing works if it's a broken relationship. And that's how we were able to, I think, successfully win the agreement with them. They were very pleased. Each time we see the company, they keep telling us how much they enjoy our relationship and able to work with them, help them out.

COATES:

: So they were able to complete their development.

ORTEGA:

: They were able to get past all the approvals. They're still waiting to break ground. So they're hopefully to break ground this year.

01:06:31

COATES:

: But you were satisfied. You have an agreement with them that when they do these—you were able to negotiate certain things that are going to be respected in your expectation. And I presume it's going to cost them a little bit more money if—

ORTEGA:

: It cost them a bit more money because we ask for money upfront.

COATES:

: Plus, if they do discover things that need to be dealt with, that's going to be time and—

ORTEGA:

: And maybe more land lost. So they are aware of it, so they're willing to work with us on that.

COATES:

: And they were willing to give that in order to not have a poor public relations or—

ORTEGA:

: Poor public relations and even—

COATES:

: Public image, huh?

ORTEGA:

: —image and even more land lost, because they knew there's always environmentalists, there's always community residents who—it goes back to the tribal enrollment list. Keep the gate smaller. We don't want more. But population around it continues to grow, and it's an ever-growing demand. It's something we need to be facing. And that's the other approach, the other angle the tribe looked at. We'd rather be involved in development and say how it should be done to minimize the impact to environment, to cultural resources, and also one thing we really enjoy is the fact that since the landowner own so much

property, harvesting. So we'll oppose for educational items, and then we'll—feather droppings all over the place. We get tons of feathers. So the resources open up for us. So it's like we're gaining back our land indirectly. We did get some titlement of land, but right now the pristine open forest land or any of that land, we have access to, which is really—

01:08:12

COATES:

: Even though they own it, huh?

ORTEGA:

: Right. It's like we gained an easement to it.

COATES:

: For gathering and harvesting.

ORTEGA:

: For gathering, harvesting, yeah.

COATES:

: Wow. (laughs)

ORTEGA:

: So that's what I'm saying, I think overall we all tend to win, because they had something, an interest in their mind, we have something, an interest in our mind, and we needed to make it work together and to a comparable understanding.

COATES:

: Now, as you were engaged in these negotiations, was the community being kept informed about what the negotiation was?

ORTEGA:

: Not exactly. It was only set in tribal government, in Tribal Senate, in the executive branch. Decisions were made there. The only thing that was public that was to our members was, "Here's this developer moving forward on and possibly disturbing a lot of artifacts." In fact, we went to the paper on one item, so that made them really listen to us, because then they realized, "Wait a minute."

COATES:

: They got a little taste of the threat. (laughs)

01:09:26

ORTEGA:

: They got a little taste, yeah, that we were serious. So that's what was informed to the members.

Once it was done, the developer and the tribe came to an agreement to only certain information be released until full, complete breaking ground. Then everything can be informed to the public. That was just the fear of the developer's side that they had more tribes or tribal individuals knocking on their door asking for the same kind of contract. And that's where we go to the state Heritage Commission and say, "You can't determine one person MLD. You've got to determine the tribe." And as a tribe, collectively, we make that decision, and we prefer it that way. That's one reason why we kept certain information not very disclosed, and then once we were signing the contract, then we told the entire tribe.

COATES:

: Right. But the community members, the tribal members had had this one newspaper article that had sort of illuminated the issue for them at least, okay?

ORTEGA:

: Right.

COATES:

: What was the sense within the community about that? Were they upset? Were they holding you all—was there pressure on you as the negotiations were going on, and so forth?

ORTEGA:

: Yeah, they were watching us. They were hoping that we make the best decision. I think that's something that I've learned in the tribe. If you're the leader, you've just got to do it. All the members depend on you to get it accomplished and get it complete. There's no ifs and buts. There's no, "I can do it halfways." If you're sitting in the seat and you request to sit in the seat, then you've got to get it done. And I think that's what the members were looking at towards, and they're waiting for the end result. They didn't ask, during the whole process where we're negotiating, we told them we were, there's no like, "What are you negotiating? How are you negotiating? Here's an advice to negotiate," because we told them who our team was in negotiations and what we're doing. So they left it as is until we said, "Okay. Now we've completed it and we're going to inform you at a meeting," and that's when they all came out and wonder how we do it and very pleased to hear how much and what we did and what our (unclear) was.

01:12:21

COATES:

: So there was a lot of confidence in the people who were negotiating within the community. Was that pretty widespread, or was there any kind of challenge to that negotiation that came when people didn't—I mean, before it had finalized, or people were just pretty willing to sit back and wait and see what—

ORTEGA:

: People were somewhat willing to sit back and wait. I think since they only knew so much information, so they knew like, well, okay, tribal government's keeping it closed doors and they're talking about it.

COATES:

: And there's a reason for that.

01:13:39

ORTEGA:

: Right, right. Especially if there's an opportunity of going to the courts, you want to keep certain information there still. Then the other part, within Tribal Senate itself, there was the discussion of who should be in the room negotiating, what amount we should be requesting if it's monetarial funds, how much property we should negotiate, how much easement we should ask, how much artifacts, because it was even that. Human remains, that was a hands-down they all get reburied. Nothing gets kept. Artifacts that are found with human remains gets reburied. Artifacts that are found close by the human remains get reburied. Artifacts found by itself, depending on the condition and what item it is, it may get kept for display for educational purposes.

So those are the things that we talked about, and that became—when it became further more of the discussion, that was like, "Okay. What are we doing?" So we put in the contract, "When we get there, we discuss it, but then if we're not in it right now, we don't have to." Then the other point was who shall be in the meeting and who should speak in—in Tribal Senate, it was mixed families. It was entirely not my family at the time. And the one that got chosen was my entire family. The other family member says, "Well, you guys go and negotiate the room." And myself, I was no longer on Tribal Senate. I was the tribal administrator. So it was my father, trial president; my brother, vice president; and my other brother, who was a tribal senator; and another senator that was involved with it. That was the first negotiation. Then when we came to the final complete one, again they chose me to go, then my father, and then Pamela, because we did a presentation of it. So that's who was selected to be in that room. So even then, they felt who should be and who shouldn't be in the room. Some people get hurt. I've been told, "Why did they select you?" or, "You're not on the government office. You were staff at the time."

COATES:

: But in the end, people were pretty pleased with the outcome of the negotiation?

01:15:53

ORTEGA:

: Very pleased. Because as soon as that happened, we turned around and said we had funding to keep going in our petition and make the next step and file it and get ready to file. I mean, do all the research. We have the funds to hire the research team, the writers of the petition, bring the attorney back onboard, and get things going and moving.

COATES:

: Okay. So there really wasn't any sort of disgruntlement with it in the end or anything like that?

ORTEGA:

: No, no. They were pleased.

COATES:

: And you've got precedent if you come up against other developers and other situations—

ORTEGA:

: Right, right, right.

COATES:

: —in the future. That's amazing. (laughs) Have there been other kinds of economic development that the tribe has pursued over the last thirty or forty years? Have you been able to do that, even lacking federal recognition?

ORTEGA:

: Yeah. Well, the tribe, in the late sixties, we started a nonprofit that provide community services, and through that we solicit grants, and it's still running today, which now it's called Pukuu Cultural Community Services. So we have that operation, and they provide general community programming, social services, youth involvement, job and training placement programs. And then the tribe, a few years back, we—well, prior to that, there were a couple of ventures that were established short-term, and then we created a creative design agency that does marketing design. So that one, we still have today, and it's called Pahi Creative Group Services. So through them, it's a growing part of the tribe, and today now we're looking to hire someone who can look at creative ways to establish business for the tribe, and whatever little resources we had left over, to reinvest it or create something that would generate more secure funding for the tribe. So we're still adamant in chasing those dreams, yeah, even though we're not recognized.

01:17:53

COATES:

: Right. There're still other means to do things.

ORTEGA:

: Right, right.

COATES:

: In terms of your overall tribal membership right now, and looking at changes that have occurred over the last thirty or forty years, what could you say about economic change for individuals, for families? Has their situation improved, stayed the same, gone down? What do you see?

ORTEGA:

: In the mid-1990s, a lot of families moved out of the Valley area and moved further north or moved out of state, and that was due to either jobs or affordable housing, more affordable for them and to own a home. And jobs, just like everyone else, we've always lived in the very metropolitan area, the city area, urban areas of Los Angeles, so jobs are always a little more plentiful for us around, but also, too, it impacts us like every other residence in Los Angeles. So jobs are scarce, and there's a higher number right now, I would say, of not full-time employment. Maybe they've got part-time retail or unemployment and unable to find certain jobs. Some of them may be just forced into early retirement just so they can get some funding into their household, and that's due just, again, through the regular economics that are occurring in the States, but averagely it was probably about the same. We don't have a high number of high breadwinners in the tribe. There's a few. I'll say maybe about a dozen or so that maybe we can handpick them out, that make a very well and stable living, and then the majority of the tribe, I would say, I don't know, probably about 40 to 45 percent that's in the poverty area.

01:20:16

COATES:

: Is it?

ORTEGA:

: And then the rest of it, about 50 percent of that in medium household income, and about 5 percent is above that. That would be the economic status of the tribe.

COATES:

: And most people are engaged in what the anthros call wage labor, huh, that they're working for a paycheck and that kind of employment?

ORTEGA:

: Yeah.

COATES:

: And what I guess I'm wondering, because was there more of a subsistence type of economy maybe previous to fifty years ago, in terms of people who were engaged more in small-scale agriculture or ranching or things like that? Was that the case for people, or have they always been in this wage situation through most of the twentieth century?

ORTEGA:

: They've probably been mostly in the wage situation, but a lot of it—well, generations prior to that was in agricultural, a lot of it also in construction and labor-intensive trade. I would say maybe about the seventies or so, maybe in sixties, a lot of them started going to more of administrative work, but a lot of manufacturing. A lot of them did a lot of manufacturing work or government-paid programming jobs that were in. So I think that has always been the trade of the tribal members.

COATES:

: I'm wondering because—and being relatively new to the region, it seems like maybe more to the east that the urban area hadn't sprawled quite that direction yet, and so there was more of that going on, whereas I think around here, it's been pretty urbanized for a long time, huh?

ORTEGA:

: Yeah, yeah.

01:22:23

COATES:

: Maybe like for a century or more, it's been—

ORTEGA:

: Oh, yeah. The aerospace was here. Ford Motors was here—I mean GM was here, so a lot of them had those jobs after the war. That's what I'm saying, after the war, a lot of those factories came in, construction of the ranch-style home—or I forgot how they call them, the tract homes, actually. So a lot of them worked in construction and built a lot of homes in the Valley, made that big boom in growth, and that was all through the sixties, seventies, and took those jobs. When GM left, a lot of them were forced into retirement because they were at that age, and some of them had to go find jobs in different areas. And since they was in manufacturing, they went back into manufacturing of some kind. Some of them went into medical manufacturing. Some aerospace stayed in the Valley, some of them moved up to Palmdale, and a lot of them followed. Those tended to be the type of jobs that they were receiving.

COATES:

: You said about 40 percent, you would estimate, are at poverty level, and that there's been some amount—approximately, just speculating, what percentage of the tribe has maybe moved out of—

ORTEGA:

: Of the area?

01:23:54

COATES:

: —their original villages or whatever, out of the area?

ORTEGA:

: Out of the area? It would be roughly close to 40 percent or a little bit more, but those who moved out but are not in the poverty areas as well. You've got a lot of them—or you've got a few, maybe a handful or so moved out of the area and moved to a different state because of work. They follow the job. Some of them were in construction building freeways, so they raise their family in a different state, and then those individuals are in high-paying positions in their jobs. Some of them, I think, are university professors as well.

COATES:

: So the ones at poverty level would maybe tend to be more those who stayed rather than those who left, or is there a correlation at all?

ORTEGA:

: Yeah. The ones who left would have left—some of them left because—the ones at poverty level, I will say they moved further up north in the county, and then those who moved out prior, the generation—the first one who did move out moved because of job placement, and then their children, some of them may be in the poverty area because whatever their condition is in their state.

COATES:

: Right. So it's just kind of a mixed situation. It's not really anything to correlate. Okay. What about educational changes for—I mean, in your own family, it seemed like—were you the first-generation college or second?

ORTEGA:

: First.

COATES:

: First, okay. Was that typical that your generation was kind of the first within the tribe to gain that educational level?

ORTEGA:

: Pretty much. My brother Larry went to community college, and then myself attend college, and I think it was just no one understood the reason. You had your parents just telling you just got to go.

01:26:16

COATES:

: Go to college or—

ORTEGA:

: Go to college. Or a lot of members, tribal members—not really a college, but more of a trade school, an occupational school to learn a trade to go after a contractor's license or something like that—did that, but the understanding or the complexity was a little bit much, or it didn't really (unclear) the members to go to school, and also they didn't know how. They just knew that it was a heavy burden, expense, and if you have a family of six, or in my case, twelve siblings, it makes it very difficult to go to school, and it's something they looked at as you go to school, continue learning. I remember some of the elders saying—my father saying, "If you didn't learn anything in the first twelve years, you're not going to learn nothing in college." So it's like, "You need to go get a job," and that was their thing. They didn't understood the higher education process, how can it advance you in career or not advance you. Nowadays, sometimes you've got to weigh out going to college. But they just felt that making ends meet and putting food on the table and finding a secure job was more beneficial. So there's quite a few family members that ensure that their families continue to work work, not really go in. Today the tribe offers an education department where we're teaching that. We're teaching how can you afford college, where can you go to college at. It's much like anything in life. You only eat as much as you can afford, you don't go to the five-star restaurants in Beverly Hills—

COATES:

: Hopefully. (laughs)

01:28:44

ORTEGA:

: —if your budget doesn't allow you to. So it's just the program we have teaches the kids and encourages them to look towards higher education, and teaches the parents, not only the children, the

kids, but also the parents, in showing them ways that they can look for scholarships and funding and what schools they can afford as well, and how the whole system works about going to college.

COATES:

: So are there more that are going to college and graduating? Is the overall educational attainment of the tribe increasing?

ORTEGA:

: It's increasing. There's a lot of starters but no finishers. But there's quite a few—and the numbers change. Each decade we go, the numbers continue to grow towards education, which is a good thing, because I think from the seventies is when—sixties maybe perhaps when a lot of them started having the concept of college. Because I think even though we're part of the community (unclear) here, a lot of the jobs were still farmers, you know, all the jobs, trades that we talked about earlier. So a lot of it was, "You don't need to go." And the parents prior to us, education-wise, maybe stopped at eleventh or tenth grade, so they didn't see the other need for other education at all.

COATES:

: What is your relationship with the other tribes in the area that are indigenous to here? Do you have good relationships with most of them? Do you receive encouragement, assistance, support from them in your petitions for recognition and things like that?

01:31:07

ORTEGA:

: If it's federal recognition, human nature is maybe some will be very supportive and some of them very envious. My relationship or the tribe's relationship with other groups, I think it would be as the same in any other neighbor relationship you have at home. You have your neighbors to your left and your right and front and behind you. Some of them you get along with very well. Some of them may truly pester you because whatever they do in their yard and stuff is bothersome, and vice versa. There may be something you do that they truly don't like. That's the relationship that we have with other tribes.

Culturally, when it comes to events and programming, it seems like to be the neutral ground, and we can tolerate (Coates laughs) or hang out depending on the situation or the political climate that occurred

prior to that, but I think some of the groups we tend not to have a relationship with. It's just some groups may other political approach. It's a little bit aggressive or hostile than ours, or if they're a little bit pushy and being a bully and want everyone to follow their path will defer us from speaking with them or interacting with them.

COATES:

: Very diplomatically stated. (laughs) Then there's a large population of Indian people in Los Angeles County who have come from somewhere else in the country, right?

ORTEGA:

: Mm-hmm.

COATES:

: Do you interact much with the urban Indian, the Pan-Indian community, I guess?

01:33:20

ORTEGA:

: Yeah. Well, when my father started the programs, when he had the nonprofit, he had quite a few people who were Indians who came from a different state that made Los Angeles their home and participated with them. And because of that idealism, our nonprofit has folks who are Navajo, Tohono O'odham, Pima, you know, different folks from different tribes. We have Apache, Lakota at a point of time. They were serving on our nonprofit board. So we engage with them and we circle and then participate and have them involved, so this way we can involve the community that surrounds us and those who may made Los Angeles their home, and as well we have folks who work for us, or have worked for us, who may be from different tribal affiliations as well.

So they engage quite—we have one now who's a Seminole Indian, and another one—let me see. Who is the other one? I can't remember. I think—no. Actually they're both Seminole as the uncle. We had an uncle and a niece work for us. The uncle's working for us now.

COATES:

: Based on my last couple of questions here—and they're big, broad questions—we've talked a little bit already about the issues of cultural resource protection and sort of the sprawling urban environment, and so forth. What are some of the greatest issues for the tribe? I mean, that's one. But for the tribe, other than that, of being in the middle of this huge metropolis and everything, what are the challenges of that for you?

01:35:4101:37:20

ORTEGA:

: I think the larger one is healthcare. I think being Indian, a non-recognized Indian, you have a federal law that says that healthcare should be afforded all American Indians, and then when wrote it to code, they defined it to be from federally recognized tribes, but the original bill was for all American Indians. It wasn't based on tribes; it was based on just the fact that you can have it in ancestry. So that's a challenge and hurdle over that, because the healthcare services, even though we now have an Affordable Care Act that's through, it's not so much affordable for a lot of our members, and they have to make a living sustainable to paying that extra fee and have good care. A lot of them probably makes enough just to bring home some food. Well, a lot of them, probably they're living paycheck to paycheck. They have enough to pay everybody and maybe have $10 for themselves, and that's not really a good life. So the healthcare is really essential.

The second part would be jobs, having good job resources in places that our members can be proud to work at and do some work for as well and motivate them. So I think those are the two things outside of federal recognition that would bring so much other stuff and probably answer some of those questions for us, but those are the needs for that. Then lastly—(unclear) probably jobs, and this one's probably, I think, the same as housing. A lot of our members move quite often, those in the poverty areas, so they lease out their areas. Some of them have lived in motels for a point in time, became homeless, and they're here. So if Los Angeles is their home and become homeless, it's very difficult for them to—there's no reservation to go to. There's no other state to go to. They go to another state if they already had a job offer, or if there's another relative lives out of state and says, "Oh, I can get you a job as a cook or the dishwasher man here at this restaurant, and you could come here to live here with us." Rent is $300 versus here in L.A. rent to be almost $1,000 or maybe 1,000 or more in some places. So they do that transition and move out. But if we had good housing programming and affordable housing for—and we don't—again, as Indian who's not federally recognized, we don't qualify for Indian HUD, so they can't go into those programs as well. So those are the items, I would say.

COATES:

: And we should know, because it's real apparent that in Los Angeles County, which has the largest Indian population of any county in the country, right, and yet because Tataviam and Tongva are not federally recognized, there are no services for Indian people here of any kind, especially in healthcare.

So if that recognition were gained, it would be a tremendous benefit, not only to the two tribes, but to all the overall Indian population in the county, which is so large, and which at this point has no access to that type of assistance, right?

ORTEGA:

: Right, right. I think if it's a win, it's a win for everyone, as mentioned. So it's a pivotal point to have. It's something crucial.

COATES:

: That's something you need to take your negotiating skills into— (laughs)

ORTEGA:

: Yeah.

COATES:

: —because it would take a lot of the pressure off of public health types of facilities and things like that.

ORTEGA:

: Well, we tried. We went to one congressman already and advocated that they entrust the tribe to run an IHS clinic. Came close, but that's where we had oppositions because going in—

01:38:46

COATES:

: The federal law doesn't—

ORTEGA:

: Well, they're looking to grant us or kind of give us that permission, but the issue was appropriations, and we will cut into the healthcare funding, and that meant other federally recognized Indians and other Indians saying, "Wait a minute. It's going to non-recognized Indians? We can't do that." So that's where it didn't happen.

COATES:

: Yeah. Then I guess to kind of flip the question over, what is the impact of the tribe on the larger region of Southern California that you see?

ORTEGA:

: The impact as today?

COATES:

: Or over the last forty years or so, say.

ORTEGA:

: Last forty years, I think we became more of an educational history location, more correctness and information that's being taught about American Indians, especially San Fernando Indians, especially Tataviam Indians in the school systems, and we're slowly doing that correction over time. We've provided educational scholarships to the community. We created jobs. We provided jobs. We assist in providing financial aid to some individuals. We also took some of the burden off of some local government. Immediately here in the city of San Fernando, we saved them roughly between 80 to

120,000 annually on maintenance fees, because the tribe has its own maintenance crew and now maintains the park facility. (Coates laughs.) So the city loves us on that because they don't have to put in their maintenance crew and they don't have to put staff there for that, and we have a three-man staff there. Within the national forest, similar to the city, we maintain a Cultural Center, granting the forest another destination for visitors to visit the forest, have a facility up and kept and utilized by the public. So we're able to do that. It saves the forest and federal dollars, tons of money, because that's something they don't have to put employment or staff or oversight or maintenance care. So we're probably averaging—saving their savings about half a million up there on that site. And I think those are the impacts right now, immediately that we've impacted the city and the county.

01:41:37

COATES:

: So you're convincing them it could be beneficial to have an Indian tribe in there. (laughs)

ORTEGA:

: Definitely. And that's not being recognized.

COATES:

: Right, right.

ORTEGA:

: Imagine recognized, a lot more, and the county itself will receive funding, more appropriations coming towards them.

COATES:

: So I was thinking about the little story that you shared with me last time about your experience in school, and I think it was you that they were not saying something correctly about, or it was you or a

friend or somebody saying, “Actually, I am Indian here.”

ORTEGA:

: Yeah, yeah.

COATES:

: And when they were saying, “Well, everybody’s extinct,” and so forth or something like that—

ORTEGA:

: Yeah, yeah.

COATES:

: —as I recall. So that wouldn’t happen nowadays, huh, because—

00:00:00

ORTEGA:

: No. I think more kids are proud to say who they are and—well, I’ll probably take—I think there’s probably school here or there with a teacher, one or two loosely around, who will say, “There’s no more Indians.” But I think the fact of us being out there more publically and doing the correctness about it has changed quite a bit, and there’s more information. (00:00:00)

We have a map that we develop and we’re publishing, right now is in our third version that we’re getting ready to move out to the public. It’s been on high request and demand by teachers, and now people are using it, and instead of saying, “I live in West Valley,” they say they live in one of those village areas. So it has changed quite a bit. But again, there’s always that one individual who will say to a room of Indians, “There’s no Indians here.”

COATES:

: Until somebody pops up in their class and says, “I am.” (laughs)

ORTEGA:

: Says, “Yeah, I am, and I can bring the people to tell you.” Because besides me, my niece did the same thing. She was in school and the teacher argued with her. It’s my sister’s daughter, and they came over to us. She came over to me, and I wrote her a letter and I said, “Well, give this to your teacher,” and it had the tribal seal on there, my father’s signature, my signature on there, and it pretty much says, “The tribe’s here. You’re near the Mission of San Fernando, and the people who descend from who built it are here, the descendents, and if you’d ever like to have go in for a presentation, we’re more than happy, free of charge.” I never got the call (Coates laughs), but my niece said that the teacher apologized.

COATES:

: Did she acknowledge in the class and everything?

ORTEGA:

: Yeah, she acknowledged it, yeah, definitely.

COATES:

: Very good.

00:00:00

ORTEGA:

: Yeah, yeah. (00:00:00)

COATES:

: Very good. Okay. Well, is there anything else that you'd like to state for the record, so to speak, or things that I haven't asked that you think it would be important for a researcher or a student or somebody that might be listening to this in the future to know about this moment?

ORTEGA:

: To know? I think overall, American Indians, tribal people, just like anyone else in an educational profession or a research profession, is constantly learning and realizing and restoring their history and their culture. So along the way, there's always going to be bumps, but more importantly is be respectful to them, and get the time to engage with the people and understand them and get to know their personalities and the way they work, and that's what makes them that community. What makes that community thrive is that uniqueness, characteristics, and the people's soul and spirit from that community.

COATES:

: Okay. Well, thank you.

ORTEGA:

: Sure.

COATES:

: Thank you so much for sitting with me these two sessions. (laughs)

ORTEGA:

: Yeah. Well, definitely. Thank you for coming down.

COATES:

: Appreciate it. (End of June 4, 2014 interview)