

Oral History Transcript

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Interviewer(s): Mylah Cueva
Arianna Reyes
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[Mylah]: My name is Mylah Cueva, and I'm here with my partner,

[Arianna]: Arianna Reyes.

[Mylah]: We are interviewing

[Cole]: Cole Morales.

[Mylah]: Thank you for agreeing to participate in this oral history project. I want to remind you that this may be published as part of the Oral History Archives project for Dr. Gloria Lopez in our ethnic studies methodologies class at California State University Chico. I need your permission to publish this transcript in part or in its entirety. Do we have your permission?

[Cole]: Yes.

[Mylah]: So, let's begin with you telling us a bit about yourself.

[Cole]: My name is Cole Morales. I'm the Associate Director for the Office of Tribal Relations here at Chico State. I grew up semi-close to the area in Lassen County and grew up there my whole life and then came down here for school. I am Mountain Maidu as well as Indian Rancheria.

[Mylah]: So how long have you been working here at Chico and I guess you answered you already attended the school before, what was your major while you were here?

[Cole]: So, my major was Recreation Hospitality and Parks Management with an emphasis in natural resource management. I also did a certificate geographical information system through geography. And then after that, I went right into a grad program through the Wildland Management program.

[slight pause]

[Arianna]: Okay. What is the current relationship between Chico and Mechoopda at this current moment?

[Cole]: At this current moment, we work pretty closely with the Mechoopda, especially when it comes to making sure that we include them in a lot of the different events, um, publications. Myself and the Director Rachel McBride-Praetorius go into the Mechoopda Tribal Council meeting every month and we give updates on Chico State and our work here at Tribal Relations. In addition, within the last year, a little over a year, we've been working with the auxiliaries. So, Chico State Enterprises, which has the Big Chico Creek Ecological Reserve, the North State Planning and Development Collective, and we go in with that staff member, the Tribal liaison and also give updates for the auxiliaries. So, we actually work pretty closely with them, with the Tribal councils, giving updates. Then we do programming which invites the local community onto campus to both, Mechoopda and the greater Native community.

[Mylah]: And do you know at all about the current relationship between the Mechoopda and the Bidwell Mansion or also Tribal Relations and the mansion?

[Cole]: I don't. We don't really have too much conversations with the Mansion staff or with State Parks, but we do have a cultural tour that we do talk about the mansion and the relationship with John Bidwell, more on the historical side, but not so much in the present time.

[Mylah]: And then, could you tell us more about that cultural tour, how it started, and what else it talks about it during that tour?

[Cole]: Yeah. So, the cultural tour started in 2019 or 2018 by two students. They really wanted to talk about the history of Chico State. We do have the admissions tour that talks about what majors are on campus, but there really wasn't anything that talked about the local history. So, that tour was completely student led. All the research from there was done by those two students, and then they had the stops, which talk about the Bidwell Mansion. It talks about the Nome Cult Walk, which if you... Um in elementary school, we learned about the Trail of Tears. So, this one is like the Northern California Konkow-Maidu Trail of Tears. So we talk about that. Then we talk about more contemporary issues like how students felt during the [19]80s and how their experience was, especially around the tree of peace. There's a lot of different aspects where we talk about more farther back history and then more current work that we do here on campus. It kinda talks about a whole range of different topics.

[Arianna]: So, how did Tribal Relations start? What was the...were there any like issues or any need for like this community to come together in Chico.

[Cole]: Yeah, so personally, when I first started here, Tribal Relations was started here like when I was a student. I think the biggest need was making sure that Native people, especially like Mechoopda people, especially like the Tribal councils had a voice on campus. So that's really kinda where it started with the previous president Gayle Hutchinson [Previous CSU Chico President]. She really made a big forward to create the office Tribal Relations. One thing that we mentioned in the tour is that this office sits underneath the office of the president, and that really allows, you know, our director, her direct supervisors, the president, so that really gives our office the power and, you know, the autonomy to be able to go out and meet with Tribes and have those conversations. So, I think that's a really big part that really makes us different than some of the other CSU campuses where if they might have a Tribal Relations, it kinda sits lower in like that hierarchal chart, but we fall underneath that. Really, it was Gayle Hutchinson that really started that movement. The office started off as a one-person office. Then over the years, we have about 40 professional student-staff now. You see the progression from 2000 I think 17 to 18 all the way to 24 to where we have a building. We have staff up in the 40 range with students and faculty and professional staff. Um, and even with Steve Perez, he's been really on board in continuing the work and prioritizing Tribal Relations and really making sure that our Native folks within our service region and even outside the service region have a voice that we're there to support their students, their Tribes whenever we can.

[Mylah]: And do you know if there were any like fights or protests that had led to its formation or even against the formation of Tribal Relations?

[Cole]: I don't know about that. I don't know how it was before that and kinda more like the politics side. I know that once this position was created, there was a lot of education done on like why we need to consult with our Tribes. Why is it important to acknowledge, you know, Tribes have sovereignty? Um, they have their own governing body, and I think there's been a lot of education behind like why this has been important, even with some work like such as NAGPRA [Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act], which really revolves around repatriation of funerary items and the ancestors. I think there's been a lot of work to really educate folks on like why this is important because NAGPRA has been around since the 1990s. So um, just on our end, we've been doing a lot of education, but it's nice to see that Chico State has taken the education and really kind of I guess learned from it. Would, is how I'd say, but

yeah, there's been a lot of education. I'm not sure about the future part of it just because I wasn't a part of those conversations. But yeah.

[Mylah]: And then, what big issues are we currently dealing with between Tribal Relations and Chico or just on campus that you've seen in general?

[Cole]: That's a good question; I don't know of any current issues right now. I know a lot of different organizations and committees on campus have been really open to ensuring that, you know, we as Tribal Relations and um, you know, Native voices have seat at the table. So, a lot of the different organizations that we work with, they've been really open in saying, yeah let's have our Tribal representative. Let's have some of our students be a part of this conversation. So, I think just continuing that and making sure that you know our students, our community, our governing bodies such as Mechoopda's Tribal council have a seat at the table. Just continuing that would be great.

[Arianna]: So, what have been the biggest barriers in creating this relationship between Chico and the Mechoopda?

[Cole]: I think the biggest thing with, especially with this office was finding capacity to actually have someone in this position to make those relationships. We get asked a lot, especially when I was with Chico State Enterprises, when I worked with them as a Tribal liaison. We got asked a lot, how do we make sure that we're doing what we need to do to build relationships? A lot of it comes down to putting people in the position who are from the community, who the community trusts, to be able to go out and say, this is the resources we have. How can we make sure that we meet your priorities? I think having dedicated staff to do that really goes a long way. It's really taken down a lot of barriers for us to actually engage with Tribes to say, how can we help your students? How can we make sure that they're getting what they need? Then having just staff in here to do programming. So, we have a Tribal Relations specialist. I support with some of the student programming. So making sure that once we get folks on the campus, like Native students, that we do things that really, kind of support them, whether it's academic, whether it's getting help with financial aid, or even just doing fun stuff and kind of separating school and also the fun side. So, I think just having dedicated staff is a really big way that we've been able to take down barriers. But also understanding, like, you know, I think with every Tribe and every community, everyone is different. You can't really do a cookie cutter approach to engaging with

different students, with different staff. So really kind of understanding that too has been a real big way that we've been able to tear down barriers.

[Mylah]: What are some like specific examples that you've done? Like I know you mentioned, reaching out to students and having scholarships or financial aid. So, what are some other specific examples to combat any hardships you've faced?

[Cole]: One that I've seen as a student, we've had some students in the past who have said like, in our, in some of the classes that they've had, they felt as though they weren't a part of the conversation or some classes have said like, kind of mentioned Native communities in the past and not the future. So, one thing that I know that some of our staff did when I was a student was really advocate for our students and say, look and talk with the professors and say, "Our Native communities are here. We're still doing things we're not in the past, do not reference in the past. So, I think that's been one way that we've been able to take down barriers is through that education piece, right? You want to make sure that, you know, people don't think of us as in the past. Um so that's one way that we've really kind of, um well I've seen as a student, be advocated and really take down barriers and open up more of a conversation that, yeah, Native people are still here, we're not in the past.

[Arianna]: So, what approaches is Chico taking to take back and return, [struggling to read question] to return land back to the Mechoopda, sorry. [Apologizing for hiccup in reading]

[Cole]: Yeah no, and this is a great question so. For Chico State, the Big Chico Creek ecological Reserve, which is an arm of the Chico State itself, the campus. They own about, they own, or they manage, or I should say Steward lands above 8,000 acres. But one thing is that they had another property up Honey Run Road, which was the Butte Creek ecological reserve that was acquired, I think in the [19]90s or early two thousands, um for the Campus itself to do research. And a couple of years ago, we actually did land back to where we gave them Mechoopda Tribe 93 acres of that land, and we transferred the land to them, which was actually a state change because before you wouldn't be able to transfer land back to a Native American Tribe. But through this process, there was a lot of change where, you know, Mechoopda came together, the BCER [Butte Creek ecological reserve] came together. We at Tribal Relations came together and said, "How does it look? And how would that process be if we wanted to give the land back? So, we actually went through that process, which I think took years to do. But we were able to give land back a couple of years ago, I think in 2022. Then right after that, we gave another I think 73

acres back to the Susanville Indian Rancheria because the Big Chico Creek Ecological Reserve also owned land up in Lassen County. And I want to say they did that around the same time. So, we actually gave land back to two Tribes and one of them was a state legislative change, and then the other one was a federal legislative change. We've been doing that and we're the first in the CSU system to be able to give land back to a Tribe.

[Arianna]: Being in Honors, we've heard a few stories about the Mechoopda and its land. And I know we've heard one about a graveyard around here that belonged to the Mechoopda. Would you say that was a start to land being given back or was it sort of a reminder that there was land that needed to be given back?

[Cole]: I think with this question, as more of like a, my personal opinion would be with that property, I think it just shows that we need to have Mechoopda included in these conversations because if you think about Native people, and you think about boundary lines, do you think that Mechoopda would just bury people in the square plot? That's perfectly square. They would be burying people other places, correct? [Both Arianna and Mylah nod heads]. So with that, I think it just shows that with the new science building coming up, with the new BSS [Behavioral and Social Sciences] building coming up, it's important to make sure that we, let the Mechoopda know when we break ground because when they're digging, that's when cultural monitors are really needed in those areas to make sure that if anything is uncovered, whether it's ancestors, whether it's cultural resources, that Mechoopda can, appropriately take care of those resources. I think the question isn't so much about the land back side, which is a big part, but I think it just shows that Chico State does reside on Mechoopda's, you know, village. There's a lot of cultural resources here and it's our duty to make sure that Mechoopda is consulted and that they can deploy monitors if needed.

[Mylah]: I know back home, [Ventura County] we have this thing where if we want to build on some land that was passed with the Tribes back home is Chumash, they have to give us the blessing and bless the land before. Do we have anything like that here with the Mechoopda?

[Cole]: Yeah. When we did the new science building from what I remember, they came out. They were part of the project through the groundbreaking ceremony. They had Tribal representatives, I believe the Tribal Historic Preservation Officer, and I think the chairman came out and did a welcome and was really included in that ceremony to bring up this new building. So, there has been instances where that's happened. Most recently, they're doing a new project on

the farm. So, the chairman for Mechoopda came out, he kind of did a blessing and a welcome and was really a part of that ceremony. We have done that in the past.

[Mylah]: And then, what can you tell us about the renaming of, I think it was Sutter Hall to Estom Jamani, and is there any more sort of processes of that happening as well with other buildings?

[Cole]: I don't know about other buildings, but I know that that was a process that was even taking place. I think even before I came on campus, when I was a student in 2017 in the fall where a lot of students came together and said, you know, we want to look at renaming Sutter because Sutter had had so much of a negative impact on the community through Genocide, through you know, what is the word? Um, Having like Native people on, uh indentured servitude basically as a form of slavery. They really wanted to make that change. That was a conversation that started then and then later on within the last several years when we did make the change over to Estom Jamani, there was a lot of research that went in so why we want to change the name to show that there was a lot of genocide in California, that Sutter was definitely a part of that. Then along with working with the local Tribe, Mechoopda, and say, what would be an appropriate name to have this, um, this building be called, and that's how this name came about for Estom Jamani. It was really a lot of work through students, faculty, the local community and then having Mechoopda's representatives a part of it also.

[Arianna]: So how has your time working with Tribal Relations at Chico State affected your perspective? Or in— oh wait, of Tribal presence within Chico. [Didn't read entirety of question at first]

[Cole]: So, I think it's really shown that in the past, there's ways that different folks have worked with Tribes where it was more like these are the requirements that we have to follow for guidelines. But I think with Chico State, being a student in this office because when this office was formed, I was one of the first student assistants in this office and then growing from being a student to a professional working with this office as the Tribal Relations specialist as an emergency hire, being a part of Chico State Enterprise, and still being a part of this office and now being the associate director. I think it shows that there's a lot of ways that we can include our Native community that should be happening instead of just, you know, just appointing someone from the Tribe and saying, alright you're on here it's like, how do we make sure that this is more inclusive? How to make sure that there's more equity in a lot of the things that we do

with working with Tribes. Making sure that whenever we consult or whenever we speak with a Tribe that we go above and beyond and really make sure and meet their needs. I think in the past, there might have been times where other, not saying Chico State, but Um, some organizations or agencies might try to meet their own needs to working with Tribes, where we want to kind of take the approach to how do we meet their needs with our resources and really make sure that we include Tribes at the table that their students feel welcome here, that we support them all the way until graduation. And even after that, how do we make sure that we find jobs for them? How do we make sure that we set them up with the skills to be able to work with their Tribes that they want to or go do something else? Um so, I think Chico State has really put on that, perspective of Yeah, we need, we can go above and beyond. Things can change, it might take time, but it can happen. Especially like with the land transfer. I think that was a really big one, the land back like going through that many years of trying to give it back and then eventually getting there to show, like yeah, this can happen. It'll take time. It'll take blood, sweat and tears, but it can happen.

[Mylah]: And going back to the Tribal Relations tour, do you think it's done a lot to educate people within the community and at Chico State about the Native influence and history found here directly on campus?

[Cole]: Absolutely. We get a lot of requests for the tour, even from outside folks. During the summer, we had actually worked with the [struggling to recall the name] Butte County Office of Education, so they had brought their professional staff, and we had myself and another student give the tour. And um after a lot of people take the tour, they say, well, I never really knew that really happened. And I think putting things in perspective on the genocide that happened in California, even talking about the Nome Cult Walk, a lot of people have never heard of that, which took place here in Chico. But when you mention like things like the Trail of Tears, they can put that connection together. So, I think there's been a lot of education that's been given out about the tour. And like I said, we get requests all the time and we're always happy to have those conversations and people have more questions. Umm, so yeah, I think definitely this has really brought a lot of the history to light and really has opened some folks eyes to say like,, you know, Native people are still here, there's been a lot of things that have happened, but we always try to end the tour say, there are great things that are still happening. We don't want to end the tour and focusing on the negatives, but there's been a lot of things within the local community that's really been impactful. So that's kind of how we usually end it.

[Mylah]: And then, I guess it'd be how you kind of, how you advertise or like make the students aware of Tribal Relations itself because it is kind of a building hidden behind. So how do you guys make what you guys do aware to the general public or let people know, like this is what you're here to do and then the things that you do. How do you advertise that I guess?

[Cole]: Yeah so, we have a lot of, for the students here on campus [laughing because Mylah bangs knee on table]. We do a lot of like outreach programs. So like, last night, we did a dinner with an elder where we bring on elders from the community. We advertise to our students to have them come in and share a meal with the elders and ask them questions. Our elders have a lot of knowledge, a lot of experiences. So, it's really a way for our students and elders, community members to come together, share their experiences, share a meal. We do- do a lot of programming that way that does have a big community focus to it. So, our programming is one way. Then also with the Tribal liaison with the director and myself, we go out and we actually meet with Tribes in their Tribal councils to say, this is who we are, and we invite them to campus. Two years ago, we held a Tribal summit here in Colusa Hall, which is like right next to our building to show, you know, how can we help you and support your needs as a Tribe through whether it's our auxiliaries, helping them know about our resources here on campus, but then have them come in and tour our buildings so that they're familiar with campus. I think that's a really big way that we've been really trying to I guess do outreach is saying, you know, come to campus, come check it out. We'll make sure that we have parking passes for you. Um so that's one way that we really kind of work with our local community here, work with our students on campus, but then also work with prospective students and Tribal leaders to say, come visit. Um we'll come to you if needed. So, we've been doing a lot of work for the last several years to really kind of bring more folks on campus and we'll continue to do that. I think this year, we're going to look to do the Tribal summit again in the summertime and bring Tribal representatives on campus again and have more conversations.

[Arianna]: So, on the tour, what are some of the spots that are visited? And how do those tie in the Mechoopda with this Chico community?

[Cole]: So...Let me think. So, the first one, which is our office, is the first stop. We talk about kind of what I've told you about today is how our office really works with the local community, how we work with Mechoopda, and how myself and Rachel go and Thomas, our new Tribal liaison go in. We meet with their council. We talk about that. We have a mural that was done by

a local Mechoopda artist, Ali — Knight [Name is unclear]. We talk about the things that she had painted in her mural that's in our space, and then let people know about our resources. We have free printing on campus. We have a space if someone just wants to come in and do some reading or have a quiet space or even the classroom here. We have that. The next step we go to is the Tree of Peace, which talks more about like students and what they face. In the 80s when it was here at Chico State with their Native American Club. We talk about the experiences most recently with the campus bringing on Maidu dancers and some conflict with that when it comes to really respecting the culture of Mechoopda, the local Maidu people. And then we shoot over to the three statues on campus, which talks about the Nome Cult Walk. It talks about, you know, the horrific things that have happened on that walk. The tour is pretty dark in some areas because this is the history of California and the history of this local area. We really touch upon those hard topics, and then we end things over at the Bidwell Mansion and talk about the relationship with John Bidwell. And how it was with Mechoopda. Then after that, we usually wrap it up and talk about the positives and things that Mechoopda does here even supporting our students. So, we kind of go through a number of things, but it is a pretty heavy topic to talk about and we let folks know about that. Then from there we wrap it up with a, a more of a inspiring and more present-day influence that the Tribe has with the local area and the community.

[Mylah]: I know we have the different graduations for like the different groupings. What does the graduation for Native, for the Native community look like in order to make people feel welcome?

[Cole]: Yeah, absolutely. Our graduation has been growing ever since. I think this last year we had about 100 graduates. And when we have our graduates, we don't just focus on our Chico State graduates, which um so we'll have Chico State graduates. We'll have graduates from the local community College, usually Butte College or if there's another person who is outside the area and they want to participate, we always open that up to them. But we also honor our high school graduates from the local high schools. So that when the high school graduates come on stage, they can say, hey, I know this person, they're my cousin, they're my brother, and they graduated from Butte College. They can be on the same stage together. We honor all of our graduates from high school all the way up to college, even in their master's programs. They sit on the same stage together. We provide them with a sash and necklace. That in the past has been handmade, and through that, it's been cool to see how different folks have been able to come up.

I think last year, we had a son, and a father sit on the same stage and they graduated together. So that was a really impactful moment just to see them and just show like, Yeah, it's all possible. Everybody on this stage and everybody in the crowd is here to support our students. We just want to make sure that we honor them and the great work that they're doing and if they want to go on, we're here to support.

[Mylah]: And are there any special presentations that are done during the ceremony as well?

[Cole]: Yeah. Usually, we'll have like a slide show. We'll show all the graduates and where they're going. We'll have speakers from the local Tribes. We've had some chairpeople come up and give their wisdom and their knowledge and share that with the students. We've had Tribal representatives. We've had slide shows to show everyone who's graduating. Then we usually do a small little get together in the courtyard outside of the BMU [Bell Memorial Union] and we'll share cake and just have time for pictures and just chat with everybody. That's usually how the layout goes. It's a lot of fun.

[Both interviewers reach for mic and laugh about it]

[Arianna]: I'm sorry, I'm trying to think....

[Mylah]: Are there any other ways besides through like the tour and such that you guys go out of your way in order to educate the general public about the Mechoopda or just the Native presence on campus?

[Cole]: Yeah. So, we actually have been having a working relationship with one of the local middle schools here in Chico to really kind of help with professional development. Let teachers know what are some things to look out for or even to keep in mind when working with Native students such as our ceremonies fall within spring and fall. So, if a student is asking to get time off, this is why they're doing it, because it's part of the culture, it's part of who they are as a person. So, letting teachers know that that's a thing. We also do a cultural night for this high school, so we'll bring on different comm- uh different agencies, different organizations in the community that are Native-led to really talk about our presence as Native people and what we do in our communities. Then through that too, we also work with Butte College pretty closely to do a college motivation day. So we held one at Butte College this last...two weeks ago to really bring on all the CSU systems, have people table about different colleges, whether it's the UC system, the CSU's, or Community College, and bring in high school students and say, Hey, come on in, we'll give you, we got T-shirts. We'll give you swag and it's a great time for students to

come in and have conversations with the college that they're interested in. So, we do a number of different things within the community, and we partner with different people. But those are kind of the things that we've done in the past to really kind of, spread out into the community. I think one of the best ones is through that culture night and that relationship with that middle school.

[Arianna]: So, I know earlier you mentioned that Chico is one of the first CSUs to incorporate relationships with the local Tribes. Do you know if there are any other CSUs that are also looking to dive deeper into this?

[Cole]: I don't know specifics, but I do know that there has been a lot of push for college campuses. I know Sierra College has a Native American Center. Butte College has a Native American center, Sac (Sacramento) State, Humboldt. I mean, there's a lot of great colleges that do a lot of great work when it comes to engaging with the community. I think that if students are looking to go there, there's a lot of great opportunities for that. We're just one of the ones to. There's been a lot of good work lately. I've been seeing like online, through different relationships that we've built with different campuses. So, it's really nice to see all these different campuses really take Native communities as a priority and really support our students. That's been really nice to see. Hopefully, it continues to all the campuses and even out of the other states.

[Mylah]: And I know you had mentioned earlier a mural within the Tribal Relations Building. Can you tell us a bit or more [trips over words] Can you tell us a bit more about that and what steps were taken to getting that mural painted?

[Cole]: The Mural itself is a depiction of traditional Mechoopda village. So, our director had worked with this community member, it was for a for a couple of months to really say we want to make sure that there is a presence in our artistic presence within our space to show that this is Mechoopda's village. You know, Chico State is on this village site. It was really a big push to work with that artist to say, how can we create a mural? How can we make sure that there is a really big Mechoopda presence even with our office so that we always know, and we tell our students, this is Mechoopda land. We're on their village site. We really need to acknowledge that. There was a lot of work within the community. And our director kind of took the lead on that one. Throughout the months, it was created, and we had it in our space, and it's been following us around because we've changed different locations on campus. It's just been trying to find a

place to put it. With our space now, it fits perfectly, it's meant to be there. Yeah, a lot of work with just the community.

[Mylah]: And then I know there's about two or three different markers around campus. Can you tell us a bit about those? The trail markers, I think they are.

[Cole]: Oh, there's trail markers? [all three laughing] I don't know too much about those. Yeah. Where are they at?

[Mylah]: [quiet since she is far from the mic] I believe there's one like right out, like right behind the building. And then there's marker between the science building and the-

[Cole]: Oh, yes, okay. So, the marker that we have behind our building. So, for folks who know campus a little bit more, the area outside our building that's now designated as Tribal Relations commons. The marker that we have there is actually the land acknowledgment. And its um, the land acknowledgment is important because when we had done a land acknowledgment with Mechoopda, the words that you see on there are words that the Tribal council wrote themselves, they approved of. So those are the Tribe's words when it comes to land acknowledgment. We really want to emphasize that when folks see the land acknowledgement to keep the language that the Tribe provided us. Because at that point, if anything's changed, it's not their words. This went through a process of us going to Tribal council, then creating it, us approving it, them approving it, and then from there, we were able to say, this is an official land acknowledgement from the Tribe and their governing body. So that's kind of what that marker is. The other one talks about Bahapki Commons, which is the name of the village site that was here prior to Chico State. It talks about I think there's a historical rendering of the village itself and some um some art there and then talks more about what Bahapki was and the meaning behind it. It's a way for folks to know more about the Mechoopda history and the area that they're at here on campus.

[Mylah]: Do you know if there's going to be a push for more markers like those to appear just throughout Chico, not just on campus?

[Cole]: Ooh, I don't know. That's a good question. I don't know about that. I would hope there would be, but I know for us at Chico State, we're always happy to put more of that history out there. But it would be cool to see some more in Chico the city itself.

[Arianna]: So, would you say that you've seen a larger presence of activity and involvement within the Tribal Relations community now compared to a few years ago?

[Cole]: Like are you asking for like our building, like the work that we do or just the bigger presence bigger presence like within the Native community in Chico?

[Arianna]: Yeah

[Cole]: Yeah, I definitely say that there has been. There's been a lot of good work being done by the local Tribes. Even just to having, at the end of the month, they have their Mechoopda market where it brings a lot of different Native artists on where they can come in, people can buy their art or jewelry. Even to, you know Butte College hosting their own big time, which is our version, California's versions of like a Pow Wow for instance. So, we call them big times, even just having a big presence there, bringing on Maidu dancers, having this big, you know um get-together to be able to acknowledge the different cultures within Butte County, and greater county—or even farther out counties. So absolutely, there's been a really big push in a lot of the involvement with the Tribes, with our office with Butte, with a whole bunch of different agencies. It's been cool to see how things have evolved over the years.

[Arianna]: And do you know if when the community started to come together, if it was a struggle to get involvement and push for just a presence on campus?

[Cole]: I'm not too sure because that might be before when even I came to Chico. I know that our director has been a part of the Native community for a number of years now and she's been working with the local community, and I know that she's mentioned to me some of the struggles and barriers that they have overcome. But, yeah, I think that was before me because I know that there has been. I'm just not too sure about the details.

[Mylah]: Then going back to the murals, do you there will be, do you think there'll be a plan to make more and then make them more visible throughout campus?

[Cole]: I'm not sure about on campus or even in Chico. It would be good to see more mural projects. I know that there was one mural done in the library that a Native woman had created. It's a really nice one that shows how it incorporates the city of Chico, but also incorporates the Mechoopda culture, the Maidu culture in that. I know that for one of the programs we have with the Butte Chico Creek ecological reserve, there is a mural project included in there with Tribal youth and a muralist. There might be some opportunities there. But yeah, it'd be cool to see more murals around the town that are more focused on Mechoopda, the local community. I know that there's some down towards the WREC (Wildcat recreation center) that really looks at Mechoopda's culture. I also think I think that one also has a tie to missing murdered indigenous

women too. So that's also a really nice one to bring those awarenesses to those dates like that.

[Arianna]: Other than the murals on campus, are there any other um...[pause]Are there any other I'm sorry, I'm trying to think of the word. [pause] Any other um [Mylah helping her think of the word] representations of the Mechoopda on campus?

[Cole]: Yes. So. Have y'all been to the science building, the new one? [Both nod yes] The new science building actually has a display that really highlights all the past and current Mechoopda graduates that have come through Chico State. It also highlights a lot of the culture in there too, so you'll see different objects such as baskets, cultural resources, pictures of dancers. It's really a great way to honor those Mechoopda Tribal members in the Mechoopda community that's graduated from Chico State but also talk about more of the contemporary resources and things that we use as Maidu, uh Maidu Native community. There has been some more push on campus, which has been great to see.

[Mylah]: And then do you know where the mural that you said was in the library? Do you know specifically where it's at?

[Cole]: First floor? [laughs] I think it's on the first floor. Yeah. I think it's when you first go in, you go to the left of the elevators and then it's right there in that little foyer right before you go into where, I think the study or the computer lab used to be. Yeah. First floor, I'm pretty sure.

[Mylah]: Then are there any other representations, either physical or like through clubs and such that you want to see happen?

[Cole]: I know the Native American Club has really been working a lot to really do a lot of events on campus. I know I'm the advisor for the club, so they're going to be out at the Mechoopda market selling like coffee, T-shirts that they've been creating. But for the most part, that's the only one I know so far.

[Mylah]: [far from mic] Is there any that you want to see, any more representations that you want to see happen?

[Cole]: I think the murals would be really nice. I think just having more Native people on campus and those representatives during different events would be great. I know that they're really busy, so it's really hard to get people on schedules. But I think just inviting more community members on the campus, doing more events such as dinner with an elder and having a really big focus on our Tribal elders would be really, really cool to see. I know that we've been looking at different things, but I think really focusing on the elders and students would be a

really great collaboration to bring them together because Even with last night, there was a lot of great conversation that happened where I think the students kind of walked away thinking like Wow, it is really nice to be able to have those conversations and know that the things that I've been feeling our previous generations felt too and how they overcame those barriers or struggles. I think really having more elders on campus would be really nice.

[Arianna]: And then do you believe that Chico State, in general, and as a community, is doing enough to preserve and maintain this relationship?

[Cole]: I think that there's been a lot of great work done. There's could always could be more work to be done. But I think right now like for Chico State and like what I see from our office, I think that we've been doing quite a bit. But like I said, there's always room where we can or different, other things that we can provide. So, I think as of right now, we're doing a good job, but, you know, there's always things that we can improve on.

[Mylah]: Could you tell us a bit more? I think I asked ready, I'm not sure, about any of the other events that are held by or between Chico or just the Tribal Relations and the Native Tribes or groups?

[Cole]: Yeah. So, we, I know in the past, we've done some things such as like the awareness day, so orange shirt day. That's usually one that we'll share information with different folks or even on and off campus, which really highlights those families, those generations that were impacted by boarding schools. We do events like that where we invite Mechoopda folks. We invite the community to come on campus to get an orange shirt to learn more about why we do this. The other one would be for missing and murdered indigenous women's day, really highlighting those days and the impacts that they have on our community. Last year, we brought on Tribal elders, both from Mechoopda and some of the different Tribes to do a screening of a documentary that one of the local professors had created to really talk about missing and murdered indigenous women and how it's impacted the local community. So, I think events like that are really opening to both our students, the community to know that this is still something that impacts our community today.

[Mylah]: And then do you consider yourself an activist or an advocate?

[Cole]: I guess. Is I guess I never really thought about myself as that, but I guess in a way, I think a lot of our community, even our staff here, do kind of act that role. I don't know if we

would consider myself that like formally, but I think that we definitely do the work. But, yeah, I don't—I guess I never really considered that for myself. [Laughs].

[Arianna]: Are there any public events that you offer to the community as a whole, not just the Native community that can educate Chico about the Native land?

[Cole]: Yeah. So, one that we've done, which is women of wisdom. That's one that we usually do during the springtime where we bring Native women onto campus. They come in and share their experiences and how they've maneuvered through higher education, maneuver through their personal life, things that they've had barriers with. It's really open to the whole community to where we want to invite both the Native and nonNative community on there to say, like this is kind of a way that we want to highlight the great work that the women in our community have been able to overcome. So that's one that I always like. Last year, we had Virginia Hedrick come on and she was a really phenomenal speaker. We have had other speakers in the past who you sit down and you're like, wow, this is really impactful. It's been really nice to be able to do that, share a meal, and then just chat with the local community and get to know both a Native and non-Native community also. That's really been a really great one that I personally enjoyed.

[Mylah]: Do you know about, or... what are some ways that you think some young people or students can take some effect and action for change within the community?

[Cole]: I think just doing, you know, educating yourself on you know, if you live somewhere like Chico, knowing who the local Tribe is, I think that's a really great step. But also understanding that our communities are still here today. We still have a presence. Then also looking at those awareness days too can really bring impact with our communities to bring more awareness. Like yeah, um, our community gets hit hard when it comes to missing, murdered indigenous people. Understanding that boarding schools have had effect on our community through generations and it's still happening today. So I think those awareness days are really big, but also knowing that each Tribe is different, that we might have different cultures, even when it comes to big times and Pow Wows like people will say, Oh, you're going to do a Pow Wow and its like no, here in Northern California, California itself, we do a lot of big times. So just knowing the differences between that and being open to conversation too.

[Arianna]: And then you starting off from a student to where you are now. Was there anyone who really influenced you and inspired you throughout your journey?

[Cole]: Yeah. So, when I came here, I didn't know anybody. I came from a small town, so it was kind of like, I didn't know too much. But this office and the staff, through Tribal Relations, both the previous staff, current staff, have really shaped who I am as a professional and also how I am personally and really kind of helped guide me into being, um you know, working with these different folks, whether it's working for Mechoopda that I had a job in. I worked for Chico State Enterprises. Now I worked for this office. It's really showed me that I want to work with my community. And this is one way I can give back. So, the staff here had really been good mentors to me to really shape into being a professional. Sometimes, I'm not ready to be Associate Director, but they really kind of supported me. So, I've been really fortunate enough to be a part of this office, see it kind of evolve from just being one person in there to having 40. And then to see us work with different staff. I'm also learning too, so it's good to be able to give back and learn something from our staff currently. Yeah, absolutely. Definitely our staff.

[Mylah]: Then you've mentioned Pow Wows and big times a few times for those who may not know what those are. Can you explain a little bit about what they are?

[Cole]: Mhm. So, a Big Time, so a lot of folks know about powwows from popular media. People might go to them. But for Big Times, ours is more of California-based. So, our dancers will look different. We have other dancers. It's pretty similar in like the gathering part, social gathering. There might be rules associated with them. That might be a little bit different, a little bit more strict, but for the most part, it's just a gathering. It's kind of what we call them here in California. But I think a big one is like yeah, our dancers will look different. They'll dance a different way. But I think just knowing the difference there. It goes a long way.

[Arianna]: Okay! And then, do you have any final words or advice for the community or the students of Chico to continue the fight for equality?

[Cole]: hmm [laughs]. I don't have too many final words. I just say that, you know, I think for the community here, like, just knowing that we're still here. And I think for the equality part, knowing that whether you go into working with Tribes, whether you don't. I think that keeping in mind that Tribes are sovereign governments that need a seat at the table would be a really big part to ensure that our voices are heard, that our concerns are heard, that we can still participate as a community in a lot of these conversations, whether it city, government, state or federal conversations. Because, you know our communities have been impacted so much, whether it's

cultural resource with our cultural sources being destroyed. So, I think it's important that we have a seat at the table.

[Mylah]: And I guess it's kind of the same question. Is there any other final things you'd like to add to the interview?

[Cole]: Not too much. No, just thank you for the time to have a conversation with you all. I think that this was a really, I loved your questions. They were great. I think they really flesh out the work that this office has been doing. So, thank you for your time.

[Mylah]: Thank you so much for participating and allowing us to ask you these questions and interview you.

[Arianna]: Yeah. Thank you for participating in this history project.