The following interview was conducted with Elaine Grinnell, as part of a grant provided by the Washington Women's History Consortium. The interviewer was Jill Linzee and the transcription was completed by Jill Linzee and Elaine Vradenburgh.

00:00 – 01:18

Linzee: So where would you say you learned most of your stories? The ones that you tell?

Grinnell: I would say that most of my stories came from my experiences with my grandmother and grandfather. I was raised by them. And Klallam was their first language. My grandfather was quite a storyteller. During WW II also – we had blackouts. And all lights were turned out. We had blackout shades. The only light we could see was from the fire from the woodstove...the cracks in the woodstove. And we 3 would huddle around that in the evening time before we went to bed. And he would tell stories. And I’ll never forget the warmness of the stove. And how that would flicker on his face. Maybe it was flickering on mine too, I don’t know that. And he would sit there and he would peel apples. And – while he was telling a story.

01:19-02:39

And I was always amazed by how long he could peel an apple and have it all on one piece. And it seemed like it took about the length of the story. And then I’d think, why does he even bother to peel it? Because I would eat that peeling too. But maybe it was for his own comfort. But, you know, when you’re in darkness, and someone is speaking and there’s just a flicker of light, you’ve got my attention. Or anyone else’s. It’s almost a spotlight on what he was saying. And the way the people felt, and the loss of language, the loss of the way things were. Course we understand that now as transitioning. And we have a whole lot of that right now. But back then when they were – their families agreed that, Yes it’s a good thing it you 2 married.

02:40-04:23

And there was always a status in the tribe. And if those 2 families married, well then they would have a strong, high status. My grandfather thought it was a wonderful idea, but my grandmother didn’t. And she had a hard time coping with that. She was married at 15. She went on to have 7 children. They were married for 68 years. And of course she grew to love him very much – and he was such a kind person. But when you’re 15,...she didn’t know him very well. She know of him, and he had kind of a wild streak too.

Linzee: Was he much older than she was?

Grinnell: About 3 years, and, he played in a band in Port Townsend. And that was just about too much for her.
Linzee: Did they both grow up on the Jamestown S’Klallam reservation? Your grandparents?

Grinnell: No. My grandparents grew up in Port Townsend. [She says something in her Native language] We call him...And there’s the Duke of York – also that’s his name – but that name was given to him because it wasn’t easy to pronounce his Native name. Prince of Wales – that was his son. Then David Prince, that was my grandfather. And my grandmother’s name was Elizabeth Hunter. Now when the non-Indian came, the new people came...

04:24-06:14

They liked where the Klallams were living in Port Townsend. That’s what you now know as Kahtai. In fact that’s what we called Port Townsend, Kahtai. There were Klallam there, all the fishing was there, fresh water was there. There deer were there, crabs, salmon, all the foods that they wanted were right there. And then there was a natural harbor also. They could have their canoes any place they wanted to down there. But it was also a good place for ships. And pretty soon they were treated so badly that it was very difficult to live there. And then the chief realized that there were more Klallams in the cemetery than there were in the village. And about that same time it was decided by the government that the Klallams should be down on the reservation, down at Skokomish. Oh, people knew the Skokomish – they were friends. But that wasn’t home. And so, what they did, with one great big ship, they tied all of the canoes together. Told all the people to put all their belongings in the canoes, they were going to go down and live with Skokomish. And that in itself wasn’t a bad thing. But it still wasn’t home, because Port Townsend was Kahtai...and so then...

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Grinnell: After tying all the canoes together and starting to pull them down there people started talking...We like the Skokomish and all the people down there, but that isn’t home. Why are we going down there? The chief said, because he knew they were unhappy and uncomfortable going down there, forever. He said, Don’t worry, we can do something about this. As soon as they cut us loose we’ll just wait til dark and then we’ll turn around and follow them back and go back home. So in essence that’s what they did, they followed them home. But when they got there they found that their houses were burning. It’s hard for us to put words to a feeling like that...to see your home burning. There’s such a finality to it. It’s very close to death. That wall that’s there that you’re no longer wanted or expected to be there. Treatment got very bizarre after that.

01:24-02:34

So they knew that they had to move on. Some went to Port Gamble. Luckily some stayed back, the...Elwha...the Lower Elwhas were on the west end anyway. But they had the same kind of experience. Where they all went to town one time and came back to see all their homes burning. From the logging people out there that needed their location to do better business. And so they were later moved to a reservation, the Lower Elwha, but first they put them on the Ediz Hook where there’s no longer any...,
no water out there, no lights or any electricity. So every day you had to take that long walk or you had to paddle into Port Angeles from Ediz Hook – for those conveniences.

02:35-03:47

It was a bad situation so, it was later settled that they would live on the Lower Elwha reservation while, during that time too Jamestown was – were wandering from Dungeness Spit. Decided to settle there but then again, no fresh water there. Surrounded on 3 sides with water, but it was all salt water. They moved onto the butt of Dungeness, and then they were confronted by farmers who didn’t want them there. And so their animals and so on...and finally they decided that they were going to pool the money that they did have. They pooled $500 in gold coin. And they bought 225 acres which is now Jamestown. That was the first village. Then they figured, no one could move them again. That was their property.

03:48-05:19

**Linzee:** Did they want to turn it into a reservation?

**Grinnell:** No. They wanted their own property and they would handle their own land the way they wanted it to be handled. They didn’t trust any longer. Reservation seemed like it was not going to work for them. And so, until today, it has never been a reservation. If you looked at the map you would notice that. Those 225 acres might be very square alright, but to accommodate each family that contributed to that $500, one of the things that they had to have was a part of the beach. So you could pull your canoe in. So there’s narrow strips. And so they went from aquaculture to agriculture, eventually. For some it worked out really well, my grandfather was turned into a farmer. But nevertheless he had dug clams, and he fished and sold crabs and they all cooked on the beach...

05:20-06:50

People would come down there and buy. They would sell clams to Buggy. I think it was J.C. Buggy, I can’t remember those initials yet. But anyway over to Washington Harbor and he would bring them over to the Seattle area to sell. The people really struggled. They had to clear the land in order to have a cow. Then there were dairies finally. We had over 30 cows eventually, and by the time that I was born everyone had worked the farm. The economics changed again, and those young people, my mother’s generation were ordered at that time NOT to speak their language. It was well known that the parents were not to teach their children the language. They would become a better person if they just learned English. And if you did try to teach them their language, you could tell by the accent. By the way they would enunciate the words.

00:00-01:42

**Grinnell:** So there’s a whole lot of punishment that went on in school because a Native word might slip out. They did very well in destroying that language. And of course when I came along, my grandmother
and grandfather – and remember, this was their first language, was the Klallam – and they had many, many people...they went to church and they spoke Klallam. So when they got together with their friends they spoke Klallam. But they did not teach me. They would speak it when they didn’t think I was around or listening, because they didn’t want me to get in trouble when I went to school. Or be able to vocalize the way everybody else...it was really important to them that I should join this other group and go along. Which is too bad, you know. So at ten years old, my mother came back after the war. By this time my grandmother had multiple sclerosis, my grandfather had terrible rheumatoid arthritis, crippling. And so I was a real help to them. He taught me how to drive the tractor at 4, and so I worked with him...

And I would work all day, driving that tractor. And he had to build special little seats for me, and put a lift on the brakes so that I would be able to reach all of those...the pedals that I had to reach. And him and I would go round and round picking up the hay and doing whatever we had to do to make this farm function. And luckily I had an uncle who did a whole lot of work, but he had to go off to the war also. Many of our young men from Jamestown went off. I think probably about 30 of them went to the war.

Linzee: WWII?

Grinnell: Yes. So I feel that I understood the rhythm of the language even though I wasn’t a real speaker. But the voice inflection, and the expressions. I knew if I was in trouble. I knew - she might say something and I could tell if I was in trouble or not. Whether she was asking me something. I knew enough to function with them in their Klallam language.

But I wasn’t allowed to learn either. It was very interesting. Now that I look back at it it was kind of cumbersome at first. We were down on the water. Nobody else wanted to be down there... well it was because we thought we were going to be bombed or people were going to come in a submarine. And we had soldiers on the beach. With gun emplacements and rolled barbed wire for the longest time. And the kids, you know, during the daytime it was fine, but at night it was scary. It was scary. You know, to talk about this now – I just turned 72 – so I was a real kid when all this was going on. And now in my later years I had an opportunity to go to Japan and tell stories and stayed with a family, and he happened to be the same age.

As I was when we were going through WWII. And he let me read his diary. He was so scared, just like I was. He was on one end of the war, I was on the other end of the war. And I never thought of them as being human before. That was just some enemy. And I thought what would my grandma and grandpa think if they knew that I was over here? For sure, I would never return. But life has changed so much now. But it’s important that our young people – I have nine grandchildren. And it is important for them
to know where I have been in my life. Because everything that has happened to me is going to have an impact on them. Just from the things that I tried to do all the time. I’m a certified teacher. I haven’t taught for a long time and I probably won’t get certified again. But that’s a part of me. I tried to keep the language. The traditions, just gave them all Native names. One even goes by it every single day – Ha’qwi’nel. He changed it on his driver’s license, on his birth certificate, everything. He goes by Hawk to his friends. But Ha’qwi’nel Grinnell is his name.

**Linzee:** This is your grandson?

**Grinnell:** Umhmm.

00:00-01:23

**Grinnell:** But 13 names were given out at that potlatch...4 years ago. And they were proud and they danced and they went from one direction to the other directions. Shouting their names. Because they were proud to have them. And that’s what my life is all about. To never be ashamed of what you are, no matter who you are. Make sure you know enough. Make sure your children know enough. So that they will have that same proud feeling. Good spirits toward where they came from. Even though they didn’t have any control over it. You just have to be proud that you’re alive and have the stamina to understand and to be strong when a part of your life is talked down. When someone else doesn’t appreciate that – whatever you’re doing.

01:24-02:57

It’s important to let them know why you’re doing that. It’s all in the understanding of who you are. Where your family has come from. Your spirit.

**Linzee:** At what phase in your life did you become actively involved in preserving your heritage?

**Grinnell:** It was after I got out of high school. And then I started working down at the Olympic Health Department. By this time I was involved in Jamestown tribal meetings. And I could type. So I was pretty valuable. But I was asked to be a secretary. And the more I heard, I thought, Hey this is important stuff that’s going on here. And then that’s when it really took off. And it’s not that I ever forgot that I was Indian, because I never did that. I thought that our lives were so interesting. And I never called it Indian life or anything like that.

02:58-04:07

It was just that we all did this together and this was important to me. So I don’t know which year it was, it was just after my high school years. My high school years were good. I was voted homecoming queen if that makes any difference...and inspirational award, I thought that made a big difference to me. And I thought, that is so great because I think that a lot of Natives were just such good athletes. Why weren’t
they acknowledged for that? And many of them are acknowledged after they get out of high school and get into the town teams or they form their own. And you can see the athleticism that’s there. So I got involved in that. And it just kept on going. And education...I always felt bad because I didn’t have the education that I really wanted. And so I wanted that for everybody else that was around me.

And when I worked at the Olympic Health Department this gal Lorraine Daybrook contacted me and she said I need some help – Native from Lower Elwha. I says “What doing?” “Well, just doing some transcribing.” And I need some help up at the high school and all the schools. Can you help me? I said, I don’t know if I’m qualified to. She said all you have to do is be Indian. I said, Well I’m that. But it turned out to be more than that...until we finally got our certificates to be counselors. And no one knew more about being Indian than we did. And we didn’t even know we did, you know. It’s just life, for us. And so we worked for many years together until she passed away in the 80s. But I kept on working. To this very day...like Friday I’m going to go to the National Indian Education conference here in town and we’re going to have a reception there for Natives. I mean, every day I have something to do with the education of children. And I think well, I’m getting too old to do this. But I don’t know whether you’re ever too old to encourage anybody to better themselves. And you do that through education. And so I just keep hanging around, Until somebody throws me a little pittance then it makes me go on a little bit more you know. And I think that’s really my part.

Linzee: You were born on the Jamestown S’Klallam reservation, is that right?

Grinnell: Very close. I was born in Port Angeles. You know that Jamestown really didn’t have a reservation at that time. But we had a community. And we still do. But there were about 12 families established down there. But like I say, it was never a reservation. And now there are only about 8 of us that are still there. A lot of people lost their land to taxes. A lot of people lost their land in quest of an economic adjustment. And nobody lives on the reservation, the Jamestown reservation. It’s all dedicated to services and economic development in the quest to serve our students. Having as much education as they want to do for them to improve themselves and support families and such.

Linzee: You mentioned yesterday that there was a group of people who pooled their resources and bought a piece of land.

Grinnell: Yes it is. And that’s north of Sequim on Dungeness Bay. But it’s still separated from the little settlement of Dungeness. Some of our Klallams lived down there too, but there were many families that lived down at Jamestown.
Linzee: So subsequent to that time when the families pooled their resources there has been a designated piece of land for the reservation?


Linzee: That recently?

Grinnell: Yes. We’ve always been there, but we weren’t recognized. 1981 we were recognized by the federal government as a tribe. Since then we’ve almost got a thousand acres that we’ve had to buy back of our own land, but nevertheless when we were paid by the government for acreage that we did have we all voted to keep that money together rather than distribute it to individual members.

02:36-03:38

We decided to keep it together so that we could – it would be a start of our businesses that would eventually support us. We want to be self-governed and self-supporting. And take care of ourselves. And like I said, no one lives on our reservation. It’s working very well for us. We intend to employ as many of the tribal members as we can. For the rest, well give them the education so that they can be – do as well as they can outside of the tribe. Tribal government.

Linzee: At the time that you were born how big was the community?

Grinnell: Not very big. Like I said, there wasn’t a reservation so there probably were about 50 of us down there. The rest have been scattered throughout. Some of them lived in Sequim. Some of them lived in Port Angeles.

03:39-05:00

You know, even now we probably only have a couple hundred that live in the Sequim area, but we have them all over the United States...Jamestowns...So they’re in many different kinds of professions. But we have an older tribe now – but we still have 30 in school. In higher education is what I mean. But we have pretty close to 600 members.

Linzee: That includes people who live in different past of the U.S., right?

Grinnell: Uh-huh.

Linzee: Were your parents both Klallam?

Grinnell: My mother was full blood Jamestown S’Klallam, my Dad was full blood Lummi. And so when my mother brought me home at a very young age, well then I was enrolled in the Jamestown Klallam tribe. But I’m only half – is the way that our tribe sees it. I’m only half – she was full blood. I’m half
Lummi and half Jamestown.

05:01-06:09

So I have 3 adult grandchildren and also 9 grandchildren, so I feel pretty fulfilled.

**Linzee:** So, your parents – how did they meet one another?

**Grinnell:** Well, through sports basically. The parents knew each other - some way or another they managed to get together – the parents, they...My parents were not told to marry each other. They selected, they decided that themselves. And it was through baseball. Even way back then they had baseball teams and the reservations would play each other. And so that’s how my Dad and Mom got together.

**Linzee:** So, when they were married, where were you raised?

**Grinnell:** I was still raised in Jamestown.

**Linzee:** Your father moved there?

**Grinnell:** No, no, he continued to live in Lummi. They were divorced when I was about 3 months old.

06:10-08:03

And I think it was really unfortunate, but at that time there weren’t divorces, so that was pretty traumatic situation for both of them. But that’s what they decided and it worked out fine...

**Linzee:** And you mentioned that you were raised by your grandparents – your mother’s parents.

**Grinnell:** Yes, that was during WW II and so everyone had to work. And so she chose to work in the Keyport – which is a Naval torpedo station between Poulsbo and Bremerton, and so when she decided she had to move away, well then I had to stay with the parents, because she had no way of taking care of me and working full time, so that’s what happened. They had a farm and so I felt that I could – even at a very young age - I could help them, and I did.

**Linzee:** What kind of a farm did they have?

**Grinnell:** It was agriculture. And that was a kind of transition time too because he was a fisherman – he was a crabber – he did all of those things...for clams also. And my grandmother even worked in the clam cannery, as later on my mother and aunts did too. But it was a transition. He turned into a really good farmer because of his work ethics, and he did quite well. He built up his herd. But because of crippling arthritis, I happened to be his legs and I was able to chase the cows and things.
Linzee: So he was a dairy farmer?

Grinnell: Dairy, umhmmm...we milked.

Grinnell: And I had an uncle there. He was sixteen, seventeen before he went into the service and, oh course, he did a lot of the work too. And then after he went into the service then my grandfather and I made an attempt to continue servicing the farm.

Linzee: Did you have gardens as well as having the dairy farm?

Grinnell: Oh, yes. You had to have that. We didn’t have the freezers, of course, so my grandmother did a lot of canning. We had cherries. We had all the fruit—fruit trees and plums, berries, everything. And so that was a lot of hard work that my grandmother had to do too.

Linzee: So you grew all of that on your own property?

Grinnell: Yes, uh huh, yeah. We had almost a hundred acres.

Linzee: Did you sell your produce also?

Grinnell: No. Well, the produce that came from the water—yes we did. Because we had clams, we had some fish, but crab, a lot of crab. That was sold right there.

Linzee: And you’d sell it right there at the waterfront?

Grinnell: There, and also we would take it up town and some of it would be shipped out to the Seattle area.

Linzee: So you’ve been in the seafood business a long time.

Grinnell: Long time. And as I look back now I see that all my aunts were the same. My grandmother bought fish and my aunts did, as well as my uncles. They fished in big boats—seiners and gill-netters too.

Grinnell: Yes, she came back to live in the area and also to pursue her dreams and one of her dreams was nursing. She wanted to be a nurse so bad. Having an eighth-grade education will hinder your
dreams a small amount, but she started in a kitchen at Davidson and Hay Hospital down in Port Angeles. And then she worked out on the floor for a while—maintenance—and then up to nurses aid. And then from there on she kept taking tests until she passed them to become a licensed practical nurse. And she was a very, very good nurse—highly called upon—and people really enjoyed her. I think that because she was Native, and the Native people really related to her, they would request her when they were in the hospital. They wanted her there too. Because a Native face in the health profession was very, very far between. You just didn’t see a lot of Native nurses, and so she was our first one there in Port Angeles.

03:08-05:00

Linzee: What do you remember when you were being raised about your identity as a Jamestown S’Klallam. You were a small community, but did you have gatherings or celebrations or things that would have reinforced your spiritual background or culture in any way?

Grinnell: Every weekend, of course Sunday you had to go to church. And we had the Shaker church right there in Jamestown and it was only about two blocks away from our house. Of course we didn’t have blocks; there’s only one road in and one road out of Jamestown. And it burned when I had the mumps in Jamestown when I was about six years old. And after that church went down...and that was a gathering place. People would come a far just to go to that church. And, oh, it was so spiritual. The shaking that the people did and the preaching that they did was just so powerful. So that would go on for hours and then they would have big dinners. And the little kids didn’t eat until after everybody else did. And we served and then we did dishes and then we got to eat then. And then you got to listen to all the stories. I think that stuck with me more than anything—the stories of the people.

05:01-06:17

Really, it wasn’t all that great to be Indian at that time. Now, it only takes us four and a half minutes to get to town from where I live—downtown Sequim. But at that time it was a long ways. If you were lucky enough you had a car, but if you didn’t you had to walk. And so we were kind of isolated, and it wasn’t all that glamorous. It wasn’t glamorous. And during the war it was felt that if anybody was going to get it we would get it first because we were right along the beach. So it wasn’t a desirable place to even visit because the thinking was that pretty soon it would get either bombed from an airplane or from a submarine or something.

Linzee: So your home was right on the water.

Grinnell: Yeah.

Linzee: You grew up right on the water.

Grinnell: Umhum.
Linzee: And the farmland was back from that?

Grinnell: Yeah.

Grinnell: As my grandfather took trees down then our land was developed into agriculture and we raised hay and had cows and chickens, everything. And so we were pretty self-sufficient, in fact, very self-sufficient. There were people down there that didn’t do the farming and so we provided some help for them also. But they did other things. They did have other resources, too.

Linzee: And so you would sell your milk to town?

Grinnell: And then, finally, we had the Dungeness Creamery and they would come after our milk. I guess that’s when I learned at a very young age about time. The cows had to be serviced at a certain time in the morning and the same time at night and you had to go get them at a certain time and take care of them before you took care of yourself. I think all that was good for me.

Linzee: Were there traditional foods that you were raised eating?

Grinnell: Well, I always thought that salmon and crabs and all those good things were just regular foods, but now we call them traditional foods. And ducks. I learned very quickly from my grandmother that sometimes you would eat with the shades down and sometimes you would eat with the shades up. But usually you would eat with the shades down because you didn’t want anybody else to see what you were eating. And I always thought that was strange because everything that I did eat tasted so good. Anyway, I learned that you should be ashamed of some the foods that you were eating. Some of it was duck, some of it was fish head, some of it was fish eggs, and now everybody eats those things. My grandmother told me, though, she says, “Don’t tell anybody because as soon as they start eating it the price is going to go up.” Low and behold it did. And when I would go to town there was always a fish store in the alley and so she would send me over there. “Go ask them if they have any fish heads,” and I said, “OK.” And this man would say, “What do going to do with your fish heads?” And my grandmother had already prompted me. She says, “Tell them that you’re gonna feed your cats.” And so that’s what I told him: “I’m going to feed my cats.” I knew very well we were going to eat those things. And finally he started putting a price on them. So what she said was very, very true. They find out you’re going to have to pay for your food. People don’t do that very much anymore. The generation of my grandkids don’t eat that. In fact, my own children don’t eat some of the things that I ate at that time. Fish they do, but they don’t mess with the heads or make the soups that we used to make and buckskin bread.

Linzee: I was going to say, I would think people would make it in a soup, use it in a soup.
Grinnell: And then everybody has different breads, like fry bread is just very, very popular. Everybody eats fry bread. But we didn’t out here. We ate buckskin bread and it was so good. And it just amounted to be crusty bread after you baked it. Put it in the oven and you just pounded it real flat. You put a brown on it and it was crunchy and it was buckskin bread. That’s what we had.

Linzee: Were there any special ingredients in it that made it different from regular bread?

Grinnell: Nope.

Linzee: It was just how you shaped it.

Grinnell: Yeah, you just rolled it out to fit the pan and browned it and that was it right there. You didn’t expect it to raise up. It was baking powder and water and flour.

Linzee: You didn’t use yeast or anything.

Grinnell: No, we didn’t have that.

Linzee: Oh, you used baking powder.

Grinnell: Yeah, and it had a good flavor. And you always ate it hot, but nothing went to waste. You couldn’t afford to waste anything, so you could eat it cold to. It was better hot.

And we ate devil fish. And it was just the biggest time in my life when we’d go devil fishing or octopus. And I can remember my grandfather teaching me how to do that.

Linzee: How to catch them?

Grinnell: Umhum. The way he taught me it just happened to be this one time that we had a picnic. My grandmother couldn’t walk very far. We didn’t know at that time that she had multiple sclerosis. So he would hitch up a little wagon and away we’d go down the beach. And there was a great big octopus under this one rock. And he said, “I’m going to put you up on this rock and you stay up there until I get this octopus.” But, oh, it was so big and he would get a hold of it and he’d pull. And finally he put one of the legs in his mouth. He had really strong teeth and he’d hold onto it with his teeth and he’d pull on it and it would pull him back. I was screaming my head off because I thought that thing was going to eat my grandfather. And he pulled and finally he got his knife out and cut one of its legs off. But the suckers were so huge on it I just felt that it must have been ten feet, twelve feet in width. And he said—in fact
he was right—that they do grow back. And so, he says, “In that way, you don’t lose everything.” He says, “If you can’t get it all, get part of it.” And he says, “You can come back later.” But I just thought that thing was so big I thought for sure it was going to get my grandfather. That was almost too traumatic for me.

Linzee: And how do they cook octopus?

Grinnell: Simmer, in those big black iron kettles.

Linzee: Cast iron pots?

Grinnell: Yeah, that’s it right there. And you just simmer it. You never boil it. That’s what grandma thought me. And it might be two or three hours and then it will get just real tender and then you cut it up real small, thin pieces and eat it. Oh, it’s so good, to this day. In fact, I have some in my freezer right now.

Linzee: And did your grandfather teach you how to fish and crab and things like that.

Grinnell: I went with him, but I really was too small. I might have learned how to do a lot of other things—digging clams and identification and all that. Grandma taught me how to cook. But to jump in a boat and to go out with him—I didn’t do that. I just knew what he was doing. And crabs—everybody was catching crab. We could catch them at low tide too.

Linzee: Did you see your grandmother doing basket making? I know basket making is important to you.

Grinnell: Yeah, but I didn’t realize...she was just doing what grandma’s do and that was sitting down and doing a little bit of weaving there. But I didn’t pay that much attention and I thought, “Oh, here I was sitting right on the beach with her and she would just pick grasses from around her,” and she would say, “Hey, look at this here.” And so she would try to show me how to weave the bottom of the basket, the beginning. She’d take it up about this far, turn it up, and I still didn’t get it. That really wasn’t important to me. And I look back and I could see all those things that I missed by not being attentive at that time. But I wasn’t ready. And then language was another thing too. I said, “Teach me.” “No, no,” she says, “You’re not ready yet.” I says, “When will I be ready?” She says, “When you get your good brains.” And so, I got my good brains but it was way too late. But I did learn a lot about the language while I was living there.
Linzee: What kinds of things did you do for recreation as a kid?

Grinnell: We spent a lot of time in the water. We spent a lot of time playing tag and kick the can and Annie I Over and then just running from place to place and picking cherries and berries and apples and all those kinds of things. But we played on the beach all the time until we were just as brown as little raisins. I can’t believe how dark we were. But anyway, that was all fun. It was all...but a lot of my time, though, was helping my grandfather out in the fields. A lot of my time was spent doing that. I could hear kids playing down on the beach too and it bothered me a lot. But I had to work. Now that I look back on it I’m glad that I did because I did receive some very valuable lessons as far as work ethics.

Linzee: So they had other grandchildren too, you grandparents?

Grinnell: They did, but they all were with their parents. They would come down to Jamestown in the summer time. And we would all swim together and do the work together and all those kinds of things while they visited grandma and grandpa.

Linzee: What about your schooling?

Grinnell: My schooling...I only went from the first to the fifth grade in Sequim. My mother was home and her and my step-dad got married when I was ten and then it was time for me to move and my grandmother and grandfather got me to sit down and they told me, “It’s time that you go with your mom now. We’re getting too old. We’re getting too old to take care of you. And it’s best that you go on with them because they’re young and they can do things with you.” It broke my heart. Broke their heart. We all cried. It took me the longest time to understand that. So I had to make that adjustment really early. And, ooooh, it was terrible. Terrible. But anyway, at ten years old I moved in with my mother and my step-dad and moved to Port Angeles and then I got so involved in everything that that’s what kept me going there then. But I’d always go back every weekend to grandma and grandpa. Yeah, I loved them very much.

Linzee: So you went to public school, public high school in Port Angeles?

Grinnell: Yeah, yeah I did. School wasn’t really my best subject. If I worked at it I’d do all right. But there were other things. Sports was really my thing. I really liked that. But I got through school easily and I should have gone on to college because I probably could have gone but I didn’t know anybody and nobody could help me as far as being a Native. That’s where the scholarships really would have helped out
then. I didn’t go to college until after I was married and then that’s when I would take subjects that I really wanted to take. Then I got more involved in the culture too.

06:25-06:43

Linzee: So, you lived in Port Angeles and then at a certain point you moved out of your folks’ place?

Grinnell: Oh, yeah, my first marriage was in fifty...

00:00-03:16

five. And so then I went to Oregon for four years and then I had my son. He just turned fifty. He has three sons. One is in college, the other one is a senior in high school, and the other one is a freshman. And they’re all college-bound. All the children are college-bound and I’m just so happy that that’s happening. And I’ve got one that’s a granddaughter that’s down in Arizona and she’s pre-law. And I’m so happy about that.

Linzee: So you married someone that was from Oregon?

Grinnell: Yeah, he was from Oregon, here in the service, and then we were married for four years. And then the husband that I have right now, Fred, we grew up in the same town, went to school together, and then he had gone off for four years in the Navy. And when he came back then we got married. He’s been my oldest son’s father all those years. Then we had two children together, a boy and a girl. And so that’s how we got the nine grandchildren. So, he supports me in everything I do. And I thought, “Oh, gee! This is great.”

Linzee: You’re first marriage you went down to Oregon. Was this a Native community?

Grinnell: No. All white as far as I knew. I didn’t see any Indians.

Linzee: And you got to know each other through sports—your first husband?

Grinnell: My first husband? No. He came to town with another one of my friends after we got out of high school. So that’s how I met him and we were married later.

Linzee: But you knew your second husband that you’re married to now, you’ve known him for a good part of your life.

Grinnell: Yeah, now we’ve been married for 48 years.

Linzee: Wow.
Grinnell: A long time. Yeah, a long time. Longer than you’ve been alive.

Linzee: Well, that’s not true, actually.

Grinnell: Just about.

Linzee: No, I’m 52.

Grinnell: Yeah, just about.

Linzee: You got married in ’55. I was born in ’56.

Grinnell: I married my...I graduated in ’54 and I married Fred in ‘60. He’s a master electrician and contractor and so I’ve supported him while he’s taken different things in college too. But we are kind of like the breaking point. Now all the kids go to college right off the bat. So this is the best thing. And we support that wholeheartedly for everyone.

Linzee: Great.

03:17-04:08

So you’ve had a very successful...did you live on the reservation then? You and Fred?

Grinnell: No. We lived in Jamestown, which was never a reservation, but then that’s...

Linzee: Oh, that’s right. You said nobody lives on the reservation. I didn’t mean that. I meant...

Grinnell: We lived in Port Angeles for 25 years and then I retired from the high school. I was a counselor for the Native American students there and liaison for the school. And so when I retired—oh, gosh, it’s four years ago. Oh, wait a minute. We’ve been living down there for 15 years. Time goes by so fast. We’ve been living in Jamestown for about 15 years now. And so, actually, we went down to Jamestown—went back—before I retired.

04:09-05:15

Linzee: So was that the same property that your grandparents lived on?

Grinnell: Just about. Just about. We’re only about two blocks away. It feels good. It feels like home. Born and raised—it seems like—right there. Life has changed because the neighbors have changed and all of that. The housing has changed. The roads have changed. We never had T.V. We had wood heat. The houses were built by people that really didn’t know how to build a house and didn’t know how to
insulate unless it was just rolled up paper stuffed in a crack. That type of thing. And so I appreciate the housing that I have right now, but life was good then too.

**Linzee:** So, had your grandparents built the house themselves?

**Grinnell:** Yeah, along with other neighbors and relatives. They built the houses. Yeah. Uhmhm.

05:15-07:07

I used to have a bedroom upstairs and the Dungeness Lighthouse was working—way before I came along, but anyway—at night while I’d go to sleep with that lighthouse blinking in my window. And now it still does that—blink in my window. And so I joined the Dungeness Lighthouse Society and so now they want me to go out there and stay at the lighthouse and then I can see it from the other perspective. I told my husband, I says, “You have my boat ready.” I says, “In case I get tired of being at the lighthouse, you come and get me.” But some things that are so close to you all your life and you never really get to examine or participate in. But I’m lucky enough that I’m going to be able to do that. So this winter I’m going to go stay at the lighthouse.

**Linzee:** Oh, neat. People can live there, huh?

**Grinnell:** Yeah, well, you can go up there and live...It’s a volunteer thing. And you try to keep up the place.

**Linzee:** Oh, I see.

**Grinnell:** There will be six at a time. And so you better come with me.

**Linzee:** Sounds great.

**Grinnell:** It’s on a reserve. There’s a lot of elephant seal and seals. It’s a refuge. All kinds of...puffins and seagulls and all kinds of birds are out there. It’s all saved for them. And, of course, we have a lot of history at the Dungeness Lighthouse where people would go by and they used to stop there. And sometimes it was good and sometimes it wasn’t—a long time ago.

00:00-01:48

**Linzee:** How long did the Shaker Church last in Jamestown?

**Grinnell:** Until about 1942 and that’s when I watched it burn. And I couldn’t go over there because I had the mumps really bad, but I sat on the beach all wrapped up and watched it burn.

**Linzee:** They never reestablished it after it burned?
Grinnell: No. It had caught fire before and luckily they were able to save it and repair it. But this time they couldn’t do anything about it. It’s a stovepipe going through the ceiling type of thing on shake roof and moss and so on. And, so it just went...puff. Everyone got out safe, but it was a danger and they knew it.

Linzee: Did the religious tradition live on? What did people do for religion?

Grinnell: You know, it kind of went under. Unless you go to Mud Bay, some places like that, down by Olympia. There the church is really strong. Up in the North it’s really strong. But now it’s getting really strong in Lower Elwha. I really praise them for doing that—keeping that religion going. And they do a lot of spiritual help for many, many people. And I think it’s a good thing because when you do a service for people and they feel good, they feel better, they feel so good about themselves, well, then, it’s okay. The Shaker Church is fine for them. It’s something way from their past.

01:49-04:43

Linzee: So, is there something else that you would like to talk about from your past, from your life that you think is really important? Now, you worked as a school counselor, your husband worked as an electrician, but you were also involved in fishing and things too.

Grinnell: Yes, very involved in fishing. In fact, I was the first woman gill-netter from our tribe and also in the whole fishing fleet. And I was not liked because I was a fisher-lady, and you know that that is bad luck.

Linzee: Right.

Grinnell: Additional fisherman means that you have to share. Your quota isn’t as big and that was a bad thing too. But we made it all through that and before it was all over we were all pretty much friends. And because my husband was white the Jamestown did have an ordinance where he could fish with me. That boat could not go out without me so I was a skipper. And it worked out really well for both of us because we could work well together. I was a navigator. We always fished at night. So I was a navigator and I would tell him...I got to tell him where to go. But we were both good workers and so we did very well for ourselves as far as fishing is concerned. And because we were always together that meant that your deck hand or your skipper was right there too. And so you got to go out at a designated time and stay as long as you wanted to. Where other people had to worry about their families at home our kids were in college at that time and that’s what we were fishing for. And we were fishing hard because we wanted our kids to be in college.

Linzee: Were you fishing mostly for salmon?
**Grinnell:** Salmon always. And we did that for ten years. And that’s when the salmon were on a downhill—over fished. And so we jumped out of that. And we’re getting up in our years now. We’re up in our sixties, but we continued to fish for crab and that was fun. My husband and I really enjoyed that and we worked equally as hard, but at least that was in the daytime. And we had a good...we did well in that also.

**Linzee:** A whole different set of gear for that.

**Grinnell:** Different boat and everything.

**Linzee:** Different boat, even?

04:44-07:15

**Grinnell:** Yeah. And so now, this year, I’ve been involved in that canoe society, our canoe club. Almost every reservation on the shore, on the Olympic Peninsula, has a canoe club. And so we make that journey every year. This year we went up to Duncan, B.C. and we happened to choose one of the roughest days to go across. I’m sure my ancestors must have been rolling over and questioning our judgments. But, anyway, we went and it gave me a new perspective on what it is to go across in a canoe. I wasn’t in the canoe, but it was very, very scary for them. I was in the safety boat so it wasn’t as bad. But the orca...we were out there and they were bigger than our boat and our canoe too. So, that added a little spice to it.

**Linzee:** So, were the canoes made by people in the club, in the S’Klallam Tribe?

**Grinnell:** Yes. Yeah, our canoe probably is...it must be well over ten years old now and it was made by our people. And, so, it’s special. And my son, Laka’nəm, that’s the name of our canoe also. And so it’s especially good to see that that canoe is really working well for everybody. And, yes, it was made right there by our people. It was spread by our people. A tree is round like this, and after you hollow it out you have to spread it so it’s more serviceable. It won’t roll over. Well, I’m sure it will roll over if you really wanted it too. Widened it. Did all those things that you have to do to a canoe and put special spirits in there to keep you safe and everything. Well, they’ve done all those things and it can really take rough water. Not that I’d want to try it again.

**Linzee:** Really. Yeah, you only have to do that once, huh.

00:00-01:21

**Linzee:** Your grandparents, did they teach you about plants and traditional uses of plants?

**Grinnell:** You know, they tried to but at ten years old I didn’t really retain that much. I knew that you could do a lot of healing with the cedar bark and cascara. You could clean your blood with these
different plants. I knew the colors that you could get out of alder. I knew that you could weave with the alder bark, as well as the cedar. But I think that they were in a transition then because they knew that times were changing. If the language was changing, everything was changing. And so you were better off not depending on those any longer. And I think it was mainly my particular age that probably didn’t allow itself to stick with me. But now I have books on that. I have books on all of our different cures for different things.

01:22-04:17

Linzee: Are there histories of the tribe that have been maintained over time?

Grinnell: Oh yes. At the Jamestown we have one of the best libraries and collections, some that you can actually check out of the library. And there are some that are so precious that you have to sit right there and read it or view it and you’re locked in while you do that. But mainly we do have some of the best history books there. Out of print, way out of print.

Linzee: And they’ve been produced by people in the tribe?

Grinnell: History just like this.

Linzee: Uh-huh.

Grinnell: History just like this.

Linzee: So, oral history that’s been written down.

Grinnell: Yeah, because we had no way to write them. My grandmother and grandfather knew how to sign their names, that kind of a thing, but they didn’t know how to write a whole story or anything like that. But they could dictate. They could tell somebody a story and it was written down. I don’t even think they even proofread it to see if it really was what they meant to say.

Linzee: Right.

Grinnell: But there are some things in there that...

Linzee: But when you talked about the burning of the villages that was a tribal history that came from sources.

Grinnell: Yes, uh-huh. Most of that history is over in Port Townsend and we have copies of all that too.

Linzee: At the Historical Society?
Grinnell: The Historical Society and also the library. Peter Simpson. He’s a great collector. And he’s really been innovative on the saving of our history. And, so, he’s an important person to us. I’ve worked with him for several years. Not in history, per se, but in community efforts for everyone.

Linzee: Now, is he of the tribe?

Grinnell: No.

Linzee: He’s a local historian?

Grinnell: Yes. He’s so good. He’s spent many, many hours with people to get their history down.

Linzee: Oh, he took people’s history down.

Grinnell: Umhmm.

Linzee: Wow. Just hand writing it out or recording it.

Grinnell: Umhmm.

Linzee: Wow.

Grinnell: Well, he started so long ago he had a recording machine and then you had to transcribe off that. And so it’s a slow process compared to what it is now.

04:18-06:26

Linzee: How much of the language do you think you have maintained yourself?

Grinnell: I’m probably one of the most pitiful examples of the times because I was born in between and one side said no and the other one...and then there was a space in there where I created my own life. I knew I had this. This was strong. This is very strong. And so it caught on later in life. And if you don’t do something every day, even though you know it, it’s still hard to download and continue to retain that. And now that I have retired it’s even harder because I don’t speak it all the time. But I feel I have a better chance with reading it. And that’s the wonderful thing about the program the Lower Elwha has provided to all of us. And we’re all involved in the grant process too—Port Gamble, Jamestown and the Lower Elwha—we’re all involved. We’re able to get it down on paper and then we’re able to get it down on computer and we can type it. That’s a wonderful thing. And now we’ve got a program going down there where they can speak almost every day. Up at the high school they’re teaching it as a foreign language. And so it’s accepted. It’s accepted just as Spanish or French, Japanese, any of them.

Linzee: So there are people from the tribe and not from the tribe that are both taking it?
Grinnell: Both. Yeah.

Linzee: Uh-huh. That’s great.

Grinnell: It is.

Linzee: At the public high school, huh? Great.

[End Interview.]