

Gathering Our Voice

Interview with Pedro Sandoval
Interviewer: Nancy Warner
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Transcribed July 27, 2011 by Cyndie Alto

Nancy: I am here with Pedro Sandoval at his office in Omak/Okanogan just barely south of the Omak line I think. Ok, Okanogan and we are going to do a Gathering Our Voice interview for the Foodways and Byways Project. So, thank you again Pedro for taking time in your busy work week to have this conversation with me.

Pedro: Sure, it's my pleasure.

NW: I am going to ask you a series of questions that we're asking people all over the region, as we attempt to gather this very rich story of food harvest, processing and distribution in our region. So, let's just start with how long have you and your family lived in North Central Washington (NCW)?

PS: We came here back in 1981; at the end of 1981 we fell into the Okanogan. (phone rings) Let me shut the other phone off.

NW: Ok, we just had a little interruption from the phone there, so um, you were just starting to tell me how long you and your family have lived in NCW.

PS: Yeah, we have been here since 1981 and uh we have never left. I have 5 sisters and uh 3 uh, 4 of them actually. Uh have come and gone thru here. We all work in the Okanogan Valley.

NW: Ok, so where did your family come from?

PS: We came from the state of Oaxaca. Um and so it was just the trip from there to here to the Okanogan Valley. My parents have had to work here for a few years prior to my sisters and I moving up. So they have worked from Oroville, Omak, Okanogan in the uh, orchard industry.

NW: Ok, and when they came up to work, did, had they other friends that worked in the region?

PS: Yeah, they when we got here there were only a few families that we knew of in the Omak/Okanogan area that uh, we would get together with. Uh, we knew a family in the Johnny Appleseed uh, area in Malott and also we knew of another family that had been here longer than our family. Um, and um, so yeah, we had a few other families that we knew.

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NW: Yeah, so how old were you then, when you came?

PS: I was nine years old and duh, I didn't know a word of English, same with my sisters. And so, uh, we basically came here not really knowing what we were doing here. But, uh, here we are.

NW: Wow, must have been pretty exciting. Were people pretty excited for you at home when you were leaving? or

PS: Um, not I don't remember that part, I just remember overhearing my parents the night before that uh they were going to bring us to the Okanogan Valley. It was kind of like going to a new world and so for myself I ran away at that time. I didn't want to come. And so my dad had to actually capture me. I ran away for the night. And then, they came looking for me. My sisters were a little bit too young to really recognize what was going on and so. Uh, I think that it was stressful for, for us as kids to be able to, or not be able but just to, you know, traveling that far of distance when we hadn't travelled out of the area where we were living, ever.

NW: Yeah, yeah. So are you the oldest, youngest, where do you fit into your family of sisters?

PS: I am the oldest in the family, of our family.

NW: Ok. So now that you have been here for a few years, this is 2011 and you came in 81. You have been here long enough to get your bearings and raise your own family. So, um what do you like most about NCW or Okanogan/Omak area?

PS: I really love the, the people in the Okanogan Valley. Uh, they are very kind, and generous. Uh, I feel like they are compassionate and there's a lot of things that the Okanogan Valley has to offer, such as, again the people, the environment we have here. I can go to a big city 2 1/2 hours from here to Spokane, 5 hours to Seattle, or 1 1/2 to Wenatchee. Or and I can go fishing, hiking and it's, it's a slower mode of life. There's uh, obviously some crime that goes on here, but for the most people, uh or for the most part it's the people that live in the Okanogan Valley that has kept me here. And because of the generosity uh, and the again the kindness that they displayed to my family has been one of the reasons that I have stayed here and wanted to be part of this community.

NW: Ok. Do you have any food traditions in your family that are specifically linked to NCW that you've developed since you have been here?

PS: Uh, well obviously you know we uh, we have apples, and cherries and so uh, pears. My

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mom used to dry a lot of dried fruit. And you know, she learned how to make pies and um, really cook with what's available here. Um, and because we've had to integrate into the way of life in the Okanogan Valley. We just used what's available here.

NW: You mentioned that you liked to go fishing? Is fish kind of one of the traditions around life here for you?

PS: Not for me specifically, but when I was younger my dad, uh, you know we started in a place where we were farmers and duh, farm workers and basically the money they were making at the time was not enough to really feed us and so they would uh, my dad would go hunting and once in a while you'd have deer and learn how to cook that. And my mom would grow her own, raise her own chickens and vegetables and uh, and my dad would go fishing quite a bit. And so yeah, we definitely that was part of our diet as well.

NW: So, um how did you how did you learn to cook venison, what did your dad teach you about cooking deer?

PS: Um, he had to learn from others as well in this area because I remember the first time they brought deer home, I didn't like it. It wasn't very tasty. Uh, but one of the things that we do, we like a lot of hot food, and so they incorporated some really hot chilies into the meat, and then they would smoke it, or dry it, and or uh, my mom would make it in stews and stuff like that.

NW: Oh, uh. Sounds good.

PS: Uh huh.

NW: Spicy jerky.

PS: Yeah.

NW: Sounds excellent.

PS: Yeah.

NW: Oh, so others taught you how to do that when you got here.

PS: Yep.

NW: Here.

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PS: Yep.

NW: Ok, well we will talk more about food traditions um in a little while. Um, actually we could talk about it right now. I want to know more about what you brought with you from Mexico to your family, um, some other traditions that didn't develop here so much but traditions that you brought with you.

PS: Uh, some of things that we brought with us were obviously traditional foods. And a lot of the spices and um, flavors that we, that weren't available here. My mom and dad would go down to Brewster, was one of those little towns that had been established with the Hispanic community and so they would have a lot of the traditional spices and such available to cook with and so uh, one of the specialties that my mom would make would be hot tamales. And so, when I would go to school and have the little hot tamales boxes, I would kind of laughed cause these are not hot tamales, but that is what they called them. Uh, but in the tamales my mom makes a sauce that they call mole. And Oaxaca, Oaxaca, the state of Oaxaca is known for their moles and so she would make several types of moles and um, so basically it was a lot of the food that we brought over and you know our diet consisted of homemade refried beans and fried rice and usually some kind of meat. Uh, in addition to that meal. And later on my mom actually travelled to Mexico several times and every time she would bring back seeds for tomatillos and cilantro and that's part of our diet as well. Even to this date, my wife learned how to make fried rice and the refried beans and the, she makes fresh salsas and uh so, a lot of that stuff has been passed on to my family and um, I don't cook very often, but if I have to, I you know, I do know how to cook some of the stuff my mom used to cook for us and same with my sisters. They have learned a lot of those dishes.

NW: Good. So is there one particular dish that you think is something special that your family shares at gatherings and so on?

PS: Uh, definitely this, uh, red mole. It's very, very tasty. It's not really hot, it's, it's kind of a thick, sweet and a little bit of spice and usually serve that with chicken or beef or pork or whatever. Uh, that's one of the items that of one of the recipes of food that we really enjoy as a family and you know when there's mole going on somebody has gone to a lot of effort. It is not a thing that you just pull it out of a can and put it in there. They do offer uh, a mole in a can that you could just slap in a pan and serve it, but when it is homemade usually it takes at least 2 hours to cook and it has many, many ingredients and uh, you know, to me that's usually a sign of love from that family member. Because they have to go to so much effort, to try to serve it to us. And the other is that we make homemade tamales around Christmas time and sometimes uh, at other gatherings as well.

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NW: And so, do you make pork tamales, or chicken tamales or fruit tamales?

PS: Uh, it varies. Sometimes we'll make, oh, a maybe around Thanksgiving we'll make turkey tamales and sometimes we'll stick vegetables in there. Uh, the mole is again one of those ingredients that goes on those. And so, again its, its a big process. And it's a lot of work and so it's easier just not to do it. And now a days other ladies that have moved into this valley make tamales as well. Uh, but for me, I always say there not as good as my moms. And so, it's easier to go to the store and buy some tamales.

NW: Yeah, definitely easier. So how about harvesting wild greens? Did you bring any traditions around harvesting greens? Quelites?

PS: Uh, the Quelites and stuff, I think stuff like that was natural around here. Uh, but my mom actually brought these, uh these types of greens from the region where we came from. And again she used to grow her own cilantro from seed and man she knew how to grow cilantro. These things would be you know, 4 feet high and really, I mean the stuff you buy at Safeway or any of the local stores is basically the very beginning of the sprouts, but the actually the, the cilantro that makes the salsa or whatever you're cooking it with is, is when it gets a little bigger, and it's ripe. And obviously when it turns to flower and seed it's too late, but in between that process, uh, she also um, I remember, she would bring uh, these peapods, they call juahes. And my wife absolutely hates them because they make your mouth kind of stink. It's kind of like garlic. But uh, to me, and to us it's a very um, kind of a delicacy I guess, just because of traditionally we have eaten it in the region we have come from. Uh, she also brought I can't remember the name; of the, this plant I believe flidless. And, maybe Papa Lopez, they call them. It's kind of a leafy green and same thing it has a distinct flavor to them. And um, that's the kind of stuff she would bring from Mexico and try to incorporate those things into our diet here again. And for me, coming here as a 9 year old, and whenever I would have that stuff it would definitely take me back to a time and when my grandmother used to feed us the same stuff.

NW: Um, did your grandmother ever come up here to visit?

PS: She came one time and because uh, her diet was very specific uh, the kinds of food that we had here was probably the biggest turn off and I remember we took her to Dairy Queen one day and bought her a hamburger and she basically thought that that was disgusting. She didn't know how we could eat that kind of stuff, and she was accustomed to making homemade tortillas and cooking over an open fire and actually making an effort to feed the family. And so when we would show up at a restaurant and say here this is what we were going to eat. And she wasn't

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very impressed and she was only here for about 2 weeks. And she went home. She didn't like it.

NW: Um, Is she still alive?

PS: No, my grandmother passed on.

NW: Oh, ok. I'm glad she got to come see you up here.

PS: Yeah.

NW: So, I think I might just stop this for just a second.

PS: Sure.

NW: So that's a really good overview of, of by the time you came, you could, you could actually buy some things that you wanted in Brewster because

PS: Yes.

NW: it was already established as a center for, for Hispanics in the region as a supply center.

PS: Yes.

NW: And then you were able to go back and get, start supplementing your larder basically through seeds and so on your mom did. And so, so it seems like you haven't had to leave a lot of things behind. You've just eventually built them in.

PS: Yeah, and uh, as far as food, we've, we've always kept our traditional foods from where we came from, and my wife's originally from Oregon. And uh, her whole family is, uh, and she actually learned how to cook a lot of these meals and so to me it's a real treat and again a sign of affection when she goes through all the trouble to really uh, do this. It's really hard for her at first, my mom would only tell her only, it's a pinch of this, and a couple of these and a handful of that, and a cup of this. And but my wife is uh, very meticulous and stuff like that, and so she actually started writing down what the pinch of this and the handful of that really meant as far as cups, and teaspoons and such. And so every once in a while she'll break out the recipe book and she'll make that same stuff.

NW: Oh, that's great. I look forward to meeting her at some point. So, now I've got a question, we have already talked a little about foods that you like from this region. Um, and what you

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have brought with you. Is there anything else that you would say is a favorite food from this region?

PS: Um, in this area. When I first got here I, uh you know, I didn't know what chili was and one of the first families that I used to hang out with, they pretty much taught me what American life looked like and what their diet looked like, and so, anywhere from ham and cheese sandwiches with mayo, to chili, uh, stews and um, I've lived with friends that uh, live on the east side which are Native Americans. Uh, and they to you know, eat a lot of deer meat and so they've showed me some of that. I have some friends that used to go root picking, picking. And um, and so you know the fish obviously salmon is, is one of the, uh, big parts of the diet in this area. And, um, uh just you know the typical American food, you know again, the hamburger, obviously is one of those items that, uh, is available everywhere. And but, um, you know a lot has changed in the Omak/Okanogan area once the restaurants came in, the fast food, uh, industry took over what our diet looks like. And so, I believe that you know some of the health issues we have are really direct to that you know. If you go to McDonalds, or Arby's, or Burger King, everyday and that's all that you eat and you don't incorporate other things like fresh, fresh vegetables and fresh meat, uh, we are still in a farming community where people do have the availability to fresh eggs, fresh chickens, and uh you know, pigs and um, cows and so um, I don't know that there's a very specific thing that's a favorite of mine because again you know I always go back to my roots. But you know a good steak is good every once in a while, some a-1 sauce and so like potatoes.

NW: Ok. Uh, so when you were younger, when you were in, um, when you were in Mexico still, when you were in Oaxaca. You were very young when you moved here. So,

PS: Yes.

NW: 9 years old. Um, but how did your family's food, um, the source of their food change between Oaxaca and being up here? Did you grow more there and forge more in the wild there than up here? Could you just talk about that a little bit?

PS: Um, what I can remember about down there was that they had a farmer's market and basically my grandmother would go to the farmer's market and get fresh meat and um fresh fruits and vegetables and if she needed something usually a neighbor down the road would grow something and barter and trade that kind of stuff. Um, my grandmother used to have a little uh, ma and pa store and she uh, sold sugar and flour and that kind of stuff and she would trade with some of the indigenous people in the area. They would bring fresh pineapples and uh, apples, uh and right in the little town where I lived we didn't grow apples, but some of the surrounding areas did, and uh, bananas and mangos and so. And basically, it was kind of a barter and trade type system. Uh, also obviously they had stores, but the stores had more like processed foods,

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like the cans of sardines and tomatoes and uh, you know, some breads and stuff like that. But it was more, again fresh stuff from where I came from, uh, there used to be lots of corn grown everywhere. And so, I used to run away from the house all the time at about 5-6 and it was a small enough town that I wasn't going to get lost or you know but I am sure my grandparents feared for my safety but I knew a lot of people there. If I just didn't make it home for dinner it was easy to start a fire and throw some corn on there and then they had lots of avocado trees growing wild everywhere, and guavas. And so you really wouldn't grow hungry because it was really kind of one of those deals, where no matter where you went there was food. Pomegranates off of somebody's tree when you walked by the roadside and that kind of stuff.

NW: Sounds wonderful. Um, did you share food you grew or gathered with your neighbors and friends? I guess this question would be relative to NCW?

PS: Um, my dad used to work in the Baja, California and in California as well in the tomato fields. And I remember him and my mom planting rows and rows of tomato plants and by the end of summer they had so much, that yeah they, they would have to give it away otherwise it would rot. Um, and some of it my mom would sell at the farmer's market and I remember them shipping boxes and boxes of tomatoes and so that was a source of income as well at that time. Uh, we used to have a big row of raspberries. I don't remember them selling those, but people would show up and gather raspberries around the bushes there and um.

NW: So that was here?

PS: That was here.

NW: And then growing the tomatoes was here too?

PS: Yeah.

NW: Oh, so where would they ship the tomatoes to?

PS: Um, usually I um, my mom would go to Spokane and then, un, here in the local farmer's market as well, she started bringing her own there. Um.

NW: Ok, you were telling me on the phone that she also started marketing cilantro.

PS: Yeah, she did, she used to grow her own cilantro and sell it here. And I have gone to the farmer's market here and I have noticed that somebody's growing cilantro now too and selling it. Not another Hispanic person, but, ah, actually, a white person that knows it's a good ingredient

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for fresh salsas or just eat it fresh.

NW: So are they selling the cilantro at the market at large or in the smaller form that you see in the grocery store?

PS: Um, it probably a little larger that they are letting it mature a little bit and I think they recognize it that's where a lot of the flavor may be. Um, in comparison to just selling the sprouts. I forgot to tell you that the other thing that she brought into this area was the tomatillo. And the tomatillo is kind of like a tomato only it's only green and again that's an ingredient for a green mole or chili verde they call it at one of the local restaurants. Or you can make a different type of salsa and so where we come from we eat a lot of hot food and we love it.

NW: Um, sounds beautiful, I've never been there but I would love to go.

PS: Yeah

NW: Um, so how about putting up the food once you, once you grew it yourself or bought it at the farmer's market. Tell me a little bit about, um, what would you do with all the tomatoes?

PS: Um, some of the stuff that we had for leftovers my mom would actually freeze them. We used to have, uh, I don't remember how big, probably a 5ft x 4-3.5 ft freezer. And she would zip lock bag um and put them in there. And uh, she used to freeze a lot of stuff. She used to have 5 of those fruit dryers and she would cut up enough apples for the winter time, and pears, apricots, uh, prunes. I mean so she really would do a lot of stuff to preserve some of that food. And some it was to do with finances and some of it just had to do with the fact she didn't like the waste. And so we used to eat that in the winter time. I remember a few times, uh, in December I would jump into, or go to the freezer and grab a bag full of dried apples. And they were good.

NW: Oh, so she dry them and then she'd put them in the freezer.

PS: Right.

NW: Oh.

PS: And I remember she'd try different things like, uh, one year she'd put a little bit of sugar, and then year of course she'd put some cinnamon and um, and today I see don't know what the name of that company is, but I see they are selling the granny apple kind of dried up and they put cinnamon on it as well. And uh, some of the things that have developed I don't know if it's a direct result from her doing that kind of stuff, but she used to sell those as well as the farmer's

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market.

NW: Uh, she might have inspired someone.

PS: You never know.

NW: And is she still alive?

PS: Yes.

NW: Oh, good. Oh, good. Um, let's see. Were there difficult times when you had to survive with little to no money? How did you manage then compared to those times when making a living was easier?

PS: Oh, um. Like I said my family in particular when we came to the United States, uh, again we were, uh, farm workers, and basically I remember the first place that we lived in was a small cabin that used to be our living room, that used to be our sleeping quarters and the bathroom was outside in an outhouse. And uh, we used to live next to some people that were hippies and they were really kind, they, they helped us out through winter time, that first winter. And yeah, it was difficult because when you come to a new area you don't have resources. Um, basically you just had to do with what you could and uh, we didn't have the nicest cars and any of that stuff. But you know, eventually my parents worked really hard and the, we ended up, my parents ended up leasing some orchards and making some money and they made a new, they built a new house. And uh, and for us as kids we were pushed to get educated so we could not have to go out there and work in the fields and the hot sun and the cold winters. And uh, also that was a way to liberate ourselves from staying in the same, um, financial situation. And so my parents really pushed hard on that. There has been a lot of heartache in the process. Um, you know when you go from having a \$20,000. per/year income for the household to bringing in \$320,000. per/year. It really flipped their minds. And they didn't know how to handle the finances and so you know there's been some situations that have occurred. And, and my family's a broken family right now as a result of finances. Back in 1998-99, the apple industry crashed and so, uh, at that time my parents went from again from bringing in \$300,000. plus income to filing for bankruptcy and selling some of the property. And uh, my mom and dad ended up divorcing and you know there's a lot of animosity and, and as a result of that, even amongst my sisters and I, you know we have reserved feelings about the situation and how it could have been handled then. For me personally, as the eldest in the family I somewhat feel a little of responsibility for maybe not sticking around and helping with the family, uh, farm and that kind of stuff. And, of course, there's a lot more to those dynamics and so, um. Uh, uh, we have gone from nothing to a lot, to trying to figure out, you know, where's the happy living and you know, what, what, is it worth.

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Because, um, you know when you have to work, work, work and you miss your children growing up and events and stuff like that. I think that having money and making money is great, but I think that for me today, I feel like my family's my number one, when it comes to, uh, uh, you know, happiness, or content, contentment. And so, there has been a lot of variance in the ways of thinking and I believe my sisters are going thru the same things at this time.

NW: So that brings us to this question of, of um, the things that you learned from your parents and maybe from your neighbors and others in the community about how to get by well, um, with little money. Um, how are you passing what you learned on to, to your own children and to others in the community? Is that something that you are doing sub-consciously or have you had some, you know, intentional

PS: Ah...

NW:ways of doing that?

PS: I think that it's a little bit of both. Um, for myself I own 2 businesses right now with my wife. We run an adult family home. Uh, my wife had always believed education is the next way to getting ahead and having success. And so she became an RN, early in our marriage and it was a big sacrifice at the time and we have, had next to nothing as well at that time. But we have been in the adult family home for 10 years now. And I started my own car lot, about 6 years ago. And so, we both have seen money come through our hands and we were just wasting it because we felt it was always going to be good and times were going to be good. But, uh, today we understand with today's economy it can get very unstable at any time and so how do you cut back when you are accustomed to living a certain way. And we've actually had to learn the hard way. I've had my youngest kid say, "Dad, are we poor?" Because you know, when their ears are open and my wife and I are discussing finances in our home. Uh, they get to worry as well. And so, uh, today again I believe that my kids understand the, it's nice to have money, but it's not our number one priority. And that, you know we want to be able to just be sane, and safe, and have our family unit together. And understanding that, you know, sometimes, we all have to pull together to give up some things and sacrifice some things to, to get to tomorrow. And, and that some of the important things are obviously, being able to have a roof over our head and food on the table and everything else is just extra. And even the cars, if we have to go to just something that runs, as compared to something that looks really nice. They understand that concept today. And I think as a result of that happening to me personally, uh, that's the part where my community is watching. And so when people drive by my house or my car lot, that they assumed that I am wealthy and that I am very rich. And I am very, I am wealthy in the sense that I have a lot of family. And we have a lot of love in our family, and um, but in the sense that I don't have a million dollars stocked away somewhere. That in that really doesn't matter to me. I

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try to uh, to live in a way that I am not out there trying to show off or pressure people into, the neighbors you know all around us, that way we can compete with the Jones' mentality. And so, uh, some of the things that are happening and some of the responsibilities that I feel personally is that, you know that I need to be a good example for my community and then that I need to be willing to serve my community. And really both businesses are of service to my community and so, uh, how ever that turns out in the future, I'm not really sure. I just know that, uh, we're survivors and if we need to do something different, we know how to do that.

NW: So, to get down to the basics of surviving then, um, did you're who taught you how to garden and grow things?

PS: Probably my mom and dad. Um, you know my grandmother and my grandfather used to farm and I remember them showing me how to work a hoe. And uh, you know a shovel, and you know, how to do you work those tools, because um, if you don't know how to work the land, and you don't know how to irrigate and you don't know how to plant, and you don't know, you know. The, again just having the basics of having to weed around the whatever you're growing. Because if you let the weeds get to them, and the bugs into um and pretty soon your harvest is done and the plants that you're watering are basically not going to produce because it's mostly weeds and so. Uh, I would say mainly my parents. Um, you know, again they've grown a lot of stuff. Anywhere from peppers, tomatoes, tomatillos, um, I just green beans and they, we've grown it all. and so on a basic level if it came down to where we did not have enough finances to go to Safeway and pick those kinds of items then, yeah we could definitely go back to planting our own uh, fruits and vegetables and. I've actually enough property that I work today that I have thought about planting some fruit trees and allowing my children to uh, sell those through the summer. Uh, in a little fruit stand out here just to show them how that works, as far as economics and the kind of work that you have to put in. And um, because I'm located sort of downtown I have thought about going with you know organics. And that way you don't have to worry about pesticides and spraying in the neighbor's house and that kind of stuff, so. Definitely, if we have to get back to basics, I know how to get there and one of the uh, skills, or some of the skills that I have is in the orchard industry. So, if I ever have to go back to, say if I couldn't get another job anywhere else. I believe I could manage an orchard, or I could just to getting on a ladder and pruning, thinning, picking. Uh, whatever it would take to survive and make it to the next day.

NW: So, what does that ability to take care of yourself and know that you have diverse skills? What's that do for you?

PS: It builds confidence in a person and it builds confidence in, in the family and it builds you know, I, I see some of my community that it falls complacent to again just being willing to wait

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for Safeway to bring in some of this stuff. And sometimes I think well what would happen if, you know, Safeway couldn't bring enough vegetables and actually couldn't you know, if some catastrophic event happened where we could not bring in food. What would some of these people do? You know, and uh so for me it builds a lot of confidence in the ability to be able to survive. And the, like I said I have a lot of Native American friends that you know, if I had to ask for help and say, "Hey listen, I need you to take me hunting cause my family needs some meat. And how bout we go root digging or berry picking or whatever." One of my favorites I guess that I forgot is the huckleberries. Ah, I love huckleberries. I'm a huckleberry hound. I love those things.

NW: Yeah. They are great.

PS: Yeah.

NW: Blueberries don't quite measure up do they?

PS: No.

NW: Yeah. So um, how did you get into huckleberries?

PS: Um, some of my Native American friends would freeze them and so again, winter time they would bring them out and we would just eat them. Just out of the bag or we would throw um in ice cream and then I have a little recipe that I make uh, Huckleberry Lemonade. And I've thought about if I had enough huckleberries to be able to sell um at our event here at the end of the year, the Omak Stampede. And I, I saw a few years ago, that somebody has already started doing that. But I have a different recipe that I feel would definitely surpass that. And I would definitely outsell them, if I chose to do that. So those are some of the things, that again I feel that I could market a lot of different things and um. And I think, I think my parents really taught us the entrepreneurship idea. That yes we could work for somebody else, but if we can work for ourselves and kind of make our own destiny and that's really where we need to be. And I try to teach that to my kids as well.

NW: Ok, um, is there one thing that you are most proud of in terms of the way your family, um, and your family not so much right today, but into the past and into the future? Is there one thing that you're most proud of about the way your family has harvested and grown food directly?

PS: Um, I guess I'm proud of the fact that again we can say we are survivors. And again if there was a catastrophic event that had happened then or that will happen in the future, I feel that like we can come together and grow stuff and share with our neighbors and teach our neighbors how

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to do that. You know, they talk about you can either give a man a fish or teach him how to fish. And I truly believe in that. One of the things that I feel is, is something that I take pride in is that I have work ethic. With work ethic you can do anything. You know, if you're a good worker I can either go work for someone else or I can work for myself and be able to produce enough to either store food or sell food or whatever or buy food. You know, I mean, uh, it is again part of the economics and um, but, but mainly you know with being able to share stuff. I have neighbors and friends that they'll call and say, "We have apricots. Come get them." And that's great that they can call, and peaches or left over apples or whatever. And so even today we practice some of those things like my wife has 3-4 dehydrators. And she also does the same thing and she also cans. Which my mom used to do as well. And uh, so a lot of the um, the food storage for winter time or food gathering for the seasons, you know, sometimes the plums are only available for a 2-3 week period. And so, wherever we can get some we try to eat what is available and fresh at that time.

NW: Um. Okay. I have a few more here. I have a question here for you Pedro. I think we have been nipping all around it, but I just want to ask you directly. As you were growing up here in this community and your family was going through all its own transitions. What are, how did you notice people taking care of people in need? From your own family outward or your own family being recipient of someone else's generosity?

PS: Um, and yeah that's, that's a really good question. I that again that is one of the major factors in the Okanogan Valley that I love about people in this valley; very, very kind, very generous. Uh, I feel like there are numerous groups of people out there that do help other families and I know again if I can recall back to 1981, our community has a food basket program that is still alive today. And several of the ladies that either came up with that idea or maybe they were handed that idea. Um, they still have it going on and I remember our first Christmas here you know, a basket of um, food items came to us. I mean we absolutely didn't have anything. And you know, cans of juice, frozen juice, and uh, even maybe some is it spam, and you know just those kinds of things, I, I never forget. I mean, I never forget stuff like that. And so what that does for me and my family it allows us to know that we have been blessed and we have been given and therefore we shall bless back and give back. And so we really try to help other families that are in need and I know that, uh, that sometimes I feel like personally I taken it where you know, um, I always take inventory of the good that I have done and so I sometimes expect that that good will come back. And that I can call in favors and stuff like that. But you know it's just part of the growing process and part of my growth today is that you know I can do something with no expectation of return. And that's the beauty. Because I feel that there are other people in our community that do the exact same thing. They don't want to get the praise; they don't want to get the glory. They just want to be able to know that they are doing the right thing and again, we all have to come to our own understanding of why we are here. And that has

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been one of the questions in my mind for a lot of the years that I was growing up. God, why Omak, WA. You know, why did you put me in Omak, WA. of all places on earth. Why Omak, WA? Um, and, and I feel like the answer is clear to me today, this is where I belong, this is where I was put and so this is where I live. This is what I call my home town. This is what I call my community and I, I try to stay involved in and participate and be of service again in different areas of my community and un. You know, like I said where as I have, I have made the mistake of wanting to get praise and adoration. Today that's not so important to me; I just need to know that I am doing the right thing. And my name needs to be anonymous in all things that I do.

NW: Un, un. That must feel good?

PS: It's, it's really a good feeling again to not have the expectation of somebody returning something to you. And, uh, you know I have had a few instances where I've helped families out. They want to say, "Thank you, Pedro. Thank you." Usually, you know, I'll say, "You know thank God. That, you know, he gave me, so I could give you." And, and so that's where I fall in line today, where um, you know in past as I was growing up I, I was very confused and just not understanding what I was doing here. And today I have 4 children and uh, ranging from 20 years old to date to 4 years old and uh, there is a little bit of a gap in the 2 sets of kids that I have. Uh, the 20 and 14 and 6 and 4. And so it has given another opportunity to continue to grow and, and be a different person of what I used to be. And again I believe that, that's just what's supposed to happen. Uh, I, I have felt in my heart that, again I was put here for a reason and you know, I have a lot of leadership skills that allow me to know that I have a great responsibility to be a good example to others and uh, most importantly to my kids and to my family around me.

NW: Ok. Um, just a couple more questions? One is about food distribution.

PS: Um huh.

NW: And, when you first moved up here, when your family first moved up in 1981 and there were some things missing in your diet that you wanted. Um, some of it was down in Brewster but, some of it took years to bring up here. Was there a system amongst you, your family, others in the region who had been recent immigrants for sharing, distributing things as you got them, like seeds or, or. Was there any kind of formal distribution system of food, seeds sort of a subculture?

PS: Um, not so much here in this area where we live. Uh, the, some of the folks that we knew, we did share foods and we did share meals. Um, I don't remember so much sharing the seeds and stuff. And usually, sometimes that's one of those things that you know your family becomes known for certain something, and so, it may be that we we're almost hoarding, I guess, and

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because it can become income. You know, if you're giving your income away, it's kind of like me coming up with a new invention and then sharing it with everybody else. And, then missing out on the finances end of it. Um, but you know in this area, there are several families from Oaxaca. And some of the things that we do get to share when we get together are again, our foods and uh, one of the things that we didn't talk about is like, music.

We brought music that we like and we share that when we sit down and um. And even just memories of the regions where each individual families comes from but. Uh, not so much, I don't remember really sharing a lot of the, or having a formal mode of distribution for seeds and food and stuff like that. Usually it was one of those things, again, if you knew a friend of a friend that needed this then you know that friend would say, "Hey you go to see these folks, cause they have a ton of tomatoes just laying everywhere." And uh, usually that would mean that maybe they would bring a box of some special type of apple that we hadn't see or peaches or whatever they had in their area. So again, it became one of those kinds of a bartering system. You know, you couldn't really say that you could sell me a pound of this for a pound of that. But more of just here this is what I can offer, and this is what I can give you. And, and I think that that works out, again with that mentality that we are just helping each other out to survive. There are families that obviously have less, and so how could you ask for more of them, if they don't have it. And when you can recall the day when, you know, someone gave you a handout and, and so I'm thinking that that mentality is, is pretty well spread around here. I think that a lot of neighbors help a lot of neighbors. And, and again that's one of the parts that I really love about this region.

NW: So I am glad you brought up the music. Um, we are working with a group of musicians to put together a sound track for this DVD. You know, so it will be the sound of NCW. So the sound of NCW is going to be bigger than we can produce on this DVD. But, in terms of the sound of Oaxaca, what are, what are some examples of, of what are the instruments that would be in that music.

PS: Um, I, as I grew up here, I came to this country and I got into a lot of American rock and roll, you know and. They call it heavy metal and that kind of stuff. And basically it was just getting involved in the culture. You know, I, I wanted to embrace the culture and become American. And so, I remember the days when it was shameful to even say I was Mexican, for me. Because, you know people say, oh well, you know, they had a certain attitude about that, but as I have grown up I've really gone into look and dig up where I come from, what is it that they have and some of the music that they play down there they call them chilenes. And I'm not really sure why chilenes, but chilenes is a music they use like saxophones, and uh, a lot of brass instruments. Um, obviously a guitar, um, probably not, probably no electrical, no electric guitars or pianos or anything like that. But a lot of brass, and, and a really fast moving beat. Almost like uh, with some African, uh, sound to it. I have done a little bit of research into the land of

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Oaxaca. And I have read parts where they brought in, um, at a certain time they brought in a lot of Chinese people in that region, and Africans in that region for the slave trade. Uh, when a lot of the people of Mexico were decimated to disease and there was no more workforce. They brought these people in and so the music was kind of integrated one with the other and so basically. Uh, there is a certain type of sound it has, and about, maybe it was last year, when I went to a little birthday party. And little did I know that most of these people were from Oaxaca. And so, I was the DJ and they said play this and I plugged it in, and I danced like I haven't danced in a long time. And it was such a good feeling. Uh, it was emotional; I mean it was really emotional because I remember as a young child going to these parties and them playing this type of music and just being amongst the big party dancing. And so it was kind of like. And uh, my 14 year old experienced the same thing; you know she doesn't know how to dance to that type of music. She said, "Dad, I don't know how to dance, but". I said, "You know what just come watch. I'll show you." So I went out there and danced with her for about 3 hours and ah ha. So now every once in a while she hints around about, "Hey you know could we go to another dance?" Uh, it's really fun because it's not like uh, American dancing you know with rock and roll. It's either you jump up and down and just kind of wave fist in the air or something like that. Uh, with this type of dancing it's really uh, really fast beat and mostly your feet and uh, for me it was kind of a, maybe in the same regards as what the Native Americans do when they do their traditional dancing. And you know I see some of the fancy dancers get off the air and their just out there for multiple seconds. And you know it is almost like you're in your own little world. And that's how it felt to me and so, uh. Today I am looking to go back to Oaxaca where I come from and just to familiarize myself with some of the events again. And uh, I have thought about bringing some of the traditional dances up here. Because they are really neat and they do have a story to tell. Um, but you know it's all in good timing. Because sometimes I feel there is resistance to change. And uh, it, it will just come when it comes. And so I feel like you know if I just want to be able to share culture music and dance, then that's the way it's going to happen when it does.

NW: Interesting. Back to that topic. Now I have my last question. Um, and then I just want to offer you an opportunity to add anything else but. This project Foodways and Byways basically we're trying to gather successes from the past, so we can carry them forward could adapt them to today's context. And um, we basically interested in strengthening our regional food system, and strengthening our sense of self-reliance. So when you think about the food we harvest and eat, what is your hope for the future of this region?

PS: My hope for this particular region in the NCW, uh, is that our farmer's markets become stronger and they become bigger. And it seems like right now that there is a big trend of going backwards in a sense where people are making homemade items and homemade foods and you know being able to buy honey, and even flowers. And uh, you know I, I feel like we're missing

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out on being able to produce our own food and distribute and eat off of our land here. And you know, we have a lot of farming land that isn't getting used. And again, I feel some of that um, the cause for that has been that we just have so reliant on Wal-Mart and Safeway and all the local stores to be able to provide that. But I feel like if there was enough farming, uh, being done in our local area that I believe that some of our local stores would be willing to market some of our own product. Um, and the other is being able to promote the farmer's market where it's a community gathering rather than just a place you can go for a couple hours on a Tuesday, or Thursday, or Saturday, uh, just uh, not just place where you can pick up 1 or 2 items but really be able to go there and again share music, uh, share dance, share a meal and have that community togetherness. And, and I feel that is one of the things that it could do for us as communities could really bring us together and you get to know new people and, and you get to maybe ask questions about, "Well how do you grow this, or how do you grow that?" And again, some people might not want to tell you their full secrets, but I think a lot of people will if you are willing. Um, there again there is so much opportunity here to be able to do that, and we're just not taking advantage of it. So my hope is that we can get on the road to that. And being able to promote that type of atmosphere and um, just kind of see what happens I guess.

NW: Yeah, ok. Good. Well is there anything else that you want to add that I didn't ask you about? Something that I missed?

PS: Oh, um, you know as you asked me the first time to do this and I kind of went on a rambling on about my beliefs and my personal um, bringing, upbringing and stuff like that. You know, I, I just think that um, some of us want what's best for all of us. For me today, I want to get into the political ring to be able to bring about change. But I also fear of the sacrifice that my family has to make as a result of that. And, I'm not really sure what the future has for me or for us as a county, and as a country. And you know, I feel like I am an outsider looking in still. And that I see the things that maybe people here, that were born here don't see. And so, I feel like my perspective and even my opinions of some things, sometimes don't matter because I don't really want to get to heavily involved in again. Where's this going to take me cause I have gotten in a couple situations where you know I came up with a great idea and people say, "Ok, well, Pedro how would you like to be the leader of the situation?" And then of course, I've done that and it has cost me uh, things with my personal family, you know where I don't see my kids, I'm running in and out of my house everyday, I'm going to appointments. And, so I'm not sure what the sacrifice and all of that has to do with anything right today, but, uh. Like I said as I grow older, and more mature then perhaps there's a way that I can be of help to my community and some of the things that you're talking about. You know, the, food distribution, and how do we work that out and maybe in 5 years I will have my fruit stand. And so, there's a lot of hope for this valley and I am just really glad that I am a part of it and that I am able to be here and be able to have these opportunities in front of me.

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NW: Ok, thank you, thank you so much.

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