



Personal Reflections on UnangaĬ (Aleut) Men and Matriculture: Transcript

CARTER PRICE

[lightly edited; please cite using time signatures]

[Greeting in the UnangaĬ language]. My name is Carter Price. I'm from Unalaska, Alaska, which is a small island on the Aleutian chain off of Alaska. And that's where my ancestors come from; we're UnangaĬ. That's where my wife and her family come from. She's UnangaĬ. And yeah, so the UnangaĬ side of who I am is from my mom's side, and her grandmother, and her mom.

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And as a kid, I always knew I was Alaska Native. I always knew that was part of my identity, but not until about, I think, about high school timeframe, is when I really started to, like, think and realize, oh, this is part of my identity. How do I want to, do I want to reconnect? Or, you know, you get on this life path, and you have these choices like reconnection, or, you know, choose something that you, maybe you're passionate about. And that was really the time I started doing that. And a lot of family values come from just my grandmother and her home. Like, my grandmother, her nickname was 'Honey,' which is everyone called her: Honey. That's how I knew her growing up, and I never called her by her first name. But she, she really was a strong woman in the sense of, like, caring for her



family, caring for her community. She was a health worker that would travel to smaller communities as well. So, I saw that, the tenderness and caring, like, really, really closely, and I think that stuck with me. Growing up, her home was a place of, like, safety, and we'd always have family dinners, and we'd always, you know, she taught me about, like, fishing. You bring the fish home, we can cut it together and cook it right then and there. And she just always was willing to provide however she could. And that always stuck with me, just one of the kindest people I'll ever, you know, know.

[02:37]

And so that's where it starts. And I think that language wasn't huge, because she went to boarding schools when she was a child. And the language was, you know, taken from her, and that passed down to my mother as well to us. But what she really, really focused on was subsistence, food, gathering together, and being, like, a safe, safe space with our family. So, our family was always, you know, our, our center. And so that's where it started for me, just being able to fish and provide for my family as much as I could, as you know, a young child, always wanting to be on the beach and whatnot, but then spending time with my grandmother, my mom, picking berries at her secret berry spot. You know, those memories stick with me, like, so, so, so much.

[03:44]

Yeah, so yeah, in the Unanga culture, it's a little different. We don't have clans or systems like that. We claim our mothers, like, I'll let people know, if they're familiar with the region, like, yeah, my family's the McGlashan family. That's my grandma Honey's, last name. And, or, yeah, I'm related to the Bear family. That's my grandmother's maiden last name. And it clicks with people. They know the family names and gives them a sense of connection early on, if that's what we're talking about. I was born in Anchorage, but I was raised on Unalaska Island, and that's where my grandmother, my aunties, and family lived. So really, really close by, like down the hill, maybe a ten-minute walk, I'd pass by her house walking to school in the morning. Walking back home from school, I'd pass by and say "Hi." And yeah, so really close, really close in relationship.

[05:00]

Yeah, my traditional tattoos are, represent my mother's family on her side. So, my mom has these tattoos, my sisters has these tattoos, I have them. But my wife is also Unanga. So, her tattoos, my son will take on those. And like my sister, if she has kids, her children will have our family tattoos. So, I did, I forgot to point that out earlier. But, yeah, it's something special, and represents who we are. I think it's really cool, because my sister and my mom made the design themselves, looking through old textbooks and whatnot.

For them, that was like ceremony for them, being able to design or what represents our family, what's going to represent our family down the line, and really special. A lot of designs, you know, are familial, even not just only tattoos, but also in the basket designs; the art you see as well. We live in Wasilla, which is an hour north of Anchorage, but her (*Carter's wife*) whole family, where she grew up, was in Anchorage. And so, she has really strong familial ties, and we visit, you know, as much as we can. Her parents have been so helpful with like raising our son and giving us time, you know, if we need a babysitter, they'll watch him. Yeah, she has lots of aunties, uncles that are just in and out of Anchorage and family dinners. We actually, this winter, we started going to our local semi-pro hockey games. All of her aunties are always there having a good time. And one of her cousins plays for the hockey team. But um, it's just a fun time for family to come together and we all sit in the same section in their arena. And it's, you know, families, family is huge for us.

[07:14]

For me, I was separated, not separated from my family, but I was living in Anchorage. The rest of my family was in Onalaska. And for some time, you know, I was alone, and I just didn't have that sense of community until I met my wife. And spending time with her family, also being Unangaŋ, you know, I saw the importance of the family and dinners, cooking, and, you know, I always, I like clung on to that. That was so important.

[07:46]

My wife, Chloe always mentions that he's [*Carter's son*] a, he's a 'dada's boy.' And he very much is very, ah, he loves being around 'dada' and always has me picking him up. But I think as my role as his father, it's making sure I give him the right tools and the right tools to pursue whatever passion he wants in the future, whether it's something like playing the guitar or reconnecting with his culture or starting the foundation of just connection to culture. I think that is super important. And just really creating, my goal is if I could create a son that loves his family, respects his wife, cares about his culture, I think, Chloe and I could say we did a good job. But we've done our best, surrounding him by culture, bringing him to dance practice, our traditional dance practice. When he was a young baby, small, we were taking a language course together, our traditional language course, and he would sit and listen with us. And we try our best to speak it around him as well. And I think just surrounding him by his culture, and empowering him to be strong, strong in different senses, not just physical, but, you know, spiritual and mental. And if he could be strong in those areas, I think we've done a good job.

[09:39]

Yeah, traditionally, just from the notes and journals that, you know, these explorers took, it was the uncles at a certain age, maybe, I think, like past five, is when the uncles would take the children, as well as the aunties, if it was a girl. And then they would teach them the ways of, the importance of providing or basketry was big for the women, teaching the young women how to create baskets, or sew, or cook and things like that. But as for the uncles' side, it would, they would be my wife's brothers. And they would train or teach *acigakuq*, important life lessons, which I think is a cool, cool way of being. I wish my uncle and my mom's side passed away when I was a baby, but I think it would have been really cool to learn from him. He was a really good fisherman. And I think it would have been an amazing experience to spend more time with him.

[10:53]

I think the term that I've been taught or learned through some of my classes is like reimagining ceremony. And I'm currently in the process of doing that with some of the work I do, but it's taking what you know, from the past, taking what you've experienced, and then also looking forward to reimagine ceremony for the future generations without trying to change it completely, but just integrating them both and, and really, because people like saying like, "If our ancestors had our technology, they would have, they would have used it, they would have created something more beautiful or have similar ideas as us." And I think it's important to do that.

[11:48]

And so yeah, it's all about reclaiming and, you know, doing our best with what we have. From just my knowledge and readings and research I've done, there was a pretty, not structured, but men were providers, hunters. But the women would provide the sewing to for their clothing, as well as their kayaks. Everyone is a part of that process. But from what I know, I don't think there were much women hunters. But of course, today, those rules have broken. And if we're able to preserve the culture, and if there's people that are interested or willing, we're open to that. And I know there, there are also recognized two-spirited people in our culture. And oftentimes, they were spiritually powerful, not necessarily shamans, but very, very intellectually grounded in the spiritual realm.

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I think it will, it'll touch a soft spot in who I am that I maybe not even know yet. But I think just the relationship I have with my son, we're very active, we like to play outside. We like to have fun, play with cars. And he's such a boy, like, he loves car tires and playing in the dirt. And I think it would be so cool to see just the passions of my daughter, my future daughter, and seeing how she [is] similar to myself, as well as my wife. My wife's an

amazing artist. She uses traditional materials and does contemporary earrings and art. I have some of her art on the wall behind me as well. And it's just, I would just love to, you know, see that be brought up out of her. And like, I already know if you know, if I had a daughter, she would, I would just spoil her so much. *[laughs]* Just do my best to protect her.

[14:19]

Yeah, I think the mindset might change because I'm obviously, you know, I don't feel the same. I don't have the same experiences as a female. But I know how I can protect or create a safe environment for my wife, future daughter. So, I know the things that I can do. And if I can just do that for them, I would be happy. And I obviously can't teach my daughter about periods, I've never had one or what pregnancy is or feels like, but I have the experience and outside perspective to share as much as I can, but I'm like, I'm not going to teach, if that makes sense. I think there's ceremony in the small things like cooking and berry picking. There's, really, there's something spiritual about being out on the land or just in silence with Mother Nature and harvesting and providing in that sense. I think there's ceremony in doing those ri-, it could be considered rituals other than like, a task or a hobby. It's providing for your family.

[15:45]

The funny thing is, so my wife introduced me to the Anchorage Unanga Dancers. They've been a dance group for, it was revitalized in the nineties. Our dance coordinator, our dance instructor, they were a part of the revitalization of dance, the Unanga dance for quite a while. We say it went to sleep. It was taken from us during the boarding school times and colonial times, when our language went away as well. But my wife actually introduced me to that group. Oh no, forgive me. My friend, Dustin, introduced me to the group. He invited me and that's where I met my wife. She was the most beautiful dancer, and I couldn't stop staring at her. I just fell in love with her dance movements. And just for me, it was incredibly empowering to hear the drums, to see the movements of our ancestors and hear the language, it's so empowering and it just pulls so much emotion out of you.

[17:14]

For my experience, I mean, I was in a similar situation, just at that point in time, when I was invited, I was going to school, a little disconnected, a little antisocial. Like, I hadn't met Chloe and her family yet. So, I was separated from my family, but seeing community and focused around our culture, that was something I just, I wanted to hold on to. And like I said, the emotions and empowerment that it felt seeing people be proud of their culture,

wear the regalia, is so important. And it made me want to join the dance group. And I started drumming and practicing, and it's just being a part of community is so important. I mean, you meet people that you would have never thought or known you'd end up marrying two years down the line. And it's so impactful. I mean, getting on stage and seeing people from your community, as well as other communities in Alaska, just celebrate and cheer and clap. And it's so, so empowering. And I think young men should absolutely take the chance. It's obviously nerve-wracking, but being surrounded by your culture is... It changes you.

[18:56]

Just listening is probably one of the best, not pieces of advice, but I've just, I've learned to listen. Listen to my wife, listen to my parents, my mothers. You know, it takes time and maybe even practice doing that. It's not so easy. Just being the way I was raised, I'm kind of stubborn or have a hard head, but Chloe has definitely just not opened my eyes, but just through conversations and understanding. It's like, I see that her knowledge and her feelings are incredibly valid. And if it's even like a feeling that she has, and she thinks maybe we should just call it a day, or let's actually postpone this plan that we're doing. It's like, you take that into consideration ten out of ten times. And often, she's right. Like, there's a reason, like there's either that mother nature, not mother, but the mother instinct kicks in, or things like that. Men are not like super intelligent, historically; we can provide, but I think the really... Being able to like, understand the perspectives of others, women are incredibly, incredibly innate and natural. I think they have an understanding of how the world works differently than men. And like I said, just listening, and being present with them is, it's changed, you know, our marriage, and it's changed how we teach our son, and it's been incredibly helpful.

[21:11]

I did want to talk about some of the work I do. And it relates to this topic we're talking about matrilineal process and culture, but I am the repatriation coordinator for my tribe, and that's returning ancestors and artifacts from museums, and institutions like that, back to the rightful, our rightful lands. And I learned about this word called rematriation. You might have heard it as well, but it's returning to Mother Nature, to heal, to regenerate, to break down traumas. And I've made that kind of a center of pursuits and making sure that tribal members know that we're involving rematriation in this process. And we're actually really close to returning some ancestors at the end of June, fingers crossed, is our plan. And I'm excited to reimagine ceremony as well. But my mantra during this work is 'When our ancestors return, the land will heal, as well as our people.' So, it's all rematriation. And

I believe in it wholeheartedly. And I'm so excited to see the different levels of healing go on in our community. And yeah, I just wanted to finish with that. Thank you.

[22:56]