NPS Oral History Collection (HFCA 1817)
Telling Our Own Untold Stories:
Civil Rights in the National Park Service Oral History Project/

Alisha Deegan
January 29, 2021

Interview conducted by Lu Ann Jones
Transcribed by Teresa Bergen
508 compliant version by Lauren Pash

This digital transcript contains updated pagination, formatting, and editing for accessibility and compliance with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act. Interview content has not been altered. The original digital transcript is preserved in the NPS History Collection.

The release form for this interview is on file at the NPS History Collection.

NPS History Collection
Harpers Ferry Center
P.O. Box 50
Harpers Ferry, WV 25425
HFC_Archivist@nps.gov

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

ALISHA DEEGAN

29 January 2021

Interview conducted by
Lu Ann Jones

Transcribed by
Teresa Bergen

Telling Our Own Untold Stories:
Civil Rights in the National Park Service Oral History Project

&

Women's Voices:
Women in the National Park Service Oral History Project
This project was made possible in part by a grant from the National Park Foundation.

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

[START OF TRUCK 1]

00:00

Lu Ann Jones: --recording. I have an audio recorder here that I'm using to record on my digital audio recorder from the microphone here, the speakers here in the computer. As I said in the [oral history] webinar yesterday, I usually just start with an introduction for each of us. So, this is Lu Ann Jones. I'm staff historian and oral history program manager for the Park History Program in Washington. I am interviewing Alisha Deegan today for two projects, Women's Voices: Women in the National Park Service, and Telling Our Own Untold Stories: Civil Rights in the National Park Service. And today is Friday, January 29, 2021. We are recording via Teams meeting because we are still in the time of the pandemic.

Lu Ann Jones: So, Alisha, could you just introduce yourself? Some basic biographical information of when you were born, where you were born, and a little bit about your family. And then maybe we can talk about your site, your place.

Alisha Deegan: Okay. Yeah, so my name is Alisha Deegan. I am from North Dakota. It's currently where I'm living. On the Fort Berthold Indian Reservation. My mom is from New Town, North Dakota. My dad's family, because my grandpa was an engineer and moved around, worked for the BIA [Bureau of Indian Affairs]; they lived in a lot of different places. But my grandparents on my dad's side both were born and grew up in Elbowoods, North Dakota, which is currently under Lake Sakakawea. Also on my parents' side, my great-grandparents' generation, they all grew up on the river bottom. So, on both sides, for the homesteaders and my indigenous side, I cannot go back to any of those locations, because of the Garrison Dam and the Lake Sakakawea.

Lu Ann Jones: Wow.

02:23

Alisha Deegan: Yeah. And so having grown up next to the lake, and of course my dad became an engineer, too. So, we moved around a bit. But North Dakota has always been our home base. I moved back here when I was in third grade from New Mexico, and lived in Riverdale, North Dakota. I remember when I was younger, they were still doing some research, archeological research, at Knife River and coming to this place but not realizing where I was at at the time. Knowing my culture, but not realizing that it was different. When you're a child, you don't realize the differences until you get older. For example, there is a word that is Hidatsa, and I didn't realize it was Hidatsa. I thought everybody used this word. It's ishtabetes, and it's the gunk that you get, like it's called sleep or eye boogers. (laughs) So I thought everybody used that word. I just thought that was a word that was in English. I didn't realize it was very central to just where I grew up and just my community. My mom used it, everybody. But realizing when I was older, she

grew up on the reservation. So, she knew that being a non-native person, she still understood the culture growing up around that Mandan-Hidatsa culture.

Alisha Deegan: So, my tribe is the three affiliated tribes, or Mandan, Hidatsa, Arikara Nation. Of which everybody calls the MHA Nation. We have always lived in North Dakota for a very long time. But it's three distinct tribes. So, you have the Mandan, the Hidatsa, and then the Arikara. The Mandan and Hidatsa are part of the same language family, the Siouan language. The Arikara are the Caddoan. So, the Mandan and the Hidatsa have a history of getting along. The Mandan and the Arikara have a sort of love/hate history of getting along and separating and getting along again. The Hidatsa and the Arikara, or the Sahnish, have not had a good history of getting along. So, it's just interesting, realizing those truths when we get a little bit older. I heard one of my grandmas, my Arikara grandma, say, "Oh, those Hidatsas." I was just shocked because I had not heard that growing up. We were raised Arikara, but we knew we were also Hidatsa. We knew we were Mandan. We knew all of this stuff. But my grandparents and my parents never taught us those divides. It wasn't until you started interacting a little bit more and listening to what your elders say. As a child, you listen. Most children don't really process what they're saying. So, as I got older, I started really listening and realizing the nuances that are within putting three tribes together and calling it one. All because we lived in earth lodges, and we had the same effect from the smallpox.

Alisha Deegan: I've always carried that history with me, being a native person. But also, white passing. Like I can, I make a point to tell people that I am native. I'm proud of my history, I'm proud of where I come from. But I know some people that are born with lighter skin, they don't want to deal with that, and so they choose not to. But that's not something that, I guess I was raised how to do, like this is all parts of me. I am proud of all of the parts of me where I come from, who I am, that all of my ancestors lived and worked in order for me to be here today. So that's a little bit about my history. And--

Lu Ann Jones: Well, that—go ahead

Alisha Deegan: No, what?

07:04

Lu Ann Jones: I was just going to say, that's kind of a beautiful introduction that's very complex. So, I won't interrupt you. Go ahead, please.

Alisha Deegan: I was just going to say, to get where, well why I'm being interviewed by you today, it initially started back in college. I had wanted to become an archeologist. Took the Archeology 101 course, and I got a D. So, I sat, and I thought, I should rethink my career path. At that time, I was also still trying to process things that have happened since moving to the reservation in eighth grade and then going

into college. So, when we moved back home, there was somebody that I knew was my age or close to my age that died every year. I had not experienced that before I moved there. Like there was elders and great-grandparents that passed away. But it didn't make you look at your mortality at that age until it was somebody that you were sitting next to in class and then all of a sudden, they're not there.

Alisha Deegan: I'd always been interested in archeology, anthropology, I didn't realize it was called anthropology at that time. When I got to college, I said this is what I want to do. But then I think the universe is like no, that's not what you should do, Alisha. With getting a D, you should really rethink what you're doing.

Alisha Deegan: So, I looked back at what I had been doing as, for work. When I started, when I turned eighteen, I worked for the Army Corps of Engineers. I taught water safety. Then I moved over to the threatened and endangered species program. So, I was out on Lake Sakakawea counting least terns and piping plover nests and little chicks for two summers. Or more than two summers. Yeah, two summers with the T&E program, and the water and boat safety for two summers. So, I realized I need to go into this field, because if I have a degree and I have the experience, then I'm going to be, like people will want to hire me then.

Lu Ann Jones: Yes.

09:50

Alisha Deegan: I have both. So, I changed majors, and I changed schools. When I changed schools, I was in my third year of college. I got pregnant with my oldest child. Not planned pregnancy, but very much wanted and loved pregnancy. I always say without her, I definitely would not be sitting where I am today.

Lu Ann Jones: Can you explain that a little bit?

Alisha Deegan: Yeah. So, I had like all these ideas of things I wanted to do and places I wanted to travel. But realizing that now I have the responsibility of taking care of another human being, it kind of sobered me up to like okay, you need to be responsible now. I was twenty-two years old. There's a lot of twenty-two-year-olds that are, they're responsible, they are doing a lot of stuff. But then there's a lot that are not. I was in that range of still just wanting to enjoy my twenties. But she helped me focus. People asked me, "Are you going to drop out of school?"

Alisha Deegan: I would look at them like they were insane. I was like, "No, I have even more of a reason now to succeed. To show her that this is what you do. You don't give up. You just maneuver and you keep going."

Alisha Deegan: So, I changed schools and my degree before I got pregnant. But she helped me focus and work a lot harder. I got a, it's called recreation and leisure, it's like a

parks and rec degree. But University of North Dakota called it recreation and leisure. I ended up having to do a twelve-credit internship in order to graduate, and I wasn't sure what to do. My dad had just went through Omaha and had dinner with Gerard Baker. So, they're like hey, he works, he's going to Mount Rushmore as the superintendent. You should contact him and see if you can do your internship there. I was like, okay. (laughs)

Alisha Deegan: So, I called him. He's like, "Yeah. Send your resume and we'll look it over." At that time, they had the STEP program. I cannot remember what that acronym stands for; it's like Student Temporary Employment Program, I believe.

Lu Ann Jones: I think so.

12:42

Alisha Deegan: Yeah. So, I was able to get in for that summer. But it was really difficult also because I had a not quite one-year-old yet. She was going to turn one in June and work started in May. They had housing, but it wasn't for a mom and a baby housing. (laughs) So I had to find a place to live in order to finish my degree and to get a job that would allow me to bring my child with me, and then also find daycare. It ended up working out. I stayed in Custer in some Forest Service housing that they partnered with the National Park Service. I hired some local teenagers to babysit my daughter for that summer. It was a really great summer. I also say my family helped out so much. They would take Kaya (her name's Mikaya, but we call her Kaya) and she would stay with them. Then when I would have her, we'd have the daycare. It was really great.

Alisha Deegan: I realized I really liked the National Park Service. Because I had originally wanted to do tourism for my tribe. I liked the idea of tourism. I wanted to show our culture in a really positive way and not an appropriated way, not in a way that seemed hokey, kind of cringy type way. But working that first summer for the National Park Service was a lot of fun. It was challenging. I met a lot of really great people there, and they believed in me.

Alisha Deegan: One of the supervisors that I had there, his name is Duane Bubac. He was in facilities, and I ended up applying for an admin assistant position there at Mount Rushmore in facilities. I had started as an interp. I decided to go back to school and get a business degree. So, I was able to get on permanently through the SCEP program, the Student Career Employment Program. Once I graduated with that degree, then I became a permanent employee. Which was super cool because that time still counted. So, I was like twenty-three when I started officially permanent. I really feel like when doors open, I always take that opportunity and just try to make it work, and work hard. And was able to get in with the federal government permanently at twenty-three years old. I hear a lot of people have worked a long time to even get in. So, I felt really, really fortunate. I had really, really great

mentors in Gerard and Duane and other folks at Mount Rushmore. And then meeting people within the regional office.

Alisha Deegan: Spent ten years at Mount Rushmore. Became the facilities operation specialist. Was the acting facility manager there for a little while. Then the opportunity to come to Knife River, Knife River Indian Villages National Historic Site, was presented to me. I walked through that open door. Then worked my way up to where now I am the superintendent at Knife River Indian Villages. I've been here six years in July.

Lu Ann Jones: Well, I have so many kind of follow-up questions. Thinking about being able to go to Mount Rushmore, I mean, my understanding is that for indigenous people it's a fraught relationship with Mount Rushmore. Do I understand that correctly? There's a lot of ambiguity around that site?

17:14

Alisha Deegan: Yes. (laughs) Yes. There is.

Lu Ann Jones: Can you talk about that? And kind of how you encountered that, dealt with that, and particularly right there at the beginning of your Park Service career?

Alisha Deegan: Yeah. So that first week when I started, or in the first two weeks, we had a seasonal training. You know, getting over the hurdle of making sure I could even work there with housing and daycare, got past that. Now I'm at work. Learning the Tilden Freeman's principles while in college, but now I'm going to enact them and put them to use here at Mount Rushmore. We were going through all the trainings for, it had to have been two weeks. Then one day when I was sitting in training, somebody comes down and says, "Hey, come here, Alisha." So, I go out and they're like, "The superintendent wants to see you."

Alisha Deegan: I was like, okay. (laughs) I got a little nervous. I walked over there, and Gerard was in his office. He had this round table in his office, and he had all of these seeds on the table. He's like, "Come in, come in, sit down." He was asking me questions, and visiting, talking about the seeds. They were beans and corns. He said, "These are seeds that I have collected from my mom and the old gardens and just kind of trading with other people so that we can have our plants from the gardens that were here at Knife River and before." It was just really an awesome conversation and asking me about my family. That was the first time I had ever met Gerard was sitting down in his office talking about these heirloom seeds.

Alisha Deegan: Then he goes, "I want you to talk about treaties." Because we had a thirty-minute presidential talk we had to do. He's like, "I want you to talk about treaties."

Alisha Deegan: I was like, "What?" (laughs) I have a quiet voice to begin with. At that time, I had a really, really quiet voice. I was really nervous. I didn't particularly like speaking

in front of people. But he asked me to do this, and I respected him. So, I researched the treaties that the presidents were involved with, or other events that the presidents were involved with before Mount Rushmore. It was 150 years of American history. I realized there was that tension that a lot of native people, they do not like Mount Rushmore. It's even memorialized in a movie. I think it was in the '70s or the '80s, I cannot remember the decade, but AIM [American Indian Movement] occupied Mount Rushmore for I think like five months. Like the shrine on top. And then there's a spot up there that they call Indian Camp is where they were staying. So, there was all of this history. Because the Black Hills are sacred to a lot of tribes, particularly the Great Sioux Nation, the Lakota, the Nakota, the Dakota. You have Pine Ridge, Rosebud, Cheyenne River, Standing Rock, the Yankton. You have all of these tribes within and around South Dakota that have significant tie. Here is this sculpture that is dedicated to 150 years of American history, and not ever talking about how America got to where it was for those 150 years by land grabs, exterminating, killing indigenous people, boarding schools, all of that.

Alisha Deegan: So, when Gerard came to Mount Rushmore, he said, "We need to talk about this history. I don't understand why native history is not talked about at Mount Rushmore." That was very much a controversy. Rapid City being far away from Pine Ridge, it still had the mentality of a border town next to a reservation, where there's a lot of racism toward indigenous native people. And within that area, too. So, there was just always that tension. Now you have the first native superintendent who put up a teepee at Mount Rushmore. People were very, very upset. I had to field phone calls for that. Got chewed out by a lady because we have a teepee at Mount Rushmore and how dare we talk about indigenous history. People did not want to talk about that history, that part of American history.

Alisha Deegan: But we kept doing it. On my talk, I had people that would walk off. They would write, oh, I forget the—the sheets you can do a complaint, they would write complaints about. I remember this one thing, "Why is this white lady claiming to be native and talking about native history? We don't need to hear that." Then I would have people that thanked me. One lady even cried after one of my talks. So, it was very much I got the full range of reactions. Nobody would ever say anything to my face, thank goodness. At the end of the season, my supervisor then showed me the complaints, because they didn't want to show them to me during the season. Because they thought I was doing a good job. Just because I was getting people upset, I was still getting them to think. So, I was doing my job. (laughs)

Lu Ann Jones: You were doing what Freeman Tilden says. Provoke, right?

24:07

Alisha Deegan: Yes.

Lu Ann Jones: Well, Alisha, can I ask you, and I hope I will be able to talk to Mr. Baker. But clearly somebody had, a regional director had put him there for a reason. I assume the reason was that he would shake things up. Do you think that that was part of the assumption for his placement at Mount Rushmore?

Alisha Deegan: Definitely. Throughout his career, he has always advocated for that native story to be told. Because all of the parks within the United States and territories have an indigenous story. So, he always advocated for that. And yeah, I definitely think that was part of the reason they wanted him to be there.

Lu Ann Jones: Also thinking about him as a mentor, I wonder if you could reflect on kind of the mentorship that you received there. Very early on, your immediate supervisor. I guess lessons that you—I mean, do you still think back to, say, the example that Mr. Baker was setting as a superintendent to shake things up? Or not be afraid. I mean, kind of what did you take away from those first encounters there? And then, yeah, you spent a decade there.

Alisha Deegan: Yeah. So those first few years, I was still figuring out and feeling, trying not to feel that this is a new job, and it could go away. So really putting in a lot of work, but also absorbing the politics that happens at Mount Rushmore. The way that superintendents and supervisors have to work with outside entities, work with employees, visitors, partners, all because of the icon status that it is. But still being a very small park smack dab in a beautiful location of the Black Hills. So, I learned a lot from my time there. I learned a lot from Gerard and going out of your comfort zone.

Alisha Deegan: So, there is a time where I felt I needed to, I wanted to start doing more. I was part of this email group that Otis Halfmoon had established. And he called it the NPS Tribe. So, he just did this organically. When he would go on trainings, he would meet up with other indigenous people. He would get their emails within the National Park Service, and then he would send out native humor, funny memes. Because a lot of the times we're the only native people at our site, and it can get very isolating. So, it was his way of making sure that we stayed within the Park Service and that we felt connected and that we knew we had somebody.

Alisha Deegan: So, he one day sent out this email asking for people to be involved with what is now called the Employee Resource Group. I threw my name in there. He asked around about me and people said, "She does good work." So, I became one of the founding members of CIRCLE, which is the Council for Indigenous Relevance, Communication, Leadership, and Excellence. Which I now am the chair. I learned so much from each member and continue to learn. That is where initially, I knew I always wanted to do something and continue to want to provide a safe place for native and indigenous people to work within the Park Service. Because there isn't always that perception. The numbers for employment and firing show it. Our data within the National Park Service shows that that is not, even though we have all of these goals and good intentions, there's still so much work to do.

Alisha Deegan: So, I went down that path in 2013 when we started CIRCLE, and finalized our charter in 2015, and found that I am very passionate about making sure that indigenous people are at the table when we're talking. That also includes consultation. Not to just send a letter and say, "Hey, do you sign off on this idea? We already got the funding; we're going to do this." No; have those people, the tribes, be at the table when you're thinking about the design, the pre-design, at the beginning. So that's something I continue to do and will continue to do. It all stemmed from watching the great mentors that I had. Gerard and also my supervisor Duane. Who is not native but is very much an ally and an amazing person. And his wife Julie. They really showed me what it is to be a good supervisor, to get things done, but do it in a way that your employees feel respected by you at all times. It was really great.

Lu Ann Jones: Can you tell me what his last name is, and perhaps spell his last name? It helps the transcriber a whole lot.

30:41

Alisha Deegan: Yeah. So, Duane, D-U-A-N-E, Bubac, B-U-B-A-C.

Lu Ann Jones: Great. Thanks. Well yeah, I am interested. I mean, what did you consider? I mean, you're learning so much. And looking at your resume, you're right, you take advantage of training opportunities, of just ways to learn. I think for many people in the Park Service who succeed, they're very active in crafting their careers and making things happen, as well as taking advantage of the doors that just happen to open in front of them. So, what were you learning about supervision, for example, and how you saw other people do that work and how you began to incorporate your own values as a supervisor?

Alisha Deegan: So, the one thing with watching my supervisors and other supervisors around me and my coworkers' experiences, I valued the supervisors that gave you the instructions, but they gave you the freedom to do the work in a way that you would learn. But still have, you know if you made a mistake, it was okay. So definitely not micromanagement. My style of supervision is now that way, too. It's paying it forward. I always talk to my employees and ask them where do you want to be and how can I help you get there? Because that's what was given to me, and it was very empowering. It puts it on the employee to really think about well, where do I want to be within the Park Service, within my career? Being able to provide trainings and making sure that we put money aside for that was really nice, because that was provided for me. I had applied three times for the facility manager leader program, FMLP, and the third time, I was selected, and I participated in it. It was through Eppley Institute. They said this is equivalent to a master's degree in facility management. It was a lot of work. It was very hard. It was like going to school. They expected a lot of you, and that was a really good learning program for me. You had to show up in business professional—like, suits

for men, and very nice dresswear to each of the meetings that we had to go to. You looked at your portfolio and you saw where you needed to improve. So, your mentor, my mentor was Dan Hodgson, who had just retired. He was the facility manager at Richmond Battlefield in Virginia, and we still keep in contact. He is amazing. I really like Dan. Daniel Hodgson. And am very excited for him for his next career. He wanted to be my mentor specifically because he said that he had saw my resume the first two times. So, he remembered that. So, when they allowed me to come in, he asked to be my mentor. He was a great mentor and still is.

Alisha Deegan: It was a lot of fun to go to Virginia, into Richmond. I spent two weeks there in July. (laughter) It was very hot and humid. I worked on—have you ever had the experience of you know you've never been to this location, or this place and you go there and you're like, I know I've been here—

Lu Ann Jones: Yeah.

35:30

Alisha Deegan: --at some point of my existence. And that was Richmond. Like I felt like I was coming home. It felt so familiar. I had never had that experience like that that strong before. So, I continue to think of my two weeks there—even though it was in July and the humidity was like 100 percent--it's such a wonderful time. I got to work on historic buildings and to help protect them. That's what I really liked about facilities was that tangible--I enjoyed the interpretation, the intangible that you leave with people. But as a manager in the National Park Service, that tangible when you'd put a project in, you got it funded, and then you'd see the physical entity of your project done. It's such a satisfying feeling. I had to find those little positives until, you know, working with these mentors and seeing how they interacted with their employees. Then seeing how some supervisors interacted with employees, I realized okay, I don't want to be that type of supervisor. But also, that you have to protect yourself. At Mount Rushmore, the not so fun side of supervision is when employees have things that come up. And if it's against the supervisor, other employees. Like that is just human nature. But I for a long time did not want to go into supervision. It made me very nervous. There was some EEO things that had happened that I was around that I wasn't even named in, but the stress from them, you could just feel it in the office. So those experiences really taught me to make sure that I am doing the best that I can for my employees, that I'm transparent. And that I communicate where I can. But I know it's all about the perception of the person that it's happening to. So, I continued to try to just be honest and take responsibility for anything that I do. I saw that in my supervisors, in my mentors. And it's very respectful.

Alisha Deegan: Then it was also expected of me from my family. Because it's not just my family that I represent. It's my tribe. It's native people. People see me and I may be the only native person that they're interacting with on a daily basis. That is a lot of

pressure that you don't realize is there. Because then how they view you is then how they're going to view every other native person, because that's their impression. It is like that for people of color. Even myself, where I don't look native, but I am very much that. I forget that I don't look native until somebody points it out. It's a lot of pressure and it's a lot of responsibility, and I take it very serious. I know where people mess up, we do things. But when it's really hard, and you may hear this from other native employees, superintendents that you interview, it's that pressure. Because you represent that whole group of people. I represent my whole tribe. I represent my family. So, I have all of that.

Alisha Deegan: That all stems back from when I was seventeen, my grandma came over. She was just in a really good mood, my Grandma Delphine. She's like, "Oh, Alisha, I'm just so proud of you. You're doing so good. Nobody's talking bad about you. You aren't out there going to parties and drinking. You're just doing so good. I'm so proud of you." It's like oh, I felt really good. But then I'm like oh, my God, I cannot let my grandma down. (laughter) She knew what she was doing. It was very strategic.

40:30

Lu Ann Jones: (laughs) Well that observation about being the representative of the group, I have heard that from some other people. I always get the sense just as people describe that, yes, the sense of pressure that can come with that, that people have been kind of holding onto for a while.

Alisha Deegan: Definitely. I wish it wasn't like that.

Lu Ann Jones: Well, when you were at Mount Rushmore, were there other indigenous people there? What was kind of the makeup of the employee, the workforce there?

Alisha Deegan: I would say primarily it was Euro-American employees. There was, I can name all of the indigenous people that I worked with there. Permanently there wasn't many. Including myself there was four, over that time span. We also had three or four seasonals during that time, that ten-year time that I worked there, that were indigenous. I'm trying to remember if there were any Black African Americans. I don't know if there were when I worked there. I feel like I would remember. So there really wasn't a lot of that diversity in that sense. So.

Lu Ann Jones: I was going to ask, so for somebody who might not be familiar with the National Park Service, what does facilities management encompass in the National Park Service?

42:46

Alisha Deegan: Great question. So, facility management is the branch of each park in the region and higher up, they take care of the grounds, the buildings. If there's a wastewater

or water system, they also put in projects. So, you have your facility manager that finds the project funds to redo a historic building or a non-historic building. There's a lot of data tracking. For a long time within the National Park Service history, there wasn't much tracking and control in the sense of where is that money going? Where is our time being spent? And so, it's probably for the last twenty years there's been a really great push of having these data management systems that you put all of your time in for each day that you work. It's assigned into a work order. You put the cost of the materials that were used. So, you have a wholistic lifecycle look at what it cost the Park Service to manage a visitors center or a maintenance shop within a fiscal year. So, it's a really great management tool when the data is correct. So, it's a lot of time spent inputting that. But it's the face of the Park Service. So, when you have visitors come to the Park Service, you know, you'll hear people talk about like, "Oh, this visitors center was so clean, the grounds were great." Or "This park, it wasn't as clean." So, it could be a lot of different things it could be funding. But it's the facilities team, that management team, that help.

Alisha Deegan: But there's one thing with Gerard that I really liked with him--and being my first superintendent, I worked for--he said, "I expect everybody, not just maintenance facilities, I expect everybody to pick up a piece of trash. If I see you walk by a piece of trash and you don't pick it up, I'm going to have a talk with you." So that put the responsibility on every single employee. I still carry that. So, I have that expectation of my employees. Because it's really, like we are the caretakers. It's not just facilities that does that. We can all take that.

Lu Ann Jones: At Mount Rushmore, was the facility, were facility people central to the fireworks, which was, to my understanding, a huge production every year?

Alisha Deegan: Yes. There was a lot of prep work that we had to do. And planning. So much planning. But it included everybody. But then Mount Rushmore, we used to have to manage a helipad, because they used to drop the fireworks behind, from a helicopter that would lower it down. Then they found there's a more cost-effective way. We would train employees to become a ropes team, and then we will use the pulley system and take fireworks up that way. So, people aren't hauling them up and killing their backs. They also monitored and would repair any cracks of the fill in on the monument itself. And so that primarily the people within that team, there was a lot of facilities people, but there were also law enforcement, there was interpretation. So, it was a nice interdisciplinary team. But facilities, they did a lot of stuff, especially for the fireworks. It was very taxing on all of us. There was days, like the day before, the day of and the day after, there's people that were working sixteen hours. We had to make sure people followed those rules. Because I think there would have been times when people worked more than that, because there was just so much work to do.

Alisha Deegan: Then our wastewater system there, we had to add a whole new holding tank for waste because of the amount of people that were there for just that one day. We could not add the capacity before it, manage the amount of people that had come.

Alisha Deegan: Then we also had to add an arsenic mitigation plant because of the arsenic that was leaching into the drinking water. It was far too many parts per billion to be considered safe drinking water. So, there was that mitigation plant that was put in while I was there. There isn't any definitive evidence that it comes from fireworks. But at the same time, there's a lot of studies done to see how much natural arsenic is just within the soil. There isn't enough that would cause it. Then they also—like, well, isn't arsenic in the dynamite they used to carve Mount Rushmore? They used like 90 percent of it was done by dynamite. Very strategic blowing up. There wasn't that in that dynamite at that time. So, I'm not saying that it was that, but the evidence just kind of—and then you're exploding things behind a sculpture. (laughter) So it was scary.

Lu Ann Jones: I actually did an interview, I can't remember her name now, but she was a superintendent not too long ago who was able to get the fireworks temporarily suspended. She felt like that was a good thing in terms of safety for employees. And now they've returned.

49:38

Alisha Deegan: Cheryl Schreier.

Lu Ann Jones: Yes. Mm hmm.

Alisha Deegan: She was superintendent here. Most of her first superintendency was at Knife River Indian Villages.

Lu Ann Jones: Well, I wanted to, before you go to Knife River, I wanted to talk about kind of the organizing that Otis Halfmoon was doing. Kind of informally/formally. I mean it's not, how to put it, kind of sanctioned or under the umbrella officially of the National Park Service. But it's a collaboration among indigenous people. So how did that--what was the difference between doing something like that and then moving to a more formal ERG in CIRCLE?

Alisha Deegan: So, when I first was introduced to Otis, it was through email. Because it was kind of like when somebody started, you got introduced to him, they would send an email and say, "Hey, here's this person." So, he would contact us, and he'd be like, "Okay, what's your tribe? What's your family situation?" All this. Just to share with people. But do it in a joking way. So, when he would send it out, it was really funny. It was like, "Well, here's Alisha Deegan. She's from MHA and people, she is not available because she is married." You know, just kind of—he has a really nice way of doing humor. He's also a powwow emcee for like many years. So, he can just continue to talk and has the jokes. He's just so charismatic. I

really enjoy visiting with Otis, and how his mind works. So being introduced to other natives, especially leaders like Otis, it was really great to have that welcome. When you're in places that they could be your ancestor homeland but that's not where your community is living, because there's a lot of the displacement, it's nice to have those emails come out. And then you get to know other people, and you can visit with them. So, because of that, and then as formally going into becoming an ERG, David Vela was the, oh, I don't think the position is, he was like head of HR [human resources]. And then RDI [Relevancy, Diversity, and Inclusion]. I can never remember what the R stands for.

Lu Ann Jones: Relevancy, I believe.

Alisha Deegan: Gosh. Yes! I always want to say "reclusion," but I'm like that is not it. I don't even know if that's a written word. (laughter) So, Relevancy, Diversity, and Inclusion. See, I was mixing two words together.

52:50

Lu Ann Jones: That's okay. (laughs)

Alisha Deegan: Sometimes I forget a lot of stuff. Apparently, it's called the superintendent brain. (laughter) So. Because there's just so much that's happening. I'm like oh, okay, I'm not the only one.

Lu Ann Jones: But so, once things become a little more formalized through CIRCLE, what difference did that make?

Alisha Deegan: Once we became an employee resource group, it was visible that interaction and meeting with people. But then it also, you're at that national level of that attention. You get to send information out, get to be able to communicate with the entire Park Service in a way that informal email list that Otis had did not. So, this is a platform where we can talk about issues that are happening within Indian country, within the National Park Service, and say, "Hey, we want to bring this to your attention." So, we do that through webinars. We have an email list that we send stuff out. Karen Wilde is co-chair. She and I are the keepers of the CIRCLE at NPS.gov email. I just want to say, employee resource groups are volunteer. So, you have your job to do, and then on top of being a part of an employee resource group, that's just volunteer time. So, what we always tell people when they join CIRCLE, because anybody can be a part of any employee resource group. You just email us and you're a part of our family now. We tend to send bulk emails out because we aren't in there every day. We feel really bad. I'm like, I'm sorry we're spamming you guys. (laughs) People enjoy it and they get some good information. We've become a little bit more selective in what we send out. Sometimes we try to send out job announcements. And we just don't, we forward it to the CIRCLE email, but we don't get to that email in time to send it out. So, we just have been really wanting to find somebody out of our larger CIRCLE

membership that can help us with the email. It's really important to have people to help with the work.

Lu Ann Jones: Well Alisha, I do want to get to Knife River. Do I understand, is that your ancestral lands? Was that kind of like coming home?

Alisha Deegan: Yes. So, Knife River has always been my dream park to work at. The reason for that is there are three historic earth lodge villages that the National Park Service takes care of at Knife River. And they are Hidatsa villages. This area was known as the five-village area. There are two Mandan earth lodge villages that have been destroyed for a coal power plant back in the, I want to say '50s, but don't quote me on that. It's been a long time since that plant has been there. So, you no longer see those. But the landowners within this area pretty much kept the villages like they were. Part of one village got plowed. But the majority of it was what we call Sacagawea Village, and that's where historians think Sacagawea was living when Lewis and Clark came up the Missouri River. So, we have the three that are within the park. Through doing research from being here, I found that my family comes from Big Hidatsa Village. So yes, there's very much a personal tie to being here. I view this landscape as a living landscape. There's hundreds of years of people living here.

Alisha Deegan: It goes back to when I talk about living, growing up next to Lake Sacagawea. I never fully understood that connection to the river we had until I moved here. And I lived in this location. And I work here. I now understand why we always lived along the river. Of course, it's your lifeline for water and transportation and everything. But there's just something else about it. The energy is different. It's just amazing. It makes it even more sad that the river has been dammed in all the places where my grandparents, my great-grandparents, my grandparents lived are now underwater. I can't go to those locations.

Alisha Deegan: This spot here at Knife River, the smallpox happened in 1837, and 80 percent of the population of the people in the Hidatsa villages died from smallpox during that first year. Ninety percent of the Mandan died from those two villages. And then you had--just the small group of people that were left in the Mandan villages, they went over and started a village like closer to the Hidatsa. The Arikara came in what is now called Fort Clark State Park. They lived at that old Mandan village site for a few years and contracted smallpox. But only 60 percent of the population had died from smallpox there.

1:00:00

[END OF TRACK 1]

[START OF TRACK 2]

00:00

Alisha Deegan: Just, and it wasn't as much. It was still a lot because they had gone through the smallpox previous. This isn't the first smallpox epidemic that came through. But when you really look at the history and the US government's involvement with inoculations of smallpox, it stopped in South Dakota. It did not come to us. So, you know, you think about if the people in the villages were able to get those inoculations, people still would have died, but it would not have been 80 percent, 90 percent of the population that would have died. Our history would be so different right now if we were able to get those inoculations. But they just quit funding it. (laughs) They're like no, we're not going to do it anymore. The government.

Lu Ann Jones: Is that a conversation or a part of history that people recalled in the past year during the current pandemic?

Alisha Deegan: When the current pandemic happened, started, people were sort of making that correlation. But here at Knife River, we did not put that on social media. We did not do that. We would have conversations with visitors in person. But it's still too soon. It's still too fresh. (laughs) I don't know if that makes sense. But it's just—and to compare pandemics is really hard.

Lu Ann Jones: Yes.

Alisha Deegan: But to learn from history is important. So.

Lu Ann Jones: I think that a general understanding of American history that people don't understand what happened in terms of the decimation because of disease. So was kind of the alliances of the Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara, did that kind of come about as a result of the decimation of the epidemic, the pandemic?

02:33

Alisha Deegan: Yes. So once, in 1845, so you had that time period where people were getting better and healing. Buffalo Bird Woman, who was interviewed by Gilbert Wilson for twelve summers, was born three years after that smallpox epidemic. She grew up here at the site but what is now a village that we call Taylor Bluff, which is next to Big Hidatsa. So, people have moved; you have Mandan and Hidatsas living, and then the Arikara were still over at Fort Clark. But they got together, the Hidatsa and the Mandan, or the Nueta is the name that the Mandan call themselves is Nueta.

Lu Ann Jones: Can you spell that?

Alisha Deegan: Yeah. N-U-E-T-A

Lu Ann Jones: Okay.

Alisha Deegan: They went to a village that was up the Missouri River, kind of if you were to look on a map and you would see where Beulah Bay is, and you would just go out to middle of Lake Sakakawea. That is where Like-A-Fishhook Village was created. So, the Mandan and Hidatsa went, and they established this new village. Leaving the villages here. Not abandoning them. Leaving them, because of all of the family members that have died there. But still coming back like we do, like we go to gravesites to visit our relatives that have passed on. And still seeing the depressions of the earth lodges and knowing where your family was in each village. What lodge, what's your family's. But living at Like-A-Fishhook. Then a few years later, the Arikara joined because of them being hit with smallpox. So, you had the three tribes that were now there. And then you had the start of the, I cannot think of the act, but you had the three Mandan, Hidatsa and Arikara, which then officially became as that federally recognized tribe. Because of the smallpox and how, and the government just grouping us together because at that time, in order to survive, living, and then also attacks from other tribes, they needed to band together at that time.

Alisha Deegan: Then with the Homesteading Act, that ended the village life at Like-A-Fishhook Village. Because there's even, you know, BIA [Bureau of Indian Affairs] agents, superintendents, that have written, you know, we banned dancing. We banned singing. But these native people still are holding onto their culture. In order to Americanize them, we need to get rid of the village life. So, part of the Homesteading Act is to then give each head of household 160 acres. And then each person, it was either 80 or 60. So then it just separated. And then it opened up the rest of the land on the reservation, which used to be huge, the territory, which then shrunk to kind of what it is now. Then when we opened up the rest of the land to homesteaders, well then, my mom's side of the family comes in. My grandparents from Norway homesteaded in the area which is now called Van Hook. But where their homestead was is underwater. It's a really kind of--my history seems really sad in that sense. But after the Homesteading Act, then these communities are created. And Elbowoods and Shell Creek and Independence and Nishu. So, all these little communities were, the Mandan kind of were in Independence. There was three distinct groups of Hidatsa. There were the Hidatsa, the Awahawe and the Awatiha. Their dialect each is different. But then they all became what we now call the Hidatsa. So, you had the Hidatsa. At Shell Creek you had the Arikara and the Nishu and then you had other Hidatsas in Elbowoods. I hope I'm not forgetting another community in that area. I apologize if I am.

Alisha Deegan: So, where my grandparents, my dad's grandparents, my dad's parents, excuse me, grew up was in Elbowoods. I knew this. I know this history. And especially growing up, my parents, they always talked about it. My grandparents, they talked about it. One day my grandpa had taken my brother and I out on a boat ride on the lake. We went to what we called the old place. Because it was old Highway 8. It would lead down to Elbowoods. My grandpa has a lot of land there with his

siblings. He showed us like where they moved their farmstead up from the river bottom and kind of you can still see a little bit of the basement cement frame. Then there's like one little pump, water pump. But there isn't much out there. We just call it the old place. We were out looking around at the buttes and the bays. He stops in this one particular area when we were out there, just beautiful sunny day. Like no clouds. The sun sparkling on the water. It was really nice, nice day to be out on the water. He said, "I just wanted to tell you guys, I want you to know, twenty feet down is where I grew up." It just like snapped me out of this, like, oh, I need to pay attention. And it hurt. Because that's as close that he could get us to show us where he grew up. And talked about what it was like to grow up in Elbowoods. And funny stories of people being scared of this horse. They heard somebody walking behind them but they wasn't sure what it was. And then they get under a streetlight, and it was just an old horse following them. You know, just kind of like fun stuff that you hear of in small communities. But that moment always sticks with me.

Alisha Deegan: So, it's, yeah, that history is still very much present in everybody that's from the tribe that is alive today. So, you have smallpox, the Homesteading Act. Then you have the Garrison Dam. Then we have the Bakken oilfield that is happening. Now we're in a pandemic. There's just all these things that for, I believe now we have 16,000 members, enrolled members of the tribe. You know, we're still here. We still are here through all of these things. And are able to talk about and teach where we come from, who we are and why it's important for people to hear our story.

Lu Ann Jones: When you went to Knife River, you went there, you were the storyteller. You were interpretation and education, correct?

11:29

Alisha Deegan: Yes. So, in order to get here, I moved into an education specialist position. So, in order to get here, I was a GS-9 at Mount Rushmore. I had to go to a GS-7 to even get here. So that shows you how much I wanted to work here. (laughs) I downgraded. But after a year, then I was able to get my 9 back. Then the opportunity to apply for the interp and cultural resources program position came open. I acted in it, then I got the position. I really, really enjoyed that. But this is the only park that I would have come and done interp with. Otherwise, I would have been a facility manager somewhere at another park. Because I really enjoyed facilities.

Lu Ann Jones: Why is that? In terms of being in interpretation, that that's the park where you would do that.

Alisha Deegan: Because I get to talk about my history. I get to tell it from my perspective, versus an interpretive reading about it in a book and then telling their interpretation of what they read about of the history that is here. I feel it's really important to have

that first person, that person from that community to talk about the history. And to show that we are still here. Because in most of Americans' perception of Native American people is that we are gone. We only lived in the past. A lot of that is back to how history it taught. They're like, oh, there was people here on America. Then people colonized, and then you don't hear anything. There's nothing in the history books about what happened from that point when people colonized on the East Coast to even now. I was very disappointed in my high school North Dakota textbook. I was really excited where in history we're getting to the point where we're going to learn about North Dakota history, in the school on the reservation where my community lives. There was just two paragraphs about us. That was it. I was so disappointed. So, it's not necessarily the public's fault that they know that. It is what we are taught. It is how we're viewed in media and mainstream culture. So that is why it's really important to have people from those communities talk about their history at national parks in their ancestral homelands. But also, to support that employee, because they're probably the only indigenous employee at that park doing that. It can be really isolating, and sometimes scary. Especially if you're away from your community. Because we still have that mentality of the village lifestyle. That has never gone away. It's just in a different sense of how we do it. People are still very close to their community. That's why it's really hard for people sometimes to go away, because then you're away from your family, that support system, everything that you know, and you're out in this world where people don't necessarily care much about your welfare, like your community does.

15:39

Lu Ann Jones: Well, in terms of your relationship with your community there at Knife River, what difference do you think it makes for your neighbors that you are one of them? Yeah. You're there and you're managing ancestral lands as an employee of the US government?

Alisha Deegan: There is a few instances that I have, I've heard people tell me what other people have said. That they were proud that I'm here. And now that I'm superintendent here. Because I'm the first person from my tribe to be superintendent at this park. So, it's a really cool thing. And they're like, hey, we have one of our own at this site. That is super cool. The tribal historic preservation officer, who has since retired December 31st, he would tell me, he's like, "It is such a relief that I don't have to worry about Knife River like I do other spots, because you are there." I don't know if that's just with, if that's like every native person would have that relationship with their THPO of their tribe, but I'm still a government official in this position. I'm not representing my tribe. I'm a tribal member, but I don't represent my tribe in this. But I also know what it means to be a steward of this land and this living landscape. That to me it's very much personal. And I make sure that MHA is at the table when we have all of those discussions.

Alisha Deegan: Now recently the Crow Nation, I've reached out, because people from Big Hidatsa Village had went to go live with the Crow because the Crow and the Hidatsa have really close history throughout time. There's people that after the smallpox epidemic went to live with the Crow Nation and then stayed there. So, we need to make sure that that voice is talked about, is heard, too, within what is happening here at Knife River. So that's, yeah. I've only heard positive things that people are really happy that I'm here. Also, I really hope that it shows that other people from my tribe can be here, too. I'm actively working on trying to make that happen. I have told all my supervisors before becoming superintendent, I want to see more people from my tribe working here. I don't want to be the only one. And hopefully we'll get there. Hopefully I can get that.

18:59

Lu Ann Jones: One of the things I noticed looking at the website and speaking of schools is you have lesson plans. Is that something that the site has done for a while? Is that something that you brought to the education portfolio? Kind of where do those lesson plans for K through 12, or young people, I think, where does that fit in into the overall interp and ed program?

Alisha Deegan: That's a big part of what we do. There was some really great work done by predecessors here at the park working with the tribe, getting tribal educators to help establish a lot of the curriculum that you see on the website. Also, recently since I have been here, that's something that I want to have more, I guess modern ideas, or just different topics for students to learn. And then also focus on high school students and college learners, because a lot of it is geared towards fourth grade and eighth grade because of the curriculum of this is the history you need to learn. Fourth grade and eighth grade is North Dakota history, which includes the native story. So, we had hired an education technician two summers ago. A non-native lady. She's very intelligent, is an ASL sign language person. So had developed some really great curriculum for home schoolers so that we have some new stuff up there, and more so with Hidatsa ethnobotany. So, the plant information that we have up there, she helped develop in coordination working with our tribal partners, myself. We have some really cool programs, curriculum, that's up on the website. We also, hopefully--we're told we're going to be funded to do some curriculum on tribal history, government history. So, this one's going to be more focused for high schoolers to learn the history of the MHA tribal government. Just to understand what that political science looks like within tribal entities. Specifically, MHA. What that means going forward, if you wanted to be more involved in the community, in making things better, you have to understand what was put in place, what was established, the history that happened. So that's just to help those next generations, we get that curriculum established and funded to put out there for teachers of high school.

22:27

Lu Ann Jones: This is all so fascinating. I know that we are coming up on an hour and a half. If you have time, I have a couple more questions. I am curious, you talked about superintendent brain. (laughs) I wanted to know, what does it mean that you have become a park superintendent? Which is an aspiration that a number of people have, but not everybody achieves. Do you have peer groups that you are able to talk to as a superintendent? In terms of training, development, troubleshooting.

Alisha Deegan: Yes. So being a superintendent is something that I knew I wanted to do for a long time. I just didn't know when I wanted to do it or where if the opportunity. So, I remember in FMLP, the mentors and people would ask, "Well, what is your ultimate goal that you want to do?"

Alisha Deegan: I'd be like, "Well, I want to be a superintendent." They're like, "Not many people here are saying that. I was like oh, maybe I'm doing something wrong in thinking that. But that was something I always wanted to do. But I was also very cautious about supervision and what that meant. Because it is a lot of responsibility, but I take it very serious. The management of the park is very important. And making sure that that story that I always feel like needs to be told at parks is being told in a way that is not detrimental to the communities that they're talking about.

Alisha Deegan: Within CIRCLE, there is a lot of superintendents in our leadership team. So, I'm able to talk to them. Like the people that were sent in the email, a lot of them are superintendents or have been or have the potential to be superintendents further on in their career. I'm really proud of that I get to know and work with these people. So that community of indigenous superintendents is really powerful. Especially women superintendents. So, you have Dorothy FireCloud, Lisa Frost. There's Maya, on, I can't think of her—

Lu Ann Jones: I know who you're talking about. Uh huh. Western Arctic.

25:25

Alisha Deegan: Yep. So, there aren't a lot of female native superintendents. But it's good that I have peers that I can call and talk to. Also, my supervisor, Wendy Ross, who has been a superintendent here and is now superintendent at Theodore Roosevelt National Park, she is an amazing mentor and somebody that is always available for me to call and be like, "This is going on. I'm kind of stressed out." Or "This seems crazy." She'll help talk me through it. And I'm like, oh, okay. I'm on the right path with what I was thinking. Just being so new to this position, it's challenging and it's wonderful. But I also don't want to make a mistake. So, it's really great to be able to call and have her as a sounding board. Also, the members from CIRCLE, to have them to talk to and visit with and just say, "Hey, this is what I'm thinking. Does it sound really crazy? Or do you think it's going to cause too much of a stir?" They're honest with me and I appreciate that. To be able to have that just frank honestness with somebody, it takes a long time to get there, where you know it's coming from a good place. With the people, the leadership

on CIRCLE, we consider each other family that we can have those conversations. It's really nice to have that.

Alisha Deegan: And then also Gerard. You know, when I was in the acting position for the superintendent, he was the one that told me. He's like, "You are the only person from our tribe that has ever held that position, even in an acting capacity. It would be so amazing if you got it." And so, I did. I'm able to talk to him and visit with him, which is really nice because we're from the same tribe and we both consider Knife River very, very important to us. Just his experience alone and him being one of the first people that I looked up to as a native superintendent. And then getting to meet Dorothy, who was then the superintendent at Devil's Tower. She was the first, I want to say the first native superintendent there. So that was really a powerful moment. Just to see all of these great and amazing leaders, and now I get to call them my peers. That is just super cool. And knowing that I can just text, say, "Hey, this is happening." So that support.

Alisha Deegan: I want to give that to that next generation, also. So, I'm always looking for, I'm not actively seeking that out, because I don't want to be pushy. (laughs) But if somebody asks questions and needs help, I'm there. I always feel like that is something that I want to do and pay that forward for people that have done that for me.

28:52

Lu Ann Jones: Well can I ask you for an example of an issue that has been a tricky one for you. And I would understand that there might be some things that you wouldn't want to share or talk about. But is there a dilemma that you did seek some advice on?

Alisha Deegan: Yeah. So, this was most recent. It's really kind of more about with a lot of the CIRCLE members is the use of the word "chief" within the National Park Service. And how that is used as a derogatory word towards native people now. So, the history behind that is we had been discussing as a group, wouldn't it be nice if we could make the Park Service more inclusive in a way with language. We found the use of "chief" can be used within the Park Service, especially if that's your title, also in a way to put you down as a native person. I've had that experience myself here, when I was in the acting capacity of my old job. Somebody sarcastically in a way, just like, whoa, like, "You're the chief." But just said it in a manner that was very insulting as a native woman. But then could come back and say, "Well, I didn't mean it like that, because that's your title."

Lu Ann Jones: Now was that from another employee? Or from someone outside?

Alisha Deegan: No, it was from somebody I supervised. Yeah, it's like well then how do I—so just that summer, just a side note, that summer in 2016 when I was acting in the interp and cultural resource program manager capacity, I had talked to HR a lot and one of the HR officials said, "You are getting more experience than some

supervisors have had in twenty years." I'm like, great. (laughter) It was a really good learning experience. I feel like Creator and the grandpas, they all, you know, they put me in situations that they know I can handle and that I will learn from and that will help me further on. And it definitely did. But at the time, it was so stressful. (laughs)

Lu Ann Jones: Well, how did that story unfold that you were dealing with HR? I mean, that comment was made. Well then what happened after that?

32:03

Alisha Deegan: Oh. Well, that comment wasn't even something I brought up to HR. It was a whole bunch of other stuff. That was just something for me personally to help explain why, like I wish it didn't happen, but I have it to help explain why we don't want to use "chief" within the Park Service. We have got a lot of pushback. And people that respond as, it's because of their identity to the term "chief" and what it means within the National Park Service. People have worked really, really hard to get to that place in their career that they could be called a chief. I get that. That is, like you put years in. We are not discrediting that. We are just asking it to be a different title. All your work is still valid. It is still so important to what we're doing within the Park Service. As your peer, and as an employee, we're telling you, this word is offensive. Granted, we know the definition, and people like to point out the definition that are against no longer using "chief." They say, "Well, this is where it comes from. This is the definition of it." Telling us, "So you should not be offended, because it doesn't even mean that." Totally forgetting that language is living. It evolves and it changes. Within our society, "chief" is now used as a derogatory term towards native people. So as an employee relations issue, this is where we're coming from. We want to be heard. We want to have this discussion. It needs to happen at a national level.

Alisha Deegan: We put this white paper together to get this discussion started. So that has been something that has been challenging because what it means to different people. In law enforcement, chief ranger, that is where a lot of people want to get in the law enforcement. It also means something outside of the National Park Service. You're identifying as the chief. You know, it's different entities in different state and federal places for law enforcement. I get it, the importance of that. So, we just want to have that discussion and see where we can go with it. There's a lot of people that have been very positively receptive to this. And then ask, well, what should we use? So, we say program manager, or what is on your PD? Because the chief title isn't really on anybody's PD. There was a few within the Midwest region, or the formerly known as Midwest region; now Region 3, 4, and 5.

Lu Ann Jones: (laughs) Yeah.

35:35

Alisha Deegan: I think there are like three PDs that will eventually, that will change once they're reclassified, because you have to do that every five years. So, we're there, and we feel like it's low-hanging fruit. That's something we could do to show yes, we take RDI serious. We take what people are saying serious, instead of just brushing us off again. So, it's something that we know isn't going to happen right away. It's going to take a time. It's like changing, basically we are asking to change the culture of the National Park Service, and changing a culture is really hard, because typically people don't like change. Some difficulty.

Lu Ann Jones: (laughs) Well, I would love, is that white paper something that you could share with me? I would love to read it.

Alisha Deegan: Yes. Yeah. I will send that to you.

Lu Ann Jones: That would be great. Well, again, I know you're busy. But for now, I have one last question if you have time. I was fascinated when you described the various native arts and skills that you learned, had been taught. I was wondering at what point in your life you learned those. And second, I was interested also in quilling. I believe you put it something like that you had, I guess, received permission to learn quilling? I forget the exact language. So, could you just talk about that aspect of your knowledge a little bit?

Alisha Deegan: Yes. So, quillwork, my mother-in-law has gotten the right to do quillwork. Within my tribe society, you have to buy the right in order to do that stuff. The person that buys that right then can only sell it to three people. Like when I say buy the right, like you feed them, you give them goods for what you're going to be receiving. That is typically almost with everything. Like village life here, even now, anything anybody did, they wanted to get something, they had to do something for that person. That just shows that you are respecting their time and their energy of providing this for you. You're going to not just blow it off. So, like even if you wanted your grandma to tell you a story, you would clean her house for her. You would go over and do something for her to get that story from her. So, there was always this give and take within, just to show that respect. Because you have to have that respect for your elders and for the information that's coming. I don't have that right for quillwork. My mother-in-law does. I have been trying to kind of feel it out to see if she would let me buy the right from her, and then also buy the right for designs. (laughs) So there's the two aspects to it.

Alisha Deegan: But beadwork is something that I learned from my grandmother, my grandma's sister. So instead of saying great-aunt, we just call our grandma's sisters and brothers our grandmas and grandpas. So, my Grandma Sara taught me, but also her daughter, my Aunt Marilyn taught me how to do beadwork. So, I learned through them for that beadwork and did that exchange without realizing I was doing that exchange. It was just by doing and being there and helping them and all

of that stuff. So, looking back on it, I was like oh, I did that, but not in that formal sense of here's the things, now teach me.

Alisha Deegan: Pottery is something that I'm very much, very, very much interested in, want to do. I just don't seem like I have as much time as I would need to do that. I get jealous of the people that put videos of working on pots up, but I enjoy watching them. There isn't anybody now that is alive that we can buy the right from. So, I did something that came to me through a dream as I had put some food and stuff out and asked permission to start working with clay and making pottery. So, it's more of that because the Hidatsa-Mandan-Arikara, the spirituality in everything that we do daily is never separated. There's always an aspect of spirituality in everything you do. Even the words you say can be considered a prayer. So always be careful with what you say. So that's the journey that I am on with my pottery. So that I do it in a way that is a good way and is also respectful to all of the master potters that came before me within my tribe.

Lu Ann Jones: Wow. Well, I was just thinking as you were talking about the exchange, and I hope that as part of this interview that once there's a transcript made, that we have the audio recording and that again, that this interview and with other CIRCLE members can eventually serve a purpose for your needs and your goals. So, I hope I will be able to give back to you in that way.

42:16

Alisha Deegan: Definitely. I appreciate that. Just being able to get this history down is super important. There's a lot of people that are out doing really great work that are not within the government. But then there's people within the government that are really making a change to help make positive changes that affect everybody. So, your work of getting those stories is just perfect and right in line with making those positive changes.

Lu Ann Jones: Well, I feel like the time is right. Sometimes you sense that now is the time to talk to people. And I feel like now is a good time to be talking to folks. I was going to ask if there are other topics that you wanted to talk about today. And I would say if there are other things that you wanted to talk about or thought about, we could always reconvene later. I'm happy to do that.

Alisha Deegan: Sure. I can't think of anything right now. And I apologize because my stomach's been growling through the interview.

Lu Ann Jones: (laughs) Well, I haven't heard it.

Alisha Deegan: Sorry. So.

Lu Ann Jones: I'm going to turn on my video now, we'll see if we can see each other to say goodbye. I haven't heard it.

Alisha Deegan: Okay. Good. (laughter)

Lu Ann Jones: And I'm going to stop the recording now.

44:04

[END OF TRACK 2]

[END OF INTERVIEW]