Camille Daw: Right so my name is Camille Daw, and I am the primary interviewer for this oral history today on November 10th, 2023. I am interviewing Anna Tamura for the purposes of Minidoka National Historic Site's administrative history. Thank you, Anna, for agreeing to join me. I'd like to start with your background, and some of your education, and how that brought you to do the National Park Service if you wouldn't mind explaining that?

Anna Tamura: Sure, yes, well, thank you for organizing this. Happy to be here. In terms of my background and educational background, kind of preparing me for working on Minidoka. I'm from Portland, Oregon and I- I also have a family history that I can get into as well. But when I- I went to college on the east coast and I studied archaeology and anthropology and throughout my time in my undergraduate, I was just really fascinated with places and how people leave their culture and remnants of their culture in places and how they shape places.

And after I did my undergraduate- at Bard College, then I did work doing archaeology for a couple of years. I was in the Peace Corps and went to Togo, west Africa. And at that time I was trying to figure out what I wanted to do next, and one of the fellow Peace Corps volunteers asked me if I'd ever heard about landscape architecture.

And of course, I hadn't, it was a field that I didn't know anything about, and- and- so that just that spark of introduction to landscape architecture that got me thinking, maybe that's what I wanna do with my career and my studies and what I loved about landscape architecture is that it combines the environment and how humans shape and transform, design, create places with intention. And it also has the architectural engineering side, which is very interesting to me. And then it has the artistic creation side and design and plants, you know I love plants. And shaping the environment. And so, you know, from archaeology of more thinking about the past and how humans have connected in the past. Landscape architecture thinks more about the future and designing places in the future.

And so when I was at the University of Washington getting my Masters degree in landscape architecture, I was introduced to yet another field that is very similar to both archaeology and architecture, which is, cultural landscapes, and so it's how people are engaged with their environment, shape their environment.

And then in the National Park Service, we're also concerned about historic preservation and preservation protection of cultural landscapes. And so then when I was doing my master's degree, the person who introduced me to cultural landscapes with Susan Dolan and she was working at the National Park Service. And so I just, you know, went up after, after the class, and I asked her if I could learn more about cultural landscapes. And eventually, I got into an internship with the National Park Service, working for Susan Dolan, documenting cultural landscapes. My first job was documenting the Wonderland Trail at Mount Rainier National Park.

And at that time, there was beginning to be words- there was the beginnings of cultural landscape work at Manzanar and they were doing- it was called a cultural landscape report. And so I was tapped to participate in the development of the Cultural Landscape Report. And that's

when I started learning about the incarceration sites. And then in 2000, I was- I was going to be working on Manzanar, and I was taking a road trip through southern Idaho.

And I realized that I was going to be going by Minidoka, where my family was. And so on the way through Idaho, I went to the town of Minidoka thinking that's where the camp was but it wasn't, so I had to backtrack 50 miles and you know, driving around- this is before like Google Maps, you know, using ATLAS to find Minidoka, and I arrived at Minidoka, and this was before it became a National Park, you know. And, it was one of those times and experiences in my life that was like the beginning of a new chapter. And I was so curious and astounded that I knew nothing about Minidoka, other than, my family had been there.

And, you know, I drove around and I tried to understand, like the layout of the- what was- had been the camp there. And that was in, like, July 2000 and in, you know, January of 2001, Minidoka is named a new National Monument. And so because of my experience starting to work on Manzanar's cultural landscape report I was- and my background in archaeology- I was asked to be part of the first team that went out to do an archaeological survey of Minidoka with Jeff Burton.

And then in the summer of 2001 my project from the National Park Service was to do the documentation for the Cultural Landscape Report at Minidoka. And so, my educational background kind of perfectly fit with the early needs of you know, Minidoka and the new site. And it was, you know, there's such things as, like kismet or when things are kind of meant to be, and it was just, you know, the beginning of my work on Minidoka. I think I'll stop there, we can- if you have another question or, I mean, I can continue on and on and on, but, if you have specific questions-

Camille Daw: Yeah, well, I mean, actually one of them was about that archaeological investigation, like those early ones, and then that cultural landscape report even, and maybe going more into, like, some of the insights of, like creating those and helping with those. And what that experience was like.

Anna Tamura: Well, I think it was really important at that early time, because Minidoka had just been established as a new national monument. And the Park Service really didn't have any information about Minidoka, kind of the basic, baseline information that we need- that we like and need to have for our National Parks. And so, you know, Neil King was the superintendent at the time and he said, well, we, we need to know what resources exist here so that we can then know what we are charged with protecting and preserving. And so Jeff Burton's team was out of the Western Archaeological Conservation Center. They were the team that was doing all of the documentation of the camps. And he had actually done a very brief survey previous to that In *Confinement and Ethnicity*. But this survey that we did in 2001 was a much more intensive survey where there was a team of, I believe there was about six of us including the Kings and Jeff. And we did a walking survey of the site. And so that went on for about a week, you know, very intensive, making sure that we were documenting everything that was within the 73 acres that was, you know, a part of the original designation.

And then, you know, similarly for the Cultural Landscape Inventory. What that does is it

documents all of the cultural landscape features and there are different layers that we look at. Kind of like GIS, where you look at transportation systems, or cluster arrangements, or historic buildings and structures, or small scale features, and vegetation, natural systems and all of those that contribute to a cultural landscape, and so I was tapped to do the documentation and write the Cultural Landscape Inventory.

And so in the summer of 2001, I went out for a week. And actually, my uncle, who was incarcerated at Minidoka drove out- drove out and joined me, and so he was my tag long, but also he- you know, he was coming there for the first time since he was incarcerated there in the 1940s, and so it was really important for him and brought back tons of memories for him. And so, you know, meanwhile, I'm doing the documentation, and he was walking around just kind of reconnecting with this place, it was so significant for him.

Because he was a teenager at the time. And so, you know, I- I just- I walked the site you know. I, you know, before that, I did lots and lots of research and any archives and documentation that I could find from the WRA through, from the Bureau of Reclamation documents from Densho. Just any place that had documentation about Minidoka's landscape. I was really focused on all of those characteristics of the landscape. And so then after I did the fieldwork then I wrote it up into the Cultural Landscape Inventory that describes the history of the site, so, the transformation of the site from high desert to when it was a camp. And talking about the Period of Significance from 1942 to 1945. And then analyzing the different features to determine whether they have integrity or not.

And I really appreciated- and I think it was really beneficial both for the- for the site to have that documentation, but also for my own knowledge. Because then that also helped me be extremely knowledgeable about the site in being able to do tours and then, you know, leading the General Management Plan. And really be kind of the expert with the most knowledge about the actual features within the National Monument. So it was such an important project at the time, so necessary and, and for me it was so enriching in terms of my now learning about the site. There were, let's see, I think it was, I can't remember exactly when the final was. From 2003, and then there was an update, I think in, 2007.

Camille Daw: Thank you. And were there additional archaeological investigations, like, after that initial one that went more in depth, or was it just that first one?

Anna Tamura: There was, there was the one in 2003 that was of the entry area that focused on learning about the entry garden, right around where the historic honor roll had been. And then doing some kind of clean up and- and stabilization work in the entry area. You know when the monument was established it was totally overgrown with sage brush and you know the sage, the sage brush was actually impacting the historic features and so you know, removing some of that sage brush and- and then excavating in the garden area that's when we were excavating, and you know we didn't know that there was the pathway- the V shaped, pathway. Now we just started excavating and realized, oh you know there's another rock oh there's another rock you know and it just- we excavated that entire pathway and uncovered that and we you know, we have no idea that even existed, before that- before that excavation. And then, they also did excavations around

the entry guard station because there were some other attached buildings and so understanding, you know, what- what were the remains there.

And so that was, that was really- I think- important for helping to raise awareness about Minidoka because we had a lot of press. We had- the local TV station came out and did a feature on the archaeological work that we were doing. And there was also Dorothy Hirai, who was a survivor- she came out and talked about her World War II experience. And so it was, you know, kind of an early expose of Minidoka National Park Unit, for Southern Idaho folks.

Camille Daw: And I guess, you know bringing up, like the, bringing up survivors, you know, did you find that around that period of time, a lot of survivors were really engaging with the National Park Service staff? Or you know, was like the National Park Service reaching out to them? What was that relationship like before they, you know, formally started the General Management Plan process?

Anna Tamura: So in 2000, was late 2001. In the fall of 2001 and then into the spring of 2002, what we wanted as the National Park Service, what we wanted to do, is we wanted to communicate with survivors and descendants. Because you know, they are the most important people related to the site and the reason that the site exists.

And so what we started doing was, um, holding meetings in, you know, throughout Seattle, Portland, some in California, obviously in Idaho, with the local Idaho folks as well in Eden and Twin Falls. To start communicating about Minidoka that it had become a new National Park unit, and what that means. And starting to make connections with communities.

And so during that, it was about a year, year and a half where Neil King was involved in a lot of them, but also Fred York, who was the regional anthropologist. So it was mostly Fred and myself having meetings. And so, we went to a lot of the churches in the Seattle area, and had presentations with poster boards and, you know, just introducing, like, who's National Park Service. And, you know, I was one, Fred and I were the main presenters, and representatives of the Park Service. And so telling them, you know, telling the people who were at those meetings, like the Park Service, you know, we manage the Statue of Liberty and Yellowstone, and, and this is what it means for Minidoka to be part of the National Park System. That it will be managed long term by the National Park Service.

And we were also talking with them about the impending beginning of the General Management Plan, and so it was that first stage of just introducing ourselves in the Park Service and what was actually within Minidoka National Internment National Monument. And describing, you know, why it was selected and why the name internment, and what a national monument is and, you know, just kind of sharing information Because, you know, people think monument, they think like an obelisk of some- some sort. And so just describing the site. And so we did that for a year, year and a half of just going around having meetings and sharing information. And making connections, and, you know, we had a mailing list of people who wanted to get on our mailing list so that they can find out information about Minidoka. Or it was also being used- we told them, you know, if you sign up for this list, then you'll start to get information about the general management plan, because we're gonna start out this General Management Plan. And also

beginning to talk about what a General Management Plan is. We didn't get into that too much, but it was- that- it was those early meetings- we're just trying to make connections with, you know, different community groups.

And you know I think during that time there was a lot of learning for, um, the National Park Service and myself included, about the, you know, the diversity of the Japanese American community and the different community groups and within the community, how those different groups relate to each other. You know, the Nisei Veterans and the Japanese American Citizens League, now. And then there was also folks related to Tule Lake and, you know geographically- you know, the religious communities within the Japanese American community.

And then also recognizing that a lot of people who were incarcerated at Minidoka didn't return to the West Coast, and so there are also communities in Chicago and Cincinnati and Denver and- and just the- the diaspora of Japanese Americans throughout the country. They also went to Alaska, because of, you know, all the Japanese Americans in Alaska were incarcerated at Minidoka. We went down to California, in Los Angeles, because there are a lot of Japanese Americans in California who you know either at that time, or they moved to California later on. So it was a time of really just trying to make connections which then led into the beginning and launch of the General Management. Plan,

And let's say at that time also, so 2003, so we're getting into about 2002, 2003, 2003, you know, was the first minute of pilgrimage. And so there was a lot of activity at that time about, you know, recognizing Minidoka, it being a new National Park unit, people wanting to return to the site to learn about their families' heritage, or for those survivors to reconnect with this place that was very, in most cases, very traumatic, in their lives. And then, meanwhile at the site, there was nothing happening in terms of actual site work, you know.

That's before any trails were put in now there was a little bit of clean up that I mentioned, what just you know some of the sagebrush but the site was- essentially, it had been abandoned, you know, after World War II and then it was being used for grazing for cattle. And so was in those early years that, you know, Neil, Neil, was doing- negotiating and, and saying, okay, you know, "We need to remove this non conforming use right, we can't have cattle grazing on our historic property."

And so removing those uses- and I mean there were cow pies all over the place. I mean it was, it was, it was just a place that there- there wasn't hardly any work being done. It was just not really being cared for, I would say. And you know, the Bureau Reclamation, they were using the area, they- they own the area and then there was, I think American Falls Irrigation District was managing out of the warehouse area.

And I, you know, I remember that, that building when, not sure if anybody else has talked about that, but that building when the American Falls Irrigation District was using the facility. And there was a potbelly stove in there, and you know, they were using that building for their offices. And there were, there were like, calendars with, you know, half naked women on them. In the warehouse, I mean, it was, it was a different era, right?

But eventually you know the American Falls Irrigation District moved out of that facility and then, you know, the Park Service took it over. And then also at that time, like the potbelly stove was stolen, removed, and stolen out of the warehouse. We- I don't know what happened to it. But that's, you know, that's all kind of part of the history.

I think the other thing of that early time was that Mr. Hermann- John Hermann, and his wife Alfreda were still living in their house. And so and so, you know, there was 73 acres and then on the edge was John and Alfreda's house, And I remember the first time I met John and I was, it was that summer of 2001 when I was doing the documentation and, you know, walking around the site. You know, he saw me. I mean, you know we connected on the road and he asked me, you know, what- what I was doing and- and- he was so friendly. He was so nice and- and- he was like have you seen the vege pond? And I, you know, I didn't know what he was saying. I didn't understand exactly what he was saying, he was like, "Have you seen the vege pond?" And I said, "No, no, I don't know what you're talking about." He was like well, you know, get in and so, I'm not sure where my uncle was but, I got into his truck and he took me down the road and we got out where, kind of near where, Block 30, 31 would have been and it's in that row of poplar trees. And we got out and he showed me this original gord shaped fish pond that was from somebody's garden, you know, while they were in the camp. And because it happened to be not in the road bed and then not in the field, there's like this ten foot strip where the poplars are, it was preserved. And you know, the gord shape of a fish pond is a very traditional Japanese style shape for fish ponds and so, he, you know, he showed me, like, features throughout the site.

He brought me- invited me into his house and, you know, chatted with Alfreda. And, you know, they raised there, I think it was four or six kids right in that house, and it was so lovely because I remember all their decorations were the little school pictures of all of their grandchildren and so it's just all covered inside the house with all these pictures of their grandchildren from now the years of them growing up. So John and Alfreda, you know, they were really important to that early time and the relationship that Neil and the Park Service built with John to be able to talk about, you know. What would happen with- and the long term- land long term, and how that actually coincided with our plan- planning. And, you know, eventually John and Alfreda decided that they wanted to sell their land.

And um, what we heard through the general management plan process that- that is that their land was really important to telling the full story of Minidoka because they had- It was an original location of barracks and also the baseball fields and the Farm in a Day era, and the Fire House- the Fire House and the footings for the water tower, and half of the root cellar. And so it was, it, it worked out that- and we included that proposal in our General Management Plan.

Because they were willing sellers, and they were ready to, you know, move on to their next chapters in their own lives. I also- that was when I also met in Diamond, who similarly was so friendly and- and welcoming. And he took me out on his four wheeler out to um where the cemetery had been because he was, he was, farming that land. And it was pretty far now like we're- I'm bumping along behind him on- on this four wheeler and we get to this, oh, it's like a cornfield, or, you know, some kind of field, and that's where the cemetery was.

So just doing that early documentation and as well the dump site.Which was on Bureau Land

Management land and, that was actually included in Jeff Burton's um work- Archaeological work, and being out at the site and seeing all of the Ponds cold cream jars, because, you know, the women at Minidoka, you know, they come from the Northwest, where it was, you know- there's so much moisture in there- to a really dry place. And so all of the Ponds cold cream, these white thick jars from them using the cream and moisturizer. And that site, it- it's so rich archaeologically of all of the artifacts and remnants of camp life, you know, from, you know, abandoned toilets to the Japanese ceramics, to all of the infrastructure and, and then like bottoms of shoes and just the- it's a gold mine of information related to management. And so because it was on Bureau of Land Management land, you know one of our sister agencies, and it was very important to the protection of Minidoka and history of Minidoka, we also included that area within the General Management Plan as a boundary modification.

Camille Daw: Thank you. I guess, kind of talking about the General Management Plan- kind of feeling you knew this is coming- but if, if you know, you could talk about your role in that and what that experience is like kind of having already made some of these contacts and having conversations with survivors and descendants, but also, you know, individuals in the Magic Valley. What was that planning process like, and what were some of the insights you learned from it?

Anna Tamura: What I think- the-, one of the most, if not the most important part of the general management planning process was interacting with survivors and descendants and the local community and the stakeholders associated with Minidoka. When I finished my studies, finished my master's degree, I was brought into the planning program. Even though I'm landscape architect, and am a landscape architect by training, I was brought into planning to help with the Minidoka General Management Plan.

And originally we had, um, a consultant managing the General Management Plan, based out of Denver, and that was really good because it was a- a really concrete launch to the general management planning process by people who knew planning really well, and I was very junior. I didn't know planning very well, but I was quickly learning. And I had really good mentors, and my boss at the time, Keith Dunbar.

And when we started off that general management planning effort, we knew that we needed people who were subject matter experts, on our planning team and so, we also needed help related to civic engagement and engaging the Japanese American community. And so early on, we had the consultant, the planning consultant from Denver. And then we had a cooperative agreement with the Wing Luke Museum to do outreach and to run, like, small group discussions so to organize survivors. You know, because interacting with, you know, the National Park Service staff still, at the time, you know, we thought we needed help and we're not the best entity to do this. The Wing Luke Museum, that's what they specialize in, is , you know, community-based engagement and development of exhibits and themes. And so through I'm working with the Wing Luke Museum. They organized dozens of meetings, conversations with survivors about Minidoka. And I think, I would say, maybe healing happened during those. And we were not a part of the vast majority of those meetings.

But the purpose of those meetings was to start talking about Minidoka and then also help

identify why is Minidoka nationally significant? You know, what are the interpretive themes? Like what should be from the perspective of survivors? What are- What should people learn about related to Minidoka? And then what are the most important resources related to Minidoka? And then it also got to, well, what was their- what were their ideas and vision for the future. And, and so that process was happening at the same time that we were starting up the General Management Plan and we had Yosh Nakagawa- we had subject matter experts- you had Yosh Nakagawa, we had Beth Takagawa, who was the Deputy Director of the Wing Luke Museum.

And Karen Yoshitomi , who was a Japanese American Citizens League contact lead for the Northwest district at the time, and Yosh was a community leader associated with the Japanese Baptist Church. And we also had Tetsuden Kashima, who was a professor at University of Washington, Really a scholarly expert on the job is part of preservation. And so they helped and were core to our planning for a minute. So, you know, anytime we had like big workshops, internal workshops where we were- I'm doing, like scoping, identifying the issues to be addressed in the plan. You know, coming up with the different ideas of how the site could be developed, they were there at each step of the- of the planning process. And so, the beginning of a planning process, you know, starts with what's called scoping where we're just trying to gather information. You know, what are people's ideas? What are their concerns for planning? And what should we be aware of? What- what does the plan need to address?

And then also ideas, and so people were coming up with things that- the one idea that we heard over and over again was the reconstruction of the Honor Roll, reconstruct a guard tower we, you know, people wanted a pedestrian experience like they experienced during World War II, so we're getting all these ideas during scoping and when we had um scoping we, we had lots and lots of meetings, like formal public meetings in Idaho, also in eastern Oregon, like Nampa because there was a large Japanese American community there because I'm at that, you know, the farmers in that area invited Japanese Americans to work on the farms and then you know when Minidoka closed, a lot of Japanese Americans settled in that area and then obviously in Seattle and Bainbridge and Portland. And so through those meetings we got so much information about, you know, the stories that should be told at Minidoka.

A lot of people who were attending those meetings, this was, you know, oftentimes, like the first time, they were having a discussion about Minidoka. And so, you know, in addition to, kind of, all of that planning information, you know, a lot, there were just a lot of people who wanted to talk about their personal stories. And so, so we just took notes, started writing everything down, recorded it, and so it was really an incredible time because there were still so many survivors, and to be able to interact with them, and, you know, to hear, their ideas and concerns. And I remember there was a man named Henry me talking who he was one of the redress movement. Kind of an instigator, and it was at the, Seattle Buddhist Temple meeting. And, you know, we were talking about, well, what, what were people's different visions for Minidoka. And I remember him getting up and saying that if it wasn't done right then he wanted to make sure that the whole thing was just gonna be paved over, because it needed to be told. The histories needed to be honest and true. And needed to represent what actually occurred in the injustices experienced by Japanese Americans.

Oh, and, you know, during those meetings, we got so much information and, and learned so much about Minidoka. Like the time that the guard tower during World War IIburnt down, you know, just gathered so much information and- and I think for me personally it was so kind of mind blowing, and that, you know, I hadn't heard anything about Minidoka from my family, except for my uncle who started, you know, telling stories. And so it was almost like, through all of these other people's histories of Minidoka, I learned about how, what my family must have experienced during World War II.

So after scoping, we gathered all that information. We had a really good team who analyzed all of the content,summarized it all, and then put it back out to the public in a summary of scoping comments to share with everybody who cared, you know, what we heard from the public. And, and so then the next step in the planning process was taking all that information and developing what are called alternatives, so different ways that the- that the site could be managed, and so we developed alternatives. And the alternatives, you know, there were alternatives that included like visitor facilities and reconstructions and, you know. Then we also had another alternative more focused offsite, so telling history and really focusing on public education, but minimal activity at the site. And so o, you know, we came up with a range of alternatives because it was, it's also a National Environmental Policy Act process. And, and so then we presented out the alternatives to the public in another massive round of public meetings and said you know, you know, here are different ways that the site could be managed. And in the general management plan there are a lot of photographs right from those meetings that we held.

And, you know, hearing the opinions of the survivors, knowing that they like certain things they didn't like other things you know. They wanted to make sure that there was a barrack at the site so people can see how they lived. And so, you know, again, gathered all of their perspectives and, and opinions and rationales for what are- they- like, things or, you know, supported or didn't support and additional ideas. And for me as a planner, it was kind of the most authentic planning process that I've been through.

Where we were, pretty much all the ideas that are included in the general management plan came from those meetings. Now they weren't like my ideas, they were the people who were attending those meetings, it was their ideas that were really creative, inventive, smart ideas about how to, um, treat and manage the site for the long term. You know, reconstruction of- a- of the historic fence, you know, and- and- having a trail along the historic fence so that it could be more of a contemplative distant experience from the visitor center, and so a place where people could think about issues of confinement and and imprisonment and separation and injustice. And so you know, each of the different components of the site- areas of the site- were addressed in the general management plan and with a lot of intention.

Management zones and, you know, site circulation how people would you know walk through the site. We also had a consultant, Jones and Jones helping us and they were helping us a lot with the site design components and, and also helping run some of the meetings. So then we went out with alternatives, then we went out with a preferred alternative and a draft plan about what, a year later? And so then we actually had a draft plan to present out, and so again, you know, we went to different communities and had meetings.

And that's when we went down to Los Angeles and realized that there's actually a lot of people in- in the LA area who are very connected to Minidoka. And we had a meeting at the Japanese American National Museum that was very well attended. And so, again, got lots of information, opinions, you know, that's where we had introduced, the ideas of, like changing the name of the national park unit from Minidoka Internment National Monument to Minidoka National Historic Site, and the boundary modifications, those proposals, so some fairly substantial big ideas of changes to the site. As well as the facilities and all the reconstructions and other trails, and how many staff it would take to manage.

And so all those pieces of actually managing and running a national park and creating the blueprint right for the development of the site over the next twenty some years, and then finally in 2006, right, the General Management Plan was finalized and signed, in a Record of Decision and then that was the end of the GMP planning process. Then it changed dramatically to, you know, thinking about what could be to making all of that happen right, to implement- implementing the general management plan. And I remember Neil King would say, you know, the planning process is the fun, creative part, where the real work is, is, is doing. And my role was to help with implementation and to continue to do further planning and all of the interpretive waysides.

Like, that was a big project, and then at that in about 2009, or 2007, 2009? Something like that. There was a-a push of money and so we were able to get that money to then put in the trail so we had a whole planning process in and around the trail design. To the point of like, okay where exactly should the trail go? And you know, marking the trails for where it's historic versus where it's new construction, and part of that was also the- the fence putting in the fence and so getting some of those basic site elements- site visitor services started. And like each one of those things, you know, it was, it was, a, you know, a paragraph in the General Management Plan- or a sentence in the general management plan, and then being able to turn that sentence or that paragraph into an actual project, doing the project and then having the construction out on the site. And you know, you know we're, what is it? Not quite twenty years since the General Management Plan, but, oh, about fifteen, and seeing how the National Park Service and the staff out at Minidoka and Hagerman and um Southern Idaho how they have implemented the GMP and really done an extraordinary job, and it's incredible to see, oh here's a plan, here's a book that says everything that's supposed to happen, and now it's actually almost all that has happened. So incredibly gratifying.

And then also mention, you know, every year we would have a pilgrimage, and so it- it- in the early years, you know, we had accidents with people walking through, just, I mean, there was no trail right. And so accidents like people would trip on barbed wire because, you know, it hadn't been cleaned up. Oh, and then, you know just the necessity of having trails out of the site. And, and, each year being able to say, and now this year we have, you know, the Honor Roll or now this year we have the sign, official sign or the guard tower, like each year, being able to have some progress out of the site as, and it's still occurring. Like we're still doing. Because the site is still evolving and kind of fulfilling what was envisioned in the GMP. What do you want me to talk about next?

Camille Daw: Right, right, no I was gonna, I was gonna just add it, it's, it was pretty incredible

for me, you know coming in now, about 15 years after the General Management Plan was published, and, you know, going in as a scholar, being able to look and see and like "oh wow, like each of these things is laid out in the exact function," and looking back at historic photos and being able to see, like, where it wasn't and now where it is.It's it's it you know looks, amazing. And- and I use that term lightly, you know, kind of recognizing that it tells its story and- and the story of a place pretty well, and I think that importance of places, really helps drive the survivor and descendant community to come back to their longest annual pilgrimages. And so I was hoping, you know, you could talk maybe a little bit about that first one? But I-I think really some of them you know ones that occurred after as well and the importance of those and the importance of them continuing today.

Anna Tamura: Well I think for many, the Minidoka Pilgrimage, like, that's the most important event throughout the year. And it really kind of illustrates or shows just how important Minidoka is to the Japanese American community. And individuals, and the fact that the pilgrimage committee is made up of all volunteers, you know, who spend their free time organizing this event. Just really shows that Minidoka means so much to individuals, the survivors, the descendants, the larger community.

I mean, I mean, each pilgrimage kind of has its own experiences and, and dynamics and, you know, depends on who comes and, and those early- the first pilgrimage, it was just like, okay, you know, we're gonna organize this around the Japanese American Citizens League, district meeting because they were having a district meeting in Twin Falls. Let's try and coincide the pilgrimage with that meeting. And, did you want me to talk about the whole beginning of the pilgrimage, or do you have that somewhere else?

Camille Daw: I believe most of that was like recorded with the twentieth anniversary interview, the Youtube that you are part of with a Minidoka Pilgrimage interview, but as much as you want to include, is, is totally okay.

Anna Tamura: Okay, or maybe I'll try and think about some things I didn't talk about during that. I think one of the most important aspects of that first pilgrimage was the realization for a lot of the, the people who were on the pilgrimage, that this was really important and it needed to happen every year and there were people who volunteered and said you know, I'm gonna I'm gonna make this happen. This is really important to me. I wanna make sure that our, our survivors have the opportunity to go back with community. And in kind of a safe environment and go back on the buses and, and so that's when, after that first pilgrimage, people like Gloria Shigeno and Alan Momohara decided, like we're gonna make, we're gonna sustain this, this is, we need to make this in every- an annual event. And so, you know, each pilgrimage was, in those early years was trying to figure out, like, okay, should we do this at the College of Southern Idaho? You know, and- and every year it's the same thing like, well should we should we go to the- the Chinese buffet for lunch? And, you know, just trying to figure out the whole itinerary.

And, you know, Gloria Shigeno, had, so many kind of connections, and she was so organized and thoughtful and hard worker and, and she did, she did so much of the organization those early years, coordinating with, trying to get somebody to do all the parking at the Bellevue Community College right, so everybody could leave their cars and know that they would be

secure for the three or four days we were gone. Organizing the buses and and then. All the activities on the buses and then the handouts on the buses, what people were eating and the snacks and the entertainment, and it- just kind of all of the thought that goes into running the pilgrimage. And in different years there were- it was at different places, and so one year we had more at Boise State with the consortium. And then we kind of settled into, um, the colleges Southern Idaho, and creating a strong partnership with them to run it at- that-that facility and then- oh, there was always a tour of the site, and how to organize those tours and I think the first year we had maybe 100 or 120 people, it wasn't, that wasn't as big as, you know, when I think it was more than 350 people.

And also going out to the ranchers house and his farm? One year, there was the- the Portland folks created the Minidoka swing band, and they came up with musical scores and dances, and you know, outfits like 1940s outfits with pink and like everybody was dressed the same with outfits. And that was really great, you know, for a couple of years the Minidoka Swing Band performed, and I think it was- his name is Henry Sakamoto, from Portland who was the singer at those swing band performances. And so, kind of each year there was, you know, each year is something memorable or different.

Now one year we had Portland Taiko come and- and do all the entertainment. They were very entertaining. and then including the social aspects in the evening with the line dancing and the karaoke and and just all the like bonding and- and outside of the, the regular programming. And then after a few years we kind of settled into having a day just focused on education. And inviting speakers to talk about, you know, history related to Minidoka different aspects of incarceration, and so that, you know, is now that Friday session. So it's evolved over the years and I think, you know, when COVID kind of stopped the in person pilgrimages, then starting it up again for the first time last summer, they had to kind of reinvent a lot of aspects.

I think for the Park Service side we've also gotten a lot better over the years at running the tours and stewarding the site and I'm being sensitive and leading, leading the tours and being, working really well with the manager of the committee. And I think this last one was one of the best, I think it was the best one yet, you know it's like every year is, it's just kind of-vIt's such an important, enriching event for everybody involved and- and that's why it continues.

I think the other thing is like showcasing the development of the site and what the Park Service is doing has been really amazing too. You know, each year have dedications or ground breakings, at the pilgrimages to demonstrate that the Park Service is caring for the site. I'm looking forward to the next one.

Camille Daw: I will say it was I-I haven't gotten maybe. A normal the pilgrimage experience, and maybe that's because there isn't one. Because I attended the 2019 and then the 2023 and both are- you know covid was right smack dab in the middle, but both have been pretty powerful or just, just being able to attend. I guess, the other question that I have, um, kind of going beyond Minidoka is more specifically about like Bainbridge Island and in any involvement that you have with that specific, sister unit or satellite unit.

Anna Tamura: So for the Bainbridge site, so- there was the legislation for doing the study in

2002, I think it was? And then we started the study soon after, and so we were looking at alternatives for potential long term management of that site, including having the National Park Service be involved. And so Jones, and Jones was a consultant, I was on the team, as part of the study process, and similarly, we had a lot, of meetings to talk about the significance of the Bainbridge Island site, its history, why it was unique. Also talking a bit about the future but really the study is meant to determine whether it is eligible for National Park Service management or not, and so we completed that study around 2005.

And it did recommend that Minidoka be a satellite unit, or excuse me, Bainbridge be a satellite unit of Minidoka because they- But as a standalone site it didn't have the, as much resources or, you know, what it means to have in terms of having it as a stand alone site. And I think politically, you know, that made the most sense and the fact that the Bainbridge Island site, you know is owned locally by the Parks and Rec District, and so really the National Park Service involvement is, is a lot less than obviously at Minidoka where we own and manage the site and so we're more one of the partners, at Bainbridge.

And so, you, know there were, at that early time um you know Clarence Moriwaki was involved, Frank Kitamoto was involved. So a lot of the early- the survivors were participating in the meetings, and that's before anything actually had really occurred in terms of site development. It was still just the road bed, the Eagledale Ferry Dock road bed, and trying to envision what it would look like long term.

And then it was, you know, formally established in 2006 I believe. It may have been 2008. I need to check my dates, and then planning started related to the site, and we're just one of the many partners. And so the Bainbridge Island Japanese American Community applied for one of the JACS grants- the Japanese American Confinement Sites grants, and was able to get funding to do the early planning site planning for the site and John Paul Jones who was architect with Jones, and Jones did a lot of pro bono work.

But, getting all of the infrastructure set up at the site like the roads, the water system, because it's a drainage in that area. And then eventually, getting funding to build the wall and put in the trails. And then, I- I remember there was a lot of discussion about what would- what would be on the wall, right? Is- is it a story wall? Is it you know just a wall with all the names of the 227 people who were incarcerated? Like, what was the purpose of the wall, what was gonna be on the wall? And I remember Frank Kitamoto coming in with a stack of papers and saying, you know, everything that's in here needs to be summarized and put on the wall, like, everything, you know, this is the history that needs to be included.

And through a lot of the discussions- and themes came out, what we wanted to have major themes and we wanted the names, like everybody wanted to have the names of the incarcerees on the wall and I think one of the turning points was finding the artist, and who did the like ceramic freezes and- I love how it turned out because, actually, it ended up being, very minimal in the number of words, and so given that, you want to read every word because there aren't very many words. And the poetry, and- and quotes that are on each of those freezes, and the telling of the history through the imagery, along with the names, I think it turned out so incredibly beautiful and meaningful. And- and it's really a work of art. And so, you know, my involvement

with Bainbridge over the years was working on- on the study, and then helping out with the interpretive messaging and the messaging on the wall,

And then, it's kind of each step of the way in the development of the site; I drafted the cooperative agreement, but I think the cooperative agreement still has not been completed amongst the partners. And- and then I was acting superintendent just more recently for the Seattle area National Park sites and so Bainbridge Island is managed as part of the Seattle area National Parks sites, and so that was really amazing to be the acting superintendent for the site. Just lots of involvement over the years.

Camille Daw: It it surely it surely sounds like it um and from everything that anyone has ever said about you they've said that Anna's been involved in everything and she's great, so it's it's it's been great to hear just, I'm sure like the the tip of the iceberg of all of that, but I guess to kind of finish up, I'd like to know if there's any, like, specific memories that stick out to you about Minidoka? Like its designation and its kind of gradual development over the years, anything that I guess you'd like to add?

Anna Tamura: Well, I think one thing that I've really loved, Is giving tours every year out at the site and- and being able to retell stories that were told to me by survivors about the different locations of the site. You know, what occurred in the different areas, and on past pilgrimages, or just historically, and- and sharing, now, my knowledge that is other people's experiences that I've learned through those public meetings, or reading, or whatever might have been. I would say there's just so many oh it's hard to. It's hard to like name one. And being out with my uncles was really, has been really special. He passed away just in September and so the kind of, the bond that we formed, by going on the Minidoka pilgrimage every year and, you know, being out there the first time like just-personally, that was extremely meaningful.

And I- and- and I think that as me a descendant, as well as being a representative of National Park Service and working for the agency, there's, there's always this kind of constant like- some people want me to, like, pick sides, you know, like, are you the community or you the Park Service? I've- I've been able to navigate that, and sometimes it's been really challenging. But I just think that, you know, it's being both, kind of helps both communities, and so what I've tried to be is really kind of a bridge. And helping with understanding on both sides. Sometimes successfully, sometimes unsuccessfully, but I-I, you know I, think that being part of the Park Service and being able to, you know, share with my Park Service colleagues, you know, what Minidoka means to the community, or to know, families and descendants and- that has really helped the Park Service, you know, understand that it's really in such an important place for so many people

And I think on a bigger scale, you know, why is Minidoka important? Oftentimes, the Park Service and- and- this has happened at Minidoka to a certain degree- you know, they get focused on the actual resources, and now the windows, like, are these historic windows and- and kind of get really into the historic fabric. And being able to balance that in depth knowledge and information with issues of why Minidoka is nationally significant related to injustice, racism and, and what can we learn. And why is Minidoka even a National Park? You know, and the lessons of Minidoka, I think that it's continually evolving, and it's the interpretation. And I think

we're doing the best that we've ever done like the staff right now are just really outstanding. And being able to communicate the nuances of the site as well as the big "so what?" questions like, the big- the themes for the site.

I think Minidoka, for me, has, you know- it's been a really important place for me personally, but for my career and being able to contribute, both learn how to do things, and contribute to about every aspect of the site development and management in ways. And, you know, being in all of these meetings over the years, like when we were talking about the design of the visitor facility; should it have a-a long roof? You know should it have solar panels? Like, what, you know, what kinds of doors with the message on the front? You know just each one of those different aspects, all the text on all the exhibits, I mean people go to these, you know. Visitors go to the site and they- they're reading. All of that was developed, right, it came from somebody or, or some group of people who were working on it, you know. Some colors, fonts, the film, like all the- all the issues- all of, the information in the film. All those interviews- I remember being asked like, well, who should we interview for the film? You know, and then going through and identifying all the different key people who would be able to provide different information aspects of the history. And all the content on the- on all of those waysides and on the negotiations for the land exchange and the- the text of the legislation, like all of the different pieces that it takes to manage a National Park and develop a National Park. It's been, extremely, incredible learning experience for me, and- and very gratifying, you know, to be able to play a role in kind of every aspect of developing a place that was so important to my family. That changed, the change, you know, my family's history. So Minidoka is a very important place to meet, both personally and professionally and- and it's truely- it's truly just the honor of my life to be able to contribute to it now.

Camille Daw: Well, thank you I-I appreciate um those comments and I-I appreciate you know your thought and your insight. Is there anything else you'd like to add to this interview, anything that you didn't get a chance to?

Anna Tamura: Oh, I would say that, If you have any other questions, like I- obviously I can talk about a lot of different aspects of Minidoka in different time periods and projects and whatnot, and so if you have any other, questions, you know please, reach out anytime. And I can try and fill in whatever might be a mystery to the best of my abilities.

Camille Daw: Sounds great, sounds great I-I certainly appreciate that. I appreciate, again, your willingness to, um, honestly and openly, um, respond to some of my questions, I hope that they weren't too difficult or too challenging but I really appreciate your thought behind them and just the thought that went into it. And your willingness to be interviewed as well.

Anna Tamura: Well, thank you Camille, I look forward to- if you wanna be, if you want a reader for the document, I'm happy to review.

Camille Daw: I guess, certainly I- I'd appreciate that. You probably have the most insight into some of these- well, actually, honestly, over the full document in general, you probably have the most insight into it, so I-I certainly appreciate that but I'll plan on reaching back out when it maybe gets a little bit closer to being finished.

Anna Tamura: Okay, that sounds good. Thank you.