

Paddling straight for four hours in one spot

Owen Oliver (Quinault / Isleta Pueblo): One of the strongest memories I have of canoe journey was my first official time going on Canoe Journey. Let's see, I had to be like, maybe 14 years old. That first day, I was put in the canoe by my cousin who was skippering it, Tony Johnson, and we had to come out of the Columbia River and go into the Pacific Ocean.

[Greeting in Chinuk Wawa] Kloshe Konaway Owen Nayka Niem. Hello everyone, my name is Owen Oliver. I come from the people of the lower Columbia River, the Salish Sea, and the Southwest Pueblos of Isleta. However, I'm enrolled Quinault.

When a river is coming, and then it's also meeting the force of an ocean, there's a part called the bar where it's basically impossible to get past unless you're paddling straight for about four hours in one spot. And, if you're paddling for four hours, what's that end goal? Why are you doing that? Why don't you turn around and just not, you know?

But we knew just paddling and paddling that we would eventually get past that, and then we'd be able to go into the Pacific Ocean. And this was really fundamental to me because it allowed me to understand how my ancestors operated, but also what's the meaning of Canoe Journey in the Salish Sea. It was something that my grandfather started with many other people in 1989, and it's really helped me build these foundational steps to talk about where those good moments of Indigenous success are, and how to spot those. And how to spot when people are doing well, and not well, and how places affect us as people.

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