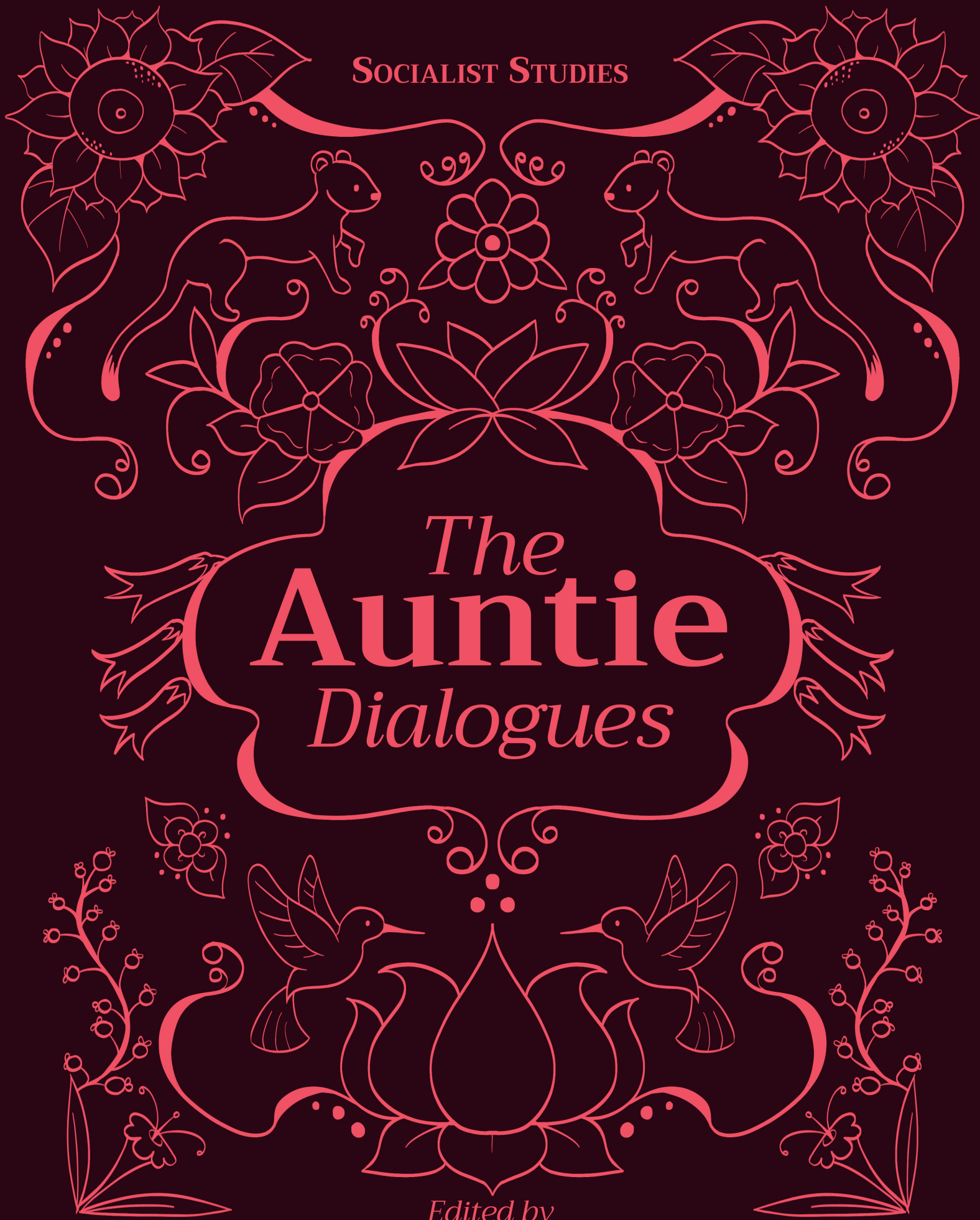
Socialist Studies
The
Auntie
Dialogues
Edited by
Paulina R. Johnson and Juan Guevara Salamanca

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Special Issue

Socialist Studies

Table of Contents

Introduction:

This is the "Auntie" Way

Dr. Paulina Johnson

Dr. Shirley Anne Tate and I often converse about our roles in academia, and importantly, she asks me this question: "What will you leave behind." I am Nêhiyaw, a Four-Spirit person, or Indigenous of Turtle Island, or found within present-day Canada. Dr. Tate, a Black Feminist scholar, is my mentor at the University of Alberta (UofA), where we are both Professors in the Sociology department. Her question has created not only anxiety in myself, but a thoughtful look into the future of what I aim to leave if I am no longer in academia or, better yet, this physical world. Her question has floated in and out of my consciousness, telling me that I needed to leave more than just your standard academic paper or written words.

Indigenous knowledge has long been seen by colonial institutions as not "academic enough," though they say they are actively working towards Indigenization and decolonization. Yet, my people's knowledge is often not written, nor is it easily accessible or understood. Therefore, I began to think about what I needed when I was younger. Nimosôm, *my grandfather*, Christopher would tell me stories of Elder Brother as he traveled around the world, and notahwiy, my father, Paul would enhance my curiosity about the "other worlds" around us. And every time, I learned a new story or teaching of our people, I craved more. When I was an undergraduate at the University of Alberta studying Anthropology and History, I would find myself on the third floor of Rutherford library reading the books available on "The Plains Cree" – a name given to my people by those who were not of us.

I read anthropologist David Mandelbaum's ethnographic account "The Plains Cree" published in the 1940s numerous times till I realized: "What does this white man know," and "Where are the women?" I would not return to that library until a decade later, but this time as an Assistant Professor, who is a little wiser than before with an objective to tell what I know. I am not an expert, and I say this as all other Indigenous scholars and Elders have done before me (though I am not an Elder). It takes a lifetime to know what we could truly know, and for my people, within the constraints of colonialism and injustice that is our everyday experiences, I thought of what if I left a part of me for those to know.

To share the stories that live within my blood, to hear the strength of all those that came before me in my voice, to hear my pain and joy within my laughter, and, importantly, make this available to those who are not able to ask their parents, or whose ancestors were not able to share their wisdom. To make this world anti-colonial and to fulfill the most important teaching of my people, to give back. Reciprocity is the driving force of relationality, and this means that I am bound to my people and community first, and an academic second. Therefore, I leave these dialogues to those both in an oral presentation and also in a written document. Bringing my Indigenous upbringing together with the Western preference for text.

I do so as an embodiment of the most caring and insightful representation of my people, of the auntie. Aunties are often the ones who you can share stories with, and they are not your mother but a strong entity that can scold you but also comfort you. With admiration and care for this role, I present who I am as an Indigenous woman shaped and inspired by aunties to you as I present the scripts from "The Auntie Is In" podcast, available on Spotify. I do so to share the way my people through oral tradition but also to ground the work into the academic spheres of knowledge production but importantly, of a decolonial stance of what academic writing can look like and how we must envision a future that embraces Indigenous knowledge in a delicate form reminiscent of the culture and people but also liberating it from the confines of whiteness that plagues or everyday reality.

I do not share the damage or deficit of my community, though it pops up in each episode every so often, instead I share with you, who I am and how I have navigated this colonial world that we exist within. But I do so with the support and assistance of numerous individuals who saw my vision and wanted to be a part of it. It is their support that often made me want to be better in my approach of my telling of stories both cultural and personal, but importantly, that they never once made me walk alone on this journey, as they were right there beside me the whole time. They let me be the academic I am, but also the little girl from the rez who had bright eyed ambitions. We carry these experiences forward and we are especially grateful to Dr. Maricor Arlos, Assistant Professor in Civil and Environmental Engineering Department at the UofA who is our biggest advocate and supporter. We are honoured by *Socialist Studies* for this opportunity to place our vision of this work into the world, ay ay, thank you.

This is for the aunties who were silenced by settler colonialism, may you live on through the voices of us who stand on your shoulders and share your wholehearted laughs.

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A Note on Formatting

Throughout these scripts, we will be using a decolonial stance of how we format certain terms. We will provide the English translation in italics prioritizing the Nêhiyawêwin, Four-Spirit language. Names of people and beings will not be italicized.

Further, each episode acknowledges the storyteller and/or ancestral knowledge shared to give reference to the information given. This is done so to give respect to the knowledge that helped build this podcast.

In addition, each podcast script offers readers and listeners to learn through different knowledge sharing styles, you may listen or read as you like. Since Dr. Johnson sometime goes off script, we have also provided her unscripted points to add reference within the script and will read as below with the time stamp in each respective episode:

Example:

[15:20-15:54 Or, Indigenous women need to redefine what they actually represent rather than the representations given to them by settlers to legitimize harm, violence, abuse, and importantly, the acquisition of Indigenous territory which models and parallels the treatment to Indigenous women. So, we have to ask ourselves, why is the representation of the image of Indigenous women still within these two binaries of the Princess and the Vixen? It all comes down to settler colonialism.]

This way of formatting attempts to be as close to the how Nêhiyawak storytelling would be in real life to share the history, culture, brilliance, and intellectual traditions of Dr. Johnson and her people, the Nêhiyawak.

Listen along on Spotify.

Episode 01:

Made in Ceremony

Paulina Johnson
With Stories by Lane Jr. as told by Wagamese
And Ancestral Knowledge from Nimosôm Chris Johnson

Synopsis: What does the "auntie" mean in Nêhiyawak custom and how does Dr. Johnson fit into this role? Listen along to hear about the importance of "The Auntie Is In" podcast and the work being done to challenge anti-Indigenous sentiments and anti-racism work at the University of Alberta under Dr. Johnson, including the foundational knowledge of her people and history.

Part One:
Introduction to Indigenous Aunties

When I think of Indigenous women, I think about the power of what they represent, and this is through the ceremony of our Nations; the very essence of the blood that flows through our veins connecting us to our past and present. Not only are we connected to tradition and coming to know who we are in our worldview, but we are also the destruction of the colonial world we find ourselves in. Nêhiyaw lawyer Sharon Venne, in her work on Treaty, talks about how Treaty is fundamental to not only our Indigenous culture but also the settler population, as this living agreement cannot be broken by any two-legged individuals. Importantly for us as Indigenous peoples, we are bound to Treaty because this sacred agreement enacted wâhkôtowin, or kinship, with the settler state making us cousins with them.

Further, Venne discusses how Treaty is not only a relationship to our lands and well-being, but addresses that women play a pivotal role. Because the quote "as long as the sun shines, grass grows, and the waters flow" is not a direct translation of only the environmental aspects, but the rivers Venne is talking about is in relation to Indigenous women, and the continuation of our culture and livelihood. Therefore, women or iskwewak, are powerful beyond political relationships, they are importantly sacred.

Indigenous women are more than just mothers and life-givers, they are our connection to the community, they are the ones who shape us, and if we look within my Nation's views on Aunts or Aunties, they are the ones that have been there time and time again, informing us if we have stepped out of line, or importantly, if we have not been accountable for our own actions. Growing up, if we did something, let's say questionable, we would be hit with the question "what did you learn?" Or quite simply, "what did you find out?" And we all know well for many Indigenous nations that if we fucked around, we absolutely found out. It was aunties that really emphasized this reality for us. We would love them for it or absolutely hate them for it, but eventually, you would turn around and see where they were coming from. And this was an important educational tool, because everyone in the community was aware of this risk. And therefore, being an auntie is like a legal tradition, if you must, and I say this because it was a common goal of all of us not to be called out by an auntie because she had no mercy.

Now aunties come in various forms, and you have the auntie who is dressed head to toe in Indigenous designers, to the aunties with the big buns on their heads and killer statement beaded earrings, to the ones that gave you a bowl of soup when you were upset and stood there in front of you giving comfort as she listened to you.

Aunties in our Indigenous communities are the laughter of our nations because every single Indigenous person knows that an auntie who throws her head back and you hear this loud bellowing laugh, but it's followed closely with a slap — especially a slap to anyone sitting near her. This is the auntie that I know, who've broken numerous uncles' hearts, young and old, but the community adores her, not only for being the presence that she is, but for sharing her wisdom in unorthodox ways that are not typical of the "mainstream" way of knowing or sharing knowledge that we assume Indigenous peoples engage in. And this is okay because being an auntie is a state of mind, one that I embody here, and of course, I will embody every auntie that I talk about because throughout this podcast, as I share truths about Indigenous reality in settler Canada. I need the power of being an auntie to inform you of the wrongs and injustices,

but also of the ways of learning, and changing the very knowledge about Indigenous peoples and our way of life that you may know.

Part Two:
Dr. J and Confronting Racism

I am Dr. Paulina Johnson, an Assistant Professor in Sociology at the University of Alberta. I engage in many fields of research stemming from indigenization to decolonization but also on racism and inequality, especially that from an Indigenous lens. I integrate indigenous methodology and pedagogies into my work. For those who have been lucky enough to learn from me already, I have taken an unapologetic approach to this work because, for so long, Indigenous peoples have had to watch what we say for fear of hurting others. But by doing so, we are not genuine to our own feelings and needs. I don't want a life where I feel that I have to compromise my truths for the protection of others, especially those who work in Indigenous communities or with Indigenous peoples. I need you to hear these realities and being palatable or avoidant of my emotions does not honour my spirit and my power.

First and foremost, I am Nêhiyaw or Nêhiyawak or Paskwâw-iyiniwak, I am a four-spirit person or a prairie person, I am as the settler state of Canada refers to us as, *Plains Cree*. I am Indigenous first and foremost, never forgetting the community that has made me, the ancestors who prayed for me, and the prayers that brought me to this position to meet you, even if it is informal. I am from *Samson Cree Nation*, also known to us as Nipisihkopahk, this is the land of the red willows, a place that has been my home as I navigated being Indigenous. But importantly has allowed me to always take pride in who I am and where I come from given the reality within our society. Settler Canada is important for your knowledge as a place of hostility for Indigenous peoples because of misconceptions and falsehoods.

Confronting these realities is needed since much of what the public often knows is still rooted in systemic racism built on ignorance but also a constructed narrative that has been used by the settler state to allow for harm and dehumanization. Let's take for instance the example of residential schools, when they were first created, those in charge knew they were problematic but still allowed them to continue. Even in the early 1900s onward, Dr. Peter Hendersen Bryce, who was the first Chief Medical Officer of the Department of the Interior and Indian Affairs for the Government of Canada, knew something was wrong. Dr. Bryce was responsible for the health of Indigenous children in residential schools and was the first whistleblower to say, this is not okay. He even published

his findings in 1907 detailing that roughly one-quarter of all Indigenous children attending residential schools had died from tuberculosis. Now let's put this into perspective. This was 1907, he became the Chief Medical officer in 1904, and the first residential school was opened in 1831, though there were mission schools as early as the 1600s. The last residential school would close in 1996, and residential schools would be removed from legislation in 2010. So why wasn't anything done? It is easier to legitimize harm against a people if you think they deserve it, or importantly, you do not see them as humans. This dehumanization of Indigenous peoples extends as early on as first contact and has not relatively gone anywhere in the present day.

Of course, we can look to stereotypes about Indigenous peoples too, that are continuously shared, including the idea that Indigenous peoples get everything for free; the only free thing that I get is the labour to tell you the truth. Well, for the most part, that's true; my emotional labour is still often overlooked. But that said, the idea of free, or not paying taxes for instance, could be easily remedied with a statement from the government, because even when we tell the truth, it is met with skepticism or "show me your evidence". The taxes that settlers pay, especially income tax, are never given to Indigenous peoples; that is a lie. The resources that have been extracted on the land and the money from that extraction is the funds that are distributed to Indigenous communities and often not equally. But my point is, there are so many false narratives about Indigenous peoples as there are people who claim Indigenous heritage but do not actually have any.

So, with every episode that you will listen or read in this podcast, we will provide the secondary literature of our research and sources so that if you do question what the fact is, it is right there for you. A little bit disheartening really, but over years as a professor, you would be alarmed, but probably not surprised as to how individuals have questioned what I have taught them about Indigenous peoples. So, to better this reality, I make what I know freely available and to be shared, and all you really need to do is to listen.

Listening, or nohta, is fundamental to learning and also the best way to teach humility since our society is in need to relearning these grandmother/grandfather teachings. Too often when confronted with the truth, many become defensive and hostile or become overly emotional. Because everything you know about Indigenous peoples is rooted in racist ideologies, and to break the foundation of what you know, I have to make you uncomfortable. Then, and only then, can you truly learn. That foundation is problematic and needs to be dismantled, and it also means dismantling colonialism that has taught you those falsehoods.

Pretty heavy stuff; imagine carrying that your whole life.

My main objective is not to get too heavy or sad fast. I don't want you to know only the damage within our communities because of what you see in the media, or what you have been taught in secondary school does not help. Though, I have to admit, there have been efforts, and I do not want to diminish the work that has been done, but these misconceptions and myths still exist.

There is so much vibrance in our Indigenous nations, and they are rooted in culturally specific creation stories, traditions, ceremonies, and songs. I share with you my people's stories, and that is nation specific to the Nêhiyawak, of the Four-Spirited, often teachings from our allies, the Anishinaabe or Assiniboine, will enter our dialogue. Still, for you listening/reading, this applies only to my people unless otherwise noted. A pan-Indigenous idea that we are all the same still exists in the minds of many. My people are not like the Haida in British Columbia or the Haudenosaunee near the Great Lakes. We speak different languages, have different customs, live in different geographies and landscapes, and importantly each Indigenous nation has its own vibrancy.

Part Three:
The Nêhiyawak

Let me teach you a little bit about my people as this information will help lay a foundation for the remaining episodes.

Nêhiyaw is derived from the number 4, or newo in the Nêhiyawêwin language, it means we have four-spirits within us, meaning we have the emotional, mental, physical, and importantly, a spiritual side to ourselves. When one of these spirits is off, our whole being will also be off. Therefore, mental health is of great importance in our first teachings and worldview identity. Specifically, in this understanding of self, we have a strong connection to our land and territory. Our territory is land gifted to us by Kisê-manitow, *Compassionate Creator*. According to Cardinal and Hildebrand, "Creator has given us all that we would ask for spiritually and materially" (2010: 10).

Now you probably have never heard of the name Nêhiyaw or Nêhiyawak before, this is due to the fact that when settlers first came to this territory, they did not understand our worldview but, importantly, who we truly were. We get the name *Cree* from a language that is not our own. French settlers and missionaries forwarded a variety of spellings, includ-

ing Kiristinon or Kristineaux from an Ojibwe term they used to refer to us as Kinistino, but the French later recorded our name and contracted it to *Cri*, or what we have today as spelled *Cree* in English (1940:15). We have to take caution with terms when we are coming to know about Indigenous people because even the term *Canada*, or as the history minutes like to state Kanata, is actually derived from a Mohawk or Haudenosaunee term, Kanatiens, which means "they sit in our village." A contemporary translation according to Corntassel (2009) actually means "squatter" (p. 139), and I don't think many would get behind this name if they knew the truth. This is why Indigenous peoples, including myself, are reclaiming our identifiers and sense of belonging.

Those colonial languages do not adequately translate or describe our worldviews. Colonial languages like English are noun based, while our language is verb based, with nearly 80% of the language being verbs. This is because action takes precedence, and we differentiate between what is alive or that it is not living, therefore animate and inanimate. And it is not that easy as you think, and I really want to stress this because we do not adequately understand the spiritual or metaphysical because in our colonial society, we devalue what we cannot see or hear. So often, Indigenous knowledge becomes seen as tall tales, myths, legends, or hocus pocus. All of this delegitimizes the Indigenous worldview and is used to make us out to be childlike and inferior. Still, I can tell you from what I have seen in ceremony, it is not for children, and it is not for those willing to admit that we are not greater than nature herself.

My people and, importantly, aunties are made in ceremony. We enter our communities, continuing the knowledge that will flow through ourselves. And our language connected with the land and earth is a fundamental part of who we are and what we stand for. Our language is a powerful connection to our traditions and how we share our knowledge.

I am lucky to have a collective of Elders and knowledge holders who have supported me throughout my life and helped me maintain my cultural roots in hostile environments such as academia and settler society. But even within the harshness of this reality, my core understanding of my people has allowed me to thrive even under the circumstances.

This is the importance of knowing who you are and what you are capable of. We all have the ability to be more than what we know, and Indigenous pedagogies, which means teachings, and the methods, the ways of knowing, share future insights, especially for all people including settlers.

Therefore, I am going to share with you one of my favorite stories that I

have come across to emphasize that Indigenous knowledge is not only powerful but significant, and it comes from Lane Jr. and was told by Wagamese in 1996 to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples.

Part Four:
The Search for Truth and Justice

This is the story of the search for truth and justice.

> *In the time before there were human beings on Earth, the Creator called a great meeting of the Animal People. During that period of the world's history, the Animal People lived harmoniously with one another and could speak to the Creator with one mind. They were very curious about the reason for the gathering. When they had all assembled together, the Creator spoke.*
>
> *'I am sending a strange new creature to live among you, He will be called Man and he is to be your brother.' Creator told the Animal People.*
>
> *'But unlike you he will have no fur on his body, will walk on two legs and will not be able to speak with you. Because of this he will need your help in order to survive and become who I am creating him to be. You will need to be more than brothers and sisters; you will need to be his teachers.'*
>
> *'Man will not be like you. He will not come into the world like you. He will not be born knowing and understanding who and what he is. He will have to search for that. And it is in the search that he will find himself.'*
>
> *'He will also have a tremendous gift that you do not have. He will have the ability to dream. With this ability he will be able to invent great things and because of this he will move further and further away from you and will need your help even more when this happens.'*
>
> *'But to help him I am going to send him out into the world with one very special gift. I am going to give him the gift of the knowledge of Truth and Justice. But like his identity it must be a search, because if he finds this knowledge too easily, he will take it for granted. So, I am going to hide it and I need your*

help to find a good-hiding place. That is why I have called you here.'

A great murmur ran through the crowd of Animal People. They were excited at the prospect of welcoming a new creature into the world and they were honoured by the Creator's request for their help. This was truly an important day.

One by one the Animal People came forward with suggestions of where the Creator should hide the gift of knowledge of Truth and Justice.

'Give it to me, my Creator,' said the Buffalo, 'and I will carry it on my hump to the very centre of the plains and bury it there.'

'A good idea, my brother,' the Creator said, 'but it is destined that Man should cover most of the world and he would find it there too easily and take it for granted.'

'Then give it to me,' said the Salmon, 'and I will carry it in my mouth to the deepest part of the ocean and I will hide it there.'

'Another excellent idea,' said the Creator, 'but it is destined that with his power to dream, Man will invent a device that will carry him there and he would find it too easily and take it for granted.'

'Then I will take it,' said the Eagle, 'and will carry it in my talons and fly to the very face of the Moon and hide it there.'

'No, my brother,' said the Creator, 'even there he would find it too easily because Man will one day travel there as well.'

Animal after animal came forward with marvelous suggestions on where to hide this precious gift, and one by one the Creator turned down their ideas. Finally, just when discouragement was about to invade their circle, a tiny voice spoke from the back of this gathering. The Animal People were all surprised to find that the voice belonged to the Mole.

The Mole was a small creature who spent most of his life tunneling through the earth and because of this had lost most of the use of his eyes. Yet because he was always in touch with Mother Earth, the Mole had developed true spiritual insight.

> *The Animal People listened respectfully when Mole began to speak.*
>
> *'I know where to hide it, my Creator,' he said. 'I know where to hide the gift of the knowledge of Truth and Justice.'*
>
> *'Where then, my brother?' asked the Creator. 'Where should I hide this gift?'*
>
> *'Put it inside of them,' said the Mole. 'Put it inside them because then only the wisest and purest of heart will have the courage to look there.'*
>
> *And that is where the Creator placed the gift of the knowledge of Truth and Justice.*

It takes time to change your existing views on what you may not truly know and to embark on this opportunity to learn fully is a step in a direction where conversation can be had. Importantly, I think of those not yet born and how we can envision an Indigenous future because it is going to be. The search for truth and justice is inside all of us, we have to have the courage to find it, and I pray that what you learn in this podcast is that our world, the indigenous world, has been all around you for the longest time. You have simply been tuned out. I'm going to bring you back in.

Keywords: *Indigenous Women, iskwewak, justice, Kanata, Nêhiyaw, power, Settler Canada, truth, wâhkôtowin, Ceremony*

Glossary

Iskewak - women
Kanatiens - "they sit in our village" or contemporary definition of "squatters."
Kisê-Manitow - Compassionate Creator
Nêhiyawak - Four-Spirit person (in settler Canada, known as Plains Cree)
Nipisihkopahk - Samson Cree Nation, land of the red willows
Nohta - listening
Paskwâw-iyiniwak - prairie person
Wâhkôtowin - kinship

References

Corntassel, J., Chaw-win-is, & T'lakwadzi (2009). Indigenous Storytelling, Truth-telling, and Community Approaches to Reconciliation. *ESC: English Studies in Canada 35*(1), 137-159. doi:10.1353/esc.0.0163.

Listen along on Spotify.

Episode Two:

All My Relations

Paulina Johnson, Emily Quecke, LeeLa Haynes, and Sam Dancey

Synopsis: Relationality is a core component of Nêhiyawak culture and the respectful ways of establishing relationships. In this episode, Dr. Johnson tells us of the importance of "all my relations" and how to live morally and ethically alongside Miyo-pimâtisiwin the good life.

Part One:
Âcimowina

One of the greatest beings I have ever met is Okimaw, which translates to *Chief*, my Siberian husky. The thing about huskies is how they are great storytellers.

[0:36:1:05 And the thing about Chief is that he rarely ever lets his opinion goes unnoticed, and he has a great disdain for baths, he absolutely loves my mom, if he had the choice between my mom or me, he goes with my mom every time. And also, within that frame of mind my dad likes to call him a specific name which is "*Chief two cents*." Because Chief likes to give his two cents about everything]. In any conversation we are having, he will be right there talking alongside us. And he lives up to his name, he is the chief of our homes. And it is really interesting because Atim in my language is what we call *dogs*, but they also make their pres-

ence known in how we refer to stories, as âcimowina, or atim owina, stories, where *dogs tell tales* or dogs are storytellers. Chiefy has been telling stories since I first met him, and he has always been my protector ever since. He curls up in front of the door every night, doing what he and his kind promised us especially when they went against the animal world [1:45:2:20 one day the Animal world decided to take vengeance upon humans who have disrespected them and treated them as if there were nothing. Atim or the dog worried about the safety of humans when out of his way to tell the human population, the human world, the animal world is preparing to have a strike. When the great bear, the leader of the animal world, found out, he said 'you and your kind will forever protect these humans, these other beings'. So that is what he does] – he protects my family and me from harm, and he shapes my life to see and hear things differently. He is what is important to me and is part of my everyday life, but he also reminds me of the good life and the relationships I have. And how I am supposed to be a good relative, especially to him.

Part Two:
Miyo-pimâtisiwin

Miyo-pimâtisiwin means *the good life* and is the behavior in which we are to act and respect the very life that has been gifted to us through our state of mind.

In our laws and teachings, we aspire to live our lives in the ceremony so that we understand our roles and responsibilities to our people, and through these roles we are kept relationally accountable, meaning we are accountable for our actions with our relatives.

The good life is a self-reflection of how we are to conduct ourselves, essentially to live morally and ethically on the land that has taught us, and who we are stewards of. But it is not only with relationships with each other, but it is our relationships with all of creation. And how we are supposed to live accountability, not only to each other but over stepping boundaries and the natural world itself.

Nêhiyaw knowledge keeper Willie Ermine talks about how we are to create a spiritual aura around ourselves and be mindful of that shield:

> *These are the ethics we create for ourselves …that nobody should transgress that spiritual aura around us. These ethics [-] created by the self and by our families. When we do certain things, we hear our mother's voice or our father's voice telling us you cannot do that or you should not do this (2009, conference in Bruno 2010:190).*

My auntie, Dr. Shauna Bruno (2010, 190), talks about this as an "inherited consciousness" when we think about the aura. This is a self-reflection that may come about long after our parents and grandparents have passed on, it is really a way to share our consciousness that their words are still present. It is where we must listen to the teachings, and where it means to act upon and live out our lives in the way we have been taught and this is part of an embodied consciousness. (Bruno 2010:191).

This embodied consciousness is where we see that we are accountable, not only for our actions, but also for our impacts on the greater society and environment we live in. We cannot just go around causing harm, or for example, I cannot just go around saying "white people," I mean I do, but that's not the point, right? [5:12: 5:26 I am not going out there actively trying to create harm and the reason why is because our own view of life is if we go out and create disharmony or unbalance, it can come back and affect our everyday lives]. It is through this view on life that there are factors associated with ensuring balance and harmony in our everyday lives. Miyo-pimâtisiwin is based on being a good relative that realizes they are part of a bigger collective reality.

When I think about my life, where I have been, and yet to go, I always go back to my *First Nation*. They are the embodiment of good things, of meaningful and powerful connection, but they are also my grounding to maintain who I am. This world is often hostile and oppressive, and it is constantly challenging the good life that I aim to achieve.

Part Three:
Maskwacîs (Bear Hills)

Where my Nation stands today is on a ridge leading down into a valley, or where the great bear winds come together to fight and wrestle and it made this area specifically very windy, and the weather spontaneously change. Our territory of Maskwacîs is known as Bear Hills, [6:15: 6:28 not only by this name but for other notable reasons. The Four Nations we have today, they exist because not only relationships but a history on the land that has existed prior to Canada's even founding]. I am from Samson *Cree Nation*, but there is also Ermineskin *Cree Nation,* Louis Bull *Tribe*, and Montana *First Nation*. The Four Nations that I come from are more than the damage-centered narratives portrayed in the media, I often account how the sun sets in July; it is such a powerful and beautiful experience. It is alongside the Battle River sitting with other Aunties spilling all the tea, picking sweetgrass or sage or more importantly saskatoon berries. These are the moments that are important to me and also talk about the beauty of my community that it is often under looked and undervalued.

The Four Nations themselves have a history. The Four Chiefs that we have, they were all family. They were relatives.

[7:15: 8:35 Chief Ermineskin was brother with Chief Bobtail, Chief Bobtail is you know the Chief of Montana's First Nation but chief Ermineskin brother; he spoke the Blackfoot language because he would actually live in Siksika and crossed the border between Alberta and Montana, and he would actually mess with the US cavalry and say that the Cree here and his kind of tribe was actually from the US and sometimes most often we would actually take the Lakota and bring them into the Canadian territory and say they were Cree to protect them from any harmful and transgressions. And that is really important because it speaks about relationships, it speaks about community and also the risks associated to that lie, but it was not because we are all within the same community, trying to protect ourselves from these colonial dangers. Bobtail, he was in between the border and his relatives who were setting up the treaties and also the First Nation while they were setting up territory for them each to have some First Nation or Reserve. And Ermineskin daughter Marian Sikak Piché would actually marry Chief Muddy Bull, later known as Louis Bull or the Louis Bull Tribe.]

Chief Samson is the First Nation I come from, Chief Samson is the first cousin of Ermineskin and Bobtail. This history alone indicated that kinship relationships are an important part of the Nêhiyaw reality, and there is an important reason why.

But one important thing to note about Bear Hills or Maskwacîs is that for the longest time, settlers and much of Canada referred to us as *Hobbema*. Many would ask me what *Hobbema* stands for, or represents in my language, because they thought there is a great Cree word and I always say 'I have no fucking clue' because it's not even Nêhiyawêwin! The President of the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR), he had this undying love for a Dutch painter named as "Hobbema'' and he would name the railway flag station after him, and the name was used to refer to the Four Nations since 1891. So, I don't have a great story about *Hobbema*. Still, I have a great story of how we reclaimed our territory rightfully so on January 1st, 2014, we took back the name and rightfully, so we are now known as Maskwacîs. Nimosôm *Maska* means bear, *Wacis* means the hills, and we are being able to retell the story of where the great bears meet and where the four relatives set up our Nations because we were more than just the Battle River Cree, we were the protectors of the edge of the Nêhiyawak territory, and we have great stories to tell and insights yet to be known.

This is why it is important to understand the territory you reside on because just stating the territory does not adequately represent the history,

the families, the voices that have lived there for very long time and this is why traditional land acknowledgments are performative, because it does not adequately tell the truth and the history of the people of the land and you have to do the work to know whose land this is and importantly why those names may no longer be known or heard.

Part Four:
The Spirits that Guide Me and Accountability

To give the context to where and who I am descended from, I will share with you my family lineage: my parents are Little Bird and Angel Woman who works with Creator, or Paul and Luci Johnson. My father's parents are Chris Johnson and Ginger Wildcat. My mother's parents are the late Frederick Michael Hodgson and the late Grace Swampy. In my culture, just to note, we use the "term" late before their name so that when we speak it, we do not call them from the spirit world if they have passed on in recent years.

Late Grace's parents were Sara and Magnus Swampy. Sara was the daughter of Peggy Joshua and John Wellington Lee. John Wellington Lee was a Welsh man [11:32:11:40 so every time in Spring or Summer my hair likes to turn spontaneously red, I attribute that to him]. Magnus was Nakoda from Morley, and the Nakoda are part of the Lakota Nation. His parents were James Swampy and Mary Chiniki. Frederick Michael's parents were Frederick Kenneth Hodgson and Melvina (Mina) Minde. Nimosôm Jerry Saddleback once told me that the last name Minde was given to spiritual people who could see vastly into the world Creator gifted us. The Minde name is about their minds and how deeply interconnected they were with Creator. Having that connection speaks of the metaphysical and spiritual world we have yet to understand fully.

I share this with you not to simply tell you my family and my lineage, but to tell you that we may be related, and importantly to give accountability to where my knowledge comes from, and how it has been passed down in the names stated before. These individuals are more than just my immediate family and ancestors; their stories live in my blood, tell me to see myself with their eyes, and speak to the world with kindness and compassion. The residential schools may have attempted to eradicate our knowledge and who we come from in our families, but the thing is I am really lucky to have love given to me by all of these individuals. Still, I am lucky to have the love given to me in the lines that frame my Nimosôm's smile when I joke around with him, in the laughter of my dad when I tell him one of my stories, or ask him questions like "What if Creator's name is Sky daddy?" Or when my mom asks me if I made a white person cry today? Yes obviously. It is the jokes, it is humanity, it is restoring the

very essence of their love to me that it is so vital, because when I start thinking about Indigenous people and how we have been portrayed is always a dehumanized representation especially from what settlers tell us we have to believe about ourselves. But for me, a Nêhiyaw who grew up on the rez[1], it is where I can lay my head at night and dream of a world that sees us as who we have always been outside of the stereotypes and misconceptions. These are the people who have and continue to shape me, and to whom I am so lucky and grateful for, but also because I am accountable for. This is the way we do things – as all the world's daddy Pedro Pascal tells us: 'this is the way'. But it is a very important aspect to consider: What if we really are all related?

Part Five:
All My Relations

Nêhiyaw Scholar Evelynn Steinhauer speaks about how when she hears the term wâhkôtowin, she feels embraced by her ancestors and all her relations. Wâhkôtowin means *family* and is of great importance to Indigenous peoples, as much of our culture and worldview is based on relationships and also unity. You cannot have a good relationship if there is distrust, malice, or trickery, and this is a fundamental aspect of the good life. How we relate to each other is important to not only ourselves but all of creation and when I speak of all creation – I state this because we believe that we are all related.

When I look at our Nêhiyawêwin language, it is founded on understanding action but ultimately gives us a look into what our philosophical worldview entails. All around us is living. These are core ethical and moral principles of how to engage but maintain good relations with each other, those that we cannot see, those that do not speak, and those who are not here yet.

"All My Relations" refers to our responsibilities on a universal level of interconnectedness. This is the core concept of how we are to keep ourselves in balance and along the path of the good life. We often hear 'all my relations' at the beginning or end of prayers or used in everyday conversations, because it reminds us to act morally and ethically. But good relationships take time, and there must be a commitment to maintaining them constantly. This is why when Chief talks to me, I listen; when the universe sends the coyote to cross my path, I brace myself to hear something; when the deer greets me on my drive home, I know that I am okay; but it is also hearing through the pain of someone who is angry, or sitting

1 "Rez"- slang term for "Reserve"

with a friend in their grief when they say nothing. We just have to be open to hearing, listening, and feeling to understand what relationships are fully, and we have to know why relationality is key.

Part Six:
Relationality

Relationality is what keeps me accountable, and it would be impossible for me to overstate its importance. It is at the heart of my methods as an Indigenous researcher and scholar. As Nêhiyaw, it is at the heart of everything I do. *Relationality* is the interconnectivity among all of us. It is the life force that connects us to the earth, to our ancestors, to our creators, and to our land. It is shaped by our histories and our Traditional Ways of Knowing (Moreton-Robinson 2000; Wilson 2008). We cannot live the good life without it because it teaches us that everything, we do have widespread consequences (Eldridge 2008, 1; Moreton-Robinson 2008). If we come into a conversation to create imbalance or disharmony, we are accountable for that energy we put out. Further to that, we are not only taught to think about our actions, but we must also think about our words. Nêhiyaw scholar Winona Wheeler states that "words have power" and this is because whenever we speak, we have to speak gently and with kindness, especially when we speak to ourselves. How we conduct ourselves in our relationships is critical to our well-being and the well-being of all around us.

As Aileen Moreton-Robinson (2017, p. 71) states, "This is a holistic conception of the interconnectedness and inter-substantiation between and among all living things and the earth, which is inhabited by a world of ancestors and creator beings". Importantly, all the relations that we have, including academic ones, are, "conducted with respect, responsibility, generosity, obligation, and reciprocity" (Moreton-Robinson, 2017, p. 71).

Reciprocity is a core tenet of relationality. In academia, researchers have a terrible history of going into Indigenous communities, gaining what they want for their personal gain, and leaving without giving anything in exchange. This is exploitation (I said what I said!) and it still happens, but it used to be widely accepted as the way things were done.

Scientists, researchers, and their work have been used in order to uphold the oppressive colonial government and their domination over Indigenous lands and bodies (Smith, 2012; Henry and Tait, 2019). And understandably, this makes Indigenous communities skeptical of so-called scientists or researchers from the outside. I am able to do research within my community because I already have relationships with relatives, and I work to maintain them. Relationality is key to research in Indigenous communities. The researcher cannot simply be an objective observer, they must create relationships not only with the people but with the land

as well (Henry and Tait, 2019). In order to have an ethical relationship, the researcher must respect the wishes of the community. And it takes a lot of time, energy, and resources to build relationships, so not everyone is up to the task, but it is vital to forge connections in order to deconstruct colonial barriers. In Nêhiyaw culture, it is important to acknowledge that knowledge is "gifted," not just symbolically but also through literal gifts, traditionally tobacco.

I am not *just* a researcher, and I am not *just* Indigenous. I am an Indigenous researcher. And I am accountable for everyone involved in what I do. That is why it is important for the people I work with both in my community and in academia to understand the necessity for relationality.

Part Seven:
Family and Belonging

Our relationships are guided by those who have shaped our lives to think about our actions in reflection and what is not only best for ourselves but all those around us. This is a collective way of thinking that also teaches us that we are not alone. Too often in our present society, in a world fixated on what can I do for myself, we overstep, undermine, and undervalue those who pray for us and the universal spirits that look out for all of us. The Seven Grandfather or Grandmother teachings teach us that we are not alone because:

> Kihêw, *Eagle*, represents Sâkihitowin, the act of being in love.
>
> Paskwâw mostos, *Buffalo*, represents kihceyihtamowin, represents the deepest respect.
>
> Maskwa, *Bear*, represents Sohkeyimowin, the act of having strength, courage, or bravery.
>
> Mistâpew, *the Giant*, represents kwayask itatisiwin, honesty in good clean living [21:50:21:53 or to be good in our thoughts and processes for each other].
>
> Mahikan, *Wolf,* represents Tapâhtêyimowin, humility.
>
> Amisk, *Beaver,* represents kakêhtawêyimowin, to think wisely.
>
> Miskinâhk, *Turtle*, represents tapwewin, the act of telling the truth.

These are the seven grandmother or grandfather teachings, they teach-

es how to also live the good life. When we consider how we are all related, and how we are to act accordingly, we affirm a commitment to each other that is founded on good and meaningful relationships. Without this ability, we may never actually truly know each other. This is why conversations should be had amongst Indigenous and Settlers, but participants must listen and truly listen, and not just listen to respond, deflect, or minimize. We have to especially listen, to hear and feel. And importantly for Settlers this needs to be done on your part.

Part Eight:
Conclusion

When I think about the connection between all of creation, my family, and myself, I see that the work that I need to do is accountable to the bigger picture. One of the biggest components of establishing relationships within and with Indigenous communities or individuals, is that there is some knowledge you will never be privy to and will not be able to access. Often when this occurs, we let our ego take precedence over the simplest reasons. Much of the world as Indigenous people is not easily understood or freely given. All knowledge takes time to receive, and all relationships are lifelong commitments even if the project or work is complete. This means that in my line of work when I am working with a 90-year-old Elder, who only speaks Nêhiyawêwin and she tells me to come back without my settler colleague, I have to. Not out of spite or fear, but to protect the energy manifested in the knowledge that is a gift itself.

When students and colleagues ask me why I am able to handle certain topics day after day in lectures, especially those that are traumatic or damage-focused, it is not because I have become desensitized, but because I am occupying the space with others behind me, I am not alone. I am in the space that those who walked before me were not given the chance to occupy and my being is not the only one there because their bloodline, memories, dreams, visions, aspirations, care, and ultimately knowledge runs through my blood making a path for those who follow afterward. And this is why miyo-pimâtisiwin, the *good life*, is the foundation of all good relationships and the foundation that I embody in my every day because without good relations we cannot have the ability to see each other as we should, we will not see the humanity, we will not see the importance of kindness, and so my friends we are all related.

Keywords: *Creator, Chief, Relationality, Relationships, The Good Life, Seven Grandfather/Grandmother Teachings*

Glossary

Okimaw - Chief
Âcimowina – Oral Narratives or Storytelling
Atim – Dog
Miyo-pimâtisiwin - the good life
Nimosôm - my grandfather
Wâhkôtowin – family, kinship, relations
Kihêw– Eagle
Sâkihitowin– the act of being in love.
Paskwâw mostos – Buffalo, represents kihceyihtamowin, regards the deepest respect.
Maskwa – Bear
Sohkeyimowin – the act of having strength, courage, or bravery.
Mistâpew – the Giant
Kwayask itatisiwin – honesty in good clean living.
Mahikan – Wolf
Tapâhtêyimowin – humility.
Amisk – Beaver
Kakêhtawêyimowin – to think wisely.
Miskinâhk –Turtle
Tapwewin – the act of telling the truth.

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Episode Three:
Skoden and Stoodis

Paulina Johnson, Juan Guevara Salamanca, Marieliv Flores Villalobos, Emily Quecke, and Sam Dancey

Synopsis: Who makes history? This episode delves into the creation of Canadian history and how it has been obscured by settler narratives. We give you all you need to know about whiteness and how this is embedded in our society and institutions impacting Indigenous livelihoods. It's time to dig in to the nitty gritty of it so, skoden and stoodis. (It's quite academic if we're being honest, or as dry as your ex's bannock, but it's to help you in the next few episodes! We promise!)

Part One:
Introduction

I always love when people find out I am Indigenous, I mean the last name *Johnson* doesn't really help me out. It is the whitest name that we could have possibly been given. But the Indian Agent at the time could not understand how to pronounce Kechiyas, I mean, I get it, but like there was not even an attempt to create something similar, it was just like, "nah, *Johnson*, next."

The other best part is when someone tells me that they too are Indigenous, but it is a grandmother from long ago. It is always sometimes this myth or this creation that they have this long lost relative, but not a lot of merit backing that statement. My facial expressions really come out in that regard. And it is sad, because I want to be encouraging, but it is

like this ongoing facade to legitimize themself in my own world. A world that has been constantly shaped by those who do not really know what is going on or know the truth. It is like the belief that North American history started in 1492 – it is a misconception layered in fantasy and illusion. A narrative that was never really made by ourselves, who are the rightful "historians" of this land. But my people, we do not have a word for *history*, as the conception of time blanketed in the past is something that is not bound by the way we think today. Time or our understanding of the world is in tension amongst translations and meanings. Can the Western world truly understand our sense of knowing if it does not have the same philosophical worldviews? Can we truly understand the definitions that are not accurately portrayed of what we see in our world? And can they properly transcend us into a spiritual knowing?

For us to answer these questions, I think it is important to address that the knowledge known about Indigenous peoples is much more complex than we truly know and there are reasons for that. Let me brief you really quickly on what you are about to know.

Since the very first ethnographic text was written to modern-day interpretation of what it means to be Indigenous, we have to realize that the ways in which Indigenous peoples are recorded, presented, and perceived are done through empirical methodologies and European lenses set to get at the heart of the Indigenous culture through 'subjective' scientific analysis and interpretation. When Indigenous peoples confront their past by bringing forward their voices and the numerous concerns of why they are vocal, they are overshadowed by non-Indigenous peoples. Many of these individuals are authorities standing in the position of privilege within universities. Lenape scholar Mary Jane McCallum (2009 in Johnson, 2023) states that even when Indigenous peoples occupy spaces to bring forward the Indigenous voice in academia, Indigenous peoples are one of two representations, "they are either 'acting' in a position of authority and credibility or 'acting' Indigenous even though they are" (p. 527, in Johnson, 2023, p. 70). But why is that our reality? Why cannot we be the authority? We have to understand the psychological warfare that is maintained in white supremacy and settler colonialism.

Part Two:
Canada's Textbook History[2]

The number of people upset with Jully Black changing the lyrics of the national anthem to "Home on Native land" instead of "Home and native land," should not surprise you. Canadian history is written through the

2 Previously published in Johnson 2017, pg. 54-58.

vantage of the colonizer, and since, it is meant to reflect a patriotic narrative, one where the settlers overcame adversity, and with nothing were able to build a great and triumphant nation, this narrative leaves out all the realities.

However, Canada has manipulated and changed its history without any regard for its Indigenous peoples. James Loewen in *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything your American History Textbook Got Wrong* presents how governments have shaped the history of their nation, and though this is written in an American context, the key themes of his argument are crucial for this discussion in Canada. Loewen presents how colonial figures go through a process of 'heroification' and this takes a flesh and blood individual and makes them into perfect beings that never experienced "conflict, pain, credibility, or human interest" (Loewen 1996:19). This process of heroification erases any fault and wrongdoing that the said individual did in real life and therefore, changes the reader's perception of what truly happened. In turn this results in false views of historic actions, and importantly for our discussion, distorts society's view of the truth through the privileged positions that written texts offer and presents what Loewen calls the "Disney version of history" (1996:31 & 35).

In Canada, history books and those used in secondary and elementary school rarely if ever tells the truth of Canada's colonial history. They do not state that Canada's first Prime Minister John A. McDonald implemented a position of 'malevolence' in regard to First Nation food; simply, he starved us (Daschuk 2013:108), but is noble enough to grace our $10 bill today and be glorified during the 150th year anniversary of the Charlottetown Conference, commemorating 'Canada's founding.' However, when it comes to the history of Indigenous peoples in Canada, these textbooks tell the time-old narrative that the Natives were savages who needed salvation to reach the kingdom of Heaven and luckily for these people, missionaries, Jesuits, and the like were there so that they could cleanse their souls (Souie 1992: xiv-xx). So, they decided to send us to residential schools and forced us to assimilate, these textbooks make it appear that everything done to the "Indian" was righteous and in well-intent since these were peoples who needed aid and to be brought from their primitive state of being into modernity, thus implying that what happened to Indigenous peoples as inevitable and just a natural occurrence waiting to happen. These texts never account for the hardships of colonialism and the destruction of culture, language, beliefs, and so on, and yet they included colonial policies of starvation, exploitation, and elimination. Simultaneously, these views contribute to the idea that the original inhabitants of this land no longer exist and if they do, they better be wearing the 'costumes' of their people; adorned in buckskin and feathers. Simply, we need to pay attention to what textbooks are telling us and what they are not (Loewen 1996: 35).

Textbooks and national narratives aim to shield children from harm or conflict and have perceived the need to "control children and avoid classroom disharmony" (Loewen 1996: 35). These ideas concerning what is written, shared, and tested on therefore extend into heritage institutions such as historic sites with re-enactments and museums. Robert Coutts states that early ideas about heritage and reasons for commemorating sites "were inextricably linked to the perceived 'triumph' of Anglo-British culture and institutions in Canada" (1993: 1-2 in Peers 2007:5). Sadly, the majority of Canadian society will learn these narratives and history from Canadian textbooks and rarely continue into post-secondary education focused on Indigenous history, and therefore, they continue to have these false views of Indigenous peoples. As Edward Said (1978:2) points out: "Institutions, vocabulary, scholarship, imagery, doctrines and even colonial bureaucracies and colonial styles' support the 'Western discourse'" (in Grande 2008:234). This Western discourse is the agenda of the nation to create a unified people that see no faults in their leaders and government.

Daniel Francis in *The Imaginary Indian: The Image of the Indian in Canadian Culture,* continues this discussion by stating that the images of Native peoples have been manufactured by White Canadians and have "believed in, feared, despised, admired, taught their children" (1992:21). Francis (1992) addresses that the very idea of the 'Indian' is problematic since: "The Indian began as a White man's mistake and became a White man's fantasy. Through the prisms of White hopes, fears, and prejudices, indigenous Americans would be seen to have lost contact with reality and to have become 'Indians'; that is, anything non-Natives wanted them to be" (21). The initial years of contact and colonization saw alliances between Indigenous peoples and settlers, and this image was relatively positive as long as they remained allies (Francis, 1992). But by the middle of the nineteenth century, many of the wars that needed Indigenous peoples were over, and whites no longer needed military allies (Francis 1992:21). Settlers in Canada and the US needed a comparison that justified what would happen next and this was true to prove clear differences between everything the settler was not, and that they certainly were not Indigenous (Francis 1992:21).

Settlers began a process of eliminating the Indigenous reality, while simultaneously taking control of Indigenous people's lands. In order to remove the Indians from their land, settlers needed to disempower the Indigenous population, and as Joseph Gold writes, disempowerment began with disease followed by an increase of immigration and settlement, and the creation of the Dominion of Canada in 1867 (in Episkenew 2009). Government officials in relation to the creation of the imaginary Indian developed policies to control the "proliferation of Indigenous languages and stories shortly after the establishment of the Dominion. These poli-

cies made it possible to falsify history to undermine group and individual identity and so in a sense invalidate the life experience of those [they wished] to disempower'" (Gold 2002:32 in Episkenew 2009:5). Furthermore, settlers believed in the superiority of Indigenous beings that they considered it their responsibility to "eradicate pagan superstition and replace it with 'truth'" (Episkenew 2009:5). Settlers allowed their privilege to become normalized and justified the seizure and occupation of Indigenous lands. Despite evidence to the contrary, the myths created by settlers were founded on the practice of psychological terrorism and theft (Episkenew 2009). As Dara Culhane states: "When government policies and practices that systematically discriminate are juxtaposed with the Canadian state's formal commitment to democratic equality, hypocrisy is revealed. In these ways, Aboriginal peoples strike repeated blows to the heart of Canada's liberal self-image and international personality" (1998:49 in Episkenew 2009:5). Few settlers are willing to admit that there is a "darker aspect of Canadian history, one rarely highlighted in a country that fancies itself an angel in an imperfect world...The Canadian self-image is that we have a bland history that is exemplified by the perceptions that the American West was violent and colorful, while in Canada was peaceful and bland" (Krauss 2004 in Episkenew 2009:6).

Ignoring the truth behind Canada's past has constrained the healing of Indigenous peoples across Canada. As Canada's 'Indian' policies constitute a form of 'psychological terrorism', which has a profound effect on Indigenous health (Episkenew 2009:7). Where many Indigenous peoples have turned the violence of these policies inward, allowing the struggle to become "toxic and effective self-loathing, culturally, and individually" (Neu & Therrien 2003:4 in Episkenew 2009:8). These feelings extend from the historical trauma endured not only through colonial policies such as residential schools and forced assimilation, but through the "violence, rarely against settlers but rather against oneself, one's family, or one's community, and addiction as a form of self-medicating to temporarily ease the despair of personal and political powerlessness" (Episkenew 2009:9). As Gerald Vizenor points out, this historical trauma is not publicly acknowledged and honoured in national narratives, and therefore subsequent generations inherit and display effects of that trauma (in Episkenew 2009). Being able to share history allows for Indigenous peoples to heal themselves but, in order for this healing process to begin, most settlers deny that their society is built on a 'sick' foundation, and this denies Indigenous peoples a cure (Episkenew 2009:11). Canada needs to address its history and the colonial succession of historical trauma to allow Indigenous peoples to begin a healing process that incorporates Indigenous stories. If we do not share the history of Indigenous peoples, then we allow this systematic oppression to continue.

Part Three:
Who Tells Indigenous History in National Narratives

The well-known Ngāti Awa and Ngāti Porou iwi scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith states that how we produce knowledge is a way to control the colonized through a legitimization of what is academic and what is not (Smith 1999). This process then follows closely to the modernist project of Europeans where white European scientific research creates pain, damage, manipulation, and trauma. Scientific research has been used to capture our knowledge and ways of knowing without recognizing them but also represents this knowledge as pre-scientific, salvage, and illegitimate (Smith 1999).

Indigenous histories, therefore, become known to be as solely 'traditional' and as Te Papa, Samoan novelist, and scholar Albert Wendt told Sean Mallon in 1994, traditional means nothing to us, as it formulates a consciousness of solely in the past. And a statement from Wendt reiterates this fact that "Colonial scholars and researchers used them whenever they referred to us but not to their cultures. Such terms I concluded were part and parcel of the Euro-centric colonial vocabulary. Traditional inferred our cultures were /are so tradition-bound they were static and slow to change; that they weren't dynamic and growing and changing; that because they were slow to change and fixed in history they were 'simple and easy to understand'" (paragraph 1).

History and the scientific production of knowledge, therefore, became a project towards modernization, and Indigenous peoples were left behind, or at least made out to be. This allowed Europeans to impose the ideology and systems of the Enlightenment across the world and gave favour to imperial and colonial beliefs of knowledge, subjectivity, and political organization over all other alternative forms (Smith 1999). Smith (1999) further exposes how the historical production of knowledge, under the parameters of European colonizers, sought to impose a totalizing, universal, exclusionary, and patriarchal methods to collect and narrate historical 'facts.' Under the production of history, chronological and progressive narrations were linked to white European history and the development of certain institutions such as Nation-states. States and societies are responsible for ignoring and denying the historical and structural conditions that led indigenous communities to navigate a world imposed by colonialism and white settlers. This imposition of a historical narrative builds on the disdain for Indigenous communities that, "have simultaneously denied our claims to humanity, to having a history, and to all sense of hope" (Smith 1999: 4).

White settlers have maintained the strategies to control our Indigenous

communities' historical narratives. Harold Cardinal, a Nêhiyaw and author of *The Unjust Society*, points out, "for the Indian to survive, says the government in effect, he must become a good little brown, white man" (1999: 1). This expression of dominance and cultural assimilation is translated to constructing a subjectivity approved and controlled by white settlers and their ways of historical knowing. This scientific production of the 'Other,' must be detached from our histories, stories, identities, and definitions of terms associated with us, because if not, it will continue to normalize whiteness and the control on our lives that force us to be a good member of 'Canadian' society. An assimilation tactic at best denies us our autonomy and is avoidant of acknowledging white settlers' colonial and tyrannical responsibilities (Cardinal 1999).

So, our past is defined and narrated by bureaucratic and technocratic interests to make our lives and experiences invisible. It is a recognition of invisibility! The technical decisions taken from a desk in Ottawa are the manifest declaration of how much Indigenous lives matter to the construction of the national identity of Canada (Cardinal 1991: 8). Thus, it is fair to say that colonized white Canadian society is not interested in knowing and acknowledging the histories and presence of Indigenous Canadian communities and First Nations (Cardinal, 1999).

Part Four:
Whiteness and Control

The creation of whiteness as separate and superior, is key for understanding the justifications, means, and methods used for colonization. As Indigenous scholar Aileen Moreton-Robinson expressed, there is a deeply held "*a priori*," that this land is white possession. *A priori* refers to knowledge or deduction which is assumed to be natural and justified outside of the need for evidence or experience and is always taken in account for Western colonial ideologies (Moreton-Robinson, 2015). [16:52 17:26 But rarely if ever for Indigenous knowledge and evidence, because many settlers always want to say 'hey, if this is truth how can we actually tangibly see it? Especially when we are talking about the intangible or the metaphysical and spiritual knowledge. And it is interesting because many of those philosophical views, especially those from Romans, and Greeks, and Europeans, well they do not have that evidence either. So why is there a double standard held for indigenous knowledge, but not colonial knowledge or Western knowledge.] Therefore, the *a priori* of the superiority of whiteness is at the core of the imperialism and colonial project. The construction of whiteness allows settlers to create unity around the project of settler colonialism where there might otherwise be a variety of individual distinct goals. Furthermore, the importance of whiteness is that it is constructed as superior and in opposition to indi-

geneity, making Indigenous Peoples as seeming to be hyper-exploitable by the other. Whiteness is constantly being produced and reproduced in ways that reinforce supremacy (Salter, 2013).

Patrick Wolfe is a historian, anthropologist, and ethnographer who is a settler in Australia, in his article *Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native*, discusses the intertwined nature of settler colonialism and genocide. Wolfe contends that while, "the settler-colonial logic of elimination has manifested as genocidal—they should be distinguished" (Wolfe 2006: 387). The distinguishing factor is the long-term control of the land and of the people existing on the land. Wolfe goes on to illuminate how this control is a product of the reproduction of racial regimes which construct White superiority and coerce others into an unequal relationship with Whiteness.

Those who crafted the Canadian Confederation did so with white supremacy in mind, because they believed themselves to be superior. And this has not changed. Some people say that our institutions are 'broken,' but in reality, they are working exactly how they were built to; to maintain white superiority and therefore, power. Canada prides itself on an identity of 'multiculturalism,' but the truth is that Canada cannot be multicultural so long as it continues to exclude Indigenous people and their histories from its narrative. This is perfectly reflected in the experiences and indoctrination of immigrants through Canadian institutions. When immigrants come to Canada, they are assimilated and taught to be racist unknowingly toward Indigenous population. [19:34 19:46 And we know statistically that within the first three months of arrival for many new immigrants and refugees, they already hold the biases against indigenous peoples to the stereotypes, damage and deficit.]

When challenging these institutions and white supremacy we are met with denial or claims of ignorance. We must keep in mind that ignorance is not a defense in the eyes of the law, so how is it a fine defense for politicians? (Cardinal1969: 6). Under the Canadian government, we have lost the right to make decisions for our own communities. Anti-colonial brings forward anti-oppressive discourses and at the same time, remains aware of the historical and institutional structures and contexts that sustain this whiteness in our colonial society (Hart, 2009 citing Dei, 2000).

Part Five:
Defining Colonialism, Decolonization, and Indigenization

To give context to many terms used in this podcast, I want to cover what colonialism, decolonization, and Indigenization means.

Colonialism is "the historical process whereby the 'West' attempts sys-

tematically to cancel or negate the cultural difference and value of the 'non-West'" (Gandhi 1998:16 in Hart 2009:26). Colonization connects directly to Indigenous knowledge through three means:

> Exclusion, or the absence of Indigenous knowledge, methodologies, and practices, and with Eurocentric scholars identifying their knowledge as superior.
>
> Marginalization, where peoples, individuals, and ideas are put to the sidelines; and,
>
> Appropriation connects colonialism to Indigenous knowledge through the misrepresentation of partial representation of an idea or artifact without recognition of the sources or inspiration.

At the same time gaining prosperity, success, and or benefit from others' ideas and not giving credit or acknowledging them (Hart 2009; Graveline 1998 in Hart 2009:27). The question for Indigenous peoples is not what settlers have done but what Indigenous peoples have experienced (Miller 2011:33).

Tuck and Yang argue that decolonization is about "repatriation of Indigenous land and life" (2012, p. 1), as a way to fight back against settler colonialism. They highlight that one of the main characteristics of this type of colonialism is the settlers' intention of making a home on land that is not theirs while claiming "sovereignty over all things in their new domain" (Tuck and Yang 2012: 5). In other words, Indigenous land is what is most valuable for settlers because they use the land to make their new home and as a financial source, which causes an endless disruption of the Indigenous connections to the land, with the intention of breaking the profound epistemic, ontological, and cosmological relationships between Indigenous peoples and the land (Tuck and Yang 2012: 5).

Decolonization is a process of "accountability to Indigenous sovereignty and futurity" (Tuck and Yang, 2012, p. 35). It is a unique project, different from any other human rights-based social justice project, therefore "it is not a metaphor for other things we want to do to improve our societies and schools" (Tuck and Yang, 2012, p. 1). It is important to acknowledge that Canada is being built on the "colonial history and the survival-struggles of its aboriginal people" (Regmi, 2023, p. 5), and its consequences of "subjugation of knowledge systems, culture, tradition, and languages of the colonized groups through oppression, exclusion, marginalization, and obliteration" (Regmi, 2023, p. 9). This makes decolonization a project difficult to imagine, as it demands reconsideration in every aspect of how life has been institutionalized (Kennedy et al., 2023, p. 91).

On the other hand, Indigenization refers to the "understanding of [I]ndigenous [K]nowledge by exploring in and reflecting upon what the nature of [I]ndigenous [K]nowledge is, what the sources of [I]ndigenous [K]nowledge are, what the ways that we come to know [I]ndigenous [K]nowledg, and the ways we pass on such knowledge from one generation to the next" (Regmi, 2023, p. 13). From this perspective, the connection between local with the global [I]ndigenous [K]nowledge system and the relations that can be built are the center of attention. More specifically, Gaudry and Lorenz (2018) explain that indigenization in academia represents a movement to expand the conceptions of knowledge in transformative ways based on Indigenous perspectives. However, there are still debates about how to do this. While some Indigenous "scholars argue for an indigenization that provokes a foundational, intellectual, and structural shift in the academy[...]; for most university administrators, this transformative vision of indigenization is too destabilizing and so propose more modest goals of increasing Indigenous student enrollment and hiring more Indigenous faculty and staff" (Gaudry and Lorenz, 2018, p. 218).

Although the decolonization and indigenization processes are constantly being defined and redefined, Eaton (2022) and Gladue (2020b) propose that everybody is responsible for the decolonization work, as we all are playing a role in the structural settler colonial oppression. Meanwhile, "Indigenization can only be done by Indigenous people" (Gladue 2020b, timestamp 35:03), as they have the knowledge for it (Eaton, 2022, p. 4).

Part Six:
Conclusion

What you may hear about Indigenous peoples should come with caution as much of the stereotypes continue to be shared amongst those who do not know. We have a long way to go, but there is an old Nêhiyaw proverb that we teach our youth: if you are willing, let's go then, and if it is worth it, let's do this. Haha, just kidding, we are not that white, its fucken skoden and stoodis for a decolonial world that finally acknowledges the whiteness embedded in our society, and how we as Indigenous peoples will liberate ourselves and our truths and have our accomplices and advocates close by.

Keywords: *Skoden, Stoodis, settler colonialism, Indian policies, trauma, political powerlessness, residential schools, psychological terrorism, Canadian Confederation, colonization, exclusion, marginalization, appropriation, Indigenization*

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Episode Four:

The Môniyâwak Apocalypse

Paulina Johnson and Luke Aaron Wonneck
With Stories by Brian Lightning and Leanne Betasamosake Simpson

Synopsis: We as Indigenous peoples live in a post-apocalyptic world different from our ancestors. Find out in this episode about the prophecy of change from our first teachers and Elders, the buffalo, who told us of the coming Môniyâw or Môniyâwak and how this relates to important teachings for Treaty and Treaty relationships. All we can say is power comes with a cost...

Part One:
Introduction

One of the biggest misconceptions about Indigenous peoples is that they are static and unchanging. They are rooted in the past and avoidant change or adapting, but Indigenous peoples are the most adaptable people *[0:36 in the world]*. Early on, many Indigenous peoples would integrate cross-cultural teachings or traditions that would strengthen their communities. But as time went on, imperialism came to Turtle Island and morphed itself into colonialism; as all great "conquest" stories say, the adaptability became layered within assimilation, and the belief that Indigenous peoples were resistant to civilization was blanketed in the notion that we loved our primitive reality so much, we refused to love

[1:07 or accept] modernity. But it was not like that.

We must be aware that Indigenous peoples have known their world before contact and the destruction of their world both during, after, and in the present. Indigenous peoples know pain and loss so well because of trauma rooted in colonialism, but there is more to that than what we are fully aware of.

It is interesting to see how many individuals get behind the ideas of a fall of civilization in doomsday movies or zombie apocalypses but have yet to realize that the world that we as Indigenous peoples once knew is completely different from the world our ancestors experienced. Our stories are blanketed, our spaces have been reimagined, and our places have been redesigned.

Anishinaabe lawyer John Borrows talks about this blanketing in Canada's legal system and how our laws were still everywhere. Still, they are "blanketed" under the placement of contemporary legal systems or "historical" colonial buildings made by settlers to ensure dominance. The Indigenous world has changed, and we need to understand what those changes mean and how our views of the interactions between settlers have created this "Canadian" narrative. To understand the shift of our world, let us first define who Môniyâwak are in relation to settlers and then re-envision the Indigenous-Settler relationship through Treaty.

Part Two:
Not of Us

Môniyâwak today commonly refers to settlers as "not of us." The term often is known to encapsulate settlers of European ancestry or who can be considered the majority of Canada. Even though this designation is still being contested in academia, many believe that "môniyâw" was derived from the fact that the Nêhiyaw were unable to pronounce the "r" or "l" in Montreal, because we do not have an "r" or "l" in our language; or refers to Môniyâw as being "not Cree."

Those "not of us" are called non-Natives, non-Aboriginal, or non-Indigenous. This linguistic definition incorporates the idea of the "other" outside the colonial context. Still, it falls short of recognizing the historical and sociopolitical diversity of the differences between the peoples in Canada, their relations to the land, and their spiritual interactions. Yet, there is much more to this term than what is generally known *[3:22 specially]* in my community.

When I was growing up, Nimosôm, Chris, would tell me stories about how we knew about those not of us who would come to our lands. They would not speak or look like us. They would have red hair, fair faces, and rosy cheeks.

Later, my Nimosôm Brian Lightning would talk about how his mom would tell him of the beings coming, the Môniyâw. These would be people who had no conscience, and they would take more than they need and not see the world like us – Môniyâw is derived from the word namôya or môya or no, as they had nothing, not only no physical belongings, but they also had no soul for the care of our world.

One of our first Elders, the buffalo, told us they were leaving us. Grandfather Buffalo told us they were leaving because of this "other being," and our people started crying. They cried over the loss of our first teachers and begged them not to go. But each herd went and laid in the nearby lakes, with Buffalo Lake being the one near our Nation. The old bulls, however, the grandfathers, went southward. The old bulls all turned into stone, preserving themselves on the prairie lands, becoming the rib stones or rubbing stones we have today. Reminders of the time before the change that had come to our lands were warnings of a storm, we would need to prepare ourselves for.

To acknowledge the change before it came to us speaks of unfathomable intelligence and knowledge that the natural world has but also how my people viewed the world around them. Prophecies layered in our stories passed down through generations after generations speak of a time when we would reconnect to what was left, not lost, but left behind.

Many rib stones, large boulders the size of the buffalo, are no longer found on the prairies *[5:18 today]* as many were destroyed to make farmland. However, we would always make sure we prayed to them and took care of the ones who still stand, reminding us of a time when the buffalo would return, signaling a new change once again.

Today, we often use the term pitos iyisiniwak, meaning *different people*, to encapsulate all settlers who are not of us, as we did also know of the different races that would come here as well, those who would be black, brown, and yellow. Late Pete Waskahat, in a recording from Maskwacîs Cultural College, accounts for seeing three boats that would come and carry different races to us once they crossed a large lake, *[5:57 or what later becomes known]* becomes an ocean. We would have to pity these individuals because they did not have gifts that we would have.

Môniyâw describes those who came and only took and not came to these lands to share with us. It accounts for the change in our world and

where animals are powerful in this regard as they have shaped our existence. We see this further in understanding how humans, especially Indigenous peoples created disrespect for others.

Anishinaabe scholar Leanne Simpson (1999) recounts the story of the Hoofed Nation is important for understanding relationships in how they are maintained and how humans must be accountable for their actions.

Part Three:
The Hoofed Nation

A long time ago, deer, moose, and caribou disappeared from our lands. We didn't notice at first, but as the moons wore on, fewer of our hunters came back with meat. Soon, no one could recall the last time they had seen even a sign of our hoofed relatives.

We became sad and worried. Things were looking pretty dire, so we came together at the ceremony and decided to send runners in the four directions to see what they could find. The first three runners returned with nothing to report, but the fourth returned with news that she had seen one young deer far north of our land. The deer told the runner that she and the rest of the Hoofed Nation had left our land because they felt disrespected.

We felt horrible. We reflected on how we had been disrespecting the Hoofed Nation by not sharing their meat, wasting it, and killing more than we needed. We decided to send a delegation of our wisest people to meet with the Hoofed Nation.

At the meeting, the Hoofed Nation confirmed what the young deer had told the runner — that they had left because they were not being honoured by our people. They shared their concerns, along with stories and teachings. Our delegation just listened.

Finally, after days of listening, discussing, and negotiating, our delegation agreed with the Hoofed Nation. They promised that we would respect the Hoofed Nation. We would take only what we needed, leave an offering to acknowledge the gift of life, use their meat wisely, look after their homes... all that, and more. In return, the Hoofed Nation agreed to return to our land.

Our people continue to remember and act on what we learned that day.

We continue to honour our treaty relationship with our Hoofed Nation relatives so we can all live well together.

Part Four:
Treaty

Treaty has existed in this territory longer than we know. Many do not understand that the Treaties enacted before settler arrival are still present, and that those who come here are still bound to them, even if they are unaware of it. We reside in Treaty 6 in Amiskwaciswaskahikan, or *Edmonton*, today, but there is a lot of misinformation about Treaty. For us, Treaty is historical, political, legal, and spiritual melded together into the ceremonial. Still, for settlers, it's only ever political and legal, and because they shape it in their worldview, they will always have the upper hand, yet, when we bring in the spiritual – settlers and all of Canada will have no chance.

Our Treaty was made not only with the British Crown but with Manitow, our *Creator*. Elder Jim Kâ-Nîpitêhtêw stated that, "When he, our brother the White-Man, made these promises to us, he did promise us that no human walking on two legs upon the surface of the earth would ever be able to break the promises made to us" (1998, p.109).

Treaty enacted sacred law for us, binding the oral agreements to be heard in the spirit and physical worlds we have. Our negotiations were bound by a two-week ceremony, allowing the settler-state of what would become Canada to live among us and with us on our unceded territory. At the same time, our Nêhiyaw sovereignty and nationhood persisted. No land or territory was ever surrendered. Rather, it was loaned or, better yet, understood to be shared. The only way that we could fully diminish ownership of our land was if our women were in the negotiations. Sharon Venne, in her chapter "Understanding Treaty 6: An Indigenous Perspective," states that the land was never talked about, but Commissioner Morris *[10:16 who negotiated the Treaties]* only talked about three things that were wanted:

He only wanted the pine to make houses, grass for his animals and land to the depth of six inches to break and plant crops. Anything underneath remained under the jurisdiction and the property of the Indigenous peoples. The Indian people would never be in want as they had ensured their future good life by sharing their lands. [The Commissioner] stated that he had not bought the water [or] fish in it. All the creatures that flew or walked were the Indian's property... The Queen had promised that the wealth of the land would be ours (in Venne, 1997, p. 193).

Further to that knowledge, it is talked about in many Nations within Treaty Six that Ten Treaty Sticks would signify the Treaty agreements, including:

> *The Promise that the Treaty agreement would last forever and not be broken by any "two-legged person"*
>
> *The promise that the use of the land would only be used to the extent of "six inches deep" by the Queen and her people*
>
> *The promise that Indigenous people would be provided for by "distribution of food" when in need*
>
> *The promise of Indigenous people's way of life and their land, they would be left undisturbed, "your land, your animals, all for your use"*
>
> *The promise of water and life within it and anything the Indigenous use would be undisturbed*
>
> *The promise that birds native to the land would remain within the Indigenous people's rights and used as the "Queen's subjects would be bringing their own"*
>
> *The promise of help in the form of an 'Indian Agent' to assist or "be a servant to the Indigenous peoples"*
>
> *The promise of 'universal access to education for all Indigenous people'*
>
> *The promise of a Police officer to "deal with the Violators" of Treaty*
>
> *The promise of access to "universal health care" or "Medicine Chest" (Venne, 1997, p. 194-204).*

[12:26 These ten principles are guiding goals, are the ten treaties sticks and from my own experience and the CAD54 000.00 that I owe in student loans, and also the lack of benefits often given, these are still not upheld today. Because the policies officers and the Indian agents that we got, they didn't do anything of what it was promised].

This knowledge is important to understanding the spiritual, but also sociopolitical dimensions of Treaty that informs settlers of the Indigenous spiritual worldview. While the settler population continues to exist in our lands, we Indigenous peoples under Treaty 6 are still bound to our agree-

ments and have never forgotten this knowledge. When our pipe entered these agreements, it forever bound our knowledge and livelihood within the spiritual realms and solidified any possible retributions if this agreement were broken.

Natural law, or universal law, is our most fundamental law and is the ethical model we use to act well with each other. If it is broken, we and all that we care about can experience hardship and pain because we have created an imbalance in our natural world. Natural law is for all people who walk this territory *[13:43 indigenous and not indigenous]*. Yet, this knowledge is not shared amongst settlers or believed in because it is seen as inferior, or met with skepticism, but natural law is not controlled by anyone, and has the patience we as people lack. I always tell people that the Treaty unifies our two very different worlds because it made my people and those who would become Settler Canada, a family. When you needed me, I would be there for you, and you would come without hesitation when I needed you. Yet, our Treaties continue to be broken and not upheld by one side, but as I have told you here, no two-legged being can break them. Still, my people know the costs of not upholding promises, as told in the story of the "Hoofed Nation." *[14: 26 because this is not just a story, this is a legal principle of how we're supposed to act and how we are supposed to treat each other. And this is founded in our knowledge and teaching.]* As Political Scientist and Anishinaabe scholar Heidi Stark (2016) accounts, these are our laws and principles rooted in our stories that are founded in our teachings. My people have seen our world change faster than the time of the European Enlightenment, but it was not our doing. We watched as all around us was transformed, leaving us in post-apocalyptic askiy, land, today.

Part Five:
In the Eye of the Storm

Indigenous peoples live in a post-apocalyptic world surrounded by past and present injustices but, importantly, a world that doesn't know our realities and often doesn't seem to want to. Our world is not post-colonial or neo-colonial (see Robertson, 2015; Mussi, 2022). We are still within the folds of the imperial/colonial structure that has attempted to destroy us and replace us.

Climate change, for example, is one manifestation of this structure. For Western scientists, climate change is something novel. It has only become an issue within the last few decades. It has created the so-called Anthropocene, a term that has been around for less than 25 years. And it is making our future — that is, humanity's future — look more and more apocalyptic.

For Indigenous people, climate change is indeed apocalyptic. But it is just another form of the same apocalyptic structure of dispossession and assimilation that we have been struggling against for centuries. As Potawatomi scholar and activist Kyle Whyte (2017) notes, "anthropogenic climate change makes Indigenous territories more accessible and Indigenous peoples more vulnerable to harm, just as did laws, policies, boarding schools, and the like in previous episodes of colonization" (p.157). Climate change forces us off the land and to seek refuge from fire, smoke, floods, drought, heat, and sea level rise. In our absence, industrial extraction can continue unchecked.

Understanding climate change in this way makes it possible to appreciate how other forms of settler colonialism perpetuate it. As Nishnaabeg writer, scholar, and artist Leanne Simpson (2017) powerfully argues, "extraction and assimilation go together" (p.75). Take, for example, residential schools. Residential schools sought to assimilate our children into Canadian society. They taught our children that our traditions were, "the way of the devil" (Monchalin, 2016, p.126). They gave our children a number and an English or French name, cut their hair, prohibited them from speaking their language, and abused them physically, sexually, emotionally, and spiritually. They forced our children into Westernized male and female gender roles, outlawing the diverse gender identities and sexual practices integral to our political and legal systems.

This was all a form of assimilation, but it was also meant to disconnect us from our lands. This disconnection was carried out through the physical removal of our children and the attack on our knowledge systems, languages, and spiritualities — which come from the land and allow us to care for it. In our absence, our lands could be accessed and extracted from — by the industries that are the leading contributors to climate change today.

Those who remain survived the apocalypse that was residential schools. We are still here in this post-apocalyptic world as settler colonialism continues to shapeshift into different forms all around us. We are strong and can survive climate change too — survive and slow it down, maybe even stop it. But this needs an expedited process, but we are reclaiming our languages, renewing our ceremonies, reconnecting with our lands, reaffirming our sacred responsibilities, and rewriting a different future. We're ready to be heard, just like we've always been. My relatives – we are here.

Part Six:
Conclusion

Kiyam, my mother, would tell me when something bad happened or I was frustrated at the systemic racism that ate at me, Kiyam, let it go; it will fix itself. Your tears are gifts from Creator. Leave it in the universe's hands to rectify harm or transgression. Kiyam, let it be because we may think they got away with harm in their generation, but it will always find them because it is carried in the bloodline, and they will eventually pay for it. Kiyam is an act of faith to trust in Manitou and its universal power.

People often ask me how I can be so calm when teaching about the changes my people face as if I cannot feel all the anger in my body rise to the redness in my cheeks. Still, settlers did not only come here for land, though settler colonialism says otherwise, but also, in Treaty, settlers were supposed to learn from us.

And I have been waiting for settlers to let me tell them the truth, to share new insights and worldviews they are not ready for; many will and have walked away without even trying, assuming they are good settlers but won't want to do the personal work within themselves, many will get angry at even the thought of learning Indigenous knowledge and better yet from an Indigenous person. Still, the ones that find me are the hope we have prayed for, they are the ones who unknowingly have yearned for my spirit, and Creator has allowed me to occupy spaces that allow me to do so.

Not only did my people put down the tobacco for us to meet, but they also prayed for the next generations, those with no faces, and I, along with many others, will continue to be here, occupying spaces, telling our truths. For those that are not ready, we say kiyam to them because it takes courage to stand against the world we have today when it is built against everything you are. Kiyam because you deserve rest too, and ki-yam, the universe holds the truth about Treaty, and it is patiently waiting to make its move. My relatives, remember we are all connected before it is too late because then the Môniyâwak Apocalypse may start.

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Keywords: *Môniyâwak, Treaty, Indigenous-Settler relationship, Hoofed Nation, Amiskwaciswaskahikan, Anthropocene, climate change*

Glossary

Amiskwaciswaskahikan – Edmonton
Kiyam – Let it be
Môniyâw – Settler (singular)
Môniyâwak – Settler (plural)
Pitos iyisiniwak - Different people

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The Young Thunderbird Prophecy

Paulina Johnson and Juan Guevara Salamanca
With Stories by Brian Lightning
And Ancestral Knowledge from Chris Johnson

Synopsis: How is power understood within Nêhiyawak culture? Find out in the oral narrative of the young thunderbird and how it relates to power maintained in The Indian Act. We narrow in especially on a reality faced by Dr. Johnson's family known as "The Hobbema Case."

Part One:
Introduction

Understanding the Indigenous world would make no sense if I did not inform you of the colonial policies that have been placed on us Indigenous peoples, specifically those identified by the settler state as "Status Indians." Understanding this colonial policy itself is not only significant to Indigenous experiences but the overarching structure at play used to control and minimize an entire population excluding the Metis and Inuit. I will not cover the Metis or Inuit experience in this podcast episode as I leave that space to be occupied by those within their respective communities. Yet, when we see how our reality has been shaped by the legislations and legal institutions embedded in whiteness and domination throughout our society, we are able to see how much has been placed

onto Indigenous peoples without proper consideration of how heavy and limiting this structure really is.

This colonial policy and legislation is the Indian Act.

Part Two:
The Indian Act

Understanding the embedded anti-Indigenous sentiments of Canada lies in the creation of the Indian Act, the legislations that were in place prior were the Gradual Civilization Act of 1857, and the Gradual Enfranchisement Act of 1869.These were policies that sought to eradicate the continuity of Indigenous culture and identities by implementing legal mechanisms to confer citizenship status via the assimilation towards Canadian white culture.

Enfranchisement, encouraged in these two Acts, was intended to be produced through accessing postsecondary education, enlisting in the armed forces, or marrying a white settler. These policies were adopted in the Indian Act until reformed in 1961 (Crey, 2009). The Gradual Enfranchisement Act of 1869 regulated the elective band council system, restricting women's rights and conceding great powers to the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs to control our statuses as Indigenous. So, long story short, our status as Indigenous peoples is determined by white colonial settlers! These policies were later incorporated into the Indian Act (Hanson, 2009).

In 1876, the enactment of the Indian Act signified that Indigenous affairs were treated by the regulations contained in this document. The Indian Act grouped the different provincial and federal regulations to a single authoritative body known as Indian Affairs, or Indigenous Affairs today. This centralization implied that all the territorial treaties and alliances were no longer relevant, and that Indigenous matters had to be ruled by this Act. *[2:50 That is ignoring any treaty responsibilities and obligations, and fundamental the kinship connections that created relations with us and settlers.]*

The Indian Act is the legal framework that regulates territories, culture, and Indian bodies, our territories, our cultures, and our bodies! *[3:10 Don't I even get a say?! Should I suppose to sit here and accepted it?]* This Act determines our political structures, ways of governing, and the rights and status of my people. This Act introduced different changes, but it stands out specifically in how the settler state shaped our territory by creating the spatial figure of reserves (Hanson, 2009).

The Indian Act implemented regulations on everyday life practices, ritu-

als, and ceremonies. The need to control our bodies and ceremonies was an overarching mechanism behind the Indian Act itself, as it dismantled our everyday being that included a ban on ceremonies. This resulted in an underground resistance by many Indigenous communities that also signified how much we would, and could, actually lose if we did not hide or protect our practices and customs (Hanson, 2009). In 2016, Nimosôm Jerry Saddleback told me of how the RCMP went through many First Nation reserves and took and burned sacred items including bundles. One little old lady in our community, held on as tight as she possibly could. The RCMP had sent two officers to do this work, and one of them was dragging her and the other said, "just let her have it if it means so much to her." We still have that bundle today in our community. *[4:35 It is not just a bundle, it is not just traditions, it is our everyday livelihood, it is the embodiment of all creation, and good that we have maintained. It might just be a material object for many but there are prayers, dreams, hopes and visions in them.]*

But it was not solely about culture and traditions, it was about land and access to our territories. The land suddenly became granted to us by their 'Majesty' and was given to our once great nations as parceled and divided "Indian bands." But we did not have full sovereignty or control over these weak municipal-type governments, our authority is granted by the Minister of Indian Affairs, and only they could expropriate decisions, control our budget, and make regulations at their discretion (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP), 1996). *[5:26 This is why today, in 2023 we still have water boil advisories because of the lack of funding and equal representation given to Indigenous populations]* We were forced into childlike positions that to date have created an infantilization of our true capabilities, it's as if we are always dependent on the government, because they made it this way. So, ask yourself, can you see how we are kept in low socioeconomic status? The Indian Act also established a heteropatriarchy throughout our communities and emphasized the role of Indigenous men, limiting the once powerful role women had. Indigenous women were forced into European ideologies of domesticity and purity, and if we did not fit that mold, we were problematic.

After the Second World War, settler society started to take note of Indigenous achievements, especially the men who fought for Canada during the war, and they started to witness the struggles impacting Indigenous communities. These telling realities alongside the commitment to respect the Declaration of Human Rights signed in 1945, started to change public opinion about Canada's role in our experiences. In 1951, an amendment to the Indian Act was approved to eliminate restraints imposed on Indigenous cultural practices such as ceremonies and the wearing of our cultural regalia. Importantly, this amendment allowed us to receive legal counseling that was previously denied to us. However, some of the re-

forms were retrograded and went against our rights. For instance, the regressive policy of allowing provincial law to regulate Indian matters was re-implemented in the 1951 amendment. *[7:10 This authorization allowed the provinces to take place of Federal responsibilities, ignoring any treaty obligation or political diplomatic relationships that we have already established. Simple, the Federal government has passed the book onto the provinces, and when we think about sovereign-to-sovereign relationship, we are not supposed to be working with the Provinces.]* With the authorization of the Parliament, provincial law would regulate Indian issues diminishing the sovereign-to-sovereign agreements we entered during Treaty (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP), 1996, p. 288). Treaty, or the numbered treaties, ensured that our livelihoods would be upheld, and we would work together with the settler population. Yet, we as Indigenous people have continuously kept our promises, the other side still refutes and denies their obligations.

Further, the 1951 amendment allowed women the right to vote in band council elections (Hanson, 2009). Nonetheless, new restraints were made. The double mother rule mandated that any child whose mother or grandmother gained Indian status due to their marriage to an Indian, at age 21, would lose said status (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP), 1996). The Gradual Civilization Act of 1857, the Gradual Enfranchisement Act of 1869, and the Indian Act of 1876 are part of a historical and systematic policy of assimilation and annihilation that attacked our culture and social values. They meant to gradually weaken us so we would have to accept and absorb the settler's culture to make us part of it without the possibility of rejection or political consultation. *[8:10 Of course this ends up changing in 1984 with Bill C-31 but the problem is it still defines who is a status Indian and who is not. Simply, it is a matter of who belongs and who does not belong. And it is broken down into a classification of 6.1 Indian or a 6.2. A 6.1 passes on Indigenous status or Indian status, while a 6.2 does not. So hypothetically, if I marry a non-Indigenous man, our child will be considered a 6.2. But if I decide to marry a 6.2, well our child will be a 6.1. Doesn't really make sense, does it? I always like the example of when a 6.2 marries a 6.2, it doesn't make another 6.2, it makes a 6.1. I don't know about you, but my math isn't the greatest, but the math doesn't math, right? Anyways, it is a lot more complicated, and there have been a lot more amendments to the structure, but to our knowledge, this structure that controls Indigenous livelihood still exists, even though it should not. I also want to point out, especially in this episode, that this Auntie has no desire to have any children because no one can take this stallion].*

Part Three:
You Don't Belong - Hobbema '57

The Indian Act created continuous problems throughout Indigenous communities that still occur to date. The Act itself has been amended over 700 times since its inception. One important aspect of the Indian Act has always been about control of who belongs and who does not, because of the rightful ownership of the land. This happens not only within the settler state's apparatus on Indigenous livelihoods, but also within our communities themselves.

In 1957, a landmark victory over the Department of Indian Affairs occurred. Discussions on the very question of Indian were forwarded as the Johnson and Lightning families were caught in a battle between if they were Treaty or Script. If they were script, they would be removed from the Samson Cree Nation, and over 100 individuals would lose their right to live in their home territory and away from their kinship connections. Supported by Ruth Gorman and John Laurie, the Johnson and Lightning families led a fight against Canada that would become "The Hobbema Case." This case is important for various reasons, as it tackles imposed colonial systems, their impacts, and how identity is shaped and defined for Indigenous peoples. Laurie was the secretary of the Indian Association of Alberta, and together, he and Gorman were stalwarts of 'Friends of the Indian.' An act of early reconciliation is highlighted in *Behind the Man: John Laurie, Ruth Gorman, and the Indian Vote in Canada*. Gorman and Laurie, along with Chief John Samson, would also work to have section 112 of the Indian Act repealed, as this allowed Aboriginal people to become enfranchised and vote without losing their treaty rights.

The impact of the case still had lasting effects on the First Nation, especially within the Johnson and Lightning families. Their stories were blanketed within the history of this case, and while it is important – their voices have been lost within the narrative. I descend from the Johnson family, and Nimosôm Brian Lightning accounts of how you were "Indian one day, and not the next." Which for anyone cannot only be troubling but damaging. The right to say who belongs and who is family should come from the people themselves, but many do not know that the settler state of Canada still decides who is status Indian and who is not, and they are the only settler government in the world that has its own legislation and legal document that states this outright.

I mentioned scrip earlier–to provide some background, scrip is a certificate that can be redeemed for land (in the form of what is called "land scrip") or money (as "money scrip"). The Canadian government used scrip as a way to shift the Métis population on the Western prairies to al-

low for settler movement west while appearing to fulfill their obligations to the Métis under the Manitoba Act of 1870. The Manitoba Act was when the land had been transferred from the Hudson's Bay Company to Canada and the province of Manitoba was created with an understanding of land being held by Métis people already living there. There was also scrip that didn't have to do with the Manitoba Act; other "scrip commissions" were set up during treaty negotiations. Between 1885 to 1924 is generally when scrip was issued, and it is generally associated with Métis and the prairie provinces.

Money scrip had the advantage of being transferable, but it devalued as land value increased over time. Land scrip would let you claim land title, but redeeming land scrip did not amount to selecting one's choice of land from anywhere in the prairies. Because plots of land had to be surveyed first, the land that was made available was restricted mostly to plots in Southern and Western Manitoba, whether or not the Métis with land scrip originally lived in those areas. Implementation of scrip was also problematic in its complexity, as well as cases of fraud. One of the major overall effects of scrip was the loss of Métis land (as evidenced by the Manitoba Métis Federation's 1981 case against the Canadian government). But since taking scrip also amounted to claiming Métis identity (and giving up Indian identity in the eyes of Canada), it would involve loss of Indian status, the source of conflict that I described in the Hobbema Case. *[13:45 Simple what happened in the Hobbema Case, let's call it interpersonal conflicts, where the chief at the time was mad at the Johnson and Lightning families. So wherein his power and privilege, he decided that the Johnson and Lightning families have actually taken scrip. But the truth is, and he went to trial, the Johnson and Lightning families were indeed treaty]*

Identity claims under the Canadian government show how Métis scrip and Indian status relate to each other, but it is important to note how scrip and status could generate divisions within communities. As I mentioned earlier, scrip commissions were set up during some treaty negotiations, specifically Treaties 5, 8, 10, and 11. This mixture of treaty (that is, negotiations with Indigenous communities) and scrip (which involves individuals) resulted in fractures of Indigenous families and communities. Even within one family, some individuals might take scrip and be designated Métis by the Canadian government, while the rest of the family might take Treaty and have Indian status. Or, in the Hobbema case, claiming that the Johnson and Lightning families had taken scrip was to claim that out of the whole Hobbema community, the Johnson and Lightning families didn't fall under the Indian Act and couldn't stay on the reserve.

You couldn't be both Métis and Indian according to the Canadian government. You either took scrip as a Métis and didn't have Indian status, or you were governed under the Indian Act as an Indian. It is important to note that this distinction is not limited to scrip; scrip is only one tool that has been used to determine who is "Indian enough" in Canada's eyes. Scrip is just one of many important ties that some Indigenous people have with the broader settler-colonial structure in Canada. And it all comes down to power.

Part Four:
Indigenous versus Settler Notions of Power

Anishinaabekwe Dana Hickey uses her master's thesis *Indigenous Epistemologies, Worldviews and Theories of Power* to compare, contrast, and understand Indigenous versus Western-colonial notions of power, highlighting that:

"Understanding more about epistemologies of power will help illuminate a pathway by which Indigenous Peoples and Canadians of settler ancestry can better understand one another, creating the shift in these relationships that is required in order to gather large-scale support for reconciliation and for ethical distribution of power resources in Canada" (p. 14).

As well, Hickey discusses the necessity that Indigenous epistemologies of power be discussed alongside that of the overly prevalent Western understandings of power– noting and dissecting the inherently unsustainable and unbalanced nature of the latter. And she outlines the timeline of these Western epistemologies, from their philosophical birth in 5th century ancient Greece with Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle – to more contemporary figures in the founding of sociology such as Machiavelli, Hobbes, Locke, Foucault, as well as several others.

The Western understanding of power has evolved; from expertise in statesmanship to the practice of scholarly debate and, ultimately, to that of domination and control – where Western understanding currently rests. Each sociological philosopher has (and had) their own complex explanations of what power is, as well as how various forms of power can interact – however, all notions eventually solidify around defining power through domination and control (Hickey, 2020, p. 16).

Importantly, Hickey notes how Western theories of power are truly lacking despite the (often violent) assertions of their alleged superiority:

"The Western theories of power show the direction that the academic

conversation about power is headed. The philosophical assumptions that underlie the mainstream theories have not been fully expanded to include an understanding of power through an Indigenous epistemological lens. Western conceptions of power are, therefore, incomplete because they are based only in Western knowledge. If we can know more about the phenomenon of power from an Indigenous epistemological standpoint, then perhaps we can begin to glean solutions to the power imbalances and the misapprehensions that stand between us and reconciliation" (2020, p. 17).

For Hickey (2020), understanding how Indigenous versus Settler constructions of power an important aspect is of knowing how to see each other. She states that for Indigenous peoples,

"Power is honouring all of creation. Power is connectedness to Mother Earth and respect for her life systems. Power is caring for the Ancestors and using the knowledge and ceremonies they passed down. Power is Indigenous women who bring balance, carry the water, and give life. Power is our languages, our voices, our stories, and our songs. Power is the collective cognitive experience known as Indigenous knowledge, which is based on experience, language, and shared beliefs. Power is kinship, community and good relationships. Power is remaining resilient, adapting to change, and ensuring Indigenous knowledge survives the colonial assault" (p. 20).

For us as Indigenous peoples, when we begin to think about power and control it comes back to living the good life and how power is the interrelated connection to everyone and everything, both known and unknown. Therefore, we do not benefit from power, because we are nothing without each other. Power is taught to many Nêhiyaw through the oral narratives of our Thunderbird.

Part Five:
Attempts to dehumanize Indigenous Peoples

The pihêsiw is the *Thunderbird*, the great being of the sky, and they are the first protectors shielding the animal nation from the serpents in the water both blue and black. The *Thunderbird* is said to look like an eagle but is greater in size and endowed with unworldly capabilities.

Late Elder Roxanne Tootoosis stated, "Pihêsiw is a spiritual yet mystical being in our cultural beliefs. It is a sacred being that we do not visibly see but hear continuously in our stories. It is a spiritual being that we refer to in our kakisimowin (*prayers*). It is considered as one of the most powerful of all spirits."

Pihêsiw is a powerful protector and the keeper of water. Nipiy, *water*, is crucial for life, the nourishment of our bodies, and the bringer of beauty as the thunderbird is viewed with extreme reverence. They can harness the power of lighting and the clouds in the sky and when they strike Mother Earth is re-energized with strength (citation). We do not know what they truly look like, but we know that they are there watching and waiting.

Along the present-day border of Saskatchewan and Alberta is a lake that is of great importance to my people. The importance is that a prophecy will come one day. nipiy kâ-pitihkwêk, the root word pitihkwêw means 'there is thunder,' and refers to Sounding Lake (MacLeod, 2016, p. 4).

It is said that this is where a young Thunderbird who was naive, and not the size of what they would become, decided to wrestle and fight the great serpent that lives in the lake. The young Thunderbird challenged the great serpent with the idea that they would win the battle because of their power and strength. But the young Thunderbird was dragged into the lake, and every so often you will hear the lake rumble and move, as if a great battle is occurring or as if lightning is coming from within. But the thing is, the young Thunderbird and the great serpent are still fighting. Because they are from a spiritual dimension not of our own or within the time frame that we see in our years, it is said that the young Thunderbird is still growing, and when it finally is fully grown, it will emerge from the lake victorious and this will signal a change for all those who live in these lands indicating a shift in the world that we have, especially those who currently have all the power.

Part Six:
Conclusion

The Indian Act and its creation were a manipulation of power for domination, and while it still exists, so do the stories of our ancestors and of our powerful otherworldly beings and protectors. My spirit is of the sky world, a realm still unknown to settlers, and what I love about this unknowingness is how our world and true power exist alongside our Thunderbirds and we are waiting and ready to strike but you will not see us. But settlers, much like the young thunderbird in the prophecy, are naive to think that we have willingly accepted our fate as the colonized because we are learning and growing and power has its costs, and change is inevitable because the young thunderbird is not so young anymore.

Research Assistants

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Keywords: *Gradual Civilization Act of 1857, Gradual Enfranchisement Act of 1869, Status Indians, Prophecy, Power, Hobbema Case, Indian Act, Indian Affairs, Indigenous Affairs, heteropatriarchy, European ideologies, domesticity, purity, Declaration of Human Rights, 1951 amendment, Manitoba Act of 1870*

Glossary

Anishinaabekwe – Anishinaabe woman
Scrip – a certificate that can be redeemed for land (in the form of what is called "land scrip") or money (as "money scrip")
Pihêsiw – Thunderbird
Pitihkwêw – There is thunder
Nipiy kâ-pitihkwêk –Sounding Lake

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Episode Six:

Nêhiyawiskwew

Paulina Johnson, Marieliv Flores Villalobos, and Emily Quecke
With Stories and Ancestral Knowledge from late Sarah and Grace Swampy

Synopsis: What does it mean to become an Indigenous Womxn within the landscape of settler colonialism today? This episode delves into the power and beauty of Indigenous Womxn, from the Womxn that inspire and support me, to the cultural brilliance of this sacred identity. While we focus on beauty, resilience, and strength, it is imperative that we also recognize the pain and the targeted colonial violence that impacts the everyday reality of Indigenous Womxnhood.

To the iskwew upon Turtle Island

She stands upon the ridge looking down onto the river below,

The strands of hair that escaped her braids flow and frame her face,

The redness of her cheeks mirrors the sun's rays as it turns to dusk,

Her skirt hugs and caresses the sweetgrass and sage that grows along the banks her people call home,

The beads that adorn her tell a story of where she has come and where she is going,

Her lips are still stained with the berries that she picked after laying down her tobacco and giving thanks,

She sings her song as she closes her eyes taking in every caress from the wind –ancestors who come to say hello and how are you,

Her arms raise above her head as she embraces the feeling of freedom within her own spirit and body,

A power not known by our present world.

She lets out a laugh as her song ends and she opens her eyes, hues of browns like the bear's fur that have taught her,

Onlyafewwillevertrulyknowthewarmthofwhosheis,butthat'sagiftinitself, She is Creator's gift to this world, a connection to our spiritual existence,

Built with intuition, made of love and generosity, and one who is home to many,

Iskwew, can you hear me? Can I tell you how much you matter to me and all of creation who admire you?

Can I tell you how I want to be everything that you are? Can I be close to you to hear my ancestors and those who are coming?

Can I hold grandmother moon as you embrace me?

She holds the universe in her hands as the rivers and streams tell the story of our lands and places that we have been,

We must do everything we can to love her when our world is against her because they fear her power and have never truly known who she is,

She is time, creation, and knowledge, all intertwined within the laughter of her body,

She is the brightness of every star and warmth of every breath that calls her name,

Hold on to her because she only appears every so often in this settler world,

Will you acknowledge her with me? [2:30 Will you love her with me?]

Part One:
Introduction

This episode focuses on Nêhiyawiskwewak, or four-spirit women, or Iskwew women, because women teach us a really important truth about settler Canada, one that needs to be addressed especially when we understand how women are not only the culture, but they are also the life force of all our being. And in this episode, we acknowledge that, and rather than focus on all the pain and damage caused by our settler colonial world, I will speak to the beauty, to the comfort, and to the present of women and especially those who influence my personal life on a daily basis, as well as the symbols that women hold in Indigenous communities especially on my own. Then we can delve into an important issue that Indigenous women face today, which is coined as the Pocahontas Perplex. We end with a double-edged sword concept, as women stand as threats to settler colonialism, and why we have been portrayed as we have, but never losing focus of the light, of the brilliance, and of the intelligence of who women are, especially in my home community.

When I think about the Nêhiyawiskwewak, *Cree* word for "*women*," in my life, each one stands out for various reasons, from my sisters to my aunties and my grandmothers. There are numerous womxn who have shaped my existence by being soft when I needed to stand my position and ground facing the reality of injustice and oppression. The womxn in my life have impacted how I see myself, how I care for myself, and how I am to be a good ancestor. Nokum Ginger Wildcat has always been persistent that I do what is right for me, nokum Cecilia Saddleback has taught me about how to calm myself within every situation, nikawiy, my mother, has shown me how to use my voice when I am being treated unfairly or when someone acts against our teachings, nimis Paula has taught me how to care for myself, and nimis Pauline has taught me how to laugh and joke with all those around me. There are those that no longer walk this earth, and they too are embodied within me and often I feel their spirits with me at different times of the day. The teachings of my people are grounded in their voices, the love in their hands as they braided my hair, the warmth in their eyes when I returned home from graduate school and now the big city of Edmonton. These women have carried me through some of my most difficult moments and hardships but have laughed along with me at the most random moments.

But one very important woman I would like to acknowledge is Askiy-Wapikwanew, Earth Flower Woman, my cousin Kimberly Bruno. Kim is my best friend and the OG auntie, the original auntie that all uncles are warned about. We have so many random stories worth talking about but that will probably get me banned if I tell you. She always tells me that the person I end up marrying needs to give her five horses first before my

family, because her opinion matters above all else. She's the one that I am able to call after a trying day and will always pick my spirits up, she's seen me through heartbreak, been part of my successes, and is someone I want to acknowledge because our women are never acknowledged enough for their strength, kindness, and importantly, their humor. She always jokes that she will square up on anyone that tries me, and I have indeed seen it. From watching her accidentally hit behind the ankles of the person in front of us with the shopping cart and then telling them to walk faster, to seeing her down badger milk, all of it is so important to me. It's her home fire and light that makes me want to be the version of myself that I am completely comfortable with, with no masks, no walls, just me. My Kim, or Kimothy, does that for me, and walking the path of the good life with you has been my greatest honor.

Part Two:
The Homefire

Our home fire is integral to know how we develop an understanding of how we are to act within our world. Our Mîkiwahp, *lodge or tipi*, provides us not only warmth and family, but is where our knowledge and teachings are first heard, and where guidance is given to offer protection and caution through wisdom and insight. When a child leaves the home fire, it is intended that their spirit protectors follow beside them to ensure that they always come home safely.

The Mîkiwahp holds our teachings and teaches us how we come to be from the spiritual realm into the physical world and reflects the womb and is property of the iskwew, woman. Initially, our lodge was not the shape we see today but rather, it was the shape of the matotisân, our sweat lodge. As it began to grow, the lodge allowed an iskotêw, fire, to be placed in the center. This fire is where the woman gains her name, iskwew from iskotêw, as a woman is the sacredness of the fire and the lodge itself.

In my culture, the Mîkiwahp is constructed with thirteen poles representing the thirteen moons of a full year. Each pole symbolizes sacred teachings including obedience, respect, humility, happiness, love, faith, citizenship, cleanliness, thankfulness, sharing, strength, good child rearing, hope, and ultimate protection. The poles were strongly held together by hides or canvas which symbolized Indigenous women's skirts and shawls. The Mîkiwahp floor which embodies Mother Earth is shaped like a circle that, unlike the square, signifies inclusivity and honor of women in our community.

The Mîkiwahp stands tall, just like the dress of the women, signifying dignity and protection. It was a symbol of how we are honored in the circle of life before patriarchal, colonial, and forced assimilation began to dismantle these poles (teachings).

Mary Lee, a Nêhiyaw elder describes the teachings of the Mîkiwahp as this:

"A tipi cover is like that old woman with a shawl. As it comes around the tipi, it embraces all those teachings, and the values of community that the women hold. No matter how many children and great-grandchildren come into that circle of hers, she always still has room. And if you put it upright, the poles never show on the bottom, and that tipi stands with dignity, just as, years ago, women always covered their legs with the skirt, which also represents the sacred circle of life. And when you put the flaps up, it teaches you how we embrace life itself. It's like a woman standing there with her arms out, saying "Thank you" to everything, end quote.

[9:42-10:55] The teachings of the Mîkiwahp indicate to us that there's so much we don't know yet fully about Indigenous women and our cultural teachings. One of the greatest teachings that I've come across in my journeys across Canada, especially during my graduate studies in London Ontario comes from Elder Eli Baxter. Elder Baxter taught me Anishinaabemowin which is the Ashinabe language. And they have a term called Ishkote, which represents the heart. But it also means the warmth, the sun that you find, and it just makes you feel whole. They're this individual that can give you warmth and connection and ground you to feel better and safe. It also means fire, that warmth of the individual and the truth and beauty inside of them. When I think about Ishkote especially because it's from the Anishinaabe language and is part of the Algonquian language family which is very similar to Nêhiyawêwin, I think about how that connects to our overall worldview and the importance of our women, because our women are so much that we don't fully understand or encapsulate.]

Part Three:
Becoming Woman

[11:02-11:08 How we understand women is really important to teach you the teachings of how to become women.] My auntie Dr. Claudine Louis in her doctoral dissertation presents the four phases of women. The first is the Girl-Child who sits in the east. She is innocent, trusting, and eager to learn; she is described as the little girl who is playful and able to laugh at herself; she is the one who is full of life; she is present in the moment, willing to learn about herself, others and the world around her; she is

filled with laughter, joy and happiness. And most of all, she knows how to have fun in a safe way.

Second is the Sacred Woman. Sacred Woman sits in the south, an important direction since the south is the opening towards our sacred directions. Louis talks about how her mother taught that a Sacred Woman is to be revered. She was the one who was to be respected; she was the one who held many different forms of power; she was the one who held the responsibility for the continuance of the community, particularly because of her ability to bear children.

Third is Warrior Woman who sits in the west. She is a visionary leader, assertive, bold, courageous, honest and strong; she is the one who develops boundaries; she speaks up about injustice and does not tolerate violence or abuse. Often, she is the defender of the home fire and children; she reminds people about the importance of respecting themselves and others. She perseveres and continues to work through challenges brought forward in life.

And fourth is Wise Woman who sits in the north and is the source of great wisdom. She has a strong intuitive nature and is described as the woman who knows the answers to the challenges that we face in our lives. She is the woman who provides direction when we need it. She is the gentle inner voice we hear within ourselves when we go to a quiet space and listen. She is the wellspring of love, kindness, compassion and understanding

Part Four:
Pocahontas Perplex

The four phases of Nêhiyawiskwewak, Four-Spirit women, give us a glimpse into the depth of the cultural brilliance of the people and their world views. However, these representations of self are often overlooked or undermined by two very different representations. Historian Rayna Green (1975) states that there is a Pocahontas perplex regarding Indigenous women who have been portrayed in two categories based on Indian-White relations: as Queen or Princess, for their nobility, or the one stuck in the past for their savagery, whom I will call the “Vixen” rather than the historical term that mistranslated and misinterpreted Iskwew. While the image of the Queen was developed as a symbol linked to the new beautiful and mysterious land/paradise/world, later her daughter, the Princess, entered the scene more assimilated to the whites, so she is less barbarous and Indigenous than the Queen. On the other hand, the version stuck in the past represents the closest body to a Princess, with the difference that she can be used for men’s pleasure. Green argues

that the "Pocahontas perplex emerged as a controlling metaphor in the American experience" (Green, 1975, p. 703), as it limits the notion of Indigenous womanhood: she is pure or hypersexual.

The Princess and the "Vixen" are defined in terms of their relationships with male figures. If she wants to be identified as Princess, she must be a good Christian and save or help white men. This can probably mean that she "has to violate the wishes and customs of her own "barbarous" people to make good the rescue, saving the man out of love and often out of Christian sympathy." (Green, 1975, p. 704). The Princess is good and pure, so white men can't have sex with her. In the case of the "Vixen," her sexuality converts her image from positive to negative. "She does what white men want for money or lust" (Green, 1975, p. 711), and she is ashamed of her relationships with white men.

Green argues that the attachment to a romantic past sadly shapes the notion of "the Indian woman." However, "[i]t is time that the Princess herself is rescued and the ["Vixen"] relieved of her obligatory service [...] the Native woman needs to be defined as Indian, in Indian terms" (Green, 1975, p. 714). [15:20-15:54 Or, Indigenous women need to redefine what they actually represent rather than the representations given to them by settlers to legitimize harm, violence, abuse, and importantly, the acquisition of Indigenous territory which models and parallels the treatment to Indigenous women. So, we have to ask ourselves, why is the representation of the image of Indigenous women still within these two binaries of the Princess and the Vixen? It all comes down to settler colonialism.]

Part Five:
Womxn are a threat to settler colonialism

Indigenous Womxn are seen as a direct threat, if not the greatest threat, to settler control and are treated as such (Simpson, 2016). In discussing the vitriol experienced by Theresa Spence during her 2012 hunger strike looking to raise awareness and calling for an investigation into Indigenous issues, Leanne Simpson says, "In fact, her very life, like the lives of all Indian women in Canada is an anomaly because since the 1870s they have been legally mandated to disappear, in various forms" (Simpson, 2016, p. 5).

This reminds us that by their very existence, Indigenous Womxn represent endurance and a challenge to settler violence. In particular, the power that Indigenous Womxn traditionally held as decision-makers and matriarchs in many Indigenous communities challenged the governance systems that settler colonialism is predicated upon. As Simpson continues on to articulate, "They embodied and signaled something rad-

ically different to Euro Canadian governance and this meant that part of dispossession, and settler possession meant that coercive and modifying sometimes killing power had to target their bodies" (Simpson, 2016, p. 6). Indigenous Womxn as the keepers of life, reproduction, and kinship structures are also the keepers of Indigenous survival both physically lineage-wise and culturally/spiritually.

While this threat is symbolically attached to Indigenous Womxn's bodies, it is also literally attached which is what makes them at risk for abuse in the name of colonial violence. It has been argued that the physical bodies of Indigenous women are seen in parallel to the land by the settler gaze (Smith, 2015). They are both seen as something that needs to be conquered and can be used for control because of their physical tangibility as they relate to structural heteropatriarchal power.

Another way in which Indigenous Womxn are seen as a threat to settler society is the deep ontological relationship to land and water associated with women in many Indigenous cultures. This means that they have a recognized authority over water and land protection, which challenges the settler project of commodifying and controlling these so-called resources. While this is a threat to settler-colonialism, these Indigenous Womxn represent hope for not only their nations but the world over as we struggle for water security and access. Numerous internationally recognized Indigenous Womxn have taken on the figure of the water-protector as a leader in the larger water-access movement. These water protectors such as Josephine Mandamin, Autumn Peltier, and the leaders of No DAPL (No Dakota Access PipeLine) at Standing Rock have engaged their gendered cultural identity, specifically their traditional gendered connections to water and experiences within settler colonialism, to create hope and an ethic or protection which addresses the root causes of water scarcity (Privott 2019; Awume, Patrick, and Baijius 2020; L. Simpson, DaSilva, and Riffel 2009; Anderson 2010; Barker 2019; Dennis and Mclafferty Bell 2020; Williams et al. 2018; Paz and Kaimin 2019). [18:50-19:03 Overall Indigenous women, so long as we are here, will constantly be a threat, a fear and intimidation of power to settler colonialism and the greater colonial project. But we are not going anywhere.]

Part Six:
Conclusion

Our womxn have not been treated as well as they should be. Indigenous womxn helped Canada, and Canada must do what it needs to protect them. When thinking about what I wanted to create and share with you in this podcast episode, I didn't want to focus on the pain or sadness or go in-depth about how Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and

Girls has impacted our reality, and this isn't to diminish this epidemic, but to tell those young girls listening that you are more than what the media tells us we are, we are better informed and capable of the reality we have been dealt. There are aunties, kokumwaks, kikâwiyak, that are here with you, present and spiritual. We have to have the courage to re-member who we rightfully are because we are more powerful than what our settler society tells us.

And so, I end with a final prayer for you to listen wholeheartedly to:

> *My Girl*
>
> *My girl, you have everything that you need inside of you.*
>
> *My girl, I wish I could take the pain away from so much that you carry.*
>
> *It is not fair that we have to carry colonial pain and it's not fair to ask you to heal it.*
>
> *But you are medicine blanketed with universal connections of time and place, of power and song, of nobility made in the stars, of passion and gentleness made within our water, of strength within our rocks, of fire made in our lodges.*
>
> *My girl, you are mine, and I am yours.*
>
> *Come find me on the banks of the river where I will hold you for all existence.*
>
> *Lay your head on my shoulder and tell me all that you need.*
>
> *But remember, you have been loved longer than your existence.*
>
> *Prayed for by generations before us and prayed for by the generations after.*
>
> *And you will always be loved by me in the way that our ancestors intended.*
>
> *Never let them take your fire, my girl, because they have feared it since they first saw you.*
>
> *Sahkitowin, you are loved by me.*

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Keywords: *Nêhiyawiskwewak, Mîkiwahp, Pocahontas perplex, Indian-White relations*

Glossary

Kikâwiyak – Your mothers
Kokom/Kokum – Your Grandmother
Kokumwaks – Your grandmothers
Mîkiwahp - Lodge or tipi
Nêhiyawiskwew – Four-Spirit Woman
Nêhiyawiskwewak – Four-Spirit Women
Nikawiy – My Mother
Nimis – Older Sister
Nokom/Nokum – My Grandmother

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Episode Seven:

Star People

Paulina Johnson and Paul J. Johnson
With Stories and Ancestral Knowledge from Wilfred Buck and Jerry Saddleback

Synopsis: How did we come to exist within Mikinak Ministik, Turtle Island? Dr. Johnson explores the Nêhiyawak Creation Stories of her people and how they shape and inform the Nêhiyawak of who they are and what they represent. Learn about how Kokominakasis, Grandmother Spider, brought Acakos Iskwew, Star Woman, to this physical world and how we view ourselves as those gifted by Manitou, Creator, to Nikawiy Aski, Mother Earth.

Part One:
Introduction

Throughout history, from the far past, unwritten, to places lost in time, similar situations have played out when we think of oppression and resistance. When an encroaching force is bent on domination and subjugation, another force will counter it, like an immune response. As people are pressed and constricted harder – a strike back begins to manifest. There is a barrier that keeps people from acting out radical actions; a balance is then needed for any system to remain in place. Inevitably the imposing force tips the scale too far, ramping up their violence and domination. It can be one small thing like a youthful life snuffed out or a mother bear killed for her pelt, but people who were merely cogs are made enemies. Resistance can come in many ways, from ensuring old traditions are kept alive to outright conflict.

In opposition to the common pacifist ideals impinged upon oppressed peoples from those putting on airs, violent actions have their place in violent conflict. These violent actions bring results that would have never been possible without them, and conversely, they also lead to damage and human loss that would not have happened either. It then becomes a question of whether the resistance will reveal how the damage inflicted is less than the damage of the current system. But we must ask ourselves, will further stars be made when a star explodes and destroys everything close to it? Only if a supernova is created. That is the difference between the violence of rebellion and the violence of oppression. One creates, and the other maintains.

This can be dismissed as a reframing of the reality at hand. After all, terrorism, for one, is freedom fighting for another. In isolation, can these actions be said to be markedly different from one another? The world is not so dark and light. Objective or not, context matters, hanging over every action. Whether they like or acknowledge it, context can easily sway people. Even so, killing millions who were working to kill millions more is hard to justify.

Incredibly hard questions and uneasy answers come from this reality. But from all I have questioned, it's crazy that Luke was only 19 when he got in that X-Wing. And it is funny how many people can get behind the story of why the Galactic Empire in Star Wars must fall, but rarely the reality of what Indigenous peoples face.

Part Two:
Star People

When Manitow, Creator, made our world, there was not only great pride in the marvels of creation but an insight into the world of connection and longevity that our people would come to know. Creator bestowed gifts onto our people through teachings and oral narratives, allowing us to look within ourselves and learn about the complexity of life. We were gifted our first teachers the natural elements of earth, sky, air, and fire, followed by the grandfather sun, grandmother moon, and what would become our ancestors. In this origin of life, we witness that the Creator's mind is vast and far-reaching within the depths of the universe and the intricacy of what we come to know today.

The Nêhiyawak origins begin not on earth but in another world, the spirit world. Notikwêw Atayohkan Ahcâhk, the Grandmother Spirit Star, placed the first being on earth. Therefore, the Nêhiyawak are born from the sky. The Nêhiyawak are spiritual beings that descend from the gift of the Creator's soul into the sacredness of our physical mother and are guided by the teachings of Grandmother Moon.

When a child is born, they are sacred sky beings that can talk with the Creator. Sky Beings are deities who have incredible gifts and intuition. Their children married sky beings when the Creator made the first man and woman. When you are born, you descend within a line that is sacred as our very being is in respect to be given that life from the sky. You are a gift from the Creator.

Born within the sacred womb of our mothers, the umbilical fluid connects us to the Earth and is our first purification. The water we grow in ties us to the sky and our initial meeting with the Creator. The water we are born from is from the power of the piyisiw, Thunderbird. Our connection to the land, rivers, and oceans is held regarding our belief that the blood veins of a woman are seen in the rivers and streams on Earth. Therefore, we are the keepers of the land; we have been gifted this role through our births.

Our children are gifts from the Creator and lent to us. Awâsis is a term used to refer to *children*, but is it derived from the word awihkosowin meaning, that which is lent to you in the most sacred and holy way. Awihew is the root word for awihkosowin, referred to as *He loans something to him or them*. However, awâsis is derived from the term kisikosis meaning *Little Sky Being*. This sacred understanding of a child goes further with respect given to each newborn until they reach the age of seven when pâstâhowin occurs.

Pâstâhowin means *the action of overstepping,* which indicates that a child is past seven and has become a conscious and thinking person. Their actions will dictate whether the Ghost Keepers will allow them into the spirit world. The first man and woman on Earth are the Ghost Keepers. After living over four hundred years on Earth, it was decided that they, too, must enter a new realm of existence. They belong to the southern sky and open the spirit world to everyone regardless of skin color. Manitow told them they would be accountable for all the people entering the spirit realm.

A sky being can feel the reverberations of the world and connect with their surroundings spiritually and intuitively. Our souls are connected because we come from the ahcâhk iskotêw, *the soulflame* of Manitow. Gifted from Manitow's flame, the ahcâhk iskotêw connects us to all of creation and life (Saddleback, personal communication, 2016). This flame within us is found within the essence of the stars and gives us a deep spiritual connection in our early years.

When a child is born, we are told not to touch the soft spot found on the head because we believe that the soul rests on this part of a child. Nimosôm Jerry Saddleback explains that the infant is so powerful that it

can communicate with other infants telepathically and to its surroundings. The spirit of this child can tell other children if their parents are mistreating them or whether they intend to return to the spirit realm of Manitou.

Two infants lay side by side with each other; one infant said their life was incredible and that if she cried, her parents would come to her and do what she needed. The other infant was astounded by what he was told and told her his parents never did that for him. And knowing this he told the girl that he planned to return to Creator. And therefore, you must realize that these children are Creator's children. They are not ours.

Put simply; the Nêhiyawak are born of the stars. We are star people.

Part Three:
Kokominakasis "Grandmother Spider," the Net-maker

The âcimowin or *story* I will be sharing comes from Pawami Nikititicikiw (*the Dream Keeper*) a.k.a. Wilfred Buck, who is an Ininiw/Cree Star Knowledge Keeper and retired science educator from the Opaskwayak Cree Nation in Manitoba.

And rather than condense and change the full version he has presented, I will share his teachings as he has done so before to share his wisdom within my platform, but also to emphasize on how a true teacher and knowledge holder would let those around them feel and experience, as many of those who are listening, may never get this experience:

"...[O]ne particular being of energy we have come to know as Acakos Iskwew [who] was traveling the cosmos and came upon a spatial anomaly, which happened to be in what we now call the Milky Way galaxy. This phenomenon was a portal, a doorway from one reality to another... a wormhole.

Acakos Iskwew happened to gaze through this portal and saw Nikawiy Aski [Mother Earth]. Acakos Iskwew was intrigued and decided to go to this mysterious place. Acakos Iskwew understood that to navigate the portal, assistance was needed, and Acakos Iskwew knew of the doorkeeper, who was in charge of this function. This particular Okunowiskatopiw (door keeper) was called Kokominakasis ("Grandmother Spider," the net-maker).

Acakos Iskwew approached Kokominakasis and asked for assistance to navigate the portal.

Acakos Iskwew was told there were three conditions that needed to be met if the portal was to be navigated.

A physical form was to be used as a means of interacting with the physical world.

A gift was to be taken through the doorway to act as a reminder of where Acakos Iskwew originated.

Acakos Iskwew could not stay too long on the visit.

Acakos Iskwew agreed to these conditions and Kokominakasis sent a single strand of webbing through the doorway and Acakos Iskwew used the strand to climb down into this reality and reach Nikawiy Aski. When Acakos Iskwew touched the Earth, she took a physical form… a human form. This is how we humans arrived on Earth. We are energy, then change form, and finally, return to energy when our visit in the physical world has ended.

The gift that was brought into this reality was Acakosahakoop ("the Star Blanket"), to remind us that we come from the sky world… from the stars.

As for not staying long on the visit… how long is long for a being of energy? Acakos Iskwew stayed a lifetime, then returned to the cosmos.

So, through Acakos Iskwew, we all arrive here. We change form from energy to physical beings as we are lowered by a single strand of webbing, we call the umbilical cord to Nikawiy Aski. We come for our visit, experience, teach, learn, feel, and age… then we leave.

Our Elders always remind us that we are spirits learning how to be human… not humans learning how to be spiritual… then the cycle continues. Energy changes form… solid, liquid, gas, plasma.

We were given Acakosahakoop to remind us we come from Kitcikisik [the great sky] and that sacred blanket of stars is symbolic of a special place in the sky called Pakwon Kisik ("the Hole in the Sky"—widely known as the Pleiades). The original blanket had Tipahkop Acakosuk ("seven stars") on it to symbolize the stars of the Pleiades. As more and more humans arrived here to visit, there was a decision made to honour the first one here, Acakos Iskwew, so an extra point was added to the seven-pointed star blanket to remember the Kokominow ("first grandmother"), Acakos Iskwew. Therefore, today we have an eight-pointed star blanket.

On a side note: Kokominakasis is the being who gifted humans the Dreamcatcher, which filters energy that transcends realities. We also un-

derstand that there is a connection from our dreams to Pakwon Kisik, which gives us glimpses of infinite possibilities, like the ones explored in quantum theory. We constantly dream when we sleep, no matter if we remember those dreams or not. We dream... we make connections, get inspiration, direction, guidance, healing, understanding, and broaden our possibilities.

This is one of the sacred tellings from the perspective of the Ininiw, but this telling is told across Mikinak Ministik ("Turtle Island") because Indigenous Nations understand that we are part of a greater whole that originates in Kitcikisik.

We come from the stars and understand that misiwa is energy/light/spirit."

Part Four:
Conclusion

One story I love hearing comes from Nimosôm Jerry Saddleback and he tells me that when Star Keeper made his map of the constellations, he added souls to numerous stars so they could watch us on Earth and be with us when we felt alone. Elder Brother, who was interested in Star Keeper's Map, was too eager to wait for Star Keeper and threw the stars we see today into the sky. Many of those stars we gaze upon are living deities, so our ancestors literally watch down on us.

The Nêhiyawak Stories of how we came to be are much more complex than what I have presented here. Our Creation Story has four tellings that are different in the level of complexity. We have the basic, straightforward, version and then it progresses to the sacred and higher level of Nêhiyawêwin, that I am not fluent in. Our knowledge is more than just myths or legends, it is the very essence of who we are and what we are actually made of. While science looks to the elemental aspects of nitrogen, carbon, oxygen, and so many other elements, we see beyond the classifications to an existence made in other realms, gifted by the Star People to us, and these stories or âcimowina are only a few of numerous Indigenous peoples' stories of how they came to be around the world.

Keywords: *Star People, Grandmother Spider*

Glossary

Acakosahakoop - “The Star Blanket”
Awihkosowin - That which is lent to you in the most sacred and holy way
Awihew - Root word for awihkosowin, referred to as “He loans something to him/her or them”
Kitcikisik - The Great Sky
Kokominakasis - “Grandmother Spider,” the net-maker
Kokominow - “First Grandmother”
Mikinak Ministik - “Turtle Island”
Misiwa - Energy/light/spirit
Nikawiy Aski - Mother Earth
Okunowiskatopiw - door keeper
Pakwon Kisik - “The Hole in the Sky” -- widely known as the Pleiades
Pâstâhowin - The action of overstepping
Tipahkop Acakosuk - “Seven Stars”

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Episode Eight:
Wiyasiwêwina

Luke Aaron Wonneck and Paulina Johnson
With Stories and Ancestral Knowledge from Gordon Lee

Synopsis: The universe around us is always listening, breathing, and feeling. Find out how the Nêhiyawak view the world through Wiyasiwêwina, an act of weaving together, or better known as law. Listen to the four laws of the Nêhiyawak in this episode.

Part One:
Introduction

Nêhiyaw lawyer, and one of the founding members of the "Idle No More" Movement Sylvia McAdam (2015) states that wiyinikêwina is *an act like weaving* (p. 38). This weaving refers to all of creation being bound together and for my people this is how we understand our laws. It is not only a system of rules, but a deep spiritual connection that ties us all together. It is a continuous flow of energy that requires a need to balance itself if it is out of line. Manitou wiyinikêwina consist of four parts: human laws, earth laws, spiritual law, and animal laws (McAdam 2015, p. 38). Manitou wiyinikêwina guide the Nêhiyawak in our daily activities, events, and ceremonies – wiyinikêwina is sacred, so I cannot share what I know here, but Nêhiyaw Wiyasiwêwina, the human laws, are our laws that link to Manitou wiyinikêwina that I will share here. When we think about Nêhiyaw law or Indigenous legal traditions, we have to be aware of how settler states see our institutions, and how they are clouded by settler colonialism and unknowingness to our world and philosophy. We especially see the effects of settler colonialism in Section 35 of the *Constitution Act, 1982*.

Part Two:
Nimosôm Gordon Lee and Section 35

In the fall of 1980, Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau introduced a resolution to 'patriate' the Canadian Constitution. The proposed constitution promised to, "signify the passing of the last vestige of Canada's former colonial status" (Government of Canada, 1980), and this as a colony of Britain. Specifically, it would transfer the ultimate authority to pass Canadian laws from Britain to Canada. It would also introduce the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which would guarantee basic rights and freedoms equally, to all Canadians.

Sounds pretty good, right? The problem was that Trudeau's resolution, and the proposed constitution were developed without any consultation with Indigenous Nations and made next to no mention of the collective rights and status that Indigenous people hold as sovereigns. Indigenous people across Canada were rightly concerned that the proposed constitution would eliminate Canada's legal responsibilities to recognize their Indigenous rights and status. In other words, Indigenous people understood the proposed constitution not as the passing of the last vestige of Canada's former colonial status, but rather as a new and powerful tool to facilitate the further colonization of Indigenous lands and ways of life, yet again.

So, what did Indigenous people do? Well, we mobilized to protect our lands and ways of life! The most famous protest at the time was the Constitution Express — two trains that carried about a thousand Indigenous people from the west coast to Ottawa to deliver the message that patriation could only proceed with Indigenous consent. Yet, Trudeau stubbornly clung on to his proposal. Thus, as the Constitution Express movement spread into the United States and Europe, Indigenous people were also taking action in their everyday lives in whatever way they could. For example, Nimosôm Gordon Lee once told me how during that time he phoned up a lawyer friend from Vancouver to ask for help with ensuring that Indigenous rights would be recognized in the constitution. It turned out that Nimosôm's friend was also friends with the Pope! She later told Nimosôm that she passed on his request to the Pope, who then phoned Trudeau to ask that he show greater respect for Indigenous Peoples and their rights (or something along those lines...But you get my point!).

Who knows what eventually convinced Trudeau to change his mind. Probably the Pope's call didn't hurt, along with months of international attention and pressure from Indigenous organizations across Canada. Regardless, in January of 1982 the Canadian government finally agreed to recognize Indigenous rights within the new constitution. This recognition became written in as Section 35, which was patriated with the rest

of the constitution on April 17, 1982.

Section 35 is a prime example of how Indigenous rights and legal traditions have been overshadowed by settler laws and interpretation. In this episode I will talk about how we have long had our own laws and ways of doing things through our own institutions and foundations prior to colonial contact. The problem is that the Indigenous conception of law is not fully understood by Môniyâwak, but it doesn't have to be this way. I will show you how we have to open our minds and see the world a little differently than we are used to.

Part Three:
Section 35

But first I will return to Section 35 — that piece of legislation begrudgingly included in Canada's constitution following Indigenous activism across the nation and beyond shows us a really deep root of complexity. Section 35 falls outside the Charter of Rights and Freedoms mentioned earlier. This is significant because it implies that the federal government cannot override it. The two clauses that I want to highlight here read as follows:

> (1) The existing aboriginal and treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada are hereby recognized and affirmed.
>
> (2) In this Act, "aboriginal peoples of Canada" include the Indian, Inuit and Métis peoples of Canada.

On the one hand, these clauses represent what Anishinaabe lawyer John Borrows calls a "human rights triumph" (Borrows, 2010, p.187). They imply that the Canadian government is obliged to protect Aboriginal and treaty rights first and foremost, as failing to do so violates Canada's most fundamental principles as a nation. Thus, Section 35 can be argued to give Indigenous people a powerful means to limit the government's power, at least when that power infringes upon their rights.

On the other hand, though, the potential for Section 35 to *actually* protect Indigenous lands and ways of life is limited in important ways. One of these limitations stems from the vagueness of Section 35 — after all, what exactly are "existing aboriginal and treaty rights", and what does it really mean to "recognize and affirm" these rights? The Canadian government had committed to working with Indigenous representatives to clarify the meaning of Section 35 and did so by hosting a series of 'constitutional conferences' in the years following 1982. But the government representatives at these conferences were unwilling to agree to any spe-

cific definition of aboriginal or treaty rights. They repeatedly rejected the proposals of the various Indigenous representatives, stalling and frustrating the proceedings (Teillet, 2012). The challenges that Indigenous representatives faced at these conferences are perhaps best illustrated by the remarks of Ian Binnie — a leading figure in the federal Department of Justice. When asked what rights he thought *were* protected by section 35 at a Ministerial meeting prior to one of the conferences, Binnie responded that Aboriginal people "had the right to surrender land" (Sanders, 1990, p.125).

As a result of such attitudes, it has largely been left for the courts to interpret the meaning of Section 35. Over the past few decades, a number of court cases have shaped this interpretation. Some have developed and refined criteria to determine what exactly constitutes an aboriginal right. [7:26 7:52 A majority of all these cases, actually all of the cases are Supreme Court cases, and the reason why is when we look at aboriginal rights or laws everything is *sui generis,* meaning first of its kind, and because of that sovereign-to-sovereign notion of understand and ideology, the majority of Court cases, such as those, detailing aboriginal rights and titled have to go to the Supreme Court.] In the Supreme Court in R. v. Van der Peet (1996) decided that the criteria for determining whether a practice constituted an aboriginal right included whether the practice was "characteristic of their [aboriginal] culture" and whether it had "existed prior to contact with European society" and "continued to the present day". Other court cases have developed and refined criteria to determine what circumstances the government could 'infringe' upon aboriginal rights. For example, in R. v. Sparrow (1990) the Supreme Court considered the conservation of natural resources to constitute a "valid legislative objective" that could infringe upon aboriginal rights. In Delgamuukw v. British Columbia (1997), the Supreme Court broadened the scope of valid legislative objectives to include developing agriculture, forestry, mining, hydroelectric power, the general economic development of a province, environmental protection, infrastructure growth, and settling foreign populations (para 165). Other court cases have even played a crucial role in determining who is aboriginal. For example, the Supreme Court in R. v. Powley (2003) came up with 10 criteria to determine whether a person could exercise Métis rights. While the Court claimed that they were not defining a Métis identity, their criteria have had an enormous impact on this definition — after all, being able to exercise one's inherent rights is a critical part of being a member of the Métis nation, or any other Indigenous nation.

[9:20 11:44 So, can you guys see how they are still tweaking what is aboriginal rights and what are treaty rights? Further, there is a series of test I have developed; for instance, since R. v. Van der Peet in 1996, three questions are brought for: 1. Does this indigenous right exist even if it did

exist has it been extinguished? 2. Does this right appear to have been in French? 3. Is this enfranchisement justified? For example, risk to harm others are justifications. But another test was brought for. 1. Is this practice and questioning characteristic of that culture? This is contrasted with things that non-indigenous peoples also do or things that happen incidentally rather than being a routine part of that culture. 2. Did the practice exist prior to settler contact and continue to present day? Meaning no settler influence or contact can impact indigenous cultural traits, what this ultimately means is that anything that indigenous peoples did in the past has to stay into the past, not acknowledging that many indigenous cultures were adaptive, brought in other teachings, worldviews, insights, practices, you know, technology that suit them better, no! What the government of Canada basically says in all of these tests is that if you are a primitive culture, you best better stay primitive. Therefore, do not bring settlers contact, do not bring other conflict and influences, but also in the majority of all these tests is that is not indigenous peoples telling the Court system of how they did their practices, it is experts in the social sciences who are fundamentally creating further issues, especially if they do not understand the community, especially if they do not understand the language.

Do you get the points? Do you get how complicated and frustrated this is? Because if you do not have a definition why is a setter state defining for you. And the thing is that we as indigenous peoples, we have had laws, we have had structures. And I am going to share one with you right now.]

On paper, Indigenous people have 'won' many of these court cases. By this, I mean we've often been able to overturn specific convictions, charges, and other tactics the colonial government uses to infringe upon our treaty and aboriginal rights. But are you noticing some of the problems with how these cases are determined? How is it that a group of Canadian judges can create a process for deciding what our inherent rights are, and how important these rights are relevant to other "legislative objectives"? How well positioned are they to determine who we are as peoples? That would be like a group of Americans deciding which people can immigrate to Canada, and what those people can do once they arrive. It's another, significant limitation of relying on colonial laws like Section 35 to protect our lands and ways of life. And there are other, more subtle challenges too. One is that the Western legal system frames complex historical relationships between lands and peoples into a black and white zero-sum game, where rights for some means others lose out. Playing this game by pursuing litigation can create polarization and even turn Indigenous nations against each other (Voth, 2016). It's a classic colonial strategy, divide and conquer. Another issue is that relying on the Canadian Constitution and justice system for our rights reinforces the

idea that Canada is the ultimate authority here. The more we depend on Western ways of making and enforcing laws, the easier it is to erase our own legal approaches — approaches that have renewed our relationships with these lands since the beginning of time.

These approaches are very much alive. For the rest of this episode, I will give you a sense of this vitality, first by sharing an Elder Brother story.

Part Four:
Elder Brother and the Fox

The following story helps to understand what indigenous law can actually looks like or may be not the typical way that we understand legal traditions today, especially from a colonial perspective. Ka-kisikaw-pihtokew, *Coming-Day*, of the Sweetgrass reserve in the summer of 1925 accounts a story in the book *Sacred Stories of the Sweet Grass Cree*. Elder Brother over harvested and took more than he needed which is a breach against hunting traditions. While Elder Brother slept, the Winnebago people ate the food instead since they were in more need of the food than Elder Brother. As *Coming Day* accounted, the fox out tricked Elder Brother because he was naive to challenge the fox to a race:

> *""Oho, it's surely Fox has been fooling me again, eating up my geese! And so, I am to stay hungry!" he cried; "Ho, you have got me angry, Fox! The earth will not be big enough for you to escape. It was I who created the earth; I will find you; and when I find you, who ate up my geese!" cried [Elder Brother], as he went out to look for Fox.*
>
> *He had not gone far, when he saw him taking a nap, his belly all big; for he had eaten a hearty fill. He took up a stone, to strike him.*
>
> *"Yah!" he said, "I shall ruin his hide," he said; "I might as well have a cap of his fox-pelt!" he said; "I had better make a fire round him so that he chokes in the smoke," he said.*
>
> *The other was listening to what he said about him. So, then he made a fire, setting fire to the grass round about. When the blaze came, Fox got up. The smoke was getting too thick for him.*
>
> *"Ha," said [Elder Brother]; "Haha, just you eat up my geese again!" he said to him.*

> *Fox dashed about in a circle, this way and that, as the smoke grew denser. At last, [Elder Brother] could see him no more. Up leaped Fox, jumping across the flame, and making for safety. [Elder Brother] did not see how he ran away. At last, there was a big fire, and [Elder Brother] kept walking around it.*
>
> *"I have surely put an end to Fox; burning him to death," said [Elder Brother]; and when he saw the ashes lying, where there had been buffalo-dung, "Surely I have burned him to a sorry end!" said he; "I shall eat what is left of him, if there is any of him left from the fire," he thought; and he was going to take up the ashes there, thinking, "And this must be Fox, burned up in this fire," as he deceived himself.*
>
> *But it was not Fox, it had been all the "buffalo-dung".*
>
> *Even now he did not know that the other had got away. And so Elder Brother sat there, in the fire that he had made under the assumption that he had killed Fox, for Fox eating all of his geese, but the reality is that Elder Brother just ate shit." (Coming Day 1925 in Dion-Buffalo 1996, p. 231-232).*

Here Elder Brother, thinking he had killed a fox, ate "buffalo-dung" which teaches us as listeners that often retribution is not always as straightforward as we expect. The natural order and balance of the universe all worked itself out in the narratives of Elder Brother with key teachings and lessons. These narratives offer insights into how Elder Brother conveyed traditional law to the people and therefore it could function as a legal institution. Laws for the Nêhiyaw were Nêhiyaw wiyasiwêwina and these were human laws, of how to function in society that are found in the songs, ceremonies, and in all our sacred sites, especially of those of our stories or wiyasiwêwina (McAdam 2015, p. 23). These sites are often where Elder Brother and the 'other-than-human-beings' appear. The human laws of the Nêhiyaw are a part of Creation laws and are called Manitow wiyasiwêwina, the Creator's law. This story of Elder Brother and the Fox is a clear representation of what not to do and how to treat all of humanity.

Part Four:
Indigenous Law

Saulteaux legal scholar Val Napoleon (2016) writes that, "The only alternative to lawful societies is unlawful societies. Indigenous societies were lawful" (p. 1). Yet settler societies like Canada have consistently overlooked

and discounted Indigenous laws and legal traditions. There is a pervasive assumption within settler societies that before Europeans arrived, we lived lawlessly in nature, driven by instinct and desire. This assumption is used to justify the imposition of settler laws everywhere in our lives — from how we eat to how we raise our children to how we are defined as Nations.

One reason why settler societies overlook and discount our laws and legal institutions is because they look and feel very different to those of settler societies. Napoleon (2016) writes that "For the most part, Indigenous societies were non-state without formal centralized authorities or a separate delegated class of legal professionals" (p. 1). In other words, the power to make our laws, to interpret our laws, and to enforce our laws was not concentrated in the hands of a few. We didn't have a government controlling our lives from the top down, nor a system of courts, lawyers, and police that was (presumed to be) disconnected from the rest of our lives.

Instead, in Nêhiyaw culture, we are governed by four main types of law. Natural law is our most powerful law and is rooted in our understanding that us humans are recent arrivals to the world. The animals, plants, rocks, lands, and waters around us have been living here for far longer and have much to teach us regarding how to care for each other and thrive in a good way. We learn our natural laws not by extracting or manipulating our non-human relatives like Western science often does, but by asking our relatives with respect and humility and listening with all of our senses. When we do, we start to find just how much our relatives have to share — about, for example, how to store food, how to care for our children, or how to choose our leaders. We are very observant watching animals, watching each other, watching the very essence of our living world, just like how the bees work together in the hive, that is teamwork and leadership. Just like when the muskrat finds medicines in the water, we are aware of our societies both human and nonhuman and what they have to offer us. No one can control natural law; it exists outside of our control. Why does the flower bloom when they bloom? When do the birds know when to go south? All of that understanding of the world is much more powerful than we have ever given credit for.

Sacred laws, another type of Nêhiyaw law, "are given the highest respect as they extend from Manitow [the Creator] and are found in our creation story and ancient teachings that have stood the test of time" (Johnson, 2016, p. 120). These laws explain how our world was created and how to live with this world and overcome conflict. They were drawn on during the treaty negotiations when our leaders and the Crown commissioners carried out the pipe ceremony together. That's why we say that the treaty was made between three parties — us, the Crown, and the Creator.

That's also why we say that treaty will last as long as the sun shines, grass grows, and river flows. Sacred law can never be broken and the reason why we use our pipe in our ceremonies. In the majority of all negotiations, sacred law binds us to that universal power, the connection that is greater than ourselves.

Customary laws, a third type, emerge from doing things in a particular way for a long time. Through repetition, we learn what works and what doesn't, what's right and what's wrong, and who holds responsibilities and rights. [19:22 19:55 For example, it was made very clear to me by my mother and the grandmothers surrounding me that whenever my father or any man was sitting around us, it was clear that we were not supposed to step over their legs, we have to walk around them. And this was because of a teaching of how powerful women really are, it customary to treat men with reverence because we as women are very much more powerful. We do not outright to say that, but it is the practice of what we do in that tradition and customary knowledge that it teaches us how we are to behave in that context.]

So, it is very important to understand how customary laws are often unspoken, as we simply know what to do in a particular context through past experience and through watching others within a similar context. Another example for instance is a very simple straightforward example is how often in my culture we do not really greet each other with handshakes, when I am in my community, when I see a grandmother or Elder in my community that I know, I will actually greet them with a kiss on their lips, now I would not do that in academia for various reasons, but I am aware of the customs in my community versus those outside. This is insane that you do that in any particular community. It is only with individuals that you come to know and work with, and it does not matter whether they are male or female.

Nonetheless, these laws hold great importance in our society because they are a large part of what has allowed us to thrive in our territories since the beginning of time. This is not to say that our traditions are fixed, or that we are stuck in our ways. It is just that we hold great respect for the way that things are done, because we recognize that there is probably a good reason why.

A fourth type of Nêhiyaw law is traditional law. Our traditional laws have been passed from one generation to the next all the way back to the first generation of our people known as the "Otawâsimisimâwak", or *"children of Creator*". This first generation had an intellect like the Creator's own and were gifted with blessings that would grow into laws to guide our political, social, educational, economic, and structures and institutions. These traditional laws continue to persist in our changing society

through our "wiyôhtâwîmtâw, ceremonies, âcimowina, prayers, rites of passages, stories or oral narratives, kikisomowin, prayer, and kâ-atohpikihk kihci-isîhcikêwin, rites of passage, to name a few" (Johnson, 2016, p. 122).

These types of laws all appear to sound similar but that is because all of existence works together and cannot be separated.

Part Five:
Conclusion

Settler law is so fundamentally different from Nêhiyaw law, that it might seem impossible for them to work together or both be used in practice. But in fact, some Indigenous law teachings have been recognized by settler law. In regard to protecting landscapes, we can see how major rivers have been seen as animate beings such as the Vilcabamba River (Ecuador), Whanganui River (New Zealand), and Magpie River (Canada) (ReconciliAction YEG, 2022).

Recognition of personhood outside of human beings might not be so far-fetched if we consider corporations, which have the status of "personhood" in settler law. So, settler law has the ability to recognize at least some aspects of laws of some Indigenous Nations. But as I showed earlier with Section 35 and Indigenous rights, limiting the interaction of Indigenous and settler laws to mere *recognition* of Indigenous laws by the settler state can result in *regulation* of Indigenous rights by the settler state.

There is a long way to go for settler law to work with Indigenous legal traditions, as much of our teachings are found in our oral narratives. In the *Delgamuukw* case, oral narratives were considered evidence in settler courts (Temper, 2019), so steps have been made towards coexistence of Indigenous and settler law, and they could continue to find ways to work together.

Anishinaabe political scientist Heidi Stark (2016) writes about how 'our stories are law'. Much like we heard in Episode 1 for the Search for Truth and Justice, Episode 2 and the story of the Hoof Nation, and Episode 7 with the stories about our sacred beings, these are teachings of how we are to act and how we are to care for each other, humans, the natural world, and the unseen worlds all woven together (McCaslin and Breton 2008, p. 523). A weaving of coming together, this is how our laws are viewed and the foundations of our legal institutions. As my boyfriend told me, English cannot understand our Nêhiyaw world, and English can misinterpret our views – yes everybody, that's right, Creator humbled me

since episode 5 – am I no longer a stallion? But Eagle's Son is right, it is so easy to manipulate English for your own means, we cannot do that in Nêhiyawêwin, we cannot do that, we cannot lie, Nêhiyawêwin prohibits that ability. And so, when we think about law, we think about definitions, we think about interpretations that always come down to what it is the intend, and much like Creator's humbling, when we speak words, they are sacred, when we put that into the universe, it manifests. So, when I say that I will forever be untenable, the Creator rectifies that very fast.

Research Assistant

Giovanni Ursella

Keywords: *Wiyasiwêwina, Law, Indigenous Law, Customary Law, Sacred Law, Natural Law, Traditional Law, Human Laws, Section 35*

Glossary

Kâ-atohpikihk kihci-isîhcikêwin – Rites of Passage
Kikisomowin – Prayer
Manitow wiyasiwêwina – Creator's Law
Otawâsimisimâwak – Children of Creator
Wiyasiwêwin – Law
Wiyasiwêwina – Laws
Wiyinikêwina – An act like weaving
Wiyôhtâwîmtâw – Ceremonies, âcimowina, prayers, rites of passages, stories, or oral narratives

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Episode Nine:
Wîhtikow

Paulina Johnson, Emily Quecke, and Sam Dancey
With Stories and Ancestral Knowledge from Brian Lightning

Synopsis: Known as the windigo or the wetigo/wetiko, the Wîhtikow is an entity of Nêhiyawak culture that has been misunderstood by popular culture. In this episode, Dr. Johnson explains "the cannibal" through a series of oral narratives and stories to share the truth and the fate of our society as told by the Ancient Ones who walked the land before. All we can say is watch out for "rolling head" …

Part One:
Introduction

In 1916, Alanson Skinner, an anthropologist who worked at the American Museum of Natural History and of the American Indian/Heye Foundation, detailed a story of the Wîhtikow. He wrote:

> *"[Elder Brother] traveled on. He met a Cannibal, and they went on together, looking for a place to camp. They soon found one, and the Cannibal sent [Elder Brother] to cut eight sticks to roast him. [Elder Brother] brought seven and wept. The Cannibal sent him for another stick, and on his way, he met Weasel, whom he begged to kill the Cannibal, promising to make Weasel pretty. Weasel went and ran into the Cannibal's backside. [Elder Brother] got the stick, and when he returned, he found the Cannibal dead, for Weasel had killed*

> *him. [Elder Brother] was pleased. Therefore, he painted Weasel white, with a dark tip on his tail. Then he went on traveling. (Skinner, 1916, p. 350).”*

This story is insightful but not complete. Anthropologists such as Skinner were in the field in the late 1800s and early 1900s attempting to salvage the last remaining remnants of Indigenous peoples made possible by the myth of the “vanishing Indian.” Yet these narratives are not competing in the works of Skinner, James Stevens or Leonard Bloomfield, and most certainly, David Mandelbaum, all social scientists who have written about the Nêhiyawak. This is particularly important due to the misunderstanding or mistranslation of Nêhiyawêwin, our language.

Within my community, the weasel is a sign of leadership and courage because the weasel is what adorns our Okimawak, the Chief’s headdresses. Yet, the story shared by Skinner goes a little further than what was presented, as it was also known that Elder Brother had actually become possessed by a Wîhtikow, or as Skinner has mentioned in his story, the Cannibal. And so, the story of the Wîhtikow continues:

> *“‘Grandfather! What are you doing here in the forest on such a cold day? An old man like you should be sitting in the warmth of your [lodge].’*
>
> *Then the man raised his sagging head and the great [Elder Brother] saw that the old man was not a human. His eyes were a strange shiny colour; they looked as if they were made of ice. The man said nothing, raising a birch-bark horn to his lips. Suddenly, Elder Brother realized he had spoken to a [Wîhtikow]. The Wîhtikow blew the horn, casting a powerful spell over the helpless [Elder Brother].*
>
> *‘Come to me!’ the Wîhtikow ordered.*
>
> *[Elder Brother] walked up to the creature.*
>
> *‘Go into the forest and bring back wood for a great fire,’ commanded the Wîhtikow.*
>
> *Soon [Elder Brother] came back with his arms full of wood.*
>
> *‘Return to the forest, [omitted] and obtain a long pole which I can roast you,” Wîhtikow said laughing.*
>
> *Spellbound he returned to the forest to find a stick he would die on. [Elder Brother] was powerless but he could still talk. And he came upon a weasel.*

> *'Oh, little brother, please save me from the [Wîhtikow]. He has placed me under a spell and soon I must roast myself on this long pole. If you cannot help me little one, I am doomed!'*
>
> *The weasel sat up on his back legs and said, 'I will help your big brother, but you must do as I say. Do not take back a straight stick, find a crooked one and return with it. I will see if I can help you.'*
>
> *[Elder Brother] searched for a stick with many twists and knots and then returned.*
>
> *'You are very slow,' said the Wîhtikow, 'the fire is almost out.'*
>
> *When [Elder Brother] gave the stick, the Wîhtikow shouted in rage.*
>
> *'I want a straight stick, you fool! Return to the forest and bring me a straight pole!'*
>
> *[Elder Brother] went back to the woods again. Soon he found a long true birch, chopped it down, and then started dragging it back to the Wîhtikow. When he got near to the creature, he heard a scream.*
>
> *'Aaaaaaa,' shrieked the Wîhtikow. When [Elder Brother] arrived the Wîhtikow was laying in the snow clutching his chest. The small weasel stood by proudly.*
>
> *'I have bitten his heart,' the weasel said, 'he cannot live.' As the Wîhtikow died so did the spell.*
>
> *'You have saved my life, little brother. How can I help you?'*
>
> *Again, the weasel sat up on his back and thought. After a while, he said 'my fur is one colour, [Elder Brother], I would like another colour on my coat.'*
>
> *[Elder Brother] sat by the animal and painted the tip of the weasel's tail black with charcoal from the fire. This is why the weasel has a black tip on the tail today." (Stevens 1971, pp. 31-32, edited for clarity).*

And so, this is why the weasel is revered for his courage through commitment to serve others under the circumstances, even in fear. So, I want you to remember that Chief and Council, especially our chiefs and espe-

cially those who have been given honorary headdresses. This is why the weasel is a sign of leadership, but there is more to Wîhtikow than we are well aware of given these two previous stories.

Part Two:
Popular Culture Misinforms

The Wîhtikow has been grossly misunderstood and co-opted in popular culture and Western academia. In books, movies, TV, and podcasts, from Stephen King to Supernatural, the Wîhtikow is portrayed as a cannibalistic monster stripped from its original cultural relevance. These depictions essentialize and villainize the Wîhtikow by separating it from the Indigenous culture and worldviews in which it originated. Ojibway scholar Brady DeSanti (2015) dissects the Wîhtikow portrayal in media and his analysis has noted that there are traditional characteristics of the figure that are seemingly random and arbitrary. In some uses, the Wîhtikow resembles a zombie, using the cannibalistic feature of the Wîhtikow story without the teachings or deeper meaning. Sometimes the figure resembles a werewolf and this stems from interactions between Indigenous communities and French voyageurs, but this portrayal often does not include the cannibalistic elements of the entity. Sometimes these portrayals will portray the Wîhtikow as having a vulnerability relating to their heart which relates back to Indigenous stories of the Wihtikow, for example the Ojibwe believe that defeating a Wîhtikow can be done by melting its frozen-over heart, or as we have seen in the previous story the Wihtikow is killed by the weasel biting the heart. This shows that these portrayals sometimes co-opt and twist traditional aspects, leaving out and including details at random. This highlights the indifference settler creators show to the sanctity of the figure; by neglecting to use the whole, they disrespect the original intent.

Not only is the way the Wîhtikow portrayed in Western culture wrong, but it is also harmful. While the figure is stripped from its original cultural meaning, it is still associated with and recognized as an Indigenous figure. In typical Western depictions, the Wîhtikow is a ‘savage’ beast, representing the lawlessness and fear of nature through cannibalism (De Santi 2015; Hunchman 2020). By connecting Indigenous culture to this creature that is to be feared, settler writers reaffirm narratives that Indigenous people are something to be conquered and controlled. Think about it, a story of a white protagonist will always show a villain lurking in the shadows, so evil, vile, and primitive that it turns against its fellow man in the most graphic way possible, and that antagonist will likely be Indigenous. What kind of lasting impact does this have on Indigenous and settler viewers? This portrayal affirms that what has been done to Indigenous people through settler colonialism is justified, necessary, and

commendable.

In Academia, there is a detached fascination with Wîhtikow stories. White scholars use the cannibalism element of the Wîhtikow to pathologize Indigenous psychology (Carlson, 2009). These scholars operate through a Western perspective which ignores Indigenous cosmologies or just worldviews. These scholar operates without a proper understanding of the cultural context in which the Wîhtikow exists; scholars misuse and misunderstand the point of the Wîhtikow and focus solely on the cannibalistic elements as reflective of Indigenous psychology. From this settler perspective, academics,

Outside of the northern Algonquian belief system, [Wîhtikow] has alternately been described by academics as a culture-bound psychosis, a culturally localized manifestation of paranoid schizophrenia, a correlate of a scapegoating and witch-hunting behavioral complex leading to 'triage homicide,' and a culturally mediated 'performance.' (Carlson 2009, p.371).

This prescription of Western academic phenomena onto Indigenous cultural stories is a great example of the harm which is created when cultural teachings and stories are taken outside of context. This is one of the many reasons Indigenous peoples are cautious with which cultural stories they share, and who they share them with. Because the thing is just because you do not understand it in your culture does not make it any less or not valid for those cultures that see it the way that they do.

Part Three:
Wîhtikow

The truth is, the Wîhtikow as a concept of cannibalism is contrary to general Indigenous ideologies. The story of the Wîhtikow teaches a cautionary tale.

The prairies or "grassy place" were filled with living spirits, hungry spirits, and different spirits (Dion-Buffalo, 1996, pp. 69), and the teachings of their presence are important learning tools in how to live a good life. Wîhtikow was a "supernatural, cannibalistic creature who lived in an "earlier time" – a time when different conditions of human society and existence existed" (Dion-Buffalo, 1996, pp. 69), but the values of the spirit are important to draw from as:

[Wîhtikow] is a symbolic figure whose significance is multiple and inexhaustible. The [Wîhtikow] being expressed itself in 'dreamlike' and 'contrary' language, symbolic words that related to cultural values. For in-

stance, the [Nêhiyawak] underlying structures and practices were based on the sharing of resources, wealth and materials. [Wîhtikow], on the other hand, represented the spirit of selfishness and overindulgence. In fact, one of the original meanings of '[Wîhtikow]' referred to a person who has become engrossed in oneself. And to be too self-engrossed is to become selfish or envious... By being 'wrapped up in oneself' means becoming abnormal, unnatural or aberrant. In the end, what the Cree culture seems to be saying is that one needs to really see this shadowy figure. And to accept and work with this supernatural creature of the woods, through equality or mastery, or else face the consequences (Dion-Buffalo, 1996, p. 69).

Insights into an earlier time present cultural values and beliefs about how one is to act. The narrative of the Wîhtikow expresses how working together is essential as an individual to remember the whole of the people and Nation. Wîhtikow expresses how one can be selfish, and this was a teaching given to my dad and his cousins when they would try to hoard all the chocolate cake as children. The Ancient Ones left us clues into how to live accordingly through our origin and being, that we are allowed a glimpse into the complexity of our interrelated view on life. Where teachings of honesty, truth, and integrity shape our mindset and how we view the world since we must balance right and wrong (Johnson, 2017, pp. 128-9).

The Wîhtikow is that overconsumption, that taking of more, but also of selfishness, the coldness, the coldness of the heart to not open it up to others. And if you remember in the previous episode talking about *iskwew,* the heart, the woman. What happens when that warmth is no longer given?

The Wîhtikow has important implications for modern-day colonial resistance. Nishnaabeg scholar Leanne Simpson has discussed using the Wîhtikow figure as a metaphor for settler colonialism:

"[Wîhtikow] is often used to refer to colonialism and its capitalist manifestations, particularly around natural resources. The state is seen as having an insatiable hunger for natural resources, to the point where it will eventually destroy itself through over-exploitation" (Simpson, 2011, p.70).

As such, Simpson suggests that stories of resistance to the Wîhtikow can give new insight into how Indigenous communities can effectively resist settler colonialism and resource exploitation. In presenting a story of resistance, Simpson identifies that strategy and sacrifice are key learnings. The idea of sacrifice raises notions of collectivism that echo the original intent of the Wîhtikow stories.

Powhatan-Renapé and Delaware-Lenápe scholar Jack D. Forbes published *Columbus and Other Cannibals,* first in 1992 and then in 2014. He describes Wîhtikow as a disease, stating that "the rape of women, the rape of the land, the rape of a people, they are all the same" (p. xviii). He emphasizes that education, as we know it today, is separated from ethics, creating a world where educated people facilitate the exploitation that has characterized and thrived in the 20th and 21st centuries.

Indigenous ideology generally emphasizes only causing harm when necessary; animals and plants are only consumed based on the necessity that we all must eat to survive and that one day we too will die and be eaten by other organisms. We are all relations, so killing and eating must be conducted respectfully, removing as much brutality as possible (Forbes, 2014). Going against these principles, then, is to destroy one's own potential and is thus a sickness. Forbes (2014) then defines cannibalism as "consuming another's life for one's own private purpose or profit" (p. 24). The hunger felt by the Wîhtikow can never really be satiated. They are said to have a void that no amount of consumption can fill, always starving for more (Levy, 2013).

Exploitation by the wealthy is then a literal consumption of the lives of those they have exploited, completely devoid of respect for the lives of others (Forbes, 2014). The Wîhtikow way of thinking is the very foundation that European behavior and thought are built upon. Those who do not wish to exploit are labeled outsiders and become the Other. The increased prevalence of this ideology coincides with the rise of so-called 'civilization.' Thus, those not sick with the Wîhtikow are seen as unevolved, uncivilized, and barbaric. Isn't that ironic, given how the image of the Wîhtikow has been twisted in popular culture?

The progress of the Wîhtikow disease is a process of dehumanization and, as a result, humanization, or re-humanization, is the way to restore our way of living (Forbes, 2014). However, this is not limited to just humans, and it must include the recognition of the interconnections of the natural world, that all living things deserve respect.

Part Four:
Canadian Law

The Wîhtikow story is more than just a concept. Rather, it guides Indigenous law until today. Law professors Val Napoleon, a member of Saulteau First Nation, and settler Hadley Friedland (2018) discuss Wîhtikow as a law category comparable to the current understanding of criminal law. Both criminal law and Wîhtikow are manners with which a society can comprehend and react to human acts of harm or violence. Napoleon et

al (2013) in *Mikamosis and the Wetiko*, a short graphic novel details an event in 1878 where a woman, Sap-Was-Te becomes possessed by the Wîhtikow spirit, Mikamosis, directed by an Elder, will release the remaining spirit of Sap-Was-Te to Creator, but unknowing to the Northern Nêhiyaw community, new laws in settler Canada were emerging and these will change Mikamosis' fate. He will be tried with murder. While Mikamosis followed Nêhiyaw law, and also Nêhiyaw law without the compassion to release the soul back of Sap-Was-Te, he would be trialed under white law, and unfortunately, would be hanged. Indigenous law practices were outlawed by the Candian government, aind importantly, force was used, especially seen as the example of Mikamosis. But the thing is that force was necessary as a last resort when the Wîhtikow controlled Sap-Was-Te. As a result, the only people seen as legally allowed to use force were the colonizers, and this force was used extensively in efforts to 'civilize' Indigenous populations. Despite extensive evidence of collective decision-making and reasonable thought, Indigenous responses to Wîhtikow were dismissed by Canadian courts. Indigenous peoples were patronized and labeled as 'child-like' and incapable of reason (Napoleon and Friedland, 2018. p.7). This led to the persecution of Elders and other Indigenous people acting within Indigenous law.

There is some degree of incorporation of Indigenous law into the framework of the Canadian justice system (Napoleon and Friedland, 2018.). This, however, is typically confined to the sentencing phase and often applied as pan-Indigenous. Additionally, the aspects of incorporated Indigenous legal traditions tend to be characterized as 'practices' or 'values' rather than law. This comes as the perception that Indigenous people being overrepresented in the justice system is due to 'cultural difference' rather than systemic oppression and discrimination. These additions of 'culturally appropriate' practices, including Family Group Conferencing and Sentencing Circles, are a way to address Indigenous over-representation within the confines of the dominant Canadian legal system. The participation and control of the community are limited, and the government still maintains control. However, the opening for discourse still renews and keeps the legitimacy of Indigenous legal concepts alive, allowing for the continuation of the informal application of Indigenous law.

But importantly within the story of Mikamosis and the Wîhtikow, we start to see how two worlds are actually colliding in that narrative, what it is one taking precent without seeing to the eyes of the other.

Part Five:
Conclusion

The Wîhtikow (also referred to as Windigo/Wetigo/Wetiko in other sources), is known throughout the Algonqian Indigenous communities, but so much more it is not understood. Within my culture further, whenever someone hears the name "Wîhtikow," it is blurred by misinformation. Take, for instance, the Wetikokan, who are the contrary spirits who go counterclockwise rather than clockwise and are there specifically there to restore balance. They are healers in our Sundance and can often be seen in Pow Wows. They are chosen, and we do not choose that role. Yet, their name resembles the unknown, scary, cannibal terminology of misinformation. We, as Nêhiyawak, know that we are not perfect, but we can help minimize whatever we have done to overstep and ensure the universe is set right.

For the Wîhtikow, I recall a story from Nimosôm Brian Lightning about 'Rolling Head.' I will finish the episode here by sharing what he told me, the short version, of course. Come find me for the longer one:

> *"Long ago, a man came across a woman in a clearing so beautiful that he knew she needed to be his wife.*
>
> *She told him she could only marry if they stayed near the clearing where he had seen her. He, of course, agreed.*
>
> *They settled near the clearing and soon had two children, but further to her request to stay there, she made it clear that he should never follow her. He, too, agreed to her request.*
>
> *However, one day, like all curiosity, he decided to tell her that he was going hunting but would wait for her to leave their home as she had always done and follow behind her to see what she was doing,*
>
> *To abide by the cannibal that possessed her, she would go every morning to the clearing where her husband saw her and lay down on the ground allowing the cannibal to have her.*
>
> *Feelings of betrayal and madness made the husband scream in disgust at what he saw.*
>
> *Knowing her secret was out, she gave in to the cannibal and became one too.*
>
> *She attacked her husband, and soon after, their children*

came looking for their mother, as it was no way later than when she usually returned. They saw their parents fighting, and quickly the husband yelled, 'She is no longer your mother, you have to run!'

They fought as the children ran away and as she dealt him a hit into his chest that slowly killed him, he gave one last hit on his end, and the husband gave a blow that decapitated his wife and he died. Yet, she was not dead.

Her head continued to chase her children, and this chase continues today. You can still see her children running, and they are the north star who are bright together, and down below is a smaller star that for numerous generations has slowly gotten closer to the north star that is believed, when she catches them, all our world will be left to the Wîhtikow, who only takes and takes, and consumes."

Sounds pretty similar to capitalism and where we are right now if you ask me. I think we know that Wîhtikow today is more real than any myth, legend or story, as the Wîhtikow is portrayed in popular culture. Do not let rolling head get us!

Research Assistant

Jude McNaughton

Keywords: *Wîhtikow, Wetigo, Wetiko, Canadian Law, Indigenous Law, Colonialism, Misinformation*

Glossary

Wetikokan – The Contrary Restoration
Wîhtikow – Other Being with a heart made of ice

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Episode Ten:

Âtayôhkêwina & Âcimowina

Paulina Johnson
With Stories and Ancestral Knowledge from Brian Lightning

Synopsis: Ever heard a story growing up and always wanted to know more? Come learn about the two types of oral narratives used in Nêhiyawak culture and how they speak of times before and after Elder Brother and what values, customs, and beliefs are embedded in their delivery. Find out small insights that will keep you captivated again just like when you were younger. These are the stories of Dr. Johnson's people but keep in mind, not everything is simply myth and fantasy.

Part One:
Introduction

My older sister Becky and I would always test the limits of what our mother Luci would tell us, meaning if she told us not to do something, we would. Like whistling at night, we would be outside much longer than we were supposed to as children, and then we would both stop to look at each other. Right then and there, we knew it was on, one of us was gonna whistle, and as soon as one did, both of us would be hauling ass to get inside as fast as possible if not before the other, I am not gonna lie, there was some pushes and shoves, and a lot of tears sometimes, but this exactly was taught to us as children not to whistle at night, but importantly not to whistle at the Northern Lights, and today, I can guarantee it to you,

that we still absolutely do this. Not our proudest moments but still relevant to understanding how we as Nêhiyaw view our world, and especially what the western world calls myths and legend, we call the fourth world – we may not see it, but we know it is there. This is important because my people do not write down our knowledge, but we speak it, and especially speak much of our world into existence.

Therefore, our words are powerful as evident in our oral narratives that give insight into the past realities and traditions of people's lived experiences and livelihood. Often referred to as oral history or oral tradition, I shy away from using those terminologies based on the fact that when some hear "history" or "tradition" they root the experience into myths or fantasies much like the use of the term story or folklore. Oral narratives encompass cultural beliefs and customs and offer the ability for Indigenous youth to learn from their Elders and specifically, develop their identity as Indigenous peoples navigating differing worlds from the ancient ones who walked before us. In addition to those reasons, when oral history is talked about it is often defined in the Western World as the study of recent pasts, meaning the life histories or personal recollections of individuals and where informants speak about their own experiences, and where oral traditions are solely handed down by generation by generation (Henige 1982 in Cavender Wilson, 1997, p. 102). Oral historians rely on reminiscences, hearsay, or eyewitness accounts of events and situations that are contemporary, or that have occurred during the lifetime of an informant. And where oral traditions are passed from mouth to mouth, during a period beyond the lifetime of the informants, and are seen to no longer be contemporary (Vansina 1985 in Cavender Wilson, 1997, p. 102). Therefore, these definitions made about oral history and oral tradition are limited, because oral traditions live in oral history for Indigenous peoples and therefore, I state oral narratives to legitimize the experiences layered in culture and tradition and to emphasize that they are in fact living story of truth.

Oral narratives allow for personal experiences, pieces of information, events, incidents, and other phenomena to become part of the tradition the moment it happens or the moment they are told, only as long as the person telling the story belongs to an oral tradition (Vansina 1985 in Cavender Wilson, 1997, p. 103). This definition implies that those who belong to an oral tradition would be able to relate aspects of oral history, however, not everyone relating to oral history necessarily belongs to an oral tradition. Oral narratives must be learned and embodied through a series of life-long events and training.

The life-long events and training will be revealed throughout this episode as a presentation of how âcimowina, *oral narratives,* are used in Nêhiyawak, Four-Spirit culture. We will reveal how Indigenous traditions and protocol are fundamental to the Indigenous mind and self-preser-

vation. We will begin with how the Nêhiyaw People use *oral narratives* and the importance of Indigenous knowledge keepers through primary sources found in pieces presented by Nêhiyaw scholar Winona Wheelers' "Cree Intellectual Traditions in History," and Nêhiyaw scholar Neal McLeod's *Cree Narrative Memory: From Treaties to Contemporary Times*. We will then conclude with an analysis of why Nêhiyaw âcimowina gives so much depth to our reality and world by sharing small insights into the customs, beliefs, and worldviews of my people.

I would like to state that I am by no means an expert in Nêhiyaw tradition or oral narratives, and through cultural protocol, I do not have the right to share stories that are not my own or others since my learning, much as Wheeler (2010) states in her work, "will take a lifetime" (p. 48). However, in a process of learning and by presenting Nêhiyaw traditions, we will recognize crucial elements of life ways held within oral narratives. And to quote Richard Preston's (1975) view on oral narratives, they "...have been the basis for understanding Nêhiyaw experiences" (p. 3), and it is through âcimowina that memory and the past are transmitted (McLeod, 2007, p. 10). Because Nêhiyawîhcikêwin, Nêhiyaw Culture, is an oral culture, a listening culture.

Part Two:
Âcimowina & Âtayôhkêwina

The Nêhiyaw have two common forms of stories called âtayôhkêwina and âcimowina; where âtayôhkêwina are sacred stories of how the world was shaped, when animals and humans could talk, and when Elder Brother transformed the world of misadventure, love, and mischief we have come to know today and where âcimowina account a time after Elder Brother (Wheeler, 2010, p. 48). Storytellers teach lessons about greed, respect, and humility, to name a few; many use Elder Brother as the main character as he is a cultural hero amongst the Nêhiyaw (Innes, 2013). To obtain stories and teachings takes a commitment to the storyteller who we often refer to as the Old People or as Elders. It must be noted however that one cannot simply go in and out of Old People's lives without establishing bonds, familiarities, and reciprocal relationships with them. The Old People are living sources and their ways of knowing and teaching must be considered within their own contexts (Wheeler, 2010). From how they understand the world around them to the cultural values and laws that they live by, the Old People are strong in their roles as keepers of community knowledge (Wheeler, 2010). What differentiates the Old People from other storytellers is based on the root words of our language and how we define their role.

Kêhtê-ayak can be a kisêyiniw, Elder, or kisêyiniwak, Elders, and who

stand by their Nation as people who have demonstrated throughout their life's generosity, skills, and wisdom (Wheeler 2010, p. 48). Late Alex Bonias from the Little Pine First Nation in Saskatchewan gave the analogy that a kisêyiniw is like a duck beating on the ground with its wings to distract a potentially dangerous predator, thus giving its little ones enough time to run and hide (Wheeler 2010, p. 48). Kisêyiniw is derived from the word "kiséwew" which means protector, and therefore, an Elder does not only teach valuable lessons but protects the young as they encircle themselves around their children and grandchildren (Wheeler, 2010, p. 48). With the greatest respect, the kêhtê-ayak would tell stories for the youth to ponder and think about or ones that were told with great exuberance.

If the youth did not believe the kêhtê-ayak, the Elder would stick a knife in the ground and state to his audience, "if you do not believe what I say, you can use this knife on me" (McLeod, 2007, p.12). Many of the Old People were hesitant to claim that they completely knew the oral narratives and began with namôya mistahi ê-kiskêyihtamân, "I do not know very much," or used the phrase to emphasize their own limitations (McLeod, 2007, pp. 15-16). Being humble is a core value and a grandfather teaching of our culture. Storytellers would acknowledge how they came to know a story, and statements such as "my father had told me," Or "this comes from my mother," indicating an "oral footnote," like Western culture's bibliography or references (McLeod, 2007, p. 16). Filled with compassion, empathy, and kindness, the Old People are the embodiment of Nêhiyaw culture and very much the resource that still needed today, to share the understandings of how we view our world, how we come to know and the direction of where we are going (Johnson, 2017, pp. 27-8).

Part Three:
The Power of Words

Words have an unspeakable power they can heal, protect, and counsel, but importantly, cause harm (Wheeler, 2010, p. 55). Nêhiyawîhcikêwin, Nêhiyaw culture, indicate that spoken word is sacrosanct, so early in life one is advised to speak with care because words are manitôkiwin, which means that speech is equivalent in effect of making something sacred or making ceremony (Wheeler, 2010, p. 55). Therefore, when the Old People accept tobacco from someone seeking knowledge and share the pipe, they are committing themselves to tell the truth, and are bound by the presence of the Creator to speak from their heart (Wheeler, 2010, p. 55). The pipe is the direct connection to the Creator and when the treaties were signed the pipe was used at the beginning and ending of every set of Treaty negotiations, and as late Pauline Pelly, elder of the Saulteaux band states, "we as Indian people when we want to tell the truth we put

it in the hands of the Creator" (Wheeler, 2010, p. 55).

Breach of negotiations when the pipe was smoked indicated pâstâhowin and indicated that breaking such vows "bring about divine retribution with grave consequences" (Wheeler, 2010, p. 55). The Nêhiyaw believed that the use of the Bible by Treaty Commissioners was a solemn promise to God, and so it was believed that pâstâhowin applied as well (Wheeler, 2010, p. 55). Therefore, it is believed that the Creator gave all people the spoken word and the ability to memorize so they can keep their laws, lessons, and histories protected for future generations. Although some Peoples have turned away from the spoken word in favour of writing, nêhiyawîhcikêwin oral traditions remain strong (Wheeler, 2010, p. 55).

Though oral history has remained a strong entity of Indigenous communities, there is still the lingering fear of the repercussions of losing oral histories and tradition. According to late Elder Atimoyoo Smith, the Old People were polite when they doubted something in a story someone was telling, and though they never accused the storyteller of lying they would simply state, âyanwêtêman, "*I don't believe it*", however, times have changed and "Lies are different today" and ki-tâpwê-towino, "*we believe differently*" (Wheeler, 2010, p. 57). Smith a respected elder and purveyor of Nêhiyaw knowledge and history presented what he meant to Winona Wheeler by stating:

There are so many things today that distort the way we see and believe, that distort human memory, so many old stories, but we start to believe what we are told now. Start to believe what they [non-Nêhiyaw peoples] tell us to know and we don't believe the old ways anymore. We start to believe we are not alive, what we believe is obliterated…They will make us believe that black is white, that's how powerful it is. That's how the stories of our Old People get so far away. We just try to grasp it. A person will turn into an animal, he did turn into a weasel, he did turn into a coyote, to get away from the people who were trying to kill him, to survive. I didn't get that stamina and thinking to make me into something. And so, really, I'm becoming nothing (2010, p. 58).

Much of what Nêhiyaw people took to be true has become lies because non-Nêhiyaw culture, and this is a sad reality. And unfortunately, because we cannot take the intangible and make it tangible with the science and western knowledge of the existence, they are seen as phantasy, myths, legends. Notions of truth cannot accommodate known Nêhiyaw realities and so in this way, much is being lost (Wheeler, 2010, p. 58). The inability to see Nêhiyaw customs in their own context has inhibited Western Culture and academia to properly understand âcimowina and has caused the teachings and significance to become lost in translation and/or silent

on paper.

There remains the challenge of trying to integrate Other Ways of Knowing into history, and it requires alternative ways of learning and understanding to be established (Wheeler, 2010, p. 59). Thus, a series of Indigenous scholars ranging from Anthropologists to Historians have taken it upon themselves to ensure oral history and tradition are upheld and has marked a movement forward from the Western perception of Indigenous culture to actually retell and reclaim our stories from our own point of view.

Part Four:
Insight into Living Stories

The following insights of our stories shed light on how we view our world. The Giant, known as Mistahâpêw, is also known as Kitchi Sabe, or Bigfoot, and is from a different world. The Giant is a reminder that we are not to stray too far from nature, or we will forget ourselves and is linked to the Seven Grandfather Teachings and relates to honesty for it is said that you always hear about honesty but often never see it, just like Sabe.

Then there are stories of the Little People, or mêmêkwêsiw, who are sacred beings. According to Brown and Brightman (1988), 'Little People' live on riverbanks in the prairies and may perform some tricks on people who are not believers. Have you ever had a piece of jewelry go missing? Well, you should then offer up a gift to them for its return and they like gifts that are shiny and valuable. I also hear they like candy. For William Dumas, a Rocky Cree from O-Pipon-Na-Piwin Cree Nation (OPCN), the 'Little People' appear as three different kinds:

> 1. Those who look short and burly.
>
> 2. As "static-voiced people"; and
>
> 3. Those who resemble human beings or medicine people, trappers, mappers and hunters (Dumas, 2022).

I have also been told of the time when the Battle River ran red near my community when we were fighting the Blackfoot but there were mermaids seen as our men had trapped one Blackfoot warrior who reached the ridge that led down to the river. Exhausted from running, he fell down the side of the hill leading down till his body reached the shoreline. Soon something came from the river, it was half man and half fish, and it pulled him into the river. The late Philip Soosay also tells a story of the half man and half fish (Lightning 2023, personal communication).

He said that two warriors were out scouting on their horses when they decided to make a bet when they came up upon a raging river. They bet each other to see who could get the closest to the shore with their horses without falling off or in. The first warrior went, and he got close, and then the next warrior, who was the son of the Chief, went. However, he went too far and too fast, and fell into the raging river. He kept bobbing up and down until the third time he didn't come up. Distraught, his friend kept trying to help him, but it was too late as he was swept under, but his horse was on the other side of the river.

Upset, the lone warrior went and delivered the news to the Chief. The Chief gathered medicine men to help see if they could see if they could find or know the fate of his son. The medicine men said that the Chief's son had become half fish and half human. Because the half fish-half man gave him that option, that he would not survive but he could continue on living as half fish-half human. One of the camp's hunters went back to the spot where he had fallen and as he approached it, he heard two people talking but didn't understand the language the two of them were speaking. They heard the hunter and immediately dived into the river, and the hunter saw that there were two half man-half fish.

The last insight I will share is that of the Northern Lights, kâ-nîmihitocik, who are our ancestors who are dancing. The Northern Lights are our ancestors and our relatives who have passed on, when the big dipper is upside down this is call the spilling of spirits and they are dancing to enjoy the night, and they can be seen. We are taught not to whistle at them because that is how they speak or communicate. There are different ways to communicating in the fourth world or the spirit world. There are multiple stories of individuals who whistle and do not reappear for months later thinking it's only been a few hours. These insights are only the tip of what is known within my community and my People's knowledge. There are much more layers to our existence and our living stories. When we think of them and how they exist it is layered in multiple generations of coming together to connect, share, recite, and inform. All of this is integral to how we come to know, how we will shape those who come after us, and how we will lay our tobacco down for gratitude for the gifts left to us in âcimowina and âtayôhkêwina.

Part Five:
Conclusion

Âcimowina sheds light into the Nêhiyaw world and importantly, what is at stake. Where many are fixated on showing me proof or I cannot believe it, our world has many layers that you are not aware of. You just have to have faith that it is there because we as Nêhiyawak know it is

there and when it comes the time for the next generation to take their place and carry the stories of our existence, our memory will continue on within them, and this is the very reason we do not have a word for history, because our world is not in the past. Our world is alive, breathing, informing, redesigning, and reinterpreting. Layered in my voice are the voices of numerous Elders, Old People, Knowledge Holders, Mothers, Fathers, Aunts, Uncles, Children, and the unseen who have walked this land, lived and thrived, and whose memory is carried in my blood veins. Therefore, these are not just stories, they are the past embedded in the present, and the future of my people's world that is needed today. That is why we do not write down our history because, to quote Wheeler once again, our "brains [are] like paper" (McLeod 1947, pg. 1123 in Wheeler 2010, pg. 54). Importantly, my existence is more than what meets the eye. And so, my fellow Nêhiyawak, remember that you are generations loved, embolden with ancestral knowledge, and continuous love and admiration for our bodies carry the stories of where we have gone, where we will go, and the prophecies of what is to come, we are star people after all so the magic of universe lives inside us and importantly our stories.

Research Assistants

Sam Dancey, Sophia Margaret Iligan, Gina Jimenez, and Ellie Tu

Keywords: *Elders, Storytelling, Past, History, Memory*

Glossary

Kêhtê-ayak – Old People, also Elders
Kisêyiniw – Elder
Kisêyiniwak – Elders

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Episode Eleven:

The Man from the Sky

Sîpihkokîsikowiskwew
Blue Sky Woman
with solidarity by Luke Aaron Wonneck, Juan Guevara Salamanca, and Sam Dancey

Synopsis: The history of museums and the acquisition of Indigenous materials has long been in contention. In this episode, we discuss one of the most significant Beings to Indigenous Nations in Alberta, Manitou Asinîy. For the first time, in her voice, Dr. Johnson shares her experience as a former steward of Manitou Asinîy and the aftermath of dehumanization, whiteness, and loss, that is all too real an experience for anyone. The question still remains, who owns Indigenous ancestors that are kept in museums? And whether or not reconciliation actually exists? For all Nêhiyawak, Assiniboine, and Saulteaux Nations you're going to want to hear this episode.

Part One:
Man in the Sky

> *They said he came into our world with a great burst of light all around him. A messenger of times that would come but also given the power of healing and restoration. He was the man from the sky, a spirit, gifted to us to honour and pray to. He was said to have travelled throughout the world when-*

> *ever he was called upon, but now, he cannot. He needs the power of the night sky to restore himself and needs to see his home within the stars so that he can connect to those who have long waited to see his face again. He comes from the sky world, a place that is more powerful than the world we have here. Many say he looks like a buffalo; others see a face in his outline, but for those who know him, he is Manitou Asiniy, an embodiment of the Creator themself. A gift to the people who know the stories layered in his presence but felt the healing power of all those who lay their hands on him. A portal to a world we have yet to truly know. He is to be honoured with gifts of sweetgrass and tobacco so that he can carry our prayers above. But for those who need him most, he carries our pain within him. And I think so often how interconnected we truly became.*

This episode is not any other typical episode. In this episode I will have my research assistants Juan Guevara-Salamanca and Luke Aaron Wonneck narrate the story of Manitou Asinîy, as I share with you deeply, intimate, and personal accounts during my time at the Royal Alberta Museums and what I witnessed. It is no doubt that Manitou Asinîy is contentious. But we will lay the facts down here, for the first time ever. Accounting what it happened to me, why I took the stance that I did, and why it is important to hear these truths. So, I talked to you not as Doctor Johnson, but as a Sîpihkokîsikowiskwew - Blue Sky woman.

Part Two:
The Stealing of Manitou Asinîy

Manitou Asinîy, the *Creator's Stone*, is a living being that has profound gifts to be shared with the people he was sent to. It is believed that Manitou Asinîy has sacred powers conferred by the Creator, Manitou. To colonial institutions such as the Royal Alberta Museum, he is a 145kg meteorite composed of Iron and known as the "Iron Creek Meteorite." (Royal Alberta Museum, 2021; Plotkin, 2014; Lowey, 1993).

Methodist missionary George MacDougall stole Manitou Asinîy in 1866. For him, the stone was no more than a meteorite, an interplanetary rock full of minerals and chemical elements that had fallen from the sky. In a letter written in 1869, McDougall referred to Manitou Asinîy as a strange formation composed of pure iron, soft to the touch and easy to dismember due its softness (Plotkin, 2014).

MacDougall recognized that the Indigenous people held great reverence for Manitou Asinîy and believed that this reverence was hampering

his efforts to Christianize and civilize. So, his actions, or one of his collaborators, resulted in the stealing Manitou Asinîy. According to his own admission, they loaded up Manitou Asinîy in a horse cart and carried him all the way to Victoria Missionary, near present day Smoky Lake, Alberta (Plotkin, 2014).

When our people realized that Manitou Asinîy had been stolen, they considered it a sign of times coming. Elders made prophecies of war, disease, and famine that would come as a result. These prophecies came true within the next four years after the abduction of Manitou Asinîy. As the buffalo became increasingly scarce, a smallpox epidemic killed half of Indigenous people on the prairies, warfare and killing increased as people became desperate: "The Cree and the Blackfoot, although historical enemies, fought like never before. A smallpox plague further decimated the tribes. And within two decades, the buffalo that once numbered 40 million would disappear from the Western plains" (Lowey, 1993, n.p.).

Even MacDougall's family confronted the consequences of stealing and alternating Manitou Asinîy. All of his family members, with the exception of his wife, contracted smallpox, and three of his daughters died from the disease (Plotkin, 2014).

MacDougall eventually realized that Manitou Asinîy was not attracting any more Christian converts, so he shipped Him to his alma mater, Victoria College in Cobourg, Ontario. From there, He was donated to the Royal Museum of Ontario, where it remained for almost a century. During his time at the Royal Museum, scientists vandalized Manitou Asinîy. They wanted to 'understand it better' – that is to say, they wanted to fit Manitou Asinîy into Western systems of knowledge. So, they took samples, dismembering him by sending his parts all over the world, so Manitou Asinîy was classified, signified, objectified, and his self never truly recognized.

In 1972, Manitou Asinîy was shipped back to the prairies. Not to Indigenous people but to the Royal Alberta Museum in Edmonton. He came on a 'long-term loan' (Lowey, 1993), to sit there ever since and to be "safe" from thieves, vandals and to be publicly accessible. Our communities have continuously requested the settler's State for the return of Manitou Asinîy to its original site since it was first taken, we have constantly demanded for his return to home. In February 2021, these efforts gained momentum. A group of Elders held a ceremony with Manitou Asinîy at the Royal Alberta Museum. It was determined that Manitou Asinîy needed to come back home. Connections were made between Indigenous nations, the provincial government and the farmers who currently occupy the land where Manitou Asinîy original site is located. In September

of 2022, it was announced that the Creator's Stone would be returned to his home or at least to a new facility being built near to his place of origin (Ekelund, 2022).

These first steps towards the repatriation and restitution of Manitou Asinîy are not without problems due to its financial dependency to the provincial government and future administrations to maintain and support His permanence in this new facility. This process is still going and, as of today May 26 of 2023, Manitou Asinîy is still being held by the Museum.

Part Three:
The Problems with Museums

Museums can exert a preserving force on humankind, they are containers of the memory of ancient civilizations whose latest traces are encountered in these particular spaces destined for their survival. However, recent debates about their colonial role and how they have served colonial and imperial objectives are destabilizing and reconsidering their societal role.

For Waxman (2008), museums are being held accountable as the vehicles used by Western empires to preserve and actualize the loot of entire continents under the banner of the preservation of humankind. European countries explored and conquered the world to extract and steal significant cultural materials of various peoples as trophies of the conquering results (Waxman, 2008).

Waxman (2008) centers her critique on the current role of European museums regarding fellow countries. Their justification for holding and preserving the culture of other civilizations relies on the lack of conservatory resources and socio-political stability of those countries where these civilizations flourished. However, museums also serve a particular purpose in colonial societies where the power of settlers requires constant actualization. Museums articulate and present a particular narrative of the history, in singular, and foster nationalism for colonial states. Particular knowledge is displayed and prioritized, typically colonial perspectives that establish themselves as the norm (Buijis, 2016; Leischner, 2022). While another non-Western knowledge is portrayed as pre-modern and mythical.

An actual example of this situation is how the Royal Alberta Museum (RAM) presents a significant narrative that historically locates Indigenous peoples as the 'past.' Indigenous peoples are represented as 'primitive' people within a Western and progressive understanding of time by displaying artifacts such as stone tools and arrowheads. This image reinforc-

es the message that Indigenous societies are 'unevolved' and savages, closer to the imaginary of the origins of humanity and thus less human than white settler colonizers. These representations can be problematic by consolidating an artificial division of 'us vs them' that has functioned to justify injustices, inequality and genocide (Leischner, 2022).

It is also usual to observe how artifacts are displayed as void containers in need of signification by western knowledge. Objects and artifacts of the material cultural of Indigenous communities are usually removed from their context and relationalities when displayed at museums, creating a void of significance that is filled by the narrative of the colonizers. Then, objects are interpreted and given a meaning by museum curators that usually reproduce the knowledge and culture of western white settlers, not the Indigenous peoples who created or relate to those objects (Gormon, 2011).

Also, material culture items, reframed in the spatialization of museums, are kept isolated in controlled rooms and usually through protected thick glass, preventing any interaction. Without the relationships between people and objects, the stories of artifacts and objects are distorted, and their agencies diminish due to this constraining display. Thus, the focus of museums is to showcase the reach of the conquered knowledge over different cultures, eradicating the violence and suffering inflicted to bring and keep these elements in museums (Nicjolas and Bannister, 2004).

Vast collections are held in archives and museum storerooms, preventing Indigenous peoples from interacting with elements of their own culture. Museums and other such institutions have tight control over who has access to knowledge, ensuring colonial narratives remain intact and reproduced by the general public (Anderson, 2018). Many museums occupy large swaths of land located in urban centers, often centrally located, giving the illusion of accessibility (Gormon, 2011). However, city centers are often many hours away from Indigenous territories and lands, and access to them is restricted by etiquette, dress codes and entry fees, impositions of liberal multicultural Canada. This sociocultural distancing impedes Indigenous communities have regular access to their own culture and material history. Additionally, preserving efforts are often paternalistic and exclusionary in nature. Institutions prioritize conserving objects in their original condition, not trusting Indigenous peoples to take care of their own culture. This exclusionary treat maintains the image that they are people of the past, fragmenting their identities (Buijs, 2016).

Further, objects are often not handled properly based on Indigenous customs. Some items can only be handled by certain groups of people based on gender, age, wisdom or role in the community. Since Indigenous procedures and methodologies are recorded in oral narratives, it is difficult to establish assertive communication with a colonial mindset to

understand how things are done the way they are (Liechner, 2022). The misrecognition of these relational practices is harmful and results in a lack of respect for Indigenous laws and cultures.

Museum exhibits tend to uphold stereotypical depictions of Indigenous people, not just in Canada, but around the world. The collection of precious artifacts that are either monetarily or culturally valuable is a demonstration of power and colonial traces as well as an act to preserve cultures and humankind's history. The acquisition of cultural objects, and subsequent display, have historically followed Western ideas of trade and looting, which often meant that to Indigenous people, they were stolen (Smith 2012).

While some museums across Canada and the United States have started to engage with Indigenous communities and Elders, the legacy of museums is fraught with colonial violence. Farrell-Racette (2016) articulates this legacy of Indigenous Peoples to the troubling relationships to museums. This current manner to relate is defined by an authoritative power that define and signify material culture while deciding who has access and when. It is important to highlight how the mechanisms used to homogenize the historical narrative of indigenous peoples also blurs the diversity and particularities of each community, restricting relations and negotiations to certain groups while leaving behind others.

Part Four:
Repatriation

Currently, repatriation is one of the main relevant topics discussed in museum studies around the world. Repatriation can be understood as a process of returning and restituting objects of cultural significance to Indigenous communities that were taken under false pretenses. Repatriation processes should aim to repair and recognize the systematic pillage inflicted by Europeans and their *colonial matrix of power* over indigenous communities through the ages (Quijano, 1992; Mignolo, 2008). However, much of this repatriation is centered around colonial ideas of ownership, and not on the right to reclaim and rewrite history or histories (Waxman, 2008).

In Canada, the repatriation and restitution process mainly focuses on transferring the ownership title, aligning it with Canada's legal system. This is problematic as it creates a fictional assumption regarding their control and ownership that in various cases removes the agency of Indigenous peoples and communities, while prolonging the invisibility of other entities such as Manitou Asinîy life forces, by limiting him as another exchange object.

For the Mohawk curator Deborah Doxtator (1996), ownership is relevant but not in terms of what you legally owned, but in the responsibility and relational character of the ownership. For her, to own is to be responsible "of who you are and what you belong to" (p. 56); otherwise, someone else can appropriate and own the right to define ways of living.

Under a conflicting and constant clash of legal and traditional systems, such as Canadian legal system and indigenous traditional laws, the proof of ownership of the material culture can be tricky. For this reason, authors, such as Jennifer Kramer, argue that the idea of simply physically moving an item may not be sufficient to properly repatriate it, and she encourages developing a figurative repatriation that utilizes "metaphorical acts of self-definition" (Kramer, 2004, p. 172), to overcome the difficulties of physical repatriations.

Even though this proposal seems to pave a way to establish a linguistic connection to (re)claim ownership, it makes it invisible and diminishes the knowledge and roles of these materials in our culture. Much like animals and other natural elements, objects and artifacts have a life-force. This means that proper repatriation, beyond the symbolic/figurative (re) claiming, must address histories, reestablish agencies and follow necessary protocols to restore relationships between Indigenous peoples and sacred material culture.

Additionally, repatriation and restitutional processes force Canada to confront the historical production of a national idea as a consequence of colonialism and genocide, while new historical claims are being presented (Buijs, 2016). Institutional and State-driven museums embody the position of colonizers and/or privileged classes, they capture and control historical narratives through their curated expositions and collections. Indigenous communities and their cultures are usually represented as absent, assimilated and/or disappeared inhabitants of the State territory. Our recognition of existence is fixed in the colonial narrative that seeks to preserve a contained story told by those who tried to provoke our extermination. Repatriation should be considered as a process for repairing the violence caused and to acknowledge the vivid presence of indigenous communities and our historical struggle for survival.

In Alberta, *The First Nations Sacred Ceremonial Objects Repatriation Act* regulates this process of reparation. This Act, enacted in 2000, was last amended in 2013 and revisited in 2016. This act was created by the province and the Blackfoot nation. It explicitly applies to the RAM, the Glenbow-Alberta institute and the Blackfoot nations (Government of Alberta, 2016). Nationally, there is no legislation on repatriation. The report *Turning the Page: Forging New Partnerships between Museums and First Peoples in Canada* form 1992 presents a series of procedures to de-

velop the repatriation of material culture, although it lacks legal binding. Bourgeois (2023) argues that this is not necessarily problematic since the lack of a national legislation provides opportunities to indigenous communities for exercising their sovereignty and rights in the negotiations for repatriation; however, it can also be taken as an excuse for certain organizations and governments due to the lack of guidelines and procedures.

For this reason, repatriation in Canada obeys to the institutional context and the state of the relationships between holders and claimants for repatriation (Bourgeois, 2023), i.e., between usurpers and thieves and indigenous peoples.

For authors such as Kramer (2004), true repatriation may be difficult to occur through the Canadian legal system, not only for the lack of legislation but for the protection of national interests in favour of the museums who have become custodians of the colonial and imperialist narratives. History has shown us that Indigenous regulations are respected depending on the level of support to colonial and white settlers' objectives (Leischner, 2022). To avoid the recreation of colonial acts, it is vital that any repatriation efforts occur with the leadership and protocols of indigenous peoples. These processes should attend to our needs and the exercise of our violated rights, following the wisdom and direction of our ancestors and the responsibility to own a future for the generations to come.

Part Five:
Sîpihkokîsikowiskwew

A note on this section: *Dr. Johnson, did not draft a script prior to recording, she simply stated how she felt to be complete authentic and vulnerable. Below is the transcript, edited for clarity.*

To give context in 2017, after I recently completed my PhD, I took a job at the Royal Alberta Museum. I was to be working alongside others to be the caretakers of the sacred and ceremonial objects and the collections. But importantly, Manitou Asinîy. Within my first week, I realized that there was a lot that I did not feel comfortable with. And I felt a lot of pressure placed on me to remedy or also fix unknowingness or naivety. I thought long and hard as to whether or not I should actually continue in the position. And I wasn't too sure if I wanted to be there, based on my internal instinct, I sat down with the Elders that I had worked with during my dissertation and told them how I was feeling. And they agreed that there was a reason why Creator had put me there, that Manitou Asinîy what didn't put me in a place of harm. That there was a reason for me there. I learned very fast, how much of a threat I was with not only my

PhD, but my cultural background, my understanding of the protocols, the teachings and the customs, amongst colleagues who were non-Indigenous.

I was made to feel like my knowledge was inferior. Even though I had grown up within the community and had taken the stance that I did to protect the ceremonial objects, and importantly Manitou Asinîy. There was a time when I was told that I should let others speak from my community, because they have children within my community. But no one will speak for my community, unless they are rightfully born within my community, and to tell an indigenous woman to lay down her voice, especially when she has the opportunity to have that power to have that stance is ignorance, but also racism. I will never lay down my voice for anyone to tell me how I'm supposed to be treated, how I'm supposed to be respected, but also how I am to be acknowledged. When it became clear that my knowledge was not what they wanted, they wanted me to be silent. They wanted me to be Indigenous in the presence of the public, of media. They told me that a person who has 30 years working with Indigenous communities has more right to speak and advocate than Indigenous communities themselves. I was also informed the *Cree*, the *Soto*, and the *Assiniboine* were referred to as "*non-Blackfoot*" communities. The thing is a term like *non-Blackfoot* should never happen. What was also distressing was the idea that the *Cree*, the *Assiniboine,* and the *Soto* are not ready for the repatriation of their sacred and ceremonial materials. That a study or report completed in 2004 said that they weren't ready, said in 2018 they still weren't ready. When asked if this had been updated, it was made clear to me that because 2004 had that statement, it wasn't going to happen to the *Cree, Saulteaux, Assiniboine* communities. And as an Nêhiyaw, no one who is not from the community, should make that statement, whether or not there's a report, stating that; that was what, 14 years prior? I've talked to communities, I've listened to them, many are ready. But if you willingly stand in their way because you still think they're not. Because you say, put stipulations on them. Oh, you should have temperature controlled, displays, security. That's just another form of ownership and control.

And you may say that you as a non-Indigenous curator or the like, has the community's best interest in mind, but when you use social economic realities against us, you're always going to win the game. But further to that, there was never respect given to me. Never care. Never love, or kindness, intimidation and fear are clear. And white tears of white woman are the demise of me actually ever completing the final ceremony that I needed to do. As I moved all of the sacred and ceremonial materials and when Manitou Asinîy, I was placed in charge of that, treat it as if I didn't do that work, made up to be the hostile Indigenous woman, the trope who was so hard to work with. But the thing is, I grounded everything in

ceremony and protocol. I never once stepped out of line, especially when working with the elders that I did. I tried to uphold my community's values as best as I could, given the circumstance. And when I had enough, I wrote a complaint, a respectful workplace complaint, that was given to two of the individuals. And then another one was filed against me. I was never treated with equity. I was never given the opportunity to tell this. And so, I tell it here now, I've carried this for the last five years, not telling many people what happened to me, not wanting to know them what I felt.

I was so optimistic that with all the education I had, the training, the experience of working in museums, the Federal Art Museum, the Peabody Essex Museum in Salem, Massachusetts, with curators from the Smithsonian, that I had the ability to do this work. But the thing about reconciliation and Indigenization as people want Indigenous peoples, but when we come there to do the work, it's not in the systems or frameworks that they want us to do it. It's still in colonial embedded methodologies. And methods used are still colonial. So, we cannot be fully Indigenous. I thought that with my joy and optimism, that maybe I could get through to them, that I could share them, the truths. But they didn't want to hear they undermined me. They made me resent my people. I didn't live my life the way that I did before, because I was absolutely crushed and devastated. My doctor didn't want me to go back to the museum because she could see it in my face. Everyone could see it on my face. I didn't tell my parents what was going on. Because I didn't want them to know that I was hurting, but they knew. For those of you who know me, I golf quite adamantly, I didn't golf for three years because I just felt defeated. I would go into my classrooms teaching, trying to put on a brave face but afterwards, breaking down in my office. Because I wanted to be that strong Indigenous representation. I didn't want to dim the fire of my students, I wanted to protect them from the grips of whiteness embedded in these institutions. That made me feel as if I didn't belong, that I didn't deserve happiness. I thought often about leaving academia, that I didn't want to be part of this world anymore. I felt like I also had failed the ceremonial objects in the collection, that I'd failed Manitou Asinîy. I never got a chance to say, "See you later". I haven't been back to the museum since October of 2018. They watched everything that I did. And I think of that as if you're going to watch everything I do, then you know that you are in the wrong.

It took me years to tell this truth, and though I may cry, it's not tears that are of pain, but of my own healing because if I hadn't done what I'd done if I hadn't put myself on the position that I have. The Elders were right. I was there for a reason. It made me harder, but stronger, wiser, more capable of knowing what my strengths and power are. Yes, I may have fallen. But what I rebuilt, what I stand on now, the voices that are in this

podcast with me, the students who are there with me, the colleagues who have known me, know that all of that was lies, because I wasn't going to be the trope. I'm not someone you can take their voice away from. And I may have felt alone in my stance against them because I really did. But I want to say thank you because I really finally know how powerful I am. And Manitou Asinîy, I say this to you, my dear man in the sky, I have never forgotten you.

Part Six:
Conclusion

The reality exists that materials in museums have much more meaning than that truly known. In 2023, there is no reason for materials to not be returned to the respective communities and Nations, and additionally, if institutions speak of reconciliation and coming to learn, evidence of the treatment of Dr. Johnson shows there is still much work needed to be done. Luke and I, present this knowledge here alongside Dr. J to protect her spirit, but also her emotional labour. She shared all that she could not for pity, but to emphasize this reality is an aspect of who she is and will always be - separating her culture and education from each other is the problem because then you are asking her to choose. We end this podcast here knowing that justice is not always given to Indigenous people, but we can make a difference uplifting her voice her within the truth, and we stand in solidarity with her for the greater good of what is needed to be heard and done.

Research Assistant

Jude McNaughton

Keywords: *Manitou Asinîy, Creator's Stone, repatriation, ceremonial objects, museums, objectification, harm, reconciliation*

Glossary

Manitou Asinîy – The Creator's Stone

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Episode Twelve:

A Good Relative

Luke Aaron Wonneck, Juan Guevara Salamanca, Sophia Margaret Iligan, Marieliv Flores Villalobos, and Paulina Johnson

Synopsis: At this point in the podcast, our Môniyâwak (Settler) listeners may be wondering, now what? How can I, as a settler, armed with education and understanding of Indigenous realities, show active solidarity with Indigenous advocacy and anti-racism work? This episode addresses solidarity and proposes ways that settlers can become good relatives to Indigenous Peoples, Culture, and Livelihood.

Part One: *Introduction*

In this podcast, I've been sharing stories of the various forms of injustice that Indigenous peoples continue to be subjected to in our land that white settlers call Canada. If you have been listening to the previous episodes, you have heard a little bit about how the Canadian state has violated its responsibilities as a treaty partner, by stealing our land for resource extraction and settlement. You have heard about how the residential school system, the Indian Act, and other government policies have enabled this theft by removing us from our land and attempting to assimilate us into Canadian society. And you have heard from how representations of indigenous peoples in museums, history textbooks and other forms of popular culture helped us move over these injustices by making it seem as if we're "*savage*," frozen in time, childlike, dangerous, and to blame for all the harms we have experienced.

In this podcast, I've also shared stories of some of the many ways that Indigenous peoples have been creatively challenging these injustices and renewing our ways of life, from the Constitution Express Movement that forced the government to recognize inherent rights, and the 1984 constitution. To the Mîkiwahp teachings that continue to be passed down from our grandmothers, mothers, and Auntie's. But if you are a môniyâwak, or *settler,* listening in by this point, you might be wondering what role you can play in moving your government and society towards a more relationship to more than just a relationship with indigenous peoples. Can your actions interrupt some of the ways that colonialism and racism continue to be perpetuated in Canadian society? Can you provide meaningful support to Indigenous struggles for land and sovereignty?

In this episode, I will begin to address these questions. I will start with words of caution, highlighting some of the harms that have been done and can be afflicted by well-meaning môniyâwak who want to act in solidarity with Indigenous peoples. My point here is not to discourage these actions altogether, but rather to show how difficult it can be for môniyâwak to challenge colonial systems and narratives that they themselves are part of. I will then reflect on questions that can guide môniyâwak towards forms of solidarity that actually support Indigenous resurgence and decolonization.

Part Two:
Môniyâwak Solidarity

Some groups and individuals of Canadian society are beginning to confront the colonial legacy of the country. Over the past couple of decades, especially increasing numbers of môniyâwak are becoming aware of interpersonal and institutional forms of discrimination faced by indigenous peoples, the history and horrific impacts of residential schools, the ongoing human rights violations, such as a lack of potable drinking water on many reserves are few of many. While some might not continue to dismiss these injustices as issues of the past or of indigenous peoples on making many others feel moral, if not legal responsibility to reconcile relations with Indigenous peoples. A few môniyâwak are even considering a few môniyâwak are even considered. Or even recognizing that such reconciliation requires the resurgence of a digital sovereignty and are willing to act in solidarity with us to create a space for this resurgence.

On the face of it, this growing interest in reconciliation and solidarity is a very positive thing. I mean, it sure seems to be a step up from the kind of blatant anti indigenous racism that was created in the past system or the ban on our ceremonies in the first half of the 20th century. Plus, through our principles of countability rationality, our worlds and môniyâwak are

deeply interconnected. We cannot change one without challenging the other. This means that we need môniyâwak working with us, for us, using their privilege and power within monarch society, to transform colonial institutions and structures, and to create space to reclaim our lands and ways of life. As Anishinaabe legal scholar John Burroughs, and Canadian political theorist James Tully (2018) put it, "robust practices of assertions, often, though not always need to be coordinated and nested within robust, nonviolent, contentious relationships of transformative reconciliation with support of settlers, just as practices of resurgence require the same kind of empowering constant, empowering contestation, contestation, coordination, and reconciliation within and among Indigenous communities'' (pp 4-5).

More subtly though, the growing interest in reconciliation and solidarity from within môniyâwak society presents its own concept presents its own set of dangers to Indigenous resurgence. Chief among these dangers is a tendency for would-be môniyâwak "allies" to inadvertently co-opt and impose limitations on our resurgence (Nadasdy, 2003; Coulthard, 2014; Flowers, 2015; McGuire-Adams, 2021). This tendency exists because môniyâwak assumed that their legal systems, forms of governance, and ways of knowing are natural, neutral, universal and fair. Thus, when môniyâwak see an injustice in our world, their first instinct is to try to solve it in terms of these legal systems, forms of governance and/or ways of knowing without realizing, that by doing so, they are cutting out much of what is important about the injustice, or how it could be addressed. The end result of this co-option is that Indigenous peoples continue to experience injustice, and môniyâwak feel good about themselves, or alternatively frustrated Indigenous peoples do not seem to appreciate their efforts.

This all seems to be a bit theoretical. So perhaps a couple of examples will help. The first example takes us to the mountains of Kulane territory, in what is colonially known as a southwestern *Yukon*. In recent decades, territorial federal governments have tried to move towards more, "cooperative forums," of wildlife management with local indigenous communities. However, American anthropologist Paul Nadasdy (2003) argues that this trend towards "co-management" is somewhat of a "mixed blessing for Indigenous peoples" (p 1). While co-management arrangements do provide local First Nations with concrete tools for protecting their lands, participating in these arrangements has a significant impact in First Nations ways of life and note and knowledge systems. For example, Nadasdy (2003) notes that "First Nations have... had to completely restructure their societies by developing their own bureaucratic infrastructures modeled on and linked to those governments with which they must deal" (p. 2). One of the effects of developing these infrastructures is that First Nations peoples are required to maintain them by taking on office jobs, which means less time out on the land practicing their way of life.

Nadasdy also examines how during co- management meetings Indigenous peoples are forced to learn and speak the language of wildlife management and property law, which includes implicit assumptions that contradict Indigenous understandings of wildlife and lands as relation. When First Nation Elders and hunters object to these assumptions, for example, by raising concerns about the slaughter of older adults, sheep rams, because of their roles as teachers to the younger rams, they are simply ignored by government biologists (Nadasdy, 2003, p. 127). This is not because government biologists are intentionally racist or apathetic but because, "within the context of contemporary bureaucratic wildlife management and land claims negotiations, decisions/concessions simply cannot be based on anything other than Euro-North American assumptions about land and animals" (Nadasdy, 2003, p. 8). Thus, co-management subtly undermines the integrity of Indigenous Knowledge, by distilling out only those bits and pieces that can be understood within a Western scientific and legal framework.

The second example of the dangerous môniyâwak reconciliation of solidarity, takes us to the frontlines of protests against the Kinder Morgan pipeline expansion. This particular means of protection took place on Burnaby Mountain, British Columbia in 2014. It was initiated by the local Indigenous nations and supported by a large number of settlers. However, Leey'qsun scholar, Rachel Flowers (2015) observed at the protests that the intentions of the môniyâwak were "to prevent the destruction of a Conservation Area and confront corporate greed, rather than to oppose the infringement of Indigenous sovereignties'' (p 35). The môniyâwak believed that the publicity of being arrested would be served for their best intentions, and thus chose to defy a court injunction. Rather than remain on the frontlines with indigenous peoples. They gained their publicity, and most face no criminal charges, and were soon released. Flowers (2015) notes that, "the inherent contradiction in this was loss of many who failed to connect their actions to a politics on the ground: that bodies are needed at a blockade to make it effective, but also, that in the city of Vancouver, Indigenous peoples are frequently arrested, brutalized, or killed at the hands of police, and do not have the privilege and do not have the privilege of willfully walking into an arrest with full knowledge that their lives will not be threatened" (p. 36).

These examples come from two distinct contexts and evolve very different forms of (attempted) reconciliation and solidarity. Yet they highlight similar limitations of such reconciliation and solidarity. In both examples, the môniyâwak involved assume that their goals, ideas, and values are equivalent to Indigenous goals, ideas, and values. In both examples, there's a reliance on môniyâwak-defined and controlled processes and institutions to address these goals, ideas, and values. In both examples, there is a resulting devaluation and restriction of Indigenous lifeways and claims of sovereignty.

Addressing these limitations is complex and context specific, far beyond the scope of a 30-minute podcast episode. After all, at a fundamental level, it requires taking part of the colonial narratives and institutions (for example, government bureaucracies), that guide môniyâwak assumptions, and putting back together Indigenous ways of life in their place. It's a bit of a chicken and egg problem really – what do you change first, the systems or the people? However, I want to leave you – in particular môniyâwak [readers] – with two questions to keep in mind as you begin to continue your own personal journeys of supporting this chicken and egg making. I encourage you to continue to ask yourself these questions regardless of whether you find yourself in a government office or a pipeline blockade. Doing so will not only make you an innocent môniyâwak – in my mind, but there's also no such thing. Rather, repeatedly asking yourself these questions may help you recognize when your actions are, and could be, undermining indigenous resurgence so that you make changes or if it's not possible, at least remain open to the possibility that such changes need to be made.

Part Three:
Two Questions

1. Am I doing my homework?

The first question to ask yourself is, am I doing my homework? This question is important because Indigenous peoples and môniyâwak tend to grow up with completely different understandings of history and their place within it. While Indigenous peoples experienced the reality of settler colonialism on a daily basis môniyâwak are taught that they got to where they are through purely hard work, and they belong to a peacekeeping country that has always treated Indigenous peoples with fairness and civility – other than a few unfortunate mishaps and "bad apples" (Regan, 2011). Like I mentioned before, môniyâwak are taught that Indigenous people are dangerous and primitive, responsible for our own problems.

Unlearning these teachings – and learning a more accurate version of history in their place is difficult work is difficult work. Unfortunately, Indigenous peoples are often the ones who have to bear the brunt of this work. Môniyâwak will come along – whether as a bureaucrat, or "fellow protester", or a researcher with a vague idea that they want to act in solidarity with Indigenous peoples or contribute to reconciliation. But they will have all these false notions of the past, and present, realities of Indigenous people in their head, and little to no understanding of our laws or of the history of our efforts to resist and transform colonial society. Cor-

recting these false notions and bringing people up to speed on our Nation and its history not only takes time, but it also takes emotional labour. It can be painful to be exposed to racist beliefs, even if they are unintentionally racist. It can also be painful to recount our history for reasons that are hopefully obvious by now. Thus, the môniyâw's attempt at solidarity or reconciliation turns into a relationship of extraction, as the môniyâw gains knowledge and legitimacy at the expense of Indigenous persons or people (Ferland et al., 2021). In other words, the môniyâw's efforts end up perpetuating colonialism rather than confronting it.

But it doesn't have to be this way! The môniyâw can use their own time and energy to do some basic learning about the ongoing history of colonialism and reflect upon their role within the history and how they have benefited from it. They can also begin to explore how Indigenous people in Canada and in particular, in their region, have been actively resisting colonialism and fighting for the resurgence of their lands and lifeways. Listening to this podcast is a great place to start this learning and reflection (yes, of course I will toot my own horn! Because God damnit, I deserve it). And there are growing numbers of books, articles, reports, documentaries, blogs, and yes, even other podcasts that you have access to. Many of these sources of information are referenced in the notes of this episode, and in other episodes. You can also learn a lot by attending public presentations, workshops, performances, or even certain ceremonies that are led by Indigenous peoples who are actually supported for the educational and spiritual work they are doing. Just be sure that when you attend these types of events you are not taking space or resources away from Indigenous people who may also want to participate.

Doing and redoing this kind of homework will help to reduce the amount of time and emotional labour required of Indigenous peoples who might work with you. But I want to emphasize that this homework does not make you an expert in our histories. Reading about colonialism and Indigenous resurgence in a book is no substitute for experiencing these realities over generations. This means that despite your best efforts the Indigenous peoples you work with will always need to devote at least some time and emotional labour into your education. It's important not to forget that. Further, the fact that you will never understand colonialism and Indigenous resurgence in the way that Indigenous people do, means that you should not be leading efforts to decolonize our society. Instead, Indigenous should be leading these efforts.

2. Am I taking space from or creating space for Indigenous-led decolonization?

This discussion flows well into my second question for môniyâwak listeners to consider as they attempt to act in solidarity with Indigenous people. That question is: "Am I taking space from or creating space for Indig-

enous-led decolonization?" In theory, the difference between these two alternatives is very obvious. On the one hand, taking space means you are prescribing possibilities for what decolonization can look like. In other words, you are making decolonization 'fit' within your existing agenda, whether that agenda is economic profit, social justice, or environmental sustainability. Taking space often involves literally occupying positions of authority within decolonization movements that could otherwise be occupied by Indigenous people. It occurs through attempts to "include" or "integrate" us, and our knowledge, into your existing institutions and decision-making processes, without challenging those institutions and decision-making processes (Gaudry and Lorenz, 2018). It is enabled by the assumption that Indigenous people and môniyâwak are in the "same boat," and therefore what is good for môniyâwak will also be good for Indigenous people (Powys Whyte, 2018).

On the other hand, creating space implies actions that open up possibilities for Indigenous people to define what decolonization looks like. Such actions tend to be oriented towards disrupting existing colonial institutions and processes that are currently preventing us decolonizing ourselves and our society (Steinman, 2020). These actions may also involve mundane or supportive roles within Indigenous-led decolonization movements — roles that Métis scholar Chelsea Vowel describes as "doing the dishes" (see Kreuger, n.d.). Or they may include respecting and upholding spaces where Indigenous people can access, be themselves, and learn together without being subject to the gaze, the questions, or the expectations of môniyâwak. Métis scholar David Garneau (2012) calls these spaces "Irreconcilable Spaces of Aboriginality." In all cases, actions that create space for Indigenous people to lead decolonization require a lot of trust. In particular, such actions require you — as a môniyâw — to come to terms with the fact that decolonization may seem incompatible with your social justice aspirations, or your environmental goals. Further, decolonization may not draw on forms of knowledge and reasoning that you are familiar with. As Eve Tuck and Wayne Yang (2012) put it: "Decolonization offers a different perspective to human and civil rights-based approaches to justice, an unsettling one, rather than a complementary one. Decolonization is not an "and." It is an elsewhere" (p. 36).

This all sounds fine and good in theory, but in practice, it can be very difficult for môniyâwak to tell whether they are in fact taking away or creating possibilities for the "elsewhere" that Tuck and Yang refer to. For example, in the co-management case I described earlier, the government bureaucrats seemed to believe that they were allowing the First Nation to have a voice at the table, when in fact they were constraining that voice to the Western language of wildlife management and property law. Colonial assumptions and practices have infiltrated our society so thoroughly that môniyâwak may perpetuate them without recognizing

they are doing so. Further, putting your trust in Indigenous people and ways of knowing is foreign and scary for môniyâwak — definitely not how you have been trained. This is why I advocate for you to continually ask yourself whether you are taking or creating space throughout your attempts to act in solidarity, and really throughout your life more broadly. The more you seriously explore this question in different contexts and with different people, the easier it will be to account for the spaces that your actions may be creating and taking, sometimes simultaneously. It's like developing a skill, a muscle memory. This practice may help you to learn not only about the reality of the colonial society you have grown up in, but also the reality of your role as a môniyâw within that society. Such learning is key to understanding how you and your society may be unsettled, even if you cannot comprehend what other possibilities may emerge as a result of this unsettling.

Part Four:
Conclusion

All the work towards anti-racism is important for môniyâwak. The thing about anti-racism is it's not an easy task to go about. There's no model, there's no guideline, it's not perfect. And there's really no way of knowing what the outcomes will actually bring forward. You can come with the best intentions, but sometimes an individual who has been harmed by the colonial system may not see it that way. So, for myself, I know that there's a lot of emotional labor that goes into educating my students, my colleagues, and my peers. Sometimes it's not easy to always share the damage and deficit of indigenous peoples. And sometimes I get so fixated on desensitizing the topics that I teach, but the thing is, I always must come back and re-humanize myself and say that this is not the past. We are not the statistics in journals, articles, or textbooks. We are living and breathing people and entity. So, when we also think about decolonization, going hand in hand with anti-racism, decolonization should always be grounded in an Indigenous framework, which means understanding Indigenous ways of knowing, thought, philosophy, and worldview. And it can't be colonial one, because the colonial one that we have, that exists, is violent, it's competitive, it's very hostile. And that's the truth.

If our world was very much more different than what we have, and a lot of people have often been like, "well, don't you like your modernity?" "How would you be able to do your podcast if you didn't have technology?" – Yada, yada, yada? That's not what we're saying. We're saying that there are better ways to live together, to advocate for each other. And sometimes, even if I tell the truth, I'm always hit with "well, that can't be the circumstance." "Well, look at you, Paulina, you got out of that community, you did well for yourself?" No, I did well for myself, because I have the support of my family, of my

parents, of those around me, who were white, and Indigenous, who stood up for me. Who were there for me. Well, even though I saw the darkness and sadness of this world, they taught me how to see the light.

And so, decolonization, Indigenization will always be within the Indigenous philosophies and worldview. And if you are listening here, find yourself in a circumstance where you're positioned in your life, to advocate for someone who's in a harmful situation, especially when they're being attacked for racism, it's your choice, whether or not you stand up and speak against that. Because there is no neutral. Neutral, chooses a side of the oppressor. We can't have that anymore. One of the things that I've often thought about, especially in this podcast, was how I wanted to give back to the listeners. And I thought, when we start to think about awareness, and how it is established, we can acknowledge where certain thoughts arise and seek to reframe them. So, this is why we've taught you whiteness, how it is emboldened in settler colonialism, because now you're much more aware of how it defines our everyday world, even though you may not have known it. When we start to reframe and change the way we view, I will take a step back and say, "why are they acting this way?" Or "am I okay with this?" That is a form of anti-racism work that you're working. And if you become uncomfortable, I need you to know that means that you're changing. A lot of people think that when they become uncomfortable when confronting racism is that it's because they're vulnerable. I've been vulnerable my whole life. Take that moment to embrace that change because it's worth it. And sometimes you can see that the friends that you have around you are problematic. You have to make the decision whether or not you continue to be in that social circle. Whether you want that life whether you want to re-humanize those individuals that they talk about, that they advocate against. And t this all comes down to accountability, and accountability is especially important, if not the most important for establishing relationships. It allows an individual to be accountable for their actions. Yes, in the past, you may have done things that were harmful. But can you learn from them? Can you work against them? Can you be better? Everyone has a chance to be better.

All these aspects are embedded in our society. And it's not surprising that they occur in our close relationships, especially within our families, especially against especially behind closed doors. But perpetuating harm is not just a large institution, it's individuals. And so, we asked you to listen, to truly listen, to respect. Respect those all around you, human and non-human. I provide space for Indigenous peoples to share their tools, and don't listen to respond. Don't listen to defend. Listen. It's okay to cry. Our society tells us not to. But it is okay. Forgive yourself for what you have done in the past. But we all have the ability to do better, to examine the hurtful behaviors of our previous actions, because fundamentally, we all just need to be a good relative, so be that good relative. I'll be there right beside you, calling you out if you aren't.

Research Assistant

Giovanni Ursella

Keywords: *Môniyâwak, settler, anti-racism, decolonization, reconciliation, allyship*

Glossary

Mîkiwahp – Lodge (aka tipi)
Môniyâw – Settle (singular)
Môniyâwak – Settlers (plural)

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Episode Thirteen:

Moon Medicine

Marieliv Flores Villalobos, Paulina Johnson, and Emily Quecke

With Stories from Wildfred Buck

Synopsis: Hear the story of Nokoom Tipiskawi Pisim, Grandmother Moon, and Cakapis, Little Spirit. Learn more about the role of Women and the Moon in the Coming of Age Ceremony. Dr. Johnson talks about the importance of the Turtle's Shell and how observations through storytelling informs us of land-based Indigenous science in this episode.

Part One:
Intro

Aunties give aspirations to be who you truly are within this world, but there is no greater wisdom that comes from being an auntie until you meet the nokom or kokum. Nokum refers to my *grandmother* but often you may hear kokum, because you are being told to go see her, so often our young ones will call our grandmothers kokum when it should be nokom. Yet to be a *grandmother* is a reality of knowing your lineage continues on through those that follow. And our biggest teacher of these changes is the moon. In this episode, we will come to know how the moon reminds us of what care and kindness looks like, and what the moon phases represent for our iskwewak, *women*, especially when coming of age occurs.

Part Two:
Cakapis

We are told kayas, ***long ago***, that a family attempted to travel through a strong, cold, winter blizzard. They were in distress and needed to get to a larger camp for assistance.

At some point into their journey, they got confused and were lost in the raging storm.

The storm raged on for days, and the family got weaker and weaker.

When the storm finally blew over, only one little boy from the family had survived. All his relatives had perished in the storm, attempting to keep him as warm as possible.

There he sat, alone, on the vast prairie beside his relatives who had perished.

At some point, travellers found the boy and took him to the nearest camp where he was fed, clothed and comforted as best as possible... but the little boy was lost in grief.

A council was held and decisions as to where the little boy would go were made. It was decided that a family with no sons could take in the little boy.

It so happened that in this particular camp, a family with no sons stepped up and said they would be happy to take the little boy into their family camp. So, the little boy went to live among this family.

As the days grew colder and winter drew on, the large camp broke up into smaller family units.

The little boy and his new family set out for their own winter camp.

Once their journey began, things started changing in the attitude and interaction between the family and their new little charge.

The family began to treat the little boy with indifference and downright cruelty. He was given duties no one else wanted to do, and they added duties others were doing prior to his arriv-

al. He was working constantly.

At the same time, he noticed that the family wanted nothing to do with him, and they put up a ragged little tent for the boy to sleep in at night. Thus, he was removed from the main shelter.

The little boy was expected to do everything that was commanded of him while being fed very little, and being given tattered rags to dress and warm himself in.

Thus, the little boy found himself cold, hungry, scared, lonely, tired, sad, unwanted and lost.

As the winter dragged on the little boy got weaker and weaker…

One particular howling winter night he was awoken from his little tent and was told that the family needed water. He was sent to the river, where he was to reopen the water hole that had been previously chopped in the ice by him, to fetch two pails of water. So, out he went into the blowing wind.

As the little boy was finishing his job, the storm stopped blowing and the full Moon broke through the clouds.

So, there he was standing by the water hole, with two pails of water, staring at Nokoom Tipiskawi Pisim, Grandmother Moon.

As he stood there a deep wave of grief overcame him and he began to cry.

He stood there, looking up at the full Moon and began to let go of all his emotions.

He told Grandmother Moon how cold, lonely and hungry he was. He told Grandmother Moon how hurt, scared, unwanted and unloved he felt. He told her how worthless he felt.

As he stood there with his two pails of water, crying in a cold winter night, something wondrous happened.

As the little boy was releasing all his emotions, Nokoom Tipiskawi Pisim was moved by the sincerity, pain and the tears that were being shed.

> She decided she could do something, and so Nokoom Tipiskawi Pisim lifted the little boy into the sky and set him down on the Moon with her.
>
> He would forever stand on the Moon with his two pails of water looking down unto Nikawiy Aski, Mother Earth, and be a reminder to all looking up of how people less fortunate than us should be treated.
>
> Thus, when we look into the night sky and see the full Moon we are reminded to think and act kindly towards the weak ones, the sick ones, the helpless ones. We should comfort the hungry, the hurt, the scared, the lonely. We should look after the homeless, orphaned, incapacitated, and lost ones.
>
> The little boy was given the name Acak Apisis, Little Spirit, which has since been shortened to Cakapis.

Telling stories is a keyway to teach, learn, connect, and preserve our relationships with our ancestors. The ones who get to tell those stories and the ones who remember them are not only sharing knowledge but also fighting the colonized system that keeps making us forget about the power of our intertwined connections with the spiritual world. That is why it is so important that when you listen, you can open your heart and free your mind.

Part Three:
Coming of Age

In many ways, Grandmother Moon calls upon us to remember Land, who we are, and where we come from. “Her connections to the tides of the oceans and the rhythms of life bring us back to our essential connections and responsibilities to Land and understandings of self-in-relationship” (Zinga & Styres, 2013, para. 1). Each month, Grandmother Moon offers teachings, especially during the full moon cycles. She asks us “to listen with our hearts in order to hear and see the truths, understanding ways to be self-determining while working toward finding healing solutions and accepting the truths” (Zinga & Styres, 2013, para. 1).

As Grandmother Moon calls us to value and manifest the truths, she also holds a unique wisdom and connection with women that get deeper when young women start bleeding or menstruation for the first time. Young women will confirm the power of womanhood and their connection with their ancestors during the coming-of-age ceremony. Basil Johnston explains that childhood is a time of preparation and youth a

time of quest (1976), where they will connect to his or her own source of power, with the guidance and help of protocols (Anderson, 2011). For women, the *coming of age is* an important rite of passage, this is the time when a young woman experiences her first cycle of menstruation, "this welcomed event—identified as moon time—and the related teachings and practices were considered "women medicine"" (Gaudet & Caron-Bourbonnais, 2015).

The moon time ceremony is for women to honour and develop their relationship to their feminine power, it starts from the first drop of blood until the last (Gaudet & Caron-Bourbonnais, 2015). Anderson mentions "fasting was an important component of Cree and Ojibway girls' coming-of-age ceremonies, girls were expected to seclude themselves from their families and communities" (201, p. 86). Girls would spend four to ten days alone in a lodge specifically constructed for this purpose in the woods, or some distance away from the house. The Chippewa called this time makwa or makwawe: "*turning into a bear*" or "*the bear lives alone all winter*" (Anderson, 2011).

During this time, "young women were guided for 13 moons and would learn the cosmic nature of their body's rhythm and cycles" (Gaudet & Caron-Bourbonnais, 2015, p. 165). During their moon time, they were freed of daily chores and had time to reconnect to their inner selves, rebalance their energies, and be attentive to creative visions. Throughout this time, there were some activities and interactions that girls had to follow, "as it was believed that the power a girl carried during her first menstruation disrupted male energy and was considered strong enough to kill" (Anderson, 2011, p. 86). Because of this power, it was important, for a girl during her first menstruation, to avoid interacting with boys and men. This included not touching, looking at, or crossing the path of any male.

During the time women stayed in the sacred space of prayer and quiet time, they connected with their unique gifts, engaged in sisterhood, and understood how different their power was from men's. The work and regeneration that women experienced in their physical, emotional, and spiritual lives were valued as a service to community wellbeing (Gaudet & Caron-Bourbonnais, 2015, p. 165). This powerful state was considered the optimal time for learning, experiencing spiritual enlightenment, and building commitment. "It was extremely important how a girl conducted herself during this time: her behaviour during seclusion would determine how she would live her life" (Anderson, 2011, p. 87). During this time, girls focused on self-reliance, self-restraint, and connection to spirit, while also working on their sewing and handiwork, preparing hides and chopping wood. "Elder women would assist by coming in to talk to girls about the adult responsibilities that lay ahead and would instruct them in their work and/or give them information about sexuality, courting, and

marriage. In some cases, girls would seek a vision and sometimes receive it. Such girls were granted the power to heal, act as medicine people, or become other types of leaders. Among the Wasauksing Anishinaabek, girls who had visions were promised a future as great warriors" (Anderson, 2011, p. 87).

As Indigenous women knew they could connect with the energy of the waters and Mother Earth through prayers, meditation, and ceremony, and as the moon pulls the tides of the oceans, it is believed that the moon and women's menstrual cycles are synchronized waters in their bodies and the 28-day cycle (Gaudet & Caron-Bourbonnais, 2015). "This natural connection is illustrated by offering menstrual blood to the land," in the Cree/Métis culture it was women's responsibility to pray in the Moon lodge so their blood could filter any negativity and get it back to the ground so that it could be neutralized through Mother Earth. Menstruation blood is a unique medicine of life, that contains the 28-day cycle of blood, the uterine lining, and the unfertilized egg. "The lunar cycle and menstrual cycle were believed to be in communion or the "right relationship" with the energies of the moon, the earth, the waters, the women's wombs, and the community" (Gaudet & Caron-Bourbonnais, 2015, p. 166).

When the seclusion period was over, the girl was celebrated with a feast attended by family and community members. Unfortunately, colonialism, industrialization and the medicalization of women's natural biological processes resulted in the loss of this knowledge. The contact with the Europeans, based on their Judeo-Christian culture, promoted understanding menstruation as a female sin instead of a manifestation of female power (Gaudet & Caron-Bourbonnais, 2015).

Part Four:
The Turtle Shell

The turtle shell was used by our ancestors to tell us about time. But why a Turtle? From the Ojibwe point of view, the turtle is "the messenger between the world of spirits and the world of man" (Lanoue, 19990, p. 19), as it mediates between land and water. Additionally, the turtle's back is also where the laws of women are recorded, including the Moon Lodge teachings and the cosmology of menstruation (Gaudet & Caron-Bourbonnais, 2015). "Based on observational phenology of the turtle's back, there are thirteen main scutes or sections surrounded by about 28 smaller scutes around the shell perimeter. Since 13 x 28 = 364, each scute represents a moon of 28 days where light is gained for 14 days and lost for 14 days. In between these two periods is about a day and a half when the moon seems to be missing or new" (Rock and Gould, 2018, p. 15). Indigenous nations value the knowledge of the sky and "measured patterns

to commemorate, honour and tell their powerful, place-based, stories in these earthen works using turtle shell mathematics and the numbers associated with women's bodies, such as their moon/menses cycles and length of gestation" (Rock and Gould, 2018, p. 51). Women were so powerful during this time that they followed their own protocols and were honoured for their life-giving abilities.

Indigenous calendars differ from the Western calendar because it is more closely linked to nature. For example, important yearly events are linked to the different times of the moon and cultural teachings which relate to the cycle of life and nature are linked to how the moons are named, but the names may differ between each nation (Lanoue, 1990).

The Nêhiyawak Thirteen Moons look like this (Lanoue, 1990, p. 18):

> **Opawahcikanasis** - Frost Exploding Moon - January: "Trees crackle from cold temperatures and extreme cold starts"
>
> **Kisipisim** - The Great Moon - February: "Animals do not move around much, and trappers have little chance of catching them"
>
> **Mikisiwipisim** - Eagle Moon - March: "Month the eagle returns"
>
> **Niskipisim** - Goose Moon - April: "Month the geese return and indication of the coming of spring"
>
> **Athikipisim** - Frog Moon - May: "Arrival of warm weather and open water. Frogs begin to become active in ponds and swamps"
>
> **Opiniyawiwipisim** - Egg Laying Moon - June: "Month when the birds and waterfowl begin to lay their eggs"
>
> **Opaskowipisim** - Feather Moulting Moon - July: "Month when young fowl are moulting"
>
> **Ohpahowipisim** - Flying Up Moon - August: "When the young fowl are ready to fly"
>
> **Nimitahamowipisim** - Rutting Moon - September: "Month when the bull moose scrapes the velvet from antlers as a sign of mating to begin"

Pimahamowipisim - Migrating Moon - October: "Month when birds begin their flight south"

Kaskatinowipisim - Freeze Up Moon - November: "Month when lakes and rivers start to freeze"

Thithikopiwipisim - Hoar Frost Moon - December: "Month when frost sticks to leaves and other things outside"

Part Five:
Indigenous Science and ways of seeing the world

As we can notice, there were, and are, specific Indigenous Sciences and ways of seeing the world that have an impact on the way we conduct our lives. Unfortunately, the ongoing colonization project keeps erasing this knowledge and interfering with the way we share our teachings. So, the question is, how can Indigenous Science/knowledge be defined if science education has been used as a tool, and a valid argument for the "ongoing dispossession and devastation of Indigenous Land, as well as erasure of Indigenous peoples" (Higgins 2021, p. 320)?

Michell (2008) proposes to explore the meaning of Place as a way to learn Indigenous scientific knowledge and processes. "Aside from the more literal meaning of geography, house, town, residence, or other physical and tangible space, Place also includes less tangible characteristics" (Michell 2008, p. 27). Therefore, the sense of Place suggests memories, histories, emotions, relationships, individual and collective identities, and objects associated with a physical space. Moreover, "Place can be aesthetic, ceremonial, economic, familial, historical, political, spiritual, or scientific'' (Michell 2008, p. 27). All this means, that notion of Place also speaks about the spiritual as well as the mythic geography of a people (Michell 2008). This definition of Place is directly related to the meaning of Land, as Land informs "reflective practices because everything, including pedagogies and stories, starts with and returns to the Land'' (Bowra, Mashford-Pringle & Poland, 2020, p. 136).

To understand the importance of Land for Indigenous people means to recognize the interactive and living nature of Indigenous languages. (Bowra, Mashford-Pringle & Poland, 2020) "According to Battiste (2002), the survival of Indigenous languages is by far the most significant factor in the survival of Indigenous knowledge. This is because Indigenous languages have symbolic, verbal, and unconscious elements that act to structure and order Indigenous knowledge and worldview" (Michell 2008). Thus, we must not extract Place from its connection to other aspects of life, like land, culture, and spirituality.

Michell explains that Indigenous science is not a subcategory of Indigenous knowledge. While "Western knowledge, the study of nature (small 'n') is reserved for science; Indigenous knowledge makes no distinction, because Nature (big 'N') is the source of knowledge" (Michell 2008, p. 27). Although Indigenous People come from diverse contexts there is a shared worldview in which humans are intricately connected to the natural world (Michell 2008, p. 30)

Indigenous Science proposes Land-based learning in order to connect the place with Indigenous history, knowledge, or stories; and to acknowledge that all places were once and continue to be Indigenous lands. To do that, we all must remember that Turtle Island is Indigenous land (Bowra, Mashford-Pringle & Poland, 2020).

Part Six:
Conclusion

Together, these teachings and insights reflect a world that is held together by grandmothers and importantly, matriarchs. I often wonder what my life will be like when I become a grandmother or great grandmother – but we are taught not to think too far into the future, and I am just embracing my auntie life right now. All I can say is that I hope they know they are loved, and I hope a few of them get my dark humour, ah, probably all of them will when you think about it. If they are not rank and rezzy, I don't want any of it, hahaha, I mean, good things come from being rezzy too.

Research Assistant

Brook Kelela

Keywords: *Grandmother Moon, Indigenous science, Indigenous women, Little Spirit*

Glossary

Acak Apisis (Cakapis) – Little Spirit
Iskwewak – Women
Kokom – Your Grandmother
Makwa – "Turn into bear" or "the bear lives alone all winter"
Nikawiy Aski – Mother Earth
Nokom – My Grandmother
Nokoom Tipiskawi Pisim – Grandmother Moon

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Episode Fourteen:
Elder Brother

Juan Guevara Salamanca, Gina Jimenez, and Paulina Johnson

Synopsis: Elder Brother is an important figure in âcimowin (story) who can teach us many things from our roles and responsibilities to the philosophical underpinning of Indigenous ways of knowing. In this episode we learn a bit about Elder Brother's (mis)adventures, what he can teach us about morality and ourselves, and about what he can teach us about storytelling itself.

Part One:
Elder Brother

When I was younger, Nimosôm Chris would tell me stories of Elder Brother, of how the grey wolf got his colour to stories of how he would eat jerky that turned out to be his own scab. There are numerous âcimowina of Elder Brother that have been told for generations upon generations. As Elder Brother has many characteristics: he can be generous and kind but also selfish and cruel. In âcimowin, *a story*, if he was kind, he usually met with success; if he was cruel, he often met a disastrous and sometimes humorous end. His adventures and misadventures acted to guide the peoples' social interactions, and, because of this, he is highly regarded. Stories of Elder Brother's play a role in detailing and describing social interactions of the People. His stories are considerably important and serve as a moral compass upon which people are to act. Embedded in his stories are the stories of kinship, of our roles and responsibilities, and the philosophical ideals that we should all attain. Elder Brother is known by another name, but because we are not in the winter months, I will not tell it, but it rhymes with Whiskey and Jack. He is not a trickster or fool but a representation of our knowledge, a cultural hero.

Part Two:
The Long Month Stories & Spirits for Different Times

For Robert Alexander Innes (2017), a member of the Cowessess First Nation, oral narratives can take different forms and manners. They can be understood and practiced differently, and oral narratives can be crafted using diverse but similar methods and purposes.

We, the Nêhiyaw, have two well-known types of stories: âtayôhkêwina and âcimowina. Âtayôhkêwina are all the pieces of our oral narratives that contain the sacred elements of our histories from the beginning of our times. The relevance of our oral narratives does not exhaust with the vital place they hold in transmitting, transferring, and keeping our histories and knowledge. They are also integral to decolonizing processes by telling unheard histories, contributing to Indigenous research and to quote prominent Maori Indigenous scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith "to a collective story in which every Indigenous person has a place [...] Stories such as Russell Bishop states offer 'diversities of truth' where the storyteller and not the researcher remain in control (in Smith 1999:144-145)" (Johnson, 2017, pp. 82-83). In today's world, our Indigenous cultures maintain the firm conviction that stories "are either used as teaching narratives, tell of spiritual beginnings or offer words of self-healing and self-reflection for the audience" (Johnson, 2017, p. 82).

Therefore, seasons and ceremonies go hand in hand. Ceremonies are connected to seasons while healing, teaching, nurturing, and hunting happen. These are part of life moments, daily life, the vital stages of our communities (Makokis et al., 2020). The seasons carry importance as the four seasons each have their own importance, spirits, ceremonies and practices that are connected to the changes in nature.

ᐱᐳᐣ (Pipon), or winter, refers to the snow blanket that covers the earth and other living beings so they can hibernate. During this quiet season, stories and teachings are active in the community. Reflections are made regarding how bad things are, and the actions against them should be directed to change them (Johnson, 2017, pp. 138-139). At this time, Mistâpew (*The Giant*), Cheepiuk Wawatawin (*Spirits Still*) and Cheepiuk Nemitowak (*Spirits Dancing*) accompany this season (Asiniskow Ithiniwak project, n.d.). Elder Brother would have a strong presence during this time as his name was only spoken during ᐱᐳᐣ.

ᓯᑲᐣ (Sikwan) is the break-up season of spring because "the ice begins to candle, the snow settles, the streams start running, and the geese fly in - all of these sound like rattling" (Six Seasons of the Asiniskow Ithiniwak project, n.d., p. 1). During this season hunting of geese and ducks happen. Kisikaw pîsim, or Father Sun, is very important during these months to

energize and gain momentum of hope of the upcoming renewal of life (Johnson, 2017, pp. 138-139; Asiniskow Ithiniwak project, n.d.), .

ᓂᐱᐢ (Nīpin) is the season of receiving the 'gifts from the water' or *summer*. This season is to gather berries and medicine, to fish and make crafts. Piyisiw (Thunderbird) joins us this season to teach how learning is an intergenerational process led by the elders. Also, this season helps us realize how change and healing requires great effort (Johnson, 2017, pp. 138-139). For relatives of Asiniskaw Īthiniwak the *Rocky Cree*, Nīpin is the season that celebrates the new year and this is also when the new year for how many winters old an individual is would be counted. ᑕᑲᐧᐢ (Tākwākin) is fall. This is the season to prepare for winter, for the birds to migrate and for the humans to settle. This is the moment of the year to hunt moose and bear, prepare food and trap fish (Asiniskow Ithiniwak project, n.d.).

The Asiniskaw Īthiniwak, or *Rocky Cree*, consider the cycle of Mother Earth in six seasons. They added two extra seasons to the four previously mentioned. ᒥᖧᐢᑲᒼ (Mithoskāmin) is similar to spring due to the recovery of mobilities thanks to the thawing of ice. This season is to repair canoes, build new ones, "gather eggs and tap birch trees once the sap stops running" (Six Seasons of the Asiniskow Ithiniwak project, n.d., p. 1). The other season is ᒥᑭᐢᑲ° (Mikiskaw). This is the season of the glistening of the frost and the snow, when the colours of nature are intense and some communities would hunt (Asiniskow Ithiniwak project, n.d.).

It is common how Indigenous knowledge holistically relates stories, experiences, medicine, the stars, and the seasons. Elder Mary Lee explains how the balance of the Nêhiyawak occurs in four parts and directions of the Medicine Wheel: "These parts are the spiritual, physical, emotional, and mental aspects of self (Nêhiyawak). 'Look at the four seasons and follow the sun. Spring in the east, summer in the south, fall in the west, and winter in the north. It tells the whole story of how all life came into being abundantly bright rising in the east and then fading away as it moved west and north. All life rises and sets like the sun'" (in Johnson, 2017, p. 130).

Part Three:

Nakâyâtotamowin, *Customs*

Nakâyâtotamowin, *customs*, are repetitive practices that shape individuals' behaviours, acts and modes of interaction. *Customs* have a binding faculty to those who follow socially and accept those customs but also create a social codification that allows social navigation without contraventions or embarrassing situations. *Customs* are shared and differ be-

tween territories and communities:

> "Social practices are linked to our traditions but there are regional differences between Nêhiyawak in the west and east of iyiniwi-ministik, the people's land. While I may kiss the Elders of my Nation on the lips, I acquaint myself with a handshake to those outside of my Nation. It is also based on whether I have come to know an Elder. As (the Elder) Nohkôm Sophie has indicated our custom of how we greet one another is through our relationship to the individual and if we are not aware of the relationship, we refer to them through their Nêhiyawi-wîhowin, traditional name, rather than our English names" (Johnson, 2017, p, 121).

Our narratives, traditions and knowledge are orally shared and transmitted, so our narratives are always kept alive. Our *customs* are also orally transferred, and our practices align with and respect those traditions. For example, when you offer protocol, which is tobacco in a print, to seek out knowledge and information from an elder or knowledge holder, you are actually creating a connection with that individual for not only the information but respect to them. The respect that is given, is customarily within that action itself. So, when we think about customs is about the well meaning intent of why you actually seek out that individual for the knowledge that they have but the knowledge they will share with you.

Nêhiyawak *customs* expand the significance of kinship. An extensive network of relations that includes the extended family but is taken as intimate and closed. "These customs reflect the importance of family networks that extend out of the immediate as we are taught to not plan for future events because we never know when the Creator will call us home" (Johnson, 2017, pp. 18-19). These relationships built of customs are integral to understand the role of Elder Brother and deeper knowledge of the role he represents.

Part Four:
Kinship of Elder Brother

Elder Brother taught us, the Nêhiyawak, morality and ways to know the self (Johnson, 2017). Elder Brother has different meanings and forms, but the central role is to teach, and their teachings become Âtayôhkêwina (Wheeler 2010: p. 60).

Elder Brother might be seen as a supernatural being with positive and negative characteristics and consequences for humans. The teachings of Elder Brother, as sâki ahcâhk, a loving spirit is one that desires the best for people, usually address respect, greed, humility and relational responsi-

bility through benevolence and compassion, but their attitudes can also reflect mischievousness and perversity. Independent of the driving force of Elder Brother, its moral configuration is highly valued, respected and esteemed (Innes, 2010).

Elder Brother is in charge of teaching traditions and *customs* based on oral narratives (Borrows, 1997). Innes (2017) states that Elder Brother narratives operate as a legal institution by expressing moral norms, regulations, and traditional kinship practices.

Métis Elder María Campbell argues that the influence of Elder Brother teachings have the power to determine social, economic, and military alliances and the inclusion of newer individuals into the multicultural communities. For instance, the Cowessess First Nation is one of the multicultural communities built over five major cultural groups: the Assiniboine, *Plains Cree*, Métis, Saulteaux, and English "half-breeds" (Innes, 2010).

Following the rules and advice given by the Elder Brothers is considered a positive, beneficial and desirable behaviour. Each member of our communities should strive to act and think regarding these rules or customs. On one hand, negative consequences can be seen if rules are not followed (Innes, 2010). Elder Brother can teach us how to live with other human beings and other-than-human entities as well.

Elder Brother is usually portrayed as a trickster; however, for us is our cultural hero, a teacher and a protector that shows us the way to act and be responsible to others (Johnson, 2017). "We remember through oral narratives of Elder Brother, Elder Brother, what can happen to us if we act as he acted, and he teaches us how to live. Furthermore, our natural environment offers us teachings to how we should act to one another, not only the human world, but the plant and animal worlds..." (Johnson, 2017, p. 69). This is why understanding the seasons and the customs of storytelling found in Elder Brother teachings are really vital and important.

Part Five:
Elder Brother and the Wolves

The following story of Elder Brother and the Wolves shows the teachings of kinship roles and responsibilities of Elder Brother:

> *One night some wolves heard Elder Brother singing. The oldest says "I believe that is my eldest brother. He has a good song...watch for him, and run and say to him, 'My uncle, what are your saying?'" when the wolves met up with Elder Brother,*

> *they told him that their father wanted to meet him. The father asked his Elder brother what his song meant. Elder Brother told him and then decided that he would stay with the wolves for a while. Sometime later, Elder Brother decided he wanted to leave, but he wanted one of his nephews to go with him. The old wolf allows his youngest son to leave.*
>
> *After the dream, Elder Brother addressed the young wolf, "My nephew, never go along the lakeshore. Do not run on the beach." Later, the young wolf was thirsty. Forgetting Elder Brother's instructions, he went to the lake and drank some water. He suddenly became crazy. Elder Brother realized his nephew had gone missing and knew that the White-Lynx had taken him. He tracked White-Lynx and, listening to the Sun, shot at his shadow. He was successful on the attempt, but he did not kill him. The White one, though injured, escaped. Elder Brother met up with old toad, who was on her way with her medicines to heal White Lynx. Elder Brother killed and skinned her and put on her skin. He went to White-Lynx, now as old toad. When he arrived, the people said, "Oh, our grandma is coming again." As the toad, Elder Brother entered the White Lynx's lodge. Upon entering, he saw the skin of his nephew hanging on a pole. He then saw White-Lynx with an arrow in his side. He had a pipe filled and then asked everyone to leave. "Now, shut the door. I shall smoke and take out the arrow now, but don't let anyone look in." When this was done, Elder Brother walked up to White-Lynx and grabbed the arrow in his hand and pushed it into the Lynx's heart as hard as he could. He then grabbed his nephew's skin and fled, tearing off the toad skin. Once Elder Brother had ensured that he had lost his pursuers, he brought him back to life (Skinner 1916:344-346 in Innes 2013:40).*

In this story of Elder Brother, though he was not related to the wolves, he was adopted into their family, and through his status as an adult family member, he is therefore able to call the younger wolves his nephews and assume the roles and responsibilities expected of a relative through guidance and teaching. Elder Brother is responsible for the young wolf in this narrative, and though the wolf goes against his instructions, Elder Brother fulfills his responsibility not only to the young wolf but his older relative who bestowed that honour to him by searching and rescuing his nephew (Innes 2013:41). This oral narrative and various others give glimpses into how the Nêhiyaw, Saulteaux, Assiniboine, and Métis would have acted towards one another. As well, oral narratives allow us to imagine how these groups were before the reservation system was put in place and contributed to loss of kinship customs and practice, and governance (Johnson, 2017, p. 92).

Part Six:
Ethics around his embodiment

As a vital part of our Nêhiyawak life, oral narratives have high value due to the knowledge shared.

> Storytellers like *Sakamôtâ-inew* would tell miscellaneous stories or little stories about how things were like before the Treaties, or stories of personal actions such as giving away horses, winning a wife, or holding a feast, and for Elder Brother his greatest stories were those of Elder Brother (Wheeler, 2010). Elder Brother like many Indigenous terms, has multiple meanings, typically known as the trickster, he can also be the narratives of the elder brother known as âtayôhkêwina (McLeod, 2007). It might be said, in fact, that Sakamôtâ-inew, was a contemporary embodiment of Elder Brother (Johnson, 2023, p. 196).

Our embodied narratives consider the richness and holistic aspects of our traditions, customs and knowledge. We are attentive to our everyday actions and those surrounding us living their life processes. Revealing the main features of our traditions and culture requires a special connection and a perspective of the world that can only be experienced through our bodies and worldviews. Our narratives are living experiences that have intergenerationally survived in which Elders act towards this preservation and transmission (Johnson, 2017).

Today, you are fortunate! I have been telling you how to approach and engage with Indigenous knowledge, specially that of Elder Brother. The relevance of specific practices, such as protocol, is learnt through the meaning of gifts, blankets and tobacco that will help with the payment and sometimes the instruction of ceremonial practices; this is what Wheeler considers traditional copyright (Johnson, 2023).

In traditional copyright, ownership means that the storyteller is exclusively sharing the knowledge in the stories but also that of ceremony. Capturing and making claims of ownership without permission from the original Elder is considered for the Nêhiyawak as stealing or kimotiwin. These unique forms of understanding authorship and copyrights enact a more potential agency that are the vivid and livid aspects of narratives.

By doing this you ensure that the narrative is protected ethically, and the story is upheld in the highest honour. Therefore, it has been clear that anyone who wishes to work with oral [narratives] histories must become fully informed about their roles, responsibilities to the community, and the limits of what can be shared or not. Simply, researchers must “take

the time to learn how to learn" (Wheeler 2005: 204 in Johnson, 2023, pp. 204-205).

Therefore, stories of Elder Brother, specially those of the sacred, are not going to be shared within the podcast, those are kept for the community themselves.

Part Seven:
Conclusion – More than a Trickster

The trickster is a character through whom Elders teach traditions and principles. Their personality depends on the cultural meaning and reach: Nanabush for the Anishinaabe, Raven for the First Nation people of the coastal North-west, Glooscap for the Mi´kmaq of the Maritimes, and Coyote, Crow, or Old Man for the First Nations people in North America are the different personifications for tricksters (Borrows, 1997, p 39).

Tricksters are relevant characters of a community; they defy, challenge, question, and occasionally rebel against the status quo (Borrows, 2016). The trickster discloses the cultural background of the law. It entails that tricksters' oral narratives can teach legal categories and reveal sociocultural elements supporting those regulations (Borrows, 2016).

According to John Borrows (2016), a Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Law and member of the Chippewa of the Nawash First Nation, the tricksters can debilitate and threaten power relationships. A notable example is the Anishinaabe Tribal Court in the United States, where Anishinaabe courts have utilized the oral narratives of Elders and tricksters to hold their leaders accountable for their actions and to prevent power abuses (Borrow, 2016).

However, Elder Brother is more than a trickster. The trickster is a familiar figure in different Indigenous communities; it is usually used to refer to a configuration of a pan-Indian idea that crosses cultural and geographical differences and posits a standard idea of tellers. This consideration of the trickster makes invisible the complexity and potentialities of Elder Brother and shapes a Western idea of "foolish behavior that misrepresents the complexity of this character that is simultaneously a Cultural Hero, Deceiver, Transformer, and other terms in Nêhiyaw narrative tradition" (Johnson, 2017, p. 88). This is why Elder Brother is more than a trickster as they escape the colonial narrative and culturally reside in our communities for all existence (Johnsons, 2017).

Keywords: *Elder Brother, kinship, oral narratives, seasons*

Glossary

Acimowin – story
Âcimowina – a stories
Asiniskaw Īthiniwak – Rocky Cree
Âtayôhkêwina – stories or sections of oral narratives containing aspects from the beginning of our existence
Cheepiuk Wawatawin – Spirits Still
Cheepiuk Nemitowak – Spirits Dancing
Kimotiwin – stealing
Kisikaw pîsim – Father Sun
Namôya mistahi ê-kiskêyihtamân – "I do not know very much"
Nīpin – summer, "gifts from the water"
Mikiskaw – season of glistening frost and snow
Mistâpew – The Giant
Mithoskāmin – season where mobility is regained
Nakâyâtotamowin – customs
Nêhiyawak – Four-Spirit People
Pipon – winter "snow blanket"
Pisiskiwack – animals
Piyisiw – Thunderbird
Sâki ahcâhk – teachings of Elder Brother
Sakamôtâinew – Son of Chief Poundmaker
Sikwan – spring, "break- up season"
Tākwākin – fall, season to prepare for winter

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Episode Fifteen:

Creator Made

Emily Quecke, Paulina Johnson, and Sam Dancey
With Ancestral Knowledge from Margaret Cardinal as told by Stephen McDonald

Synopsis: Land, water, fire, and air, these are the four elements of life. It is through these four elements that we understand the physical realm and the relationships and laws which guide it. In this episode we explore the Nêhiyaw connections to these four gifts from the Creator, including the importance of protocol and smudging.

Part One:
Introduction

Long ago, there were five spirits that agreed to care for Mother Earth. Together they would work to ensure that the world we have was given all the attention and admiration needed. But as time went on and reality showed the hardships of the world we live in, the five spirits would become four. Leaving us to continue to seek out the fifth, hoping for its return. The four remaining spirits are the natural elements of earth, fire, wind, and water. It is said that when we are in tune with the natural elements, we are more in balance with Mother Earth and neither of these elements can affect us (teachings by Margaret Cardinal as told by Stephen McDonald in conversation June 8, 2023).

Part Two:
Mâsikîsk, Wîhkaskwa, Paskwâwihkwaskwa, Cistemaw, *Cedar, Sweetgrass, Sage, and Tobacco*

Mâsikîsk, Wîhkaskwa, Paskwâwihkwaskwa, and Cistemaw are some of the common medicines traditionally used for smudging. Smudging is a cleansing and restoring practice, and each medicine has different meanings and teachings (McDonald, 2023; Shawana, 2021). For example, burning Wîhkaskwa (sweetgrass) is meant to heal the body and the spirit, smudging with this medicine is a cleansing/purifying ceremony. Wîhkaskwa represents Mother Earth's hair, hence the cultural significance and ceremony involved with braiding sweetgrass, as such not only is smudging with it a ceremony, but so is the picking and preparation of the Wîhkaskwa (McAdam 2015; Shawana 2021). Cistemaw (tobacco) is a smudging medicine like the other three, but it is also protocol. "Protocol is much more than handing over a package of tobacco or the presentation of material gifts" (Steinhauer 2007: 95 in Louis 2014: 108). The protocol that I gave to each Elder was not merely a token of gratitude but a reaffirmation of the continuity of the knowledge that was shared. Where lived experience, teachings from family and Elders, and participation in ceremonies and gatherings have continued the knowledge of our people and our ways. Wherever you may hear the Elder speak in front of you, it is also the voice of an Elder or Elders from years, decades, and centuries past. Protocol maintains the balance of the transfer of knowledge and through its offering to a knowledge holder affirms the "connectedness and identity with the environment" (Steinhauer-Hill 2008: 53 in Louis 2014: 108). Being a knowledge holder and Elder holds great responsibility and endless hours of understanding not only the world but also your being. While we may state it is Nêhiyaw identity, it is Nêhiyaw being, an ontological beginning that our sense of self is derived from. This origin of being begins in our gifting from the spirit world into the present" (Johnson 2017: 107).

Part Three:
Connection to Askîy, *Land*

Askîy is at the very heart of what it means to be Indigenous, the Latin word 'indigena' meaning "sprung from the land" is the root for the English word Indigenous (Monchalin 2016:2). As such, the very concept of Indigeneity relates to a unique relationship to Askîy and place. Connection to Askîy is about more than the physical but also the spiritual responsibility and relationality to all creation through time that it represents. Mother Earth is a nurturing figure which supports all life, as such we are in relation with her and the history of those who have walked

the same Askîy or land (McAdam, 2015; Johnson, 2017). The Nêhiyaw take this relationship and the responsibilities it entails very seriously. As Sylvia McAdam explains:

> Each nêhiyaw child has a birth right that is steeped in the history of the land and their kinship with all of creation. They are born into responsibilities and obligations that will guide them from cradle to death (2015, p. 36).

The spirituality of this connection guides use of prayer and protocol and creates a unique ethic of care and responsibility not seen in settler counterparts (Johnson 2017). It is this responsibility to Askîy stewardship and this deep relation which meant that concepts of land ownership from Western settlers did not fit within Indigenous ways of knowing. How can you own the very source of life that you are sworn to protect and care for? This responsibility to the Askîy is fundamental to Nêhiyaw law. Connection to Askîy is interrelated with Manitow wiyasiwêwina, Creator's laws (Johnson, 2017). Nêhiyaw law is based on sharing, stewardship and responsibility rather than individual rights like in western laws. In the western conception, Askîy is seen as a resource and therefore is seen as individual parcels related to their potential worth or function. In contrast, the connection that Indigenous cultures have with Askîy is much more wholistic. This wholistic conception is typically represented as a circle and relates all realms. By seeing the world, including humans, animals, Askîy, Nature and Spirit as all part of a whole our responsibilities are made visible (Jo-Ann Archibald 1997; Absolon 2011).

This spiritual connection to the Askîy is built through generations and connections to ancestors to descendants that also speaks to the wealth of knowledge that Indigenous Peoples have relating to the Askîy. Traditional Indigenous ecological knowledge is founded upon methodical observation since time immemorial. Complicated observation and dissemination methods for this scientific knowledge are embedded in Indigenous culture and ways of knowing and often not recognized by western science (Ljubicic et al. 2020; Bardwell 2023; Ford et al. 2000). This intergenerational knowledge is reflected in the specificity of the Cree language. Many Cree words cannot be directly translated into English as they are steeped in a specific knowledge of the Askîy. Kyle Napier and Lana Whiskeyjack discuss this connection between Askîy and language in Nêhiyaw culture:

> Each Indigenous language is interrelated with the land of its origin, and those languages are best understood when spoken about lands underfoot through ancestral lineage and connectedness. Because Nêhiyawak are ancestrally connected to specific lands, Nêhiyawêwin understandings of the world are best

> understood on those ancestral lands. The connection between all of Creation and the language speaking specifically to those lands is guided through Nêhiyaw law (2021, p. 16).

The richness of Indigenous language as it pertains to connections to the four medicines is important for understanding the relationality of these connections. All elements of the physical are named, they are known, they are relations.

Part Four:
Connection to Nipiy, *Water*

Nipiy is life. This is truly, literally, figuratively, spiritually, and linguistically; the derivation of the Cree word Nipiy can be understood as "I am Life" (Littlechild 2014: 15). Nipiy is the first thing to usher us from the spiritual world through our Mother's womb into the physical realm. Purification comes from Nipiy, and our birth is our first purification (Johnson, 2017; Simpson, DaSilva & Riffel 2009). In Indigenous cultures Nipiy is known to be alive, and to have ahcâhk spirit and to hold memory. Nipiy is water. (Johnson 2017; McAdam 2015; Littlechild 2014). When we look at Mother Earth, the rivers and streams that connect our world are seen to mirror the blood veins of a woman, women are intimately connected to Nipiy and are therefore called to protect it (Johnson 2017; Anderson 2010; Simpson, DaSilva & Riffel 2009).

Nipiy is also an important teacher in many Indigenous cultures. Joanne Barker, a Lenape Indigenous Feminist scholar, uses Indigenous teachings on Nipiy to create an academic analytic tool out of water confluence. This is important work Barker explains that:

> Water teaches us to be mindful of our relations with one another, including other-than-human beings and the lands and the waters on/in which we live together… given the realities of catastrophic contamination and destruction, water shows us the intricacies and intimacies of imperial violence (Barker 2019: 6).

The relationality piece of Nipiy is one that transcends Western conceptions of water. Nipiy are our oldest relative, one that flows through us and throughout all of creation; while in Western worldviews water is a resource that can be bought, sold, and used. This commodification can be seen in water insecurity and scarcity around the world, not only does water pollution affect our physical world, but it also impacts the spiritual and metaphysical.

As we have seen, Nipiy is much more than just a resource, it is a teacher, a mother, a relation, it is also an important element of Indigenous law. Danika Billie Littlechild, from Ermineskin Cree Nation, delves into the importance of water and water security for Indigenous legal traditions:

> First Nations lived experience also includes water use for ceremonial, spiritual and community purposes. Diversions, contamination, degradation, or destruction of water sources has far reached implications for First Nations. Identity formation as well as cultural and linguistic diversity can be compromised. When First Nations lose access to a sacred or traditional water source, they also lose access to the beings and spirits that inhabit that water source. This loss ripples out. Stories, songs, dances, and even Indigenous words related to or based in that water source are also lost. The foundational elements of Indigenous legal traditions and knowledge systems are therefore at risk (2014: 6).

This is why many Indigenous Womxn have taken important leadership roles as water protectors within the global water access movement. Considering the heightened burden of water insecurity on women as a gender and on Indigenous communities, and the feminine connections of water in cultural teachings, Indigenous Womxn water protectors can mobilize cultural and symbolic repertoire. In looking at their resistance we can see the power of water reflected in their unity, care, and strength.

Part Five:
Connection to Iskotêw, *Fire*

Iskotêw, from the sun to the home fire, is an important life-giving spirit that is to be respected in Indigenous ways of knowing (Wallin & Scribe 2022). As with Askîy and Nipiy, Iskotêw is related to the very core of what it means to be Indigenous. "To be Nêhiyaw is a gift from Manitow as we received our ahcâhk iskotêw, soul flame, from Manitow iskotêw, Creator's flame" (Johnson 2017, 168). Iskotêw provides warmth, it cooks our food, it creates community, but it is powerful, it can give protection and needs to be treated with respect (Wallin & Scribe 2022). As such, in Nêhiyaw culture, Iskotêw is uniquely connected to women, mirroring their duality of power and care. Even the Cree word Iskotêw, fire, is rooted in the word Iskwew, Woman (Wallin & Scribe 2022; Greyeyes & Vipond 2022; Johnson 2017).

Outside of the hearth, Iskotêw is used as a tool to shape the environment through cultural or prescribed burning. Over time, the use of Iskotêw has created a mosaic landscape, a patchwork of many varying ecosystems

that provide a wide variety of available resources and increased biodiversity (Christianson et al., 2022). Using Iskotêw as a tool clears underbrush, maintains meadows and grasslands, maintains trails, encourages berry patch production and helps to drive away pests like mosquitoes (Christianson et al., 2022; Pyne, 2012).

Prescribed burns are only performed under certain conditions, typically when there is still snow on the ground to keep it controlled. A key aspect of performing these highly regulated burns was that they were meant to prevent larger out of control wildfires. However, the colonial government outlawed this type of burning, partly as a form of control over Indigenous lives, and partly to preserve the "untouched" wilderness (Christianson et al., 2022). As a result, fires have been actively repressed under colonial fire management, especially near urban developments and industry sites including forestry and mining. Rather than using Indigenous risk-mitigation strategies, the fire authorities opt to spend vast sums on repressing fires and rebuilding in the aftermath of larger wildfires (Hoffman et al., 2022).

As we have seen, even this year, wildfires are getting worse and more extreme. This is due to fire suppression and climate change causing more extreme weather patterns (Erni et al., 2021). Fire authorities are slowly becoming amenable to the importance of controlled burns, in part because of Indigenous advocates but also due to the substantial body of work by the field of forest ecology (Christianson et al., 2022). However, Indigenous communities are still too often excluded from fire management conversations despite being the most impacted by out-of-control wildfires. As climate change is an ever-increasing threat to all of our livelihoods, it is important that we recognize that "science" and Indigenous knowledge are not two opposing forces, rather that Indigenous people are adept at observation and dissemination of their knowledge; principles that go hand in hand with the basis of Western science (Copes-Gerbitz et al., 2021).

Part Six:
Connection to Yôtin, *Wind*

From our first breath to the last in this world, air or Yôtin are a constant companion, teacher and life giver. As we have seen, power comes in fours. Not only is air one of the four medicines, but there are also four winds. Yôtin come from the four directions, and each has a different name, stories and meanings attached to them: Saskaniyotin (*South Wind*), Kîwêtin (*North Wind*), Wâpaniyowêw (*East Wind*), Nakahpêhan (*West Wind*) (Brant 2021). Yôtin has many stories and teachings but in many Indigenous cultures Yôtin is a power symbol for change and purification. As

Indigenous scholar Daniel Brant explains:

> We are all thankful to the powers we know as the Four Winds. We hear their voices in the moving air as they refresh us and purify the air we breathe. They help us to bring the change of seasons. From the four directions they come, bringing us messages and giving us strength. With one mind, we send our greetings and thanks to the Four Winds. Now our minds are one (Brant 2021, p. 18).

Yôtin has the ability to transform, it is filled with energy and motivation, as the grass and trees ripple through the wind we are reminded of this transformative ability of Yôtin. Yôtin and Nipiy have similar symbolic functions, but Yôtin is more dynamic and effervescent while Nipiy is more constant and gradual (Bear & Wind, 1992).

This theme of the Yôtin as the way the earth speaks to us is fundamental to Indigenous connections of air. By listening to Yôtin, taking the time to recognize the patterns associated with different kinds of Yôtin Indigenous Peoples across Canada have learned to understand what they are telling them. Yôtin can speak of coming rain, of storms, or of coming changes in seasons. In a groundbreaking academic article which lists the land, Bawaka Country, as an author of the paper, the human members of the research team write:

> "The messages that animals, plants, winds send may be heard by humans or they may not. You see, those messages are not sent directly to humans because humans are not the centre of things" (Bawaka Country, 2015 p. 279).

This passage reminds us that while we can learn to understand Yôtin and be in relation with them, part of the connection is still not known and we cannot all undestand.

Part Seven:
Conclusion

And so, the elements of Mother Earth will continue to act to protect her, as we are nothing without her. They agreed to ensure that we would care for her after the removal of the fifth spirit. That fifth spirit is sometimes seen, but for us to begin her healing we have to have the fifth spirit present. Someone said that the spirit was lost during residential schools, but I believe that the spirit or element needs to be awakened, and that spirit is love. But I end with one final prophecy layered in the name of my people. The Nêhiyawak have survived the last three phases of change on

our Mother; it is said that the last and final fourth stage of cataclysmic change will bring forward the Indigenous people of the world to lead – will you follow me then and get love back to those Human and NonHuman who have been denied it?

Research Assistant

Brook Kelela

Keywords: *Earth, water, fire, wind, sweetgrass, protocol*

Glossary

Askîy – Land
Cistemaw – Tobacco
Iskotêw – Fire
Kîwêtin – North Wind
Mâsikîs – Cedar
Nakahpêhan – West Wind
Nipiy – Water
Paskwâwihkwaskwa – Sage
Saskaniyotin – South Wind
Wâpaniyowêw – East Wind
Wîhkaskwa – Sweetgrass
Yôtin – Wind

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Episode Sixteen:

Placed in Ceremony

Paulina Johnson and The Auntie Is In Research Team

Synopsis: In this first season of the Auntie Is In we have provided a depth of Indigenous knowledge content spanning a wide range of topics. To undertake such an endeavor this requires a whole team of dedicated researchers and script writers. In this episode we meet the community behind the podcast and hear first-hand their experiences of growth and learning over this process.

Part One:
Introduction

Look at us, we've made it to the end of season one. Learning, navigating, and understanding the reality that is how Indigenous People experience the world. I hope you have been able to learn and laugh with me during the episodes and catch a glimpse of who I am as an individual and academic. As you hear at the end of every episode, I acknowledge the work of the numerous undergraduate and graduate students, many of whom are volunteers, for their work alongside mine. Having them here with me is indescribable and the sheer determination of many of them to be part of "The Auntie Is In" podcast is profound. I thought early on that this would be an easy initiative. I mean, how hard is it to talk to people through a recording? I do it every day for lectures. Man was I ever wrong. But I was awarded the Skitch Award in Social Science Research to conduct this research, and it has been one of the most rewarding experi-

ences so far. I then was awarded funding by the Situated Knowledges People and Place or SKIPP to bring on a graduate student and we have been running since. We grounded the work in the podcast in ceremony early on during the project to ensure that what we are doing here is held in grace and optimism. To challenge what is accepted and bring forward the voices of Indigenous Peoples, especially my own community here. "The Auntie Is In" has fifteen research assistants from the University of Alberta and MacEwan University here in Edmonton, Alberta. Many of them are my former students or current students. Individuals who have entrusted me with the opportunity to guide them, hopefully not so much as traumatize them, but really share with them who I am.

This episode is dedicated to them, and I asked them to leave their voices here alongside mine to share what working on the podcast has meant to them. I also posed some questions to them to consider including what they would like to leave behind for a world that sees Indigenous peoples with beauty, power, laughter, and humanity, rather than what we have come to know. Importantly, to share what they have learned, are learning, and what it means to them to be on this project/initiative. I asked them to speak to me if I was a young Indigenous listener learning about my culture and the reality of this world we have, and what they would want us to know. To be advocates and accomplices challenging anti-Indigenous sentiments and racism, for a world that sees us as Indigenous peoples through our own humanity. And so, I will let their voices be heard and let them tell you what they have come to know.

Part Two:
"The Auntie Is In" Research Team

Juan David Guevara-Salamanca

Hi! This is Juan, a Colombian Latino son of Luis Ernesto and Ruby. In Spanish, we use our two last names; the first last name comes from the father's side, while the other comes from the mother's. I have always thought that to honour my mom and her memory, I would always like to use both of my last names, even if this is odd or weird for other linguistic cultures such as English. Working with the *Auntie Is In* reminds me of the importance of kinship and the value of these relationships. As a Latino with mixed feelings over Canadian society, learning from indigenous communities and our podcast gang has been a relief against the overwhelming and exploitative dynamics we face today; we live to produce and consume and forget the relevance in our lives of our families, our intrinsic relationships with other animals and the land, and those kin relationships that have shaped us throughout the years. Dr. J.'s wisdom and knowledge trace and project the wisdom and knowledge of her community.

Her unapologetic approach is one of her great teachings and one of her most innovative resistance practices against the 'sanitized' white society. I have always admired and followed Participatory Action Research-PAR as one the most revolutionary forms to do scientific research, and even though there are significant differences with Indigenous methods and ways of knowing, being part of the *Auntie Is In* resonates with many of the principles and tools of PAR for knowledge co-creation, self-awareness or consciousness and constant dialogue. These research practices have motivated me to do research, and I am grateful to have met Dr. J. as a reminder of the meaning and relevance of the scientific research.

Through the podcast I have learnt to value the worth of the word, the reach and love of the companionship, and to appreciate the offerings to the earth that we cohabit and become with one another. The podcast is a vital strategy for reaching but also for expanding and connecting. And it is a significant mobilizer of knowledge and resistance. Dr. J., or the Auntie, has multiplied the legacy of her community, and I am glad I have contributed a small portion to this process, or at least that is what I think. In solidarity!

Saludes a todes!

Emily Quecke

Hi, my name is Emily Quecke! I am an interdisciplinary PhD student at the University of Alberta studying environmental engineering and sociology. I have three amazing supervisors, Dr. Paulina Johnson (who'd have guessed it), Dr. Maricor Arlos and Dr. Ania Ulrich. I am very fortunate to have these amazing women guide me as I undertake this new challenge and journey. We are looking at water insecurity issues from a co-management and interdisciplinary perspective including Indigenous worldviews, community engagement as well as traditional environmental engineering and sociological concepts. One day after a research related meeting, Dr. Johnson asked what I was doing next with my day. After I told her that I was basically free for the evening she told me to come with her, next thing I knew, I was 'volun-told' to work on a podcast, something new that I had never done before. I am so glad that I jumped right into this project and that she trusted me enough to bring me into a project so dear to her hear t, one that has now become very important to me as well.Dr. J told us that, after season one of the podcast was complete, after the work was done, only then could we fully cave in to all the emotions this process has stirred up and have a good cry. If I told you that it hasn't been hard to reign back the tears at times this semester I would be lying! While we haven't cried yet, we have laughed *a lot* (cobb salad). Paulina, you are the change that I hope to see in the world. You pour your

heart and soul into everything you do, and in your heart and soul is your nation. You have a community standing with you that sees you and that foundation has served you as you continue down this tumultuous and challenging path. I know it is not always easy, I see the hardships and the roadblocks, but you continue to shatter barriers wherever you go. You are the person that generations of young Indigenous and settler children need.

During this process I have reflected on the deficit narratives that I heard from society and television growing up in Edmonton. Being close to but outside of Maskwacîs (what I knew as Hobbema) I was told about crime and deficit, not vibrancy or culture. I am constantly reminded of the blatant racism I was privy to as a somewhat white passing BIPOC settler, and I am so honoured to be part of this work to challenge that legacy of misinformation. If listeners take one thing away from this podcast, I hope it is that they take up the call to challenge negative stereotypes and narratives about Indigenous peoples and that they stand firm in this work.

Paulina, I am so inspired by your determination and your bravery, you do not back down but in that strength, you also bring an ethic of care, love, and protection to the work that you do. You have created a little community here within the podcast team, one that I am blessed to be a part of. You are a shit disturber in all the best ways, you challenge the status quo and are forging a new path forward. This is the way.

Marieliv Flores Villalobos

Hola. This is Marieliv Flores Villalobos. I'm from Trujillo, a city in the Coast North of Peru. Currently, I'm in my first year of a PhD program, thanks to the support of my grandparents, parents, brothers, and friends.

In my process of applying for the PhD program I have questioned myself if academia is really the space for me. Taking into account that academia and science are products of oppressive, patriarchal, and colonial structures. Where not only, extractive and exhausting work is promoted at the expense of health, but also where only the best grades and the highest number of published articles are rewarded, instead of valuing relationship building within the community and respecting the diverse capabilities of researchers.That is why, I appreciate the work of Dr. Paulina Johnson, she is creating a space where students are allowed and encouraged to be true to themselves, with our own stories, curiosities, fears, and hopes.

The work that each member of the podcast does is not easy, it is a challenge to name and analyze the history and current violence against

Indigenous people and acknowledge that it also has an impact on us, nature, and the future generation. However, doing this hard work while also building community gives the energy, love, and support needed. I admire and am grateful to Paulina, her knowledge, style of work, and the teachings she shares help me to stay grounded, to remember the meaning of being in this Land, and to keep asking myself: who I am, where I am, and why I am here.

I am sure Dr. J's work will keep breaking the barriers for Indigenous women while also sharing her contagious laughter

Luke Aaron Wonneck

Luke Wonneck here, a white male settler with Northern European heritage - mostly German with a bit of Scottish, Irish, Icelandic, and French thrown in.

Academia has long been designed to exclude Indigenous ways of knowing. Indeed, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries it was illegal to be an Indigenous academic according to Canadian law, as any Indigenous person who went to university had their Indian status revoked. While this law changed on paper in 1920, Indigenous ways of knowing continue to be excluded from academia in more subtle ways. For example, these ways of knowing are actively suppressed by disciplinary structures that orient professors and students towards claiming and hoarding ideas as their own, treating nonhumans as objects, prioritizing reason over emotion and spirituality, elevating the written word above oral or embodied knowledge, and using words that are difficult for others to understand and definitely do not include f-bombs.

Many of these forms of exclusion have been invisible to me. This is not surprising, as I'm a white male settler — academia has been designed by people like me, for people like me. In contrast, I know that throughout her academic career — first as a student, and now as a professor — Dr. J has repeatedly experienced these forms of exclusion first-hand. She has become intimately familiar with how they operate, and more importantly, how they can be resisted.

I think what impresses me most about Dr. J is her creativity in leading such resistance. For example, through making this podcast she has exceeded academic expectations to publish written articles, as the transcripts of each of the 16 episodes will form a special issue of the journal *Socialist Studies*. Yet she has done so in a way that honours oral knowledge, as these are podcast episodes first and foremost. She has also done so by welcoming all of us together as a community; by conduct-

ing ceremony; by sharing food, gifts, and even authorship recognition; by checking in with and listening to us as human beings; and of course, by swearing when the moment calls for it (which, as it turns out, is quite frequently). I feel so grateful to be part of this creative resistance, and the beautiful stories that have emerged from it.

Sophia Margaret Iligan

A couple weeks ago at the LRT, I heard this one-woman shout "Just because I'm Indigenous, you assumed I'm associated with this person?", as she pointed at the houseless folk beside her. The man who said something to her was so quick to judge, which was infuriating but not surprising. What I was surprised by, however, was the way she stood up for herself, and how other Indigenous folks in that LRT cart stood by her too. This is only one of many instances where Indigenous power and humanity shone. Amidst all the pain, trauma, and challenges that Indigenous peoples faced and continue to face, I see their power of resilience and storytelling. It's amazing to witness the way they get back up despite all the trials they face with economic, social, and political inequality. Even with this podcast, I can't imagine how difficult it is for Dr. J to relive and retell painful stories that have happened to her and her ancestors. Yet, here she is, continuing to fight by educating folks like me, newcomers of Canada, and the rest of the world about her people, her story, her humanity. Now THAT's what I call powerful.

Kamusta! My name's Sophia – a Filipino woman who immigrated with her family of 8 in Edmonton, Canada. After taking Dr. J's Indigenous Feminism class at the University of Alberta, I knew that there were so many things I did not know about Indigenous peoples and their community. All of a sudden, I felt the responsibility to educate myself more about it, and what's a better way to do that other than to research on Indigenous issues myself under the guidance of Dr. J? Don't get me wrong, there are other ways to learn about Indigenous history and present-day knowledge. What pushed me to apply for the Research Assistant position though, were two things: 1) I wanted to learn more so I can share this knowledge with people around me. I feel like every time Indigenous people get brought up, it's always about the bad things, so I wanted to see for myself if I can learn more about the good and sweet things about their culture that influences society! 2) Dr. J commits to telling her story, her people's story, no matter how hard everything gets, no matter how much she has on her plate. I'm not going to lie; it was really difficult to work as an RA when both you and the supervisor are busy bees. But amidst all that, I still admire her for continuing to fight.

I hope that as we learn more and more about Indigenous history and their culture, that we are more conscious of how we live on a daily basis. Treating one another with respect and kindness is the first step we can take to see Indigenous peoples as equals. I am honored to be a part of this podcast and hope to learn more with our Auntie Is In listeners on how to become allies, not just as a buzzword, but as true allies to the Indigenous community.

Sam Dancey

The only way I can think to describe Dr. J's influence is to compare her to Jesus and how born-again Christians describe finding Jesus. I am not saying she is Jesus, it's just a mediocre analogy. Being taught by her has been a not entirely tangible experience of epiphany and self-awareness; a profound change in myself as a person. Every evening after the first course I took with her, I would go home and be so overwhelmed with emotions I would just lay in bed and stare at the ceiling. I was trying to reconcile my past, my worldview and my privilege, which is a never-ending process, but that semester it felt very intense. But it deeply changed the way I thought and viewed the world. Taking another class and then being involved with the podcast has continued to expand my thinking and given me opportunities I could not have imagined.

The day before I was invited to volunteer as a research assistant, I was talking to a classmate, and we were both lamenting about how we wished we could do something to help Dr. J. because she had so much on her plate. And now I am beyond honoured to get to help her every week and contribute to meaningful conversations. I still have some days of learning that are hard, but nobody else can make me laugh like Dr. J.

I really feel like she is my Auntie. She tells it straight, but she tells the truth. And she shows me and others that she gives a shit. Dr. J cares so much about her family, community and students, she's tall because she has to have room for her massive heart.

LeeLa Haynes

My family moved from Bangkok, Thailand to Wetaskiwin, Alberta in the Summer of 1988. Over the next few years, I became very aware of what was then called Hobbema, now reclaimed as Maskwacîs, and the harmful stereotypes thrown around by the settlers in my town. Fastforward almost 3 decades, and I find myself sitting in the class of this incredible, hilarious, intelligent human from

Maskwacîs, sharing with us the stories of what it was like growing up on the other side of what I observed and witnessed as a child. Immeasurably heavy things. Lived experiences that many of us could only imagine. Yet here was this remarkable professor not only doing her job educating us in a classroom, but putting in emotional labour her peers never had to consider every time she did it. Teaching us the histories of our settler-colonial nation, the atrocities, the harms done. The things people seldom want to think about or acknowledge. Yet somehow are the narratives that we often hear the most.

So, Dr. J countered these with stories of beauty and resilience, of strength, of perseverance. Of humanity. Of meaningful relationships. Things she encompasses in every fibre of her being, things she puts out into the world through this podcast and just by existing as who she is. It's these narratives of hope and resilience and love that I choose to keep with me when I think of the work needed in decolonization efforts today and in the future. This podcast is so important because I think about what its impact would be on a young Indigenous youth listening to it. Walking away from it knowing they have the power and the brilliance to be whatever they want to be instead of the way society claims they are. And to the settlers like me listening? Keep paying attention.

Jude McNaughton

There is so much I want to say about Dr. Johnson, my teammates, and the process of working on this podcast that I've really struggled to try and write it down for a short five-minute piece. The first time I met Dr. Johnson was in a cultural anthropology course during last summer semester, and that one course with her as my professor completely changed the direction of both my academic career, and my life. I really want to describe the immensely positive impacts this process has had, but before that, I feel like I need to get some of the harder emotions off my chest that came up during our researching process.

Firstly, I am a 24-year-old undergrad of settler ancestry; a good quarter of my family came to Turtle Island from Lincolnshire England around 230 years ago. They were likely "given" farmland on Haudenosaunee territory in what is referred to as Ontario – of course by the Canadian settler-state and not by the folks actually living there. Including this, I am of Ukrainian, Norwegian, Irish and German descent; essentially a big ol' cocktail of white. My immediate family has always been just a few missed bills away from poverty – but always at least relatively comfortable. Let me tell you – I think I'm at my angriest every time I turn on my tap. That last summer in cultural anthropology, all I could think about when I turned on my faucet was that my professor, probably the wisest, smartest, funniest, most

hard-working person I've ever met in my life, who ALSO graduated with honors and has a Ph-fucking-D, goes home every day to house without clean water.

It's very important to note when I say this too – merit should *never* determine whether or not you have access to basic human needs such as clean water. Everyone deserves to have such basic needs met no matter who you are or what you do. However, my hope is that this might offer some further perspective to any other settlers listening who might otherwise not see this. My family went through bankruptcy, and yet I still have never gone a single day without clean water. There are still hundreds of families, whole communities, well within utility-line areas that have no. clean. water. There is no other reason for this besides racism.

We as settlers have been sold a completely fabricated narrative – pure propaganda – rooted in ignorance, fear, disconnect from our own cultures, and above all else, *greed*. Yes, it's true that the majority of us never actively sought out this destructive cultural mindset; it's also true that many, if not all of us, are in one form or another complicit in its perpetuation. I'm not excluded from this. These facts *can* and *MUST* coexist. The thing is, rather than feeling defensive and angry towards Indigenous communities when faced with this reality, you need to direct that energy towards the REAL reason we're all in this mess; the large industrial corporations who have and continue to profit off of hundreds of years of oppression and resource theft, as well as the Canadian government who has these corporations in their back pockets still. It has *always* been about money and power. The same elite classes leading this continued attempt at cultural genocide against Indigenous People are the very same who oppressed our own ancestors in our European homelands. We're all on the same side.

However, I digress. This podcast isn't *just* about everything that's wrong in the settler-state – it's about collectively moving towards a future of true equality and true sovereignty for Indigenous Nations. It's about re-educating people about false colonial narratives without a university paywall standing in the way. It's about how actually affirming Indigenous knowledge and sovereignty will help guide us towards a brighter collective future, one where our world isn't being burnt to the ground by an unsustainable system that functions through social division, endless consumption, and oppression. Most importantly, it's about the incredible resilience and strength within Indigenous communities, and how we of settler descent can help work together to untangle this mess of perpetual systemic racism our ancestors helped establish.

Two-Eyed seeing was one particular concept that Dr. Johnson introduced us to that will probably stay with me for the rest of my life. It highlights

the necessity for combining Western schools of thought with Indigenous knowledge systems in understanding the mysterious and beautiful world in which we inhabit. Often in Western schools of thought, we're encouraged to succeed by disconnecting from what makes us human; empathy, accountability, spirituality, and self-reflection are seen as weaknesses – especially under the colonial capitalist system. As you've learned through this podcast (or perhaps already knew); these are traits valued by many of the various Indigenous cultures on Turtle Island as ways to be a stand-up member of your community. I take this deeply to heart.

Because of what I've learned and experienced working on this podcast with Dr. Johnson and our team, I feel as if the world I walk through is far larger and far more wondrous than I've ever imagined. It inspires me to work every day to be a better member of my community by keeping the seven Grandparent teachings in my mind wherever I go. I'm very grateful to have been gifted this knowledge and experience – and I am ever hopeful that the listeners of this podcast, whatever ancestry you may have, will come away similarly changed. Before I eat-up all of our time – I want to sincerely thank Dr. Johnson, my fellow teammates, and you the listeners for everything we've built together. I am truly honored to have been invited to help realize this project - and together, I know we'll make a brighter future.

Gina Jimenez

The Butterfly Effect in the Chaos theory says that "the flapping of the wings of a butterfly can be felt on the other side of the world," and this is what I think *The Auntie Is In* Podcast is doing right now, at least in my life, and maybe in the lives of the podcast members and the lives of the podcast listeners.

My name is Gina! I am a Colombian woman born in a marginalized rural area affected by the armed conflict and migrated to the city with her parents and two younger sisters looking for better opportunities. In high school, I realized I wanted to help vulnerable people and marginalized communities to be recognized as part of society, with their culture, customs, religious beliefs, sex, race, and language. Then I became a sociologist who has developed her professional career around recognizing the intrinsic connections between communities, territories, environments and identities.

Five months ago, I arrived in Edmonton, Canada looking for better opportunities and following my commitment to work alongside those who are legitimately part of a community but must fight to be recognized. As if something magic had happened, I heard about *The Auntie*

Is In and had the chance to attend the launch. During the event, and after listening to Dr. J. 's opening words, I decided to ask for an opportunity to be part of this admirable process.

Since then, I have seen through *The Auntie Is In* the connections of indigenous lands and territories and their survival tactics in a world defined by colonial settlers, how the value of the word and oral narratives build kinship and community, and how well-being relates to the harmonious relationships between humans, other species and land. I am confident that *The Auntie Is In* is flapping her wings producing effects around the world and procuring the recognition of Indigenous people.

Giovanni Ursella

Hi, everyone! I'm a son of Italian and Filipino immigrants who has lived almost all of his life in Edmonton. I was away for a bit and wasn't able to record my voice on the podcast, so I am grateful to still get to write this.

I met Dr. Johnson when I took an Indigenous feminisms class with her. It was the first time that I was being taught in a class about Indigenous stuff by someone who is Indigenous, and Dr. Johnson showed me how important it was to not limit my classroom learning to its content, as if to learn about Indigenous people from a distance. I wrote my paper in that class about how to be a "better settler"--I'm still not sure what that means, but I thought a lot about some of the stuff in Episode 12. I came to realize that I can't decide to "fix myself" by somehow relinquishing my settlerhood and moving to "the Indigenous side" of things. The most sense that I could make of Indigenous-settler relations was for settlers to be given responsibilities by Indigenous communities, that is, to be guided by Indigenous communities. (It is hard for me to imagine what else settlers can be guided by--colonialism? capitalism? I mean, it seems to me that that is what we settlers are using for guidance right now, and it sucks.) But I don't have a relationship with an Indigenous community, so I'm not sure what to do in that respect.

What this podcast means to me is beginning to work on something with an Indigenous community. To be fair, Dr. Johnson herself isn't a community, but she is working with settlers and nehiyawak to put together these podcasts. That is super amazing to me, to bring together worlds that seem so different in a way that still makes sense.

Dr. Johnson asked us to address young Indigenous people. There are so many bad things around: these podcasts talk about colonialism, and there's capitalism and climate change and housing and other stuff that I'm not even aware of. So, I think that it's so great that Dr. Johnson asked

us specifically to address Indigenous youth, because with all of those problems to look at, her thoughts are with you! She might not even have met you, but she knows to turn to you. I imagine that there are people around you who would also look to you, but even if you haven't seen them yet (or seen that in them), you know that Dr. Johnson is there.

What would I like to leave behind? I'm not sure how to answer the question. I imagine that I am always leaving things behind, because you leave a mark with every interaction. I guess, I hope to become part of a community so that I will leave everything behind--I feel like that's how communities work, that they carry a body of knowledge or whatever that everyone is always making together.

Thanks for listening to these podcasts, and good luck with whatever you are doing.

August Schaffler

I come from a white settler background. My family settled on Turtle island in waves - some as far back as the 1400s. I was semi-aware of the violence of the settler-state before taking Dr. Johnson's class (although she definitely helped paint a more complete picture of that). I was actually more surprised to learn that many of the original treaties between settlers and Indigenous people were meant to be a promise of friendship and mutual respect. While settlers have done a famously horrific job of holding up our end of the bargain, it made me realize that it's not too late to act in the spirit of those original treaties. I used to fantasize about returning to Europe to try and undo some of the damage my ancestors have done, but now I realize that I'd just be running away from a far more important responsibility. And besides - for better or worse, Edmonton is my home. It has been for as long as I can remember, and there's a lot of work that needs to be done here if it's ever going to be a place where settlers can work in collaboration with Nêhiyawak to care for the land and each other.

I'm also transgender and nonbinary - which for me means that I'm not really a man or a woman, or maybe both, or a secret third thing- ask me next week, I'm sure my answer will change. I've honestly really struggled to reconcile those two parts of my identity when so much of the dominant narrative about trans people is a straight line from one gender to another. Woman becomes man, man becomes woman. It's a struggle sometimes, knowing that I have to destroy someone's concept of one of the most basic building blocks of society before they'll even know I exist. And the concept of male and female being the only options is still so hard-wired into most people that they're still likely going to call me a

man or a woman a lot, even if they're aware I use they/them pronouns. Often, it's something I choose not to share at all - I just let people make their own assumptions and roll with it.

Dr. Johnson's refusal to be anyone but herself in the face of colonialism has really changed how I approach telling people about my relationship with gender. Although I'm neither Indigenous or a woman, I've spent a lot of time trying to justify my existence to people that don't want to respect me, or even believe I exist. Dr. Johnson has taught me that the people that will love you for being outspoken and proud of your identity are so much more important than whatever bigot you were trying to make yourself small for.

Part Three:
Conclusion

I guess you can hear that they left words of kindness for me. I am grateful for each and every one of you. To have you alongside me. To listen to me in our meetings to reach our objectives and goals. This would not be possible without you all. Ninanaskomon, I am grateful.

Together we ask you to think about how you carry the knowledge in this podcast forward and remind you to always speak with kindness because you never know who is listening.

To our listeners, I guess you're wondering what happens next. Well, we will see you in Season Two, where I get to be a lot more deadlier and rezzier. I didn't even get to say settle once, all I said was settler a million times, ever sick just colonizing still.

Well, I am Dr. Paulina Johnson, and I am the Auntie Is In. This is the way.

Ekosi, that's it for now.

End Credits:
We would like to acknowledge Tiny Forests who made the opening music of our podcast. As well as Jordan Ast and Dr. Remy Bocquillon who completed our sound engineering and mastering. Ay ay, thank you all!

End End Credit:
I hope you all don't be just f**king miss[3] me until season two.

3 "Just fucking missing him/her" slang for "I am missing him/ her."