The Auntie Dialogues: *Volume Two*

Edited By

Paulina Johnson. Marieliv Flores Villalobos and Luke Wonneck

Special Issue

Socialist Studies

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For Chief

The ultimate Rez Dog

and Rez Dogs all over

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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 sometimes 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.

Stardust

I often wonder if I would be considered a good ancestor while on my journey home to the spirit world – or if all the jokes and sarcasm I have given will have caught up to me. That maybe Creator finally was like, ekosi, enough to me. Maybe, but I think about this world that we are a part of – one that is constantly testing me, to be patient, to listen, to remember to be kind. The world I know as an Indigenous woman is not the world that many of you are aware of or have experienced. My anger often overwhelms me and overshadows my faith when injustice and racism play out in my everyday interactions. Yet, so many have come to look up to me in ways that I have never fully understood. I know my loud auntie laugh warms the heart and my jokes about white men are contagious even to those who fit that classification in the room with me. But now, in our second season our reach of the podcast continues to grow and develop into something we never anticipated – especially me.

The podcast has now reached over 25 countries with a large portion of the listeners coming from Canada, the United States, India, Germany, and France. Our goal was set on Canada alone but as we grow internationally, we see hope in the reach of our main goal – to share truths about Indigenous Peoples and the realities we face with honesty, humour, and liberation. Many of our listeners come from various backgrounds and generations as the demographics of the podcast range from Ages 0-17 with less than 1% of listeners, Ages 18-22 with 11%, Ages 23-27 with 15%, Ages 28-34 with 27%, Ages 35-44 with 23%, Ages 45-59 with 17%, and Ages 60+ with 6%. Gender ranges from 69% for Female, 24% for Male, 4% not specific, and 3% Non-binary (Spotify Overview for "The Auntie Is In" as of June 21, 2024). While statistics are one aspect, it is important to note that we dreamt of only a small audience with the work we do.

We continue this journey as a research team now known as the Blue Sky Research Collective. Every aspect of the work is still placed in ceremony and given the utmost respect. We saw new faces come in and join, and old ones graduate and pursue other opportunities, yet, the individuals who remain alongside me continue to teach me everyday. From receiving a small research award in our first season, we are now funded by Braiding Knowledges Canada (BKC) formerly the Canadian Mountain Network (CMN). This is impart due to my new role as Co-Research Director of Indigenous Engagement for BKC. If you told me a year ago that all of this would happen, I do not know if I would have believed it – yet, Creator places these opportunities upon me. And I am forever grateful to the universe and Creator for all that is gifted.

We thank Socialist Studies for making The Auntie Dialogues a Special Issue that continues to support our research and anticolonial work.

Importantly, I am grateful for our research assistants on Season Two, my brothers Dr. Remy Bocquillon and Dr. JA Morrow who have officially joined the team (I really didnt give them a choice), my mentors at the University of Alberta and family in Maskwacis, but importantly, our listeners and those who seek solace in The Auntie Dialogues: Volume I. Particularly, it is the Indigenous students who reach out to us that we admire and give us the motivation to continue and with that said, we will continue with The Auntie Is In and prepare for Season Three.

My goal will always be to the Indigenous People I come from and the Blue Sky Research Collective supports me in this endevour. The Blue Sky Research Collective is a mixture of undergraduate and graduate students who come from various backgrounds and lived experiences, they have taught me as much as I have taught them.

May Volume Two of The Auntie Dialogues highlight who I am and the People that I come from as I offer these insights as little pieces to share and to give. As my People's Creation Story tells us we are from the stars and I hope these little pieces of stardust offers you a chance to experience what it means to be Nêhiyawak.

> **With a loud auntie cackle,**
>
> **That awakens the Thunderbirds,**
>
> **And alerts rez dogs everywhere.**
>
> **To hair that is high enough to have its own honour song,**
>
> **With beaded earrings hidden behind my floral kokum scarf,**
>
> **And adorned with ribbons on my skirt for every uncle's heart I have broken.**
>
> **Thank you,**
>
> **Ay Ay.**

- Your Auntie

Listen along on Spotify.

Season 2, Episode 1:

Dr. Johnson

PAULINA JOHNSON ET AL.

Synopsis: *Season Two begins with acknowledging the people from Maskwacis who have shaped Dr. Johnson's life. This episode includes her story as a young Rez girl who went for it to become a full-fledged Indigenous baddie/auntie working towards a decolonial future where Indigenous knowledge is upheld and prioritized within universities. Get to know your auntie on a more personal level through the people who know her best.*

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Part One:
Blood Ties of Bear Hills

Prayer by Nimosôm Christopher Johnson, no translation of his Nêhiyawewin prayer will be given.

Nohtâwiy Paul Johnson [2:38]

Hello, world, it's me, Paul Johnson. Dr. Paulina Johnson's father. Here I am sitting in a booth, wondering exactly what I'm going to say in her struggles or her academic career she's taken so far. And quite truthfully, I'm pretty proud of her. To see her go from a young child to an awesome human being. As you can tell, my voice is a little wavering. I've never really thought about it. Thinking like being Indigenous, or Native in this country is difficult enough as it is. Because Canada as you know, is pretty good at displaying itself as great people, you know, kind and everything. But the truth of the reality is, that's just the surface. Dig below, scratch below, and you'll notice it's a pretty harsh country when it comes to Indigenous people. The track record in itself is not great. People tend to say it's our fault, which I don't get. But that's the conception of people who don't know nothing. They assume. And imagine most of the time they think they know better. And nobody knows, nobody. Nobody knows the true story of the struggle of a First Nation person than themselves. For me and my daughter, we're similar in that not only does she share my name, but she shares the skin tone of my color, my people. And it is in generations that that color has come through. And we're still here. No matter how much the government of Canada has tried to assimilate us and change us. We're still here.

Now, my daughter has struggled. And plenty of times we've had conversation when she talked to me about her frustration with academia and how she's made applications to certain universities and she felt excluded and I tell her at the time not to worry. It's our belief things come to you when it's time for them to come to you. You don't push the envelope so to speak and push your word, make a rush through this world. As you know, it's good, live life, have fun, do things that make you happy. And I think she found her way. I can still remember when she first went to school, right after high school, she, at that time, didn't want to go to university or post secondary. And then being Dr. Johnson, she procrastinated a little bit. And then a month prior to fall semester, she comes to me and said, "Dad, I want to go to school." So I said "okay, let me see what I can do". So I talk to our education coordinator for our Nation. And she was able to find funding for her and off she went, started her school. She started in Red Deer

College, a small college in central Alberta, where she made some friends. And through these friendships she fostered, that individual shone a light to what her career could be, and what can be. And after she did a couple years at Red Deer college, she moved on to U of A. And same thing, she made up applications to different universities, and she wanted to do her Masters and stuff like that. And quite a few of them turned her down for whatever reason, who knows. Because obviously, it's a cruel world and when it comes to academia, people are picked like a thumbs up, thumbs down. I don't know how to rationale, I can say whoever has the best CV and a line of bullshit of working the borders of the system, because basically what I've seen and learned, that it's a system, you have to work the system. And unfortunately, that's not Indigenous way or the Native way, where you manipulate the system. But for her, it was part of her process. And off she went, she did her applications, and then out of the blue, she got an offer in Ontario. And at the same time in Victoria, BC. Now she had a conundrum, what's she going to do now. And I told her, choose where you want to go. One was closer to us, and that's obviously, I told her, it don't matter if you're close to us or not, you need to do what you need to do. And so, through our conversation, she chose to go east to Western University, and do her Masters. And there she met a doctor who changed her outlook again.

So everything I've seen so far for her has geared to where she is now. It's a journey. And it's her journey. And I'm proud to see her where she got. Like I said, who knows had she took another door. It's like that crossroads, in every part of her career has been a crossroads. And she's taken it, no matter how diverse she's met, the people, and how much obstacles she has come across. Like she applied here at her alma mater at U of A and she never got approved or accepted into programs she wanted to go. So she went out east. And that's okay. Because what it did for her, made her a greater person who, obviously, I never know, every institution is not perfect by any means, from what I've seen and told from her. They all have their own criteria. And in a day, their business, and they're looking for certain people who can support their business without much pushback. And unfortunately, that's where I think they had the issue now is Dr. Johnson, my daughter has been able to push back, and say "no, no, it's time for you to listen to us". And I'm quite proud of that, that she's able to push back and say, "hold on, it's time for us to be recognized and seen". And like for her and I'm proud, she understands her culture and where she comes from. My father has given her quite a bit of guidance through his own way. He, like I said, unfortunately, he's a victim of residential school. And it took a while for him to get back to his own culture. But at the same time, it was fortunate for me because at that time when he was going back to his culture, I was old enough to understand and kind of went with him side by side in his journey of reawakening I guess, of who we are as a people of this world, as Indigenous. And that being said, I'm Indig-

enous, and ultimately it comes down to it, Cree. And then my daughter is Cree, too. So it was my family, all my family's Cree. So here we are talking about Dr. Johnson. Academia has been a struggle for her, obviously. But also I think it's given her quite a few rewards and relationships that she'll carry for the rest of her life. I don't know what's gonna happen for her in the future. Or, heck, if she's gonna stay in this institution in Alberta, I don't know. We never know. But she'll find her way. And I'm pretty sure I'll be there watching her.

Nikawiy Luci Johnson [9:43]

Tânisi, my name is Lucy Johnson. My traditional name is She Who Works With Creator From The Sky; Angel. One of the things that I wanted to talk about today was the background of who I am, and the future and the legacy that I'm leaving through my own children. I'm the proud Cree mother of five. I have four that are the namesake of my husband, Paula, Pauline, Paulina (Dr. Paulina Johnson), Paul Jr., and I've been blessed to raise and rear, our first great granddaughter, Leilani. And I'm very proud of each and every one of them. They have attributed to my life to make me feel whole as not only a mother, but to a woman in society. And I'm also very, very proud of myself and my husband, Paul Johnson. We were highschool sweethearts, and we're going to celebrate our 40th anniversary this year. So that's an achievement in itself. And I still love Paul Johnson through my heart as the first day I met him.

But what I wanted to talk about was what my nitânis, Paulina- she's my youngest daughter - has gone through with academia. And the importance of her standing strong where she is, in the career path that she has chosen, not only from Junior High to Senior High School to first year of university, Bachelor's and moving forward to her PhD. As a mother, I've always tried to instill the values that we have from our Cree culture. The ceremony that I went through with my grandmother, Sarah Swampy, and the importance of us standing proud, strong, and the resilience that we have as Native women. We are here, we are Life Carriers, and the Life Carriers that I've been given — I'm just so proud of with my daughters and our only son.

I get my strength from my, not only from my children and my husband, my community, but I've gotten the strength from my own mother, and my grandmother. My mother Grace Swampy was one of the first Native women in Alberta to achieve not only her Master's, but moving on to her PhD at the University of Alberta, in the early 70s, which was unheard of for a native woman. We've seen her struggles because I was in junior high/high school at the time. And, you know, she came home upset one time and said that a lady at registration had got after her, because they had to change the paperwork, because a status woman

has now been enrolled and accepted into the Master's program. And I told her, "mom, you just kicked open the door for everybody else". That included our own daughter in the future. So there she stood, our daughter, Paulina, not only from university doing her Bachelor's to Western University doing her Master's and her PhD, she achieved something — a legacy. We always talk about looking forward to having seven generations, and those seven generations, what did they leave behind? I've seen six in my life, and I'm hoping to, with Leilani, to see seven. That's our legacy.

I also would like to talk about the challenges she has not only as a PhD professor, in any capacity that she works in, but to to come home, leave the concrete jungle, leave everything that you can, even if it's just for the evening, come home and have that comfort food, come home and have that bonding between her father and I; and if there's any siblings home, just come home, find yourself so you can go on for the next day. And leave it to the universe, let the universe and the words out. So they know if you need prayers or strength or find a solution. The universe will hear the words that you need to be out, how they can help you heal, and how they can help you move forward in life. I'll finish with this: my mosôm Magnus said, "Never stay silent. If you stay silent, you accept. And if you accept, you can't complain later." And he always said that in his Stoney language. And I've always thought about that from early in life, to my parenting, to being able to be in partnership with my husband. That's one of the things that I have always said. For myself working in the courts, I've been a court worker for 27 years. I've always said, "if we remain without saying anything that's a positive, nothing gets solved". So I always instill those values with Paulina and some of the problems and issues that she has. I can't fix everything as a mother, but I can sure support her 100% to get to the next area. Even it's just that she comes and leans on my shoulder, has some comfort food, hamburger soup with fried bannock, you know. If that's what it takes for her to help her get to the next level that she needs, that's my role as a mother for her. Hay hay.

Nohkôm Pam Johnson [14:56]

First of all, let me say that I've known the strong, courageous, intelligent woman since she was born. The timing of her birth and following life and education are no accident. Paulina has always done her best academically and professionally to show the world her heritage. With her hard work and courage, she's where she needs to be to help the world see through her eyes. Through adversity and challenge she's persevered to achieve her goal. I'm so proud of the woman she's become. Paulina and her mosôm Chris have always had a special relationship, whether golf, cultural or spiritual. Many of us who know them say they're

cut from the same cloth. Both are strong willed, and aren't afraid to stand up for what they believe in and get the job done. No matter how challenging or difficult the situation. She's always stood up for the rights of herself and her people. At the end of the day, Paulina is still grandpa's girl.

Elder Kirk Buffalo [15:51]

Tânisi. Piyesîwîn ê-isiyihkâsoyan. My name is Kirk Buffalo. I am the Cultural Connector employed with Samson Community Wellness. As a friend, and someone that I know very dear to my heart, is Dr. Paulina Johnson. She has been part of my life. I have seen her earn her doctorate. I was there. After many years of dedication, following her goals, following her dreams, I was part of getting to know her and see her succeed. She has many of the values and skills that she applies. She's learned Western society's way of earning your degree, earning your doctorate, but she's also maintained her spirituality, her connections to her culture. She has an Indian name, she's has been part of our sweat lodge ceremony, and she knows who she is.

And as a role model of Samson Cree Nation, it is an honor to see her succeed, and a greater honor to see her at the University of Alberta sharing her knowledge and opening the doors that Western society, and society, have to work hand in hand in finding out how do we best help First Nations, how do we help our families that are struggling with suicide, alcohol. And we look back at the Sixties Scoop, residential school, child welfare and now the prison system. We as First Nations have to support and stand up and acknowledge the work that's being done. Western society needs to learn lots, and I was able to express in one sentence, when I attended the University of Lethbridge, "First Nations must stop looking outside the community at professionals that do not understand who we are, what we've been through, and how we're going to dig ourselves out to find that future for our children and for the unborn." Dr. Paulina has taken her strengths, both culturally and in Western society, in opening doors for all of us to work together and find that, the healing, the happiness. Of what can happen in the future, we don't know. But as First Nations, we all have to work together, stand up together and find a future for our children. She is a role model, and somebody that I am truly so proud of. And being part of her life is, I'm thankful for people, such as Paulina, that know their goals. And to call her "Doctor" is an accomplishment. And you working at the University of Alberta is a double whammy. So again, it's an opportunity for me to say thank you, Paulina. Follow your dreams. Stay connected to who you are, and we'll make a brighter future for our children and our grandchildren. Kahkiyaw kinanâskomitinawaw. Hay hay.

very essence of who I am. Academia still has a long way to go, but our society is even further away from what it could be. My wish in this podcast was that it would not only be a way to share truths but one that envisioned a world that is much different than what we know. While many may doubt that the audience which needs to hear my message is actively looking for a podcast on Indigenous truths, I say let this stand as a testament to who I am, to those who need it the most.

The work of anti-racism and educating against the anti-Indigenous sentiments that lie in our society is not an easy or straightforward task. It is complex and exhausting. So, I have used my time, remembering where I come from, but also surrounding myself with those willing to advocate, protect, heal, and listen to all that I am and could be without the constraints of colonization, exploitation, or intimidation upon me. And while I may not have been eager to attend post-secondary education, I did. And in a very fast way, which is impressive not because I am Indigenous but because I have always been capable. I have always been worthy, and while I may not have the years that so many look for within my people as Elders do, I do have one important aspect that I carry with me - care. Care for this world and the next. And though many have tested this, I care to those waiting for me - because our fates were always meant to meet. And so, my Indigenous listeners, never doubt that you are capable; we are more than rez kids who went for our dreams; *we are the next generation of ancestors who are needed.*

And these are the voices of those who have navigated alongside me in my academic journey from the beginning to the present. A weaving of where I come from and a future that is Creator-willed. A future foreseen by my great grandfather, Magnus Swampy, who spoke of a grandchild from my late grandmother Grace, who would teach in the big universities. I never expected myself to be that premonition, yet here I am.

Along the way, I have met numerous people that I have learned from, shared who I am with, and call my own. These people I stand by are those willing to hold space for me when needed. These people are the ones who are on my journey right now as we speak, and who get to know me in ways not always known to others. They have carried who I am in how they care for me, how they guide me in ways meaningful to what I stand for, and who know that my journey is not just mine but the teachings and connections of those who not only just spoke before me, but to those who speak through me and to me.

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Part Three:
Full Circle

[28:46 The following section is Doctors Natahnee Winder, Murray Humphries, Michael Polushin, JA Morrow, Remi Bocquillon, Marta-Marika Urbanik, Shirley Anne Tate and Richard Westerman. These are the individuals that I work wholeheartedly together and with in my research as a university academic. I asked them a series of questions for them to contemplate for their segment. I asked them to tell how they connect with me, to give the context of how we know each other, but also to say what they think is important in the work that I do. And what would they say to me if I were a young Indigenous student in their classroom? And what does it mean for them to be part of my journey for cultural resurgence and liberation from my community and people, and this is what they have to say.]

Dr. Natahnee Winder [29:38]

Being a rez girl in the academy is a lonely journey from time to time, especially being in graduate school. I was the only Indigenous graduate student in the Department of Sociology. Plus, I was the only person from my home community at the university and in London, Ontario. Where did I meet Paulina? I patiently waited for Paulina in the lobby of the Indigenous Studies Program, and the director who was excited to introduce me to her. I was told that Paulina was coming from Alberta. Paulina walked through the door, and we exchanged our conversations. We shared how we grew up on the rez, and this was our immediate connection. Our conversations transitioned into talking loudly and getting more comfortable with each other by talking louder and louder when you get excited. During our initial interactions and conversations between three Indigenous women, we started laughing and letting out those huge rez auntie laughs, and Paulina threw her head back with a gigantic cackle. I knew she was a rez girl at heart, body, mind and spirit. I invited her to come for dinner, exchanged numbers and gave her my address. I miss those conversations, and Paulina reconnected me to rez life and brought back feelings of home. As someone who experienced challenges in graduate school and being a first in my family to pursue a PhD, I wanted to make sure Paulina had support, knew where to seek support, and let her know that I was there for her to help her with her journey if she needed, so it would be less lonely, to remove obstacles and to uplift her as my peer. We have seen and continue to support each other, from ups and downs as graduate students to pre-tenure faculty members. Paulina's heart and actions is about helping Indigenous community and constantly thinking about the next generation, whether this is done as ceremony, education, and/or mentorship.

What makes Paulina's work important to the Academy? Because as an authentic Indigenous community researcher, another way of putting in is she strives to do her best work in challenging situations and she's not afraid to call out individuals. She is a fierce scholar and knows she has the backing of her community and ancestors. Her scholarship, research and service are interwoven together as she always brings in unapologetic rezy-auntie Indigenous self. As a graduate student Paulina organized a vigil for the murdered and missing Indigenous women and girls, honoring them and supporting their journey to the spirit world through the lens of a Cree condolence ceremony. She also tackled and got the Department of Anthropology to change the racist and outdated name of the graduate school journal. As a pre tenure faculty member, she is decolonizing the Academy with her work.

The advice I would tell Paulina is rez girls can become academics, it'll be challenging and individuals will try to discredit you, and make you feel like you do not belong in the ivory tower. I will be here to support you, and put you into contact with others who can help you if I am unable to. You are the miracle and answers to your ancestors prayers. Being a part of Paulina's journey is an honor, we are sisters. So I am blessed. The Creator put our paths in the trajectory where we could cross and be on this academic journey to tenure together. Thank you for opening your heart, family, and community, and allowing me to get to know them and to be in service to support and walk with you on the road to cultural resurgence and liberation. And I also want to say is just, gosh, thank you so much for supporting me in graduate school and, you know, the trust that we have for one another, and continuing to have and yeah, you just reminded me of home.

Dr. Murray Humphries [33:38]

I connect to Paulina in our shared roles as co-research directors of the Canadian Mountain Network now, and of Braiding Knowledges Canada in the future. But more than that, I connect to you as my sister, my friend and my colleague. I have that connection with you, in part because organizations and institutions brought us together. But in whole because of the trust, commitment and ceremony you have extended to me and for the opportunity I've been afforded to work with you. The importance I see in the work you do is your commitment to culture, ceremony and relationship; your willingness to teach me and many others about being Cree, Indigeneity, and the depth of institutional harm and ignorance. You make me laugh and you help me learn, with learning that reminds me of kindness, and laughter that makes me aware of your strength.

If you're a young Indigenous student in my class, I would mention that there

should be many more Indigenous people in this class and that you being here helps to make that future more present and more likely. I'd remind you that the class and the learning belongs to you and the other students here, and to make it your own. And in the words of William Prince, "go ahead and be a scientist. Or start a band with your best friends, or be the muscle with a phony list, or change some oil and burn your wrist, stay home and raise a family, go teach gym overseas. I'll love you for whatever it is, just don't let a day go wasted". What it means for me to be a part of your journey for cultural resurgence and liberation is three things. It's an honor, it's an opportunity. And it's a commitment. I'm so grateful for Paulina, and for the opportunity to work with you.

Dr. Michael Polushin [35:27]

Hi there, my name is Michael Polushin. I've known Dr. Paulina Johnson since she was first an undergraduate student taking my classes at the University of Alberta. I later knew her, continued to know her, as a graduate student on her journey for higher education. And then we collaborated on several projects, including at the Royal Alberta Museum. I think Paulina always has served as an extraordinary example. She now is part of our extended family. And she sets a remarkable example for undergraduate students, as well as young Indigenous people. And I believe this is so important. And I really, really appreciate the hard work, and her perseverance over time. I think that she has reminded me and has really informed the way I approach Indigenous students in my classes, to encourage them to revisit their own heritage, and to think about the larger picture at hand, and how they can further further their own worlds in which they live, and live a nice life I think is the main thing. But I do think that what I've learned from Paulina is that you can always laugh, you can always cry, you can laugh at things that are pretty serious. And as I reminded her on occasion, that once you start thinking about what you're laughing about, that's usually when the tears start rolling. Nevertheless, Paulina, again, is just extraordinary. And I feel so honored to have known her and continue to know her. So that's all I have to say about that.

Dr. JA Morrow [37:21]

Paulina, and I will go to these meetings, and we'll meet with, like, a vice provost of a university or someone who's in charge of something. And the first question they always ask is, "how do you know each other? What's your relationship to one another?" And it's always funny, because Paulina, and I look at each other, and have this kind of conversation with our eyes. And the answer is, we've never fully been able to explain it. Originally, I remember when we were in Parksville, the joke was, I was her bird dog. But you could tell that the

community members around us just didn't really like that joke. And I would always get these comments of, like, "that's really protective. Keep doing that, right". That's what Guidia [Mary Jane Johnson] told us. And I'm comfortable with that. I'm comfortable with being the guy who stands, you know, somewhere over her shoulder, or just, you know, a couple of days ago, I just sat at a table next to her, and we had this Penn and Teller act going on, where she did most of the talking and I just did the staring down of the audience. But there's also that dynamic outside of, kind of the public performance, right? And I help with a lot of things going on. Right, I would take Chief for a walk if I had to. But I think it's just the fact that like, it's how you treat people and family. And it's the relationship I have with any of my sisters. And that requires care, and renewal, and telling jokes and being there for each other in all the difficult moments and all the joyous moments.

The second question here is what do I see that's important in the work that Paulina does? I think it's bringing just another way of seeing and another way of talking to audiences, whether that's in the classroom, whether that's in Indigenous communities, whether that is in the community hall, whether that's one-on-one. And I think that that's kind of the important part of this, is that the work that Paulina does is to gather people, to teach people, to make people see the world in any way different than they have today, right? And I think that's the really positive thing about what Paulina does, is she helps people see the future. It's time and time again, the kind of criticism of us is you were ahead of your time, right? Paulina is always ahead of her time. And that comes at great cost, but that also means that she's seen things, been places, understood things. And I think it's just a brilliant position to be in — the ability to come back and tell people what *they* need to do, and to guide them that way. And I'm just always going to be impressed by the way that she shares that knowledge.

The third question is, what would you say to Paulina, if she was a young Indigenous person in my class. And I will say the same thing I always tell my Indigenous students is "just keep working at this". I know that's a joke that I always say that, "always keep working". But there's dignity in work. And things are never going to be easy. And I sound like my own grandparents, "nothing's ever easy". But there's truth in that. That was a teaching that was passed on to them and that's a teaching that I will pass on to others is, "nothing can always be that simple. But what you can do is just work at it and work at it", right? It's the old joke, "how do you get to Carnegie Hall?" "Practice". But when I was a basketball player, in my youth, there was a guy who would make us watch these videos, they would make us sit down and watch these videos. And this guy would always say, "the more you do it, the better you become, the more you do it, the better you become". That phrase always kind of grinds in the back of my

head, of, “the more you do it, the better you become, just keep working at this right? If you fall down, keep going at it, just get back up. We’ll go back to work, keep working”. The other is that anything at this university, anything in these institutions that you go to, I know that it’s uncomfortable, I know that sometimes you don’t feel like you fit in. But nothing here is something that you can’t do. Nothing, here is something that you can’t do, you can do this, right? And I think you have to just trust that sometimes, even in your hardest moment, there’s going to be a hand out to help you, right? And someone that will walk alongside you and guide you through this. And just trust.

Number four is what does it mean for you to be a part of my journey for cultural resurgence and liberation of my community and people? I think this means a lot for me personally. I’ve worked hard, over the years, there’s that word “work” again. But I’ve been in communities for years and years and years. And I’ve been doing it alone for far too long. And it’s nice to have someone there as my more than equal, that can help me and tell me when I’m doing it wrong. Or tell me what I can do to improve. I try very hard to commit myself to communities partly because of my background, I know the value of having others around you. And I find it really important to have someone there to be alongside me for that, in that kind of work.

Dr. Remy Bocquillon [42:51]

The first time we met was during the launch of this very podcast last March. I was a visiting scholar in Sociology and Sound Studies at the University of Alberta, and Jim introduced us after the launch. One thing leading to another, we started talking over tea and coffee, as I was working on my sound works in the office across yours. And you asked me if I could help mix and edit, what should have been two episodes, but what became more than ten in the end, and still counting as we start Season Two. We ended up also recording interviews for the projects and thinking about how to expand ways of presenting knowledges in a meaningful manner to amplify the voices that need to be heard in this podcast and beyond.

Your second question was about the importance of your work, as I am sure everyone you interviewed will agree with or said it better than me: the work you do is central to decolonization in particular within the context of settler Canada, but also beyond that. Being based in Germany, the podcast and your research is so important to me to learn how to work differently, to question the histories of colonization we are still confronted with today. Not as histories, but as current and ongoing struggles; not on dusty bookshelves, but in our practices. And this is not over. And Europe, Western Europe in particular, Western

Academy, Western knowledge, Western institutions need to do the work. It is not only about acknowledging the past, but about shaping the future, together. And having this podcast widely available, gives a voice to those questions and struggles we can all learn from and be inspired by your strength and commitment and invitation to change things, starting with ourselves with what we are and what we do.

What would I say to a young Paulina visiting my class? Hm, probably something like "what are you doing here in this tiny German town of all places? I mean, you could go to Berlin and that would be way more fun." Now, but more seriously though, I think it would say that no matter what you decide to do, the voice you have makes a difference, and people listen to you. And also that you are not alone. I am learning so much from you, from this podcast, from your research and from your teachings. Learning about the struggles of First Nations in Canada, about what it means to be an Indigenous woman and an academic. I'm also learning what it means to trust a colleague and a friend, to be a good relative, in my own way, to put in the work to be committed, even doing so from far away. So thank you, Paulina, for your trust, for this opportunity, for your work. And I wish you all the best for the second podcast season.

Dr. Marta-Marika Urbanik [45:39]

Now, if you were a young student in my class, first thing I would do is honestly, thank you for being there, for leaning in and bringing your knowledge into the classroom. And second, "well done!" Given the colonial violence that we have permeating our society still, it's no small feat for Indigenous persons, to make it into our universities. Often they have to overcome and continue to deal with far greater challenges than most other students, and so it really is important that we acknowledge that bringing Indigenous people into our universities is often much harder than for non-Indigenous individuals. They've had to overcome way more.

And third, I would say, take what serves you and contribute where you want and leave the rest. What do I mean by that? I would say it's not your job to represent Indigenous persons, it is not your job to be decolonization champions, it is not your job to educate non-Indigenous persons. You certainly can do so of course, and it would be pretty cool if you did, but if this does not serve you, if it doesn't speak to you, or if this feels overwhelming or too much, do not let anyone pressure you into doing so. We don't expect those from other cultures and communities to carry the weight of their backgrounds on their shoulders in academic and professional settings. I myself have never been asked to speak for my entire community or to somehow be this representative voice in any way.

And so I don't think we should do this or expect this of Indigenous students. That's a tall order. And that's really not fair in that regard.

Fourth, it's truly been an honor being around you. Learning from you, its had me deeply re-examining my own life, my practices, my teaching, my research, as well as in my just personal connections to what it means to be in community. And reflecting on my role, definitely past, present and future, in Indigenous persons efforts towards liberation. My role in how I teach students, whether they're Indigenous or not. My role in how I write up some of my research, documenting Indigenous peoples experiences. I've seen firsthand how your presence here has really advanced critical conversations about Indigeneity and identity more broadly. I've seen you infuse the minds of the future as well as, you know, some of our dinosaur brains, with new insights and ways of looking at the world. And I really couldn't be happier about having you as a colleague, and more importantly, as a friend. Thank you for all the work you do. [whispers: Also, I love you!]. Okay, bye.

Dr. Shirley Anne Tate [48:24]

So how do I connect with you, Paulina. I was a member of the advisory committee when you applied for your present position, and then went on to be your mentor. It has been a great honour for me to have been trusted by you to be a mentor, since I'm not Indigenous, and I'm a Black settler, arrived in Canada in 2019. I think that what has been important to me, is to show you the respect, loyalty, patience, understanding and love that you show me, and that you have enabled me to do that to you.

What is important in your work, there's so much, I can only capture a really small part of that here so I'll try and do that. As far as I know, you're only one of two Indigenous hires in Sociology. And at the moment, you're the only Indigenous faculty. That means to me, you are very, very precious. You're a very, very precious member of the Sociology faculty. You as a faculty member and the work you do, brings us one step closer to beginning to fulfill our responsibilities under the TRC's Calls to action. You make us remember on a daily basis that we exist in a land-grab university, and that there can be no decolonization without land back. You make us remember the need for knowledge reparations to right historical and present wrongs. You remind me of my responsibilities and obligations as a Black settler on Indigenous land. To show respect, learn from you, Indigenous colleagues, Elders and community members, with humility, in relationality, and in a good way. You always remind me that epistemic injustice is real, and as a teacher, I must do better. You make me know that solidarity and kinship are important in decolonization and anti-racism efforts. And they are

not just words, but they're about actions, and political and emotional attachments and affiliations. You have made, and continue to make, an enormous difference to our students and our department. I'm really glad you chose to work here. And really happy that you always share so generously of your time, your energy, your knowledge, your emotion, and your research efforts.

To a young you, I know that I would have said, I hope you do a master's, a PhD, and then become an academic. Academia needs you. You should just keep going, we need you. I would have said this because I know I would have recognized your talent as an academic. Being seen as a part of your journey for cultural resurgence and liberation for your community and people means so much to me. I feel quite humbled by this responsibility, and by this obligation. It is an honour to be seen as someone in solidarity with you in these efforts, even though I know I have so much to learn, and to be, in order to fully feel that I can occupy that space with humility. I support Indigenous sovereignty, but there is so much I need to learn about how I can best work with you, Indigenous colleagues and communities as a Black settler in a good way.

Dr. Richard Westerman [51:57]

Hi, my name is Richard Westerman, and I'm in the Department of Sociology, one of Paulina's colleagues. I want to say today that acknowledging and promoting Indigenous peoples presence in academia is crucial for fostering diversity, inclusivity and a more comprehensive understanding of knowledge. The integration of Indigenous perspectives enriches academic discourse, challenging conventional narratives and broadening the scope of research and education. Indigenous scholars bring unique insights rooted in their rich cultural heritage, offering alternative ways of understanding the world. Their presence in academia contributes to the decolonization of knowledge, dismantling narrow, Eurocentric frameworks that have historically dominated academic discourse. This process is essential for creating a more equitable and inclusive educational environment that recognizes the diverse ways of knowing, learning and being in the world. Furthermore, Indigenous scholars can serve as role models for future generations. Their presence in academia empowers Indigenous students, demonstrating that their cultural backgrounds and perspectives are valued and respected. This representation is crucial for addressing the under representation of Indigenous voices in higher education, and inspiring Indigenous youth to pursue academic and professional paths.

Collaboration between Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars fosters meaningful partnerships and mutual respect. It promotes the exchange of ideas, knowledge and methodologies, leading to a more holistic understanding

of complex issues. Eurocentric forms of knowledge must learn from Indigenous ways of knowing, or risk being limited to a narrow, rigid and self-enclosed relation to the world. By bridging the gap between Indigenous and Western knowledge systems, academia becomes a space where diverse perspectives converge, fostering interdisciplinary approaches that can address contemporary challenges. Moreover, the inclusion of Indigenous scholars contributes to the reconciliation process between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. Recognizing the historical injustices and acknowledging the importance of Indigenous knowledge systems in academic settings are essential steps toward building respectful relationships. This not only benefits the academic community, but also contributes to the broader goal of reconciliation within society. To conclude, Indigenous peoples presence in academia is not only a matter of representation, but a fundamental step toward creating a more inclusive, diverse and enriched academic landscape. It's an investment in the transformation of knowledge systems, fostering understanding, respect and collaboration between different cultural perspectives. Embracing and celebrating Indigenous voices in academia is an essential contribution to the broader goal of building a more just and equitable society. Thank you.

Part Four:
Paulina Reghan Johnson

If I could tell myself one thing in the past, it would be that "you go further together with the right people around you." Emphasis on the *right people*. Coming from community and being claimed by that community is essential to my sense of self and who I am, whether that community is the one that holds the foundation of my connection to Creator, or the family that we have formed on campus. Knowing my strengths layered in my humanity and being are integral to my sense of self and the past, connecting to the future, wherever and whatever that may be. The intent of this episode is to show that I come from community, and I'm still grounded in that community, so long as I'm in an academic institution. There is no differentiation, there is no separation. And so for that, my listeners, I will continue to be Dr. Johnson.

Keywords: Maskwacis, Bear Hills, Family, Community, Connection, Relationships

Glossary
Hay hay – Thank you
Kahkiyaw kinanâskomitinawaw – I thank you all
Tanisi - How are you?

Listen along on Spotify.

Season 2, Episode 2

The Spirit of Nêhiyawewin

PAULINA JOHNSON AND
REMY BOCQUILLON

Synopsis: *Nêhiyawewin (Four-Spirit Language) is felt throughout the soul of the people in their songs, prayers, and conversations. Knowing the medicine that is carried in the language connects those today with their ancestors and importantly, themselves. In this episode, we delve into the importance of language not just through communication but as a means of feeling, experiencing, seeing, listening, and believing.*

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> **Kise-Manitou,**
>
> **Ninanâskomon.**
>
> **Creator,**
>
> **I am grateful.**
>
> **Hold me in your presence,**
>
> **Allow me to hear what is not said**
>
> **Allow me to feel that cannot be touched**
>
> **Allow me to speak unto the world kindness**
>
> **For we are made of the stars**
>
> **Embedded in the land**
>
> **Dreamt from the water**
>
> **And carried within your flame**
>
> **Allow me to feel the spirit of all that you are.**

Part One:
Manitowakan, They Have Spirit

When nimosôm Chris calls me, he will say, "Hello, my girl;" a simple phrase that connects me to him through our familiarity, and through our relationship as grandfather and granddaughter. This phrase of my girl is heard throughout Indigenous families and is one of the most sincere but heartfelt expressions that can be used to convey safety and care. This connection is relevant to the language that we use and predominately the way that we come to know. Language has a divine ability in nêhiyawak culture, especially the use of nêhiyawewin, the language itself. But understanding the language means we need to assess the spirit of the language, and the mindset of the language. But what happens when colonial languages create a separation between the written and the spoken

word? Or better yet, how did our syllabary language come to be? Let us understand the spirit of the language but also the importance of sound and connection.

Part Two:
How Language is Understood

Dr. Lana Whiskeyjack from Saddle Lake Cree Nation and Kyle Napier from the Northwest Territory Métis Nation Tthebacha, Denendeh - in their article “wahkotowin: Reconnecting to the Spirit of nêhiyawewin[1] (Cree Language)”, talk about the spirit of the language, the intent behind the language and its use. They assert that, and I quote “the language is ancestrally connected to nêhiyaw-askiy or mistik — literally, nêhiyaw lands; nêhiyawewin is distinct in its literal language — in its pronunciation, meaning, and linguistic variances; and nêhiyawak are guided by our specific laws — which inhabit ceremony, connections, and Creation” (Napier & Whiskeyjack, 2021, p. 3). Understanding the language itself reveals a deeper connection to our worldview. For instance, “The root words of nêhiyawak are nêwo, meaning four, and ayisiniywak, meaning beings of this earth. In our language, we nêhiyaw(ak) are the Indigenous people of four parts of the soils of this earth” (Napier & Whiskeyjack, 2021, p. 3). Renowned nêhiyaw educator Reuben Quinn states that when the nêhiyawewin language is spoken, more than 600,000 words and concepts were awakened. Unfortunately, because of colonization, most of the terms and concepts are sleeping — with only 15,000 words and terms generally known to be awake (Leavitt, 2018).

The Spirit of the language comes from the language as it is used to communicate, and also from the Creator themself. Because of the relationship between each Indigenous language and the land of its origin, the languages are best understood when being used to discuss land through ancestral lineage and connection. Nêhiyawewin understandings of the world make the most sense on those ancestral lands (Napier & Whiskeyjack, 2021, p. 16). This is especially evident in the way we introduce ourselves. We say nitisiyihkâson, meaning my name is, but the root word attached to this phrase is actually connection to the land itself. Nitisiy, or the belly button, is a morphological metaphor that embodies the Spirit of the language. We introduce ourselves “as our Spirit through the connection to our mother, the umbilical cord connected first through our belly button... that spiritual connection is passed from our mother and our matrilineal ancestors, such as our grandmother, our grandmother’s grandmother, and all the way back to Spirit and Creation” (Whiskeyjack & Napier, 2021, p. 17).

1 We write Nêhiyawewin with the “N” capitalized throughout this Volume, however, in respect to Whiskeyjack and Napier 2021, we use the lower case “n” in this episode.

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The spirit of the language shows us animacy or inanimacy in ways unrealized in English or other colonial languages. Colonial languages differentiate between nouns through gendered nouns and pronouns, but “nêhiyawewin refers to a noun as either animate or inanimate based on the corresponding verbs and pronouns. It should be noted, there are no uniform rules on what constitutes nouns with animate or inanimate characteristics in nêhiyawewin. Liquids, recognized with the -apoy suffix, like maskihkîwâpoy, tea [5:10 maskihki, tea, liquid medicine, liquid tea], are viewed as inanimate, even though they have motion, but asiniy, or stones and rocks, are viewed as animate because they carry with them the Spirit of the grandfather. Some berries are animate, while others are inanimate” (Napier & Whiskeyjack, 2021, p. 19).

Understanding the Spirit of the language is vital to people and their sense of self. With that, let us dive deeper into the tension of where the syllabic writing system came to be.

Part Three:
Calling Badger

Nêhiyaw scholar Dr. Winona Wheeler (2000), in her article “Calling Badger and the Symbols of the Spirit Language: The Cree Origins of the Syllabic System”, shares the story of Calling Badger and the origin of nêhiyawewin syllabary. Specifically, Wheeler asks how Cree syllabics came to be, as two conflicting accounts acknowledge the origins. The first, which is widely disregarded by Moniyawak, is recorded through nêhiyawak oral narratives of Calling Badger. Alternatively, the more accepted origin is its creation by Methodist James Evans’ in the early to mid-1800s. Wheeler argues that the rationale behind the conflict is rooted in two main reasons: first, the latter version supports colonial discourse, and second, scholars pay little attention to the version stored in nêhiyaw oral tradition.

The narrative of Reverend James Evans tells that “...Evans arrived among the muskego-wininiwak, Swampy Cree People, of Norway House in August of 1840 and by mid-November print ed three hundred copies of the hymn ‘Jesus my all to Heaven has gone’ in Cree syllabics. A remarkable feat for anyone who had only been among Cree people for a few short months and who continued relying on interpreters for the duration of his time in Cree country” (Wheeler, 2000, p. 20). However, the story of Calling Badger forwards a different reality from that of the Reverend, as told by Chief Fine Day of the Sweetgrass First Nation. And I quote, “According to Fine Day, a Wood Cree named Badger Call [or Calling Badger or Badger Voice or mistanâkôwêw] died and returned to life with the gift

of writing from the Spirit World" (Wheeler, 2000, p. 20). The story goes,

> *A Wood Cree named Badger-call died and then became alive again. While he was dead he was given the characters of the syllabary and told that with them he could write Cree. Strike-him-on-the-back learned this writing from Badger-call. He made a feast and announced that he would teach it to anyone who wanted to learn. This is how I learned it. Badger-call also taught the writing to the missionaries. When the writing was given to Badger-call he was told 'They [the missionaries] will change the script and will say that the writing belongs to them. But only those who know Cree will be able to read it.' This is how we know that the writing does not belong to the whites, for it can be read only by those who know the Cree language.* (Mandelbaum, 1940, p. 180)

During his time among the Plains Cree in the Rocky Boy reserve in Montana, Anthropologist Verne Dusenbury was told a similar story by Raining Bird in December of 1959 where, "In all oral accounts of the origin of the Cree syllabary it was told that the missionaries learned Cree syllabics from the Cree" (Wheeler, 2000, p. 21). The Cree Syllabary consists of triangles, angles, and hooks that mirror the four directions – a teaching integral to the Four-Spirit belief system (Wheeler, 2000, p. 21).

It is significant to note that Sequoyah's Cherokee alphabet has received attention as an Indigenous invention, but unlike the Cree syllabary, no competing claims to its invention threaten its Indigenous origins because it was so well recorded in its making (Wheeler, 2000, p. 23). But, "Unlike the Cherokee experience, however, Cree people had little to no chance to learn how to read and write because prior to Evans arriving in Norway House the only school in Rupert's Land were located in the Red River settlement" (Wheeler, 2000, p. 24). The Reverend's version has been the only one told for so long that many do not realize that there is more to the story, simply because many settlers supported the idea that the nêhiyawak were not capable of an established writing system.

As quoted in a telephone interview in 2020, Wheeler states that the story of Calling Badger is "'...a sacred story on how syllabics were gifted to the people and the purposes that it was given for [story] and that comes down to oral tradition...'" (as cited in Strong, 2020). The reality of obtaining a sacred story such as Calling Badger is difficult since receiving the full account may require protocol. Still, you may not receive the full account either. Wheeler states, "'If that's what [the Elders] say happened, then that's how they understood it to happen. And that's what they believed happened. I am not one to question that...[and] The reality is that people received the syllabic system as spirit language. It was a gift from spirit. So naturally that required a spiritual kind of journey or a spir-

itual kind of relationship for that transmission to happen. It was a really powerful gift, and powerful gifts are gifts from spirit'" (as cited in Strong, 2020).

When I was younger, I was told that when we did write down our language the intent was not for a written record, but to help within that short period of time. Wheeler expands on this concept, as there is little to no physical evidence of nêhiyawewin in the archaeological record except for that which is found on birch bark. Wheeler explains, "'[t]hings weren't intended to last a long time. Unlike the Western worldview, there was no priority given to posterity...It wouldn't have been perceived [as] a need to leave something written for the future because there was still so much power in oral transmission, and that was the primary form of communication'" (as cited in Strong, 2020).

This extends to the fact that our language and culture are oral-based. But one of the most important aspects to remember is that Indigenous peoples were fluent in multiple Indigenous languages, including their allies, but importantly, also in sign language.

Part Four:
Sign Language

> *I have brought you from every direction to sit in this council. Young men are not learning your sign language, and soon it will disappear from this country.* (Gen. Hugh Scott, quoted in Oen, 2018a)

This quote, relayed by Carlos Oen in an article for the BC independent news outlet *The Tyee* dates from September 1930, when General Hugh Scott, a veteran of the U.S. Cavalry used Plains Sign Language to warn against the disappearance of Indigenous Sign Languages.

Indigenous Sign Languages (ILS) in North America, which include Plains Sign Language (PISL) which Scott is referring to – the most documented and most widespread of them (Davis, 2015, p. 914) – play a vital role in Indigenous culture and communication both within and between communities. ISLs inhabit a particular place, remaining closely linked to the lived and embodied experience, and show a greater link to oral culture than one would think at first glance. They display many uses, including but not limited to communication with deaf and hard-of-hearing people. ISL has been an inherent part of communities, as Davis notes:

> *It has been well documented in the research literature that a highly con-*

> *ventionalized and linguistically enriched sign language emerged as a common means of communication among various American Indian communities and nations. The use of sign language among native groups was so prevalent and widespread in previous times that it served as a* lingua franca*. (Davis, 2015, p. 913)*

A *lingua franca* is a common language that speakers in various language groups adopt to communicate with other groups with which they have no other language in common. This status of *lingua franca*, as well as a sign language's richness and completeness as a standalone language, was achieved because of the foundational role of the deaf in Indigenous communities. ISLs were passed down through generations and across communities - even those with no deaf or hard-of-hearing people present - which could not have been done without Deaf Elders and the deaf children they taught (Davis, 2015, p. 915).

Though PISL is the most documented, there isn't a single Indigenous Sign Language, but multiple, each presenting their own signs, their own idiosyncrasies, and even their own stories. Professor Darin Flynn distinguishes between three distinct ISLs in Canada, namely Plains Signs Language (which Flynn locates in particular with the Dakota, the Blackfoot and Plains Cree), Plateau Sign Language (used by the Salish, Sahptian and Ktunaxa Nations in BC) and Inuit Sign Language. As Flynn notes in Carlos Oen's article for The Tyee mentioned earlier, "These are unique languages that aren't directly related to each other. They were created presumably by Deaf individuals. Therefore, they are distinct genetic lineages" (Oen, 2018a). This means that sign languages evolved and changed, while still remaining culturally rooted in and relevant to the communities they were spoken in. Deaf people, and PISL users in particular, have their own traditional stories that exist in addition to oral narratives (such as "Timber" or "The Chewing Gum Story" in ASL) but without being separated from them.

Coming back to Gen. Scott's warning, PISL is disappearing. It was true then, around the 1930s, and is even more so now. As Davis (2015, p. 911) notes, no more than a few hundred Indigenous people still know and use PISL. Other Indigenous Sign Languages, like Plateau Sign Language, have already disappeared beyond the point of revitalization . These are the direct effects of settler colonialism. These sign languages existed before any contact with European settlers. But, like any other aspect of Indigenous culture and like Indigenous spoken languages, Indigenous Sign Languages were seen as a threat that needed to be erased. This attempt to eradicate ISLs is undoubtedly another facet of cultural genocide and a necessary part of justifying settler presence on the land. The roles of sign languages in Plains Cree, Coast Salish and Inuit cultures were

too important for the functioning of inter-group relations and the reproduction of Indigenous (deaf and hearing) populations not to be considered a threat. While American Sign Language and Quebec Sign Language are valuable tools for deaf and hard-of-hearing populations, their declaration as the "standard" sign languages tend to erase Indigenous particularities and consequently, their stories, cultures, and links to their ancestors. An even more paradoxical constatation, when, as Davis argues, PISL was so developed it constituted the basis for half of what ASL came to be (Oen, 2018a).

It is true that PISL is severely endangered as a result of settler policies, but, as Oen argues in the Tyee article, it has not disappeared. Oen here refers in particular to the story of Martin Heavy Head Jr. (Blood tribe of the Blackfoot Confederacy), who learned PISL at home to communicate with his father's uncle (Oen, 2018a), and for whom it was still a part of everyday practices, though mostly with older generations. Heavy Head wishes to continue to preserve, learn, teach and use PISL. It remains an important thread linking generations, a language charged with its own history. As Heavy Head notes, quoted by Oen:

> *To me it is a nice connection with life before colonization. It is something very direct. I know when I make these signs, that these are signs that my ancestors thousands of years [ago] were using, too. That feels pretty good.* (Oen, 2018a)

This is why efforts to preserve, but even more so, to revive Indigenous Sign languages are so critical. Not only does language constitute a direct link to one's ancestors through the stories they help convey, but it is also necessary in order to include deaf and hard-of-hearing people in their communities and their cultures. Deaf people already face a lack of access to societies where sign languages are not common. But the imposition of a singular sign language such as ASL – even if it descends from Indigenous sign languages – results in exclusion from one's ancestral community, from being able to understand, participate and belong. It leads to a loss of connection to the ancestors Heavy Head cherishes. It presents the risk of repeating the cultural erasure of Indigenous identities through the imposition of English and French.

But, as Carlos Oen notes in the Tyee article, Indigenous Sign Languages are "endangered, but not dead" (Oen, 2018b). He refers to the initiative by Max (Haudenosaunee; Bear Clan) and Marsha (Haudenosaunee; Turtle Clan) Ireland, who are working towards developing a new Oneida Sign Language, based on PISL:

With the help of Elder Olive Helm, the couple has come up with 250 signs,

a 13-letter alphabet (just like spoken Oneida) and signs that let people count up to 100. They are determined to create an Oneida Sign Language based on Plain Indigenous Sign Language once widely used by Indigenous people, not ASL. (Oen, 2018b)

However, despite the integration of sign languages into the *Indigenous Languages Act* in 2019, the efforts made by the Irelands to promote, preserve and even expand on Indigenous Sign Languages are threatened as long as there aren't stronger legislations recognizing, integrating, and financing such initiatives.

Part Five:
Sound

As discussed in episodes in season one, Indigenous cultures are deeply rooted in orality. The words spoken out loud, sung or whispered, and the sounds they make are in direct relation with the land, with humans and non-humans, with ancestors and Creator. This goes beyond the language as direct communication between two individuals, but also includes songs and the sounds of drums and rattles. Referring to Indigenous cultures as oral cultures does not simply imply a difference between spoken and/or written languages, but also differences in modes of perceiving, experiencing, and relating.

This is what Dr. Dylan Robinson, a xwélmexw (Stó:lō/Skwah) artist and writer, explains in his book *Hungry Listening: Resonant Theory for Indigenous Sound Studies*, published in 2020. Here, Robinson underlines the specificity of Indigenous "frameworks of perception" (Robinson, 2020, p. 15), wherein sound is not only what is being listened to, but can become healing, medicine, and law. The listener is never the only subject present, and also becomes what is being listened to.

However, just as with the erasure of languages and cultures, settler colonialism attempted to eradicate those frameworks of perception and relations to sound and song. The settler modes of listening and perceiving were derived from a now predominant written culture where the printed text is the only bearer of truth, either as law, science, or dogma, and posited as standards of how rules are made and life is ordered. In this, the Western world characterizes itself as "modern," whereas oral cultures were seen as pre-modern at best and uncivilized at worst (McLuhan, 1970). Modernity was the rational, written argument, the reproducible experiment and its written protocol, which shun direct experience as deception of the senses. This 'modern' separation had direct consequences on who is considered a subject and thus, who is being alienated and

exploited. As with Nature, oral cultures and their communities were othered and reduced to resources for Western so-called "enlightened" nations. The paradox? The basis of this Enlightenment and so-called Modernity actually lies in colonialism itself (Bhambra, 2023). Cultural genocide also happens in practices of sounding and listening.

Dylan Robinson (2020) illustrates this with the court case of *Delgamuukw v. the Queen* (1985), relating to the "land claim trial in which Gitxsan and Wet'suwet'en sought jurisdiction over their territories in British Columbia," regions without treaties with the Crown. In this case, the lawyer, Peter Grant, asked Chief Mary Johnson to sing a Gitxsan song as part of the evidence for the land claims. Here, the song was acting as "more-than-song" as Robinson notes – it was a direct relation to the land, to history, and has value as law. Chief Mary Johnson eventually could sing the song (the limx oo'y), despite Judge McEachern being very reluctant to hear it. But what is striking here is that even after the song, the judge refused to grant it any value. As he argued in the exchange quoted by Robinson: "This is a trial, not a performance..." (British Columbia Supreme Court, 1985, pp. 670-71, as cited in Robinson, 2020, p. 43).

Songs, as any cultural practice, were hunted down and forbidden. But even when they were tolerated (such as in the mentioned case), they were trapped in colonial perceptions of value and thus dismissed as simple songs. This, for Robinson, shows the enormous difference in how sounds are being listened to and by whom, and how the effects of settler colonialism reach as far as ordering modes of perception and experience.

Robinson calls this *hungry listening*. Not only the inability to listen differently, which is seen in the judge's refusal, but also the imposition of a mode of listening structured around contemplation and extraction, which "prioritizes the capture and certainty of information" (Robinson, 2020, p. 38). This notion of hungry listening can also become problematic in the case of preservation and conservation of cultures, even with the best intentions. It can be seen when one asks only the question of who or what is being recorded, and by whom, and not who those songs, spoken language, and sounds, collected in the name of historical or ethnographic research or in the name of cultural preservation and knowledge production, are being recorded for? And does the same lack of listening also apply when "more-than-songs" are relegated to recorded material, neglecting the importance they have in their respective community? How can songs and languages still exist and be practised if they are only recorded but not actually transmitted?

For Robinson, hungry listening means making room for Indigenous frame-

works of perception, because critical listening positionalities question and challenge the settler's hungry listening. It means to know and understand that some songs, and even some sounds, should not be heard by everyone; they are not to be understood; they are not knowledge bits ready to be recorded, extracted and categorized.

In doing this podcast, and the research project, *The Auntie is In* also hopes to create that room; to use the technologies, platforms, and the medium of recorded sounds and voices, to challenge *hungry listenings*.

Part Six:
Restoration of Meaning

Andrea Smith (2016) explains how language revitalization efforts by Indigenous communities have been blocked, like many other programs, by a lack of funding. Federal agencies have a habit of "losing" reports, with Canadian Heritage withholding funding due to "missing documentation." Funding is repeatedly provided to bilingualism programs that ensure the survival of French as a language and culture in Canada, while the same is not true for any Indigenous language. This marks a continual attempt at the erasure of Indigenous culture through language suppression by the Canadian government. In spite of this, communities and scholars are fighting to find innovative ways to keep their language alive.

In the Western perspective, language revitalization often starts and ends with the physical act of speaking a language again. This limits efforts to the creation of dictionaries and a focus on the grammar and rules of endangered languages. However, as we have seen throughout this episode, Indigenous languages do not adhere to the rigid language rules of settlers [26:25 and linguistics including the phonology, the sound, the semantics, the meaning and syntax, the structures of sentences]. Rather, they are a dynamic and place-based means of communication that are active participants in the production and maintenance of culture and knowledge (Blair & Ferdeen, 2009; McCarty et al., n.d.). Language is a tool of expression, both for the self and for the collective (Hanemann, 2020). It serves a key role in being part of a community, allowing self-expression and connection with others. Globally, language serves as a form of collective memory, creating a framework for cultural concepts, particularly ways of being and ways of knowing.

Scholarship in language restoration is now moving beyond simply "revitalization" of language, and instead giving more attention to reclamation (Leonard

2017, as cited in Hanemann, 2020). Language reclamation, rather than focusing on creating new speakers of a language, aims to incorporate sociocultural facets and expand the definition of language (Leonard 2017, as cited in Hanemann, 2020; McCarty et al., n.d.). Under this paradigm, language reclamation can be used as a means of decolonization. It involves going further than learning the language and delving into the needs of Indigenous communities in the past, present and future (McCarty et al., n.d.). It also requires a level of discernment about the ideologies, beliefs, worldviews and histories of language communities (Hanemann, 2020; Blair & Ferdeen, 2009). Approaching language in this way emphasizes empowerment and self-determination while acknowledging the environmental context in which the language was created and the one that exists today (Hanemann, 2020). It also recognizes the role of harmful legislation and colonial policies aimed at disenfranchising the language and its speakers.

Increasing sophistication of and access to technology has provided many opportunities to expand language reclamation efforts (McIvor et al., 2020). However, it is important to recognize that Elders who are masters of the language are often not as adept at operating personal computers and other aspects of technology (Hanemann, 2020; McIvor et al., 2020). The inverse is true for younger generations; they are skilled at technology use but lack knowledge of Indigenous languages. This necessitates intergenerational learning in the work of language restoration (Hanemann, 2020; McIvor et al., 2020). Community members of all generations need to be involved for language to survive and thrive (McIvor et al., 2020). Intergenerational teaching and learning are fundamental to successful language restoration (Blair & Ferdeen, 2009). Developing language skills in learners is best achieved in an immersive setting where ceremony and prayer are integral aspects, other cultural facets like drama, dance, and song also play key roles in developing language proficiency and connection (Blair & Ferdeen, 2009). Language learning and teaching also necessitate continual inward reflection, about meaning and connection between oneself, their community, their ancestors and the land.

In their work discussing the Canadian Indigenous Languages and Literacy Development Institute (CILLDI)'s Cree Immersion Day Camp hosted at the University of Alberta during the summer, Blair and Ferdeen (2009) quote a nêhiyawewin teacher discussing how we view language:

> If you think about it, our language is actually our life - pimatisiwin, and everything kind of falls into place [...] there's a sharing of knowledge, that community you live in, people helping one another - nitohtênihtowin. Love, respect, sharing. (p. 72)

Language revitalization is not simply knowing the rules and vocabulary of a language but rather actively pursuing the meaning of language (McCarty et al., n.d.). [29:53 And that means using it in the everyday contexts, not in the way that grammar, dictionaries, and linguists tell us. Language is about sound and use, not the formalities in how it is written].

Part Seven:
Conclusion

The language of the people is embedded in the land and connects the Nêhiyawak to different times, places, and realities. Our language is not only healing but once spoken, it lives for eternity in layers of the world waiting to be heard and the voices of the past brought forward again. The truth is language is much more than just sound as it can be seen, felt, and experienced.

When we understand the modes of delivery today, we can start to understand a worldview that is very different from what we have expected or what we know. We layer our emotions and feelings, hopes and dreams, fears and worries, anger and pain, but also laughter and joy all within our ability to connect. Whether it is through oral transmission, written syllabary or through sign language, how we know is deeply rooted in a collective consciousness of being tied to philosophical and ontological teachings shared within the Nêhiyawak world.

One thing I know for sure about my language is that when any auntie is in disapproval, the eyes will be very telling and no words will ever be needed.

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Keywords: The Spirit of Language Project, Wâhkôtowin, nêhiyawewin, Indigenous Research Methodology, Language, Sound, Phonology, Semantics

Glossary
Nêhiyawewin - Speaking Cree or the Plains Cree Language
Nêwo- four
Ayisiniywak - The beings of this earth
Manitou - Creator
Moniyawak - non-Indigenous people; literally, “not of us” people
Ninanâskomon - I am grateful
Nimosôm - my grandfather
Nêhiyaw-askiy or mistik - Nêhiyaw lands

Nitisiyihkâson - my name is
Nitisiy - the belly button
-apoy - a liquid
Maskihkîwâpoy - tea
Asiniy - stones and rocks
Muskego-wininiwak - Swampy Cree People
Wâhkôtowin - kinship/interrelatedness

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Listen along on Spotify.

Season 2, Episode 3

For Paul

PAULINA JOHNSON

Synopsis: *For Indigenous men, without the confines of coloniality.*

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Part One:
With Love

You tell me on my off days to remember who shares a name with me, a clear reality of the person who has been with me every step of the way. One of my biggest advocates, supporters, and confidants. You who was never given the same opportunities as me but never once made it about you - but me, even though I try some days to work so hard for the both of us. You tell me, it's not about you, but I cannot help but feel that everything that I am is owed to you.

I look into your eyes and see mine, our ears outline our similarities that blend into our laughter, and we chuckle at the fact that we have the same size feet and hands. I am made in every bit of your likeness and am already preparing for my salt and pepper hair.

I belonged to you long ago beyond the spirit world, for our connection has made those envious in ways that shake the core of our settler reality. You are not just nohtâwiy, *my father,* you are who I strive to be; patient, soft-spoken, and kind - your strength, which I hear in the unwavering of your voice, feel in your presence, and see in your persona. Grateful is a word that is not powerful enough to transcend the world we have faced together. Because you and I are not only father and daughter, we are chaos embedded in a world that has constrained our people. Renegades who have stood our ground. And your love has been my liberation in my work for resistance, freedom, and hope.

Pîyesîs, *Little Bird,* you have been my whole heart. You have taught me what a protector means, what a leader shows, and what power delivers. I am not only your daughter, I am the love that you carry outside your home fire that burns brighter each time we are together.

Part Two:
Fatherhood

The traditional role of fathers in Indigenous communities is foundational and multifaceted, as it is rooted in an extended kinship system where fatherhood is a collective endeavour that transcends biological ties. Traditional Indigenous fatherhood involves a network of men, including uncles, grandfathers, and other male relatives, all of whom play a pivotal role in the upbringing and mentoring of children. This communal approach ensures that fatherhood is a shared responsibility, with each man contributing to the child's holistic development and a concept central to many Indigenous cultures (Ball, 2009; Martino & Greig, 2012).

Indigenous fathers are much more than providers; they are the keepers of wisdom, storytellers, and cultural guides who navigate their children through significant life transitions. These rites of passage, such as vision quests and the first hunt, are about building skills and instilling a profound sense of identity and purpose. Life transitions are like legal transitions, such as driving a car or buying alcohol or tobacco, except for one distinct difference: Indigenous life transitions are connected to deep cultural, spiritual and communal bonds.

The familial structure in Indigenous communities is a robust, interconnected web that involves not only immediate relatives but also clan systems, which extend across physical, spiritual, and animal realms. These connections foster harmonious inter-tribal relations and provide a supportive network vital for the community's well-being (Morrisseau, 1998). Within this system, fathers teach the importance of balance, pride, honour, respect, and truth, guiding individuals through life's seven stages, each marked by its challenges and wisdom (Densmore, 1979).

The Indigenous community across North America serves as an extension of the family, reflecting a similar ethos of care, respect, and collective responsibility. Fathers contribute significantly to maintaining cultural identity and values within the community by ensuring that each member's well-being is interwoven with the communal tapestry (Maracle, 1996). This sense of unity and mutual support is particularly crucial as communities face social challenges, underscoring the role of fathers in fostering resilience and healing (NCCAH, 2011).

On a broader scale, Indigenous nations are networks of such communities, each upholding their distinct cultures while supporting one another. Fathers within these nations help nurture leaders who advocate for the community's rights and well-being globally, echoing the collective responsibility that defines Indigenous fatherhood (Waldram et al., 2006).

The contemporary Indigenous father is tasked with the challenge of weaving these traditional roles into the fabric of modern society. Fathers are redefining their identities today, drawing upon ancestral wisdom and present-day experiences to guide their children. Programs, like the Skookum Jim Friendship Centre's Traditional Parenting Program, reflect these efforts, emphasizing land-based activities and Elders' wisdom, and aiding fathers in fulfilling their traditional roles in today's world (NCCAH, 2011).

Indigenous fatherhood is a practice of care that spans the spectrum of family, community, and nation. It is a sacred calling that entails nurturing the whole child through body, mind, and spirit while fostering a strong sense of

cultural identity. Fathers are the bedrock of this nurturing system, embodying the values of respect, love, and interconnectedness that are the hallmarks of Indigenous life. Through their guidance, the circle of care remains unbroken, ensuring that the traditions, teachings, and sense of identity are lovingly passed down through the generations, honouring the past while embracing the future (Johnston, 2020; Greig & Martino, 2012).

Part Three:
The "Broken Families" Trope

Indigenous peoples, within what many now call Canada, have been subjugated to colonial narratives for over one hundred and fifty years. In Anderson and Robertson's *Seeing Red: A History of Natives in Canadian Newspapers*, the authors found, and I quote, "with respect to Aboriginal peoples, the colonial imaginary has thrived, even dominated, and continues to do so in mainstream English-language newspapers" (2011, p. 3). While truths of residential school experiences and Indigenous-police interactions are now entering the media's focus, the world must understand that these truths are not news. We have been sharing a multitude of truths for generations. Not only about colonialism's failed attempts at destroying a people, but truths about our strengths and cultural richness. However, these truths are often discredited, veiled, and replaced with blame-shifting labels such as "dysfunctional" or "broken." These labels extend past the individual and onto those who mean the most to us: our families. This is the broken family trope, and it cannot be further from the truth.

Nôhtâwiy is *my father*. He is the energy I felt long before visiting askîy, *the earth*. I chose him in the Spirit World because I saw what is nestled deep inside his beautiful heart: sâkihitowin, *love*. This is the same love that nôhtâwiy uses to guide me through this world. When nôhtâwiy brings *my uncles*, nohcâwis and nisis, home with the gift of moose meat and shares it with everyone we know, I remember the energy of sâkihitowin.

Nikâwiy is *my mother*. She gave me her belly button, the same one nôhkom, *my grandmother*, presented to her. When I told nikâwiy that I was ready to visit askîy, she gifted me the preparation of her body and blood; a sacred water that never runs dry. When nikâwiy brings *my aunts*, nikâwîs and nisikos, to prepare the gifts of meat and hide, I remember the energy of sâkihitowin.

Nôhkom and nimosôm are *my grandparents*, and they are my greatest teachers. They gave my parents gifts, which in turn were passed down to me. Through their guidance, nôhkom and nimosôm remind me of the Spirit World. They

know sâkihitowin better than anyone else. Whenever I seem to forget, when the settler world pulls me down, they remind me of the energy of sâkihitowin.

These relationships are part of a supportive network essential to the entire community's survival. Our intimate and extended families are not plural. No, they are part of an interconnected web, sharing the responsibility of nurturing, caring, and uplifting the community every step of the way. For us, the Nêhiyawak, these responsibilities are guided by *the law governing our relationships*: wâhkôhtowin (Cardinal, 2007, pp. 74-75). Wâhkôhtowin transcends blood relations and explores how we relate to everyone, including our non-human and non-living kin. To understand the depth in which the beads of sâkihitowin sew our families together, you must see the role wâhkôhtowin plays in upholding our peoplehood.

This is why wâhkôhtowin is fundamental to our peoplehood. To understand our responsibilities to our communities, we need to understand the law of wâhkôhtowin. However, the only way we can understand wâhkôhtowin is to see our families, including our non-human and non-living kin, with sâkihitowin in our hearts. What do you feel when you think about your family—those you hold most dear? What you feel is sâkihitowin—the law that means to the world to everyone, especially those who feel the sacred energy. Sâkihitowin is at the core of Indigenous families. Sâkihitowin is why the broken family trope is a myth.

Part Four:
Nâpêw

Elders are central to Indigenous cultures and communities; they have the essential role of teacher, counsellor, ceremony conductor, healer, and conflict resolver. They are responsible for teaching ceremonies and passing knowledge of healing to the next generation; they can be young or old individuals with traditional knowledge in select areas (Burns Ross, 2016). Elders are cultural teachers who can meaningfully communicate Indigenous teachings and stories to local communities (Burns Ross, 2016).

Parents and extended families are the first teachers and sharers of knowledge to their children. But grandparents, often the elders, are typically the only language and cultural teachers within Indigenous communities as they are the only ones who can speak their cultural language and have the ability to share their customs. Communities rely heavily on Elders and grandparents to pass on and share traditional cultural customs. Youth and the younger generation can learn about their cultural background, language, and traditions from their

home, family, and community environments (Burns Ross, 2016).

Various theories of youth and adolescent learning outline the process of one generation learning from the previous generation. In Barbara Rogoff's theory of culture and development, children actively engage and learn from their environment, and their participation is influenced by their involvement in the cultural activities and traditions of their environment (as cited in Burns Ross, 2016, p. 218). Another theory of child development and learning is Urie Bronfenbrenner's ecology of human development, which explains that children's development is influenced by the time spent and experienced in cultural settings (Burns Ross, 2016, p. 218).

The traditional kinship of Indigenous communities highlights the importance and vitality of kinship terms, roles, and responsibilities (Killsback, 2019). The kinship system in Indigenous cultures emphasizes familial relationships to positively impact childrearing and impart traditional values of respect, reciprocity, and balance. The traditional practice and concepts of motherhood, fatherhood, brotherhood, and love are the foundation of Indigenous kinship; these principles are necessary for the positive development of children in Indigenous communities. Children refer to Elders as "Uncles," which is a sign of affection and respect. Paternal uncles are involved with their nephews and nieces and have a similar role as a second father to the children throughout their lives (Killsback, 2019). Uncles are the guardians, teachers, advisers, and discipliners; they are responsible for protecting and mentoring boys through childhood and into manhood (Killsback, 2019).

In the media, Indigenous men are portrayed universally as physically strong, stoic, and violent (Luisi, 2021). They are usually apathetic about or irritated with Indigenous female characters whom they are not pursuing romantic relationships with. However, true Indigenous masculinity is expressed in relation to Indigenous femininity. Men and women are interdependent, with intertwining roles based on mutual trust and respect.

In Haudenosaunee culture, the Great Law of Peace emphasizes this interdependence. As the world's oldest living democracy (Native America PBS, 2018), the law of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy is complex and extends far beyond this facet. But in the Great Law, there is a distinction between the "forest" and the "clearing." As the primary caregivers of the crops and the children, the clearing is considered the realm of women. The "clearing" refers to the settlement, including the farmed crops, the homes, and the children. The "forest" is what is beyond the clearing, representing hunting, gathering, and other surrounding nations. Men were given the responsibility of the forest, to collect food to supply

the village, as well as engage in diplomacy and warfare. A key feature of this part of the Great Law is that both the forest and the clearing need each other. They supply each other, and one cannot exist without the other.

Members of a roundtable discussion on Indigenous masculinities mentioned the role of women in helping them to become good men. Daniel Heath Justice (of the Cherokee Nation) mentioned learning about strength through his mom, while also learning about men's strength through his father as he's gotten older. Richard Van Camp (of the Dogrib/Tlicho Nation) shares a similar story; he says, "It's always been my mom that showed me what kind of man to be… I want to raise my hands with utmost respect to those dear aunties of mine, who took me under their wings. It's always been my mom who has made me the strong man I am today" (Alexander Innes & Anderson, p. 260).

Part Five:
On Forgiveness

Nimosôm Christopher, my grandfather, struggled to tell his grandchildren that he loves us. Not because he doesn't love us, far from it. But because for so many years Residential Schools robbed him of emotional support and reassurance during his development. They also took ceremony from him, such an integral part of our connection to life and the universe. Our ceremonies were forced underground by legislation until 1951, denying so many this fundamental experience (Johnson, 2022).

Nimosôm participated in his first Thirst Dance, or Sun Dance, our most powerful ceremony, in 2017, at 78 years old. He called me bright and early to make sure I was up because I tend to be late and ensured that I was there on time. He showed me his whistle and rattle, his new ribbon shirt, and his new moccasins that were to mark this momentous occasion that so many children and families were denied. He showed me the moccasins as if I were the parent, and our roles had been reversed - he was so glad to just have someone there. His inner child must have sung and danced to the songs of our people that day, healing some small part of him that was finally free. He was finally allowed to show his immense love through ceremony, in being Nêhiyaw, when we had been denied it for so long.

Nimosôm was not always there for my father, and things were not always good for him growing up, but nimosôm Chris has always been there for his grandkids. He has grown and changed in his now 85 years. He may not have been there as a father but he has stepped up in other ways.

My parents both came from childhoods that were not easy, but they decided they didn't want that for their children. Paul has always been a protector of us kids, our mom, and most importantly, love.

So many Indigenous men have been deprived of knowing what it is to be loved. To heal themselves, men need to be allowed to be loved and to be human. They need to be given the space to forgive themselves. These things cannot happen without ceremony, community and reconnection with the land. When we talk about healing, it always comes back to love.

Nimôsom's fatherhood might have been disturbed by colonization, because it was, but wâhkôhtowin cannot be broken, and sâkihitowin can be recovered.

Through a community-based participatory research project, Waddell et al. (2021) created space for Indigenous men to express their healing processes with colonialism, trauma and grief. The men in this article describe their mental health as a healing journey. Indigenous men often do not relate to Western descriptions of mental illness, and label their experiences in other ways. The men in this study reflect on the challenges of living with everyday intergenerational trauma, racism, and colonial patriarchy, throughout their healing journey. An important aspect of this journey includes being the narrators of their own stories.

> *We don't have to wait for somebody else to write our story for us, we can write our own story. And I think that's one of the biggest things that holds back our men out there oftentimes too is that they're waiting for someone to tell them what to do or how to do it, or where to go.* (Waddell et al., 2021, p. 4)

Healing and storytelling often take place through ceremonies with connections to the land. These are necessary elements both to heal and to reconnect with culture (Waddell et al., 2021). One participant in this study details how reconnecting with the air, trees, birds and rabbits makes him feel healthy again and has been a pivotal aspect of his journey of healing from gangs and alcohol.

Men also identified challenges in balancing their needs for community belonging and cultural identity, with their need to develop healthier and more supportive relationships because of the trauma within their communities (Waddell et al., 2021). Forgiveness is essential to healing and importantly for one's self. We live in a world where men shy away and keep out of conversation their feelings, but within the Indigenous community, openness and conversations are vital to their role and who they are. Limiting themselves to the heteropatriarchy that is rooted in our settler world will only bring harm and damage.

Therefore, we must work together for a world where the firekeepers can be who they are and who they were always meant to be.

Part Six:
Firekeeper

> Long ago, I searched on my journey from our spirit world,
>
> I saw your little dances as you made your own songs,
>
> I heard the softness of your voice as it soothed all that was around you,
>
> I felt that you could protect me from all that was not good,
>
> And I chose you.
>
> I chose you because our world does not deserve you,
>
> Because our world has changed the image of nâpêwak (*men*) so many times,
>
> Making them less than what is right.
>
> But, do not listen, do not believe.
>
> Remember that you are created for a reason,
>
> Held in the manifestations of Creator's original instructions to you,
>
> Not only a warrior, hunter, or tracker,
>
> You are thoughtful, deliberative, and generous.
>
> Do not be defined by those who have failed to see our people's worth.
>
> You are made of the obsidian of this earth,
>
> Born to protect these lands,

> **Designed to do what we as women are unable to.**
>
> **Father, protect the fire of our people by being you as you rightfully should be.**
>
> **Nâpêwak (*men*), I pray to you as a collective,**
>
> **You were given the power of our drums,**
>
> **Sing our songs,**
>
> **Project in your melodies of strength,**
>
> **And we will stand behind you honouring all the teachings of who you are.**
>
> **Nâpewak, remember to be kind to yourself,**
>
> **But importantly, that you are valued and needed,**
>
> **With no question or doubt.**

Research Assistants: Kalias Bijman, Sam Dancey, Marc Jr. Doire, Krystal Louie, Jude McNaughton, Jessica Morrison, Giovanni Ursella, Gigi Wakana, and Drake Worth.

Keywords: *Fatherhood, Fathers, Grandfather, Firekeepers, Men, Parenting, Nâpêw*

Glossary

Askîy - the Earth
Nâpêw - man
Nâpêwak - men
Nikâwîs - my mother's sister
Nikâwiy - my mother
Nimosôm - my grandfather
Nisikos - my father's sister
Nisis - my mother's brother
Nôhtâwiy - my father

Nôhcâwis - my father's brother
Nôhkom - my grandmother
Pîyesîs - Little Bird
Sâkihitowin - love
Wâhkôhtowin - interrelatedness

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Listen along on Spotify.

Season 2, Episode 4

Academic Auntie

Paulina Johnson
With Brittany Johnson

Synopsis: What is the world that Indigenous Aunties' navigate while part of academia? In this episode, Dr. Johnson shares the struggles faced by being Indigenous in an institution not designed for Indigenous Peoples or their knowledge and what it means to be early career researchers navigating their respective institutions. From maintaining roots in community to being the hope-made flesh to the emotional labour of being who we have always been taught to be, this episode shares the voice of Dr. Johnson's closest friend and collaborator, Brittany Johnson. Guess how many auntie cackles you hear in this episode.

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Part One:

Existence

> I half exist in this world,
>
> I am too much of this,
>
> But never enough of that.
>
> Stereotypes and tropes of the past,
>
> Remove my smile, the laughter that comes from within.
>
> I am a figment of the Canadian imagination,
>
> I should be staunch and silent,
>
> Never gentle or loud.
>
> I am placed in the history books of what Indigenous women should be,
>
> But never the reflection of ancestors who walked before me in the outline of my face,
>
> In the hope of my eyes,
>
> In the love found in my lips.
>
> All of what I am meant to be,
>
> has been told from a point of view that would have you hate me,
>
> Rather than to actually know me.
>
> I must not be too powerful,
>
> To entice fear,

I must not be too radical,

To call for violence,

I must not be me,

For the protection of you.

I half exist,

Never letting the world know who I am,

Because the world does not know they have been co-opted to believing a lie,

To accept that this world is not made for me.

Where every day,

I must fight the thoughts in my head to run,

To hide.

Don't pity me.

I didn't make this world,

But I am punished in it.

I am removed from it.

But I alone will liberate it.

I have to.

If not for me,

For those that follow.

For those that deserve to fully exist,

Without contempt,

Without palatability,

Without worry.

I may half exist in this physical world,

But I am whole in the spiritual,

The mental,

And emotional.

So, I layer my strength and knowledge,

It the lines of existence,

Placing my humour along the way,

Giving the warmth of my embraces to those that need it,

Sitting with those who are told they are lost but really are not,

Because this world,

Needs me.

So, I wait and exist in the stars,

And the dreams.

In the prayers of those who came before me,

Alongside my relatives.

> Because you will find me.
>
> And I will be waiting,
>
> And when you realize that I have always fully existed,
>
> But chose only to see half,
>
> I will not condemn you,
>
> Like this world has done to me,
>
> No.
>
> [2:47 No.]
>
> I will hold you as you liberate yourself,
>
> And me at the same time,
>
> Because that is what an Indigenous woman does.
>
> As we have always done.
>
> In our true existence.

Part Two:
Auntie Auntie Oxen Free

Academia is a different world for Indigenous Peoples, especially Indigenous Womxn. We are nestled in between being needed to being too progressive for the institution's mandates. We are wary of those around us and for good reason - not that we cannot trust people, but because the expectations of us become engulfed within unrealistic expectations either be cultural knowledge or emotional labour. We become the experts of everything Indigenous but also not the experts when it comes to needing to know the truth in our respective fields. Somewhere in-between questioning "is this real life?" to "did that really just happen?" we start to reach out to those that we are closest with and ask the real questions that we need to ask ourselves, with real answers.

Being an auntie in academia comes with challenges on its own, but what are realities that we face that go unnoticed? Let me introduce you to one of the closest Indigenous womxn I get to work with and their experiences on existing in two worlds – the Indigenous and the academic settler world.

Part Three:
On the Keemooch with Brittany Johnson

Brittany Johnson [05:00] Hello, my name is Brittany Johnson. I'm a member of Beaver First Nation. And I am an assistant professor of Anthropology and Indigenous Studies at MacEwan University.

Dr. Paulina Johnson I also just want to point out that Brittany and I are actually not related.

[B] No, everyone thinks that we are, but no.

[P] I think some people actually think that we're the same person too.

[B] They do. I actually get your mail. [Laughter]. We can't be in the same space together without laughing.

[P] I think of that, when people see us together too, we're very loud.

[B] Yes.

[P] But I think that's also like a good thing. I think that, especially in academia, there's not enough opportunities where we actually get to be our authentic selves, and be very vulnerable, but also just deeply emotional or connected with people. Absolutely. It's not just like surface level, it's more depth.

[B] Like, and I think that goes in all kinds of areas in academia, like, whether we're teaching or we're doing research, or, you know, we're just like, going to get a coffee on campus, people expect us to be a certain way. And so it's really great when we get to come together and just like, mess around and laugh. [Laughter].

[P] I think back to like, when I first met you, and all we did was laugh, make really bad jokes, but we got the jokes. And I think that for many people, it's like, how can you guys do that? Without even like, knowing each other? And I think it's that familiarity, right? It's that ability to be just true to who we are.

[B] Yeah, like, honestly, I think of how chaotic that was like when we first met, people would have thought that we had been like lifelong friends. But you don't have to be like a lifelong friend with another Indigenous person to just like, get it and be able to like laugh together and have fun together. I always look forward to hanging out with you, because I know that my abs are gonna hurt after. I'm trying to get that six pack, you know?

[P] I think that also people don't think that word that serious.

[B] No.

[P] And I think that's one of the biggest issues is that they assume that we're going to be really like, either, be stoic or be like, cutthroat. And then like the here us just like cackling real loud, or like across the room. And they're like, "What are they doing? And like who is that?" They're like, "oh, that's- there's two professors right there."

[B] So unserious. [Laughter].

[P] So I wanted to bring you on today, to let my listeners but also just have your voice kind of amplify, to share what you've experienced and what I guess we have similarities and commonalities with and our journey as professors, but also just within the academic institution itself, and some of the hardships that come with that, but then also some of the really great aspects like the friendship, but also just our ability to connect with each other.

[B] Mm hmm. I love that. Thank you for bringing me here.

[P] What are some key experiences that come to mind when you start to think about your role in academia?

[B] I think some key experiences for me is that oftentimes, I'm the only Indigenous person in the room, or I'm the only Indigenous person being asked for input on things. And it gets really lonely, because you're the only one, so you don't have like another Auntie to cackle with and to talk about stuff with. And then it also kind of puts an extra burden on you because like you're expected to speak on behalf of like all Indigenous people, within your faculty or whatever you're doing. And the reality is, I can only speak from my experience. I don't speak on behalf of everyone. And I think a lot of people just don't get that. So that can be really difficult. But yeah, I think some other things is that what we do as research doesn't always get taken very seriously. So sometimes, like for myself, I work on beadwork as sexual and reproductive justice. And I've heard

things like, well, what's the permanent record? Or how does that fit within the institution? How is beadwork, a legitimate source of research and scholarship? And so like, I feel like sometimes we just have to, like work extra hard to be taken seriously. And we have to do like, so much justification for everything that we do. And it's just- sometimes it's really exhausting.

[P] I think that especially for me, when I started this podcast, a lot of people like oh, she's just gonna be talking to her friends. It's not scholarly. It's not academic. It's not of like the merit but it actually is. There's a lot of research that goes in with it. There's a lot of actually knowledge that goes into the methodology of beadwork, of creating those designs of making it something that is significant, not only for today, but in the past and the future. And I think that's one of the biggest things that we always kind of talk about too, is that exhaustion of always having to justify why we're there, when we've been invited to be there. But then there's still questions of whether or not we actually truly belong.

[B] Absolutely. And then I think it can get really complicated too, when you're trying to find space in a particular institution, or even within like a faculty. And what you do doesn't necessarily fit fully with what is kind of like the discipline. And so it can get a little bit more complex. And we have like a lot of barriers that we have to face, hoops we have to jump through. At the end of the day, it's important that there's folks like you who are doing like the kind of research into all of this, like, what does it look like to be an Indigenous person in the academy? What does it look like to be an Indigenous researcher? And how are we responsible to our community, both within and outside of academia.

[P] I think also to like that concept of legitimacy, but then also having to advocate for ourselves in these spaces is that many of our colleagues don't have to do that either. And all of a sudden, it is placed onto us, on our shoulders to have to be that representation. I like your comment about community, because I think that, especially for me, many people think that it's just me in this academic role, but I'm like, no, I have the community. And in the back of my mind, what I do impacts them, what I write is for them. It's leaving those trails of who I am for the next generation that is not just about me. And I think the university really kind of fails to see that.

[B] I think what happens too, is that oftentimes academic folks that are not Indigenous, when they're thinking about the Indigenous community, they have a very specific idea of what that means. And oftentimes, they're either thinking about a particular community, or they're thinking about Indigenous students that are at the university. And the reality is that Indigenous community is so much broader than just like one specific community, meaning like one specific

nation, it's broader than just the students that are at the institution. The Indigenous community includes all Indigenous people, and so often, the voices of folks from all different areas of the Indigenous community aren't necessarily represented. And so it's extra important for us because we know these things, and so we're trying to ensure that all of these voices are heard, that what we're doing supports everyone in our community.

[P] I think one of the things too, especially that we've talked about, is the lack of acknowledgement of our emotional labor. The fact that our emotions and our vulnerabilities get really sidelined as "not scholarly" or "not academic."

[B] I think that's a really important point that you're bringing up. Because within academia, you're not expected to have an emotional response. It's just supposed to be - it's just research - it's not anything beyond that. When you're thinking of your students and how you're supporting your students. It's not seeing your students as like people with emotions, and how like things that happen with when you're teaching and you're guiding the students how that can also affect you emotionally. And you're expected to just kind of move on and, or to be cold and not have that like relational aspect. And the reality is that when we're working with our students, oftentimes, like we're taking on sometimes that Auntie role for those students and being that safe person who they can come and talk to, when they don't have anyone else at the institution to talk to. And I don't think that a lot of non-Indigenous researchers understand that in the same way that we might.

[P] One of the things too I've been like thinking about, especially within that regard, is that because we become these safe kind of individual safe spaces for these individuals, it also kind of takes away *our* individuality. Because then we become these safeguards for them that they want the healing, they want the comfort [rather] than actually see us as experts in our area. And that's one of the things I've been actually engaging in is that they want me as Auntie everyday. They don't want me to be for instance, if they overstep or mess up to be like discipline Auntie right, they want the comfort, the, you know, the Auntie that gave tea. And I think that too, also creates the issue, right is that now we're becoming whatever they see fit for us. So we're not even [in] control of our image or even the ability to express our real emotions, and that also too is a problem, right? So like, there's all these different, not only intersections, but just realities that are on top of us.

[B] Absolutely. And I just have to say that when you said the Auntie that gives tea, I thought of that in two ways [laughter]. The auntie that's like, here's a nice warm cup of Earl Grey. And the Auntie that's like, I got some *tea* [laughter].

[P] I think so like, those are two valid concepts. And I think that, you know, we don't like to gossip, but we're like really there to state facts. Ya know what, that person was not cool to me, that person undermining me treated me like I was not a professional. And then like, I always laugh because everyone's like, "the moccasin telegraph isn't that fast." And I'm like, boy, the moccasin telegraph, as soon as I tell another Indigenous person, its flown, and like, its gone. And like, I think a lot of people don't realize that, even though they think that there's so few of us Indigenous scholars is that we're actually really well connected to each other. And if like, there's an overstep, or oversight or mistreatment, like we not just like, create issue, but it spreads.

[B] Yeah, we support each other. We're there for each other, like we are a community in and of itself, the like academic/scholarship community, we take care of each other, we, you know, warn each other if there's something that's not cool that's going on, like we tell each other.

[P] Yeah, that's important, right? Because suddenly, if we've been burned once, we're gonna tell people like, "Yo, that's a no go." And I think that institutions, they cut it, try to ride on the tails of their reputation. But when you've done like, really bad harm to an Indigenous person, like, we're gonna advise, we're gonna counsel like, you know, I don't think that's a good route for you. And so I think that people often overlook that, we do have to look for each other for support, because also many of us are first generation, we've never gone through this before. So we don't know the policies and procedures, but we're going to be able to show them or indicate in TV shows or mentor, you know, the mentorship is so vital to the generations and individuals that don't know.

[B] Absolutely, I think even when I went into even my masters, for example, I had no idea what I was doing. I faced some really difficult hardships during that degree that honestly, it was, it was just, it was really difficult for me. And I look back, and I wish that there had been someone who could have guided me, or could have told me what to expect, or like, what was okay, and what wasn't okay. And to really just like, understand those things. And like, I didn't have anyone to do that for me. And so I have kind of made it, like not that it's my mission, but it's something that I always want to offer to those who are considering, like going into academia, like, this is what I dealt with, this is what my reality was. So like, this is what you need to look out for, this is what's appropriate, and what's not appropriate. And like, How can I guide you or help you in that regard, just because it was, it's really difficult being that first person. You're not connected necessarily to the academic world at that point yet. So aside from being like a bachelor student, so you might not be as connected in that realm. And so you don't know all the ins and outs, and you don't know all the politics and you

don't know, you know, the hierarchies and all of that. That's like another layer of more talking about like the burden and that support that you need to have, I think, crucial to what we do, and being like that, taking up that space. Because if we don't, we're just going to have another generation of scholars who don't know how to navigate the system, right?

[P] They don't know how to navigate the system, but they also get abused by the system. And I think that for us, it's just like, because we both experienced it. And it's so damaging, it really affects your mental health, your confidence of yourself, also your capabilities, right? Because we're already having to face with the assumption that what we do is not legitimate research. But now even our presence is not legitimate. And so it becomes this game of, you know, how do we protect, but I think that's also just our role as a kinship kind of unit is we have to protect the next generation, we have to protect ourselves, we have to protect each other. Right? And I think about who I can trust and who I can call right. And like you and I, we may not talk for months, but like if something goes off we're like yo, is this normal, the gaslighting right? And then we're like whaaaa...? [Laughter].

[B] I'm like, hold up Paulina. This just happened.

[P] And I'm like, That's not normal. Right now. That shit wack [Laughter]. Should we talk about what the Keemooch means?

[B] I was thinking Richard [20:10 unintelligible, talking at the same time] Being on the sneak.

[P] Yeah, 'cuz I think a lot of the stuff that we do as academics is really on the down low because we can't be visible, even though we're hyper visible. So it's like we have to be under the radar not to get like sussed out or even be that target even though we know the targets there, the targets are always on our back because we are not made for the system. But the keemooch is like, you know what's up [laughter].

[B] Absolutely.

[P] So do you have one final comment that you want to share, that you want to give to the world?

[B] Oh, gosh, that's too much power [laughter]. One final thing that I could say, I think, within academia, if you find yourself as an Indigenous scholar in a posi-

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tion to be that Auntie to another Indigenous scholar, and to teach them about things in either like, with the tea, or, or just like in general, like giving your guidance, and you're able to take that on, it's always like, so rewarding to do that both for yourself and for the person who you can take under your wing as it were. But also know that it's not your responsibility to do that. So if you are not in a place to do that, honor that for yourself, because the burnout is real. So just like, you know, take that for what it is, I guess.

[P] All right. Well, thank you for being on *the Auntie is in*.

[B] You're so welcome [laughter].

Keywords: *Auntie, University Experiences, Kinship, Support, Friendship*

Glossary

Keemooch - on the down low/one's side piece

Listen along on Spotify.

Season 2, Episode 5

The Eagle and the Condor (in English)

JUAN GUEVARA SALAMANCA, MARIELIV FLORES VILLALOBOS, GIOVANNI URSELLA AND PAULINA JOHNSON

Synopsis: In this episode, Dr. Johnson shares the Prophecy of the Eagle and the Condor and reflects on the relationship between time, space and ancestry. According to the prophecy, the Eagle and the Condor will soon join again with the people and knowledge from North and South America. Dr. Johnson explains how time is not necessarily linear and the importance of a prophecy within the communities that follow its teachings.

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Part One:
Prophecy of the Eagle and the Condor

Prophecies foretell, and speak of the creative character of humans to use divine, religious connotations to question and imaginatively build meaning about time and the forces of creation. Prophecies and their contingent futures are not predetermined, but can or cannot happen, and are already in the past as soon as they are uttered (Davison, 2022).

For Byron Rangiwai (2021), a Māori scholar, prophecies relate to the comprehension of time, and act as explanatory tools. They provide context and understanding to the worldview of peoples and communities. The creation of prophecies in picturing a future highlights the political boundaries that escape rational objectification and causation as the only alternative for the future.

Indigenous philosophies reject a linear comprehension of time that can interpret prophecies as a progressive unfolding. This linear significance stands in opposition to other meanings of time in which the future, present, and past are cyclically constructed so the future is already known and lived. The Indigenous philosophical experience of time is cyclical, concomitant and simultaneous. Prophecies challenge the linearity of time because they are uttered as the past happening in the future (Tindall & Bustos, 2012).

Prophecies operate as entities of their own. As soon as they are enacted, they can conduct, guide and restrict agencies and practices toward their realization. Jelsing (2023) highlights this potential of prophecies as sites of resistance that reveal the weakness of white settler colonialism in their projected eras.

Prophecies tie together time, space and ancestry. They embody the potential practice of framing and unfolding as a narrative practice and a living entity. Thus, prophecies must be considered as “simultaneously material and spiritual, discursive and grounded in the physical world” (Jelsing, 2023, p. 19).

The Eagle and the Condor Prophecy

When the Eagle of the North
flies with the Condor of the South,
the spirit of the land,
she will re-awaken.

- **An Incan Prophecy**

According to the prophecy of the Eagle and the Condor, humans were separated into two paths in ancient times: the path of the Eagle and the path of the Condor. The Eagle represents the path of reason, of the laborious and industrial, and the masculine energy; the path of the Condor is the path of the heart, 'del corazonar', of intuition and instinct, and of feminine energy (Engle et al., 2022; Guerrero Arias, 2010; Tindall & Bustos, 2012). The prophecy is present across the extended geography of Abya Yala and Turtle Island, otherwise known as the Americas. It conceives the separation of the Eagle and the Condor as part of their trajectories, but with the potential of symbiotic relationships due to their characteristics and complementarities.

Nonetheless, the prophecy and the paths of the Eagle and the Condor do not necessarily represent a dichotomic division of North/South. In today's world, the Eagle is associated with Turtle Island (what is known as North America), while the Condor is representative of Abya Yala (what known as South America). Thus, the prophecy calls the Eagle and the Condor to join again and unite their already established but distanced and separated relations.

The prophecy suggests that the Eagle and the Condor, when reunited, would fly in the same sky, awakening sacred and powerful energy, and would "create a new level of consciousness for humanity" (Jaguar Bird, 2018) to face the global challenges as united humankind (Engle et al., 2022).

According to Willaru Huayta, a spiritual leader from the Quetchuas, the freedom of the Eagle can only be achieved through the freedom of the Condor and vice-versa (Real Peoples Media, 2016). Thus, the recognition and dethroning of colonial practices that restrict the realization of solidarity ties between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples is required to think and live in a different world (KnewWays, 2008). The prophecy shows the possibilities and potential of coming together, thinking collectively, and decolonizing our differences and solidarities (Engle et al., 2022).

Part Two:
Pachacuti – a Reconciliation of Our Space-Time

The re-encounter in the skies of the Eagle and the Condor will spawn the time and space of the Pachacuti/Pachakutik, and will bring healing to Mother Earth as a result of the coming together of reason and heart (Guerrero Arias, 2010). Etymologically, Pachacuti refers to pacha, *Earth* and cuti, *transformation/reversal*. It is a spatial moment of resolution and confrontation, of transformation

and total renovation; this is why the Incans believe order could be restored, but only if the Condor and the Eagle unite and work together (De Vivanco, 2012).

In Incan history, Pachacuti/Pachakutik was an emperor who restored the empire's order and politically transformed it, making Cusco the capital city. Due to the significance of his reign, Pachacuti/Pachakutik is known as the "earth shaker" (The First New Chronicle and Good Government, 1615).

The Incan version of the prophecy relates to shaking the world to overturn it through the cyclical Pachacutis. These temporal cycles are also present in Aymara and Quechua's cultures, testifying to how severe events affect life on Earth. Pachacuti/Pachakutik is the opportunity to transform space-time and the relations emerging from them.

According to Tindall and Bustos (2012), each Pachacuti/Pachakutik lasts five hundred years. The latest Pachacuti/Pachakutik was dominated by the Eagle, concurring with the arrival, colonization, extraction and exploitation by Europeans in Turtle Island and Abya Yala. It is believed that we are currently experiencing the process of unifying the Eagle and the Condor where the spreading of Indigenous teachings and traditions must be at the forefront to resist extractivist economies and climate change, but mainly to engage with symbiotic practices harmonically, and the restoration and regeneration of the Earth (Tindall & Bustos, 2012).

Part Three:
Power In Unity

Understanding a prophecy or specific Indigenous Knowledges involves not just acknowledging its existence but connecting with its meaning and how it interacts with the present communities that follow its teachings. However, doing that seems like a mystery for many people, [7:33- I mean let's be honest,] even the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada promotes Indigenous healing practices, especially those with healers and Elders. But very rarely do you actually see them at the forefront of what medicine and health could be. In this scenario, the question is: who is available and willing to open their minds and hearts to a greater understanding of life and history? Solidarity is a complex term that can help us to fulfill our expectations of an association we want to be part of, while it also requires "compliance in ways we may not fully grasp" (Suzack, 2021, p. 134).

Social participation involves "activities that make one interact with others in the community" (Viscogliosi et al., 2017, p. 2). Understanding the concept within the Indigenous Knowledge of intergenerational solidarity means that the focus is on the interaction between personal factors (like age, gender, sociocultural identity, organic systems and abilities of the community members) with environmental factors determining the dynamic of a society (Viscogliosi et al., 2017). "Intergenerational solidarity involves mutual help in which each generation gives to and receives from following and preceding generations" (Viscogliosi et al., 2017, p. 2). This mutual help delineates a sense of responsibility that is shared with the whole community as it is a way to consolidate power in unity. Therefore, from an Indigenous perspective, wellness and happiness are the balance between body, mind, emotion and spirit. This is based on the belief that one's connection to language, land, beings of creation, and ancestry are key factors in experiencing and promoting a caring family and environment (Viscogliosi et al., 2017)

As history and the present keep reminding us, "[I]ndigenous knowledge has intentionally been racialized, obfuscated, and destroyed by invading colonial armies and communities for centuries [...] It has been deliberately obscured by claims of Global North 'firsts'" (Mackay, 2022, p. 3). This is done in attempts to make us forget and erase from our memory that Indigenous communities were and are extremely competent and innovative in different areas, such as philosophy, public health, medicine, engineering, agriculture, and many more. Scholars have highlighted the fact that Indigenous communities, now located and divided into what is known as North and South America, used to share frameworks and knowledges with regional variations by large cultural, political, and economic groupings and alliances [...] These scholars identify shared social and philosophical aspects—architectural and philosophical similarities, shared agriculture traditions, shared linguistic evidence (e.g., trading languages, similar definitions of words, similar relations of words to histories and proverbs, etc.), and shared applications of mathematics and geometries. They argue that this indicates a shared and generalizable Indigenous thought structure, or at least an extensive collaboration of knowledge building between the two continents (Mackay, 2022, p. 3)

Indigenous people keep finding ways to stay strong. One way of doing this is by sharing sacred knowledge transmitted from generation to generation by Elders, especially female Elders, with the goals of reinforcing values, collective cultural identity, communications, relationships, memories and ways to develop competency and creativity (Clément, 2017; Viscogliosi et al., 2017). That is why the community is an 'action space' with permeable geo-local boundaries, where

people keep connecting and learning from each other without the limit of physical geography (Andrae-Marobela et al., 2012, p. 149).

Part Four:
Across Languages and Dialects

The community strength that I just described might seem to have limitations when considering the Eagle and Condor Prophecy – how can unity be built across the expanse of Abya Yala and Turtle Island, among the diversity of all of its nations? There is no one definition of Indigenous, at least on an international scale (Wang, 2015). Linzhu Wang does mention a common claim of a right to self-identification, but they allude that this is a resistance to an "objective" notion of Indigeneity being imposed on Indigenous groups to break them apart, as I talked about in Episode 5 of Season 1.

So, when looking for unity, I am not going to be looking for one particular thing that the Indigenous Peoples of Abya Yala and Turtle Island might have in common. That will be revealed through the Eagle and Condor prophecy. That said, we have ways of connecting, and we have demonstrated this historically. The Haudenosaunee Confederacy, for example, is a long-standing collective of Indigenous nations (PBS, 2018). We have also connected across languages: Indian Sign Language was used to communicate among nations throughout a large part of Turtle Island, despite their different spoken languages and regardless of hearing capacity (Skinner, 2023).

This unity is of course complicated by colonial borders. Colonial borders are lines on a map – lines on a specifically colonial map – but they are powerful enough to shape people's identity, as Gloria Anzaldúa explores in *Borderlands/ La frontera*. Borderlands, like around the Mexico-US border, are described by Anzaldúa (2007) as, quote, "a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary", "in a constant state of transition" and inhabited by "the prohibited and forbidden" (p. 25).

Colonial borders are imposed and regulated not just through physical means, such as military force, but also through our thoughts and languages. What might make it hard to see unity in Indigenous nations throughout North America and South America is the colonial division of the 'North' and the 'South'. Colonial borders are not written by the land itself. If this division still seems natural to you, you might consider how spoken languages can form a separation between hearing and deaf people; or you might consider how Anglophones

might see themselves separated from Francophones. Contrast that with how Indian Sign Language denies the hearing/deaf boundary, as well as boundaries among many spoken languages, since it was used regardless of deafness and as a lingua franca.

I should mention that there was, and still is, recognition of different Indigenous nations' territories. But to compare those territories, those understood by the people who belong to that land, and colonial borders, which need constant state reenforcement through militaries and legalities, it might not be so strange to imagine understanding ourselves as "past" the colonial borders to transcend them. Despite the US-Mexico border, Anzaldúa (2007) understands that "[b]eing Mexican is a state of soul — not [a state] of mind, not one of citizenship. Neither eagle nor serpent, but both. And like the ocean, neither animal respects borders" (p. 84).

To extend this further, if we limit our identities to what is delineated by borders, we would deny an understanding of ourselves through wâhkôhtowin, by recognizing how we relate to each other. And fundamentally, how we truly see ourselves and the world around us. So it isn't even as if we might dissociate from colonial ways, but that *through our Indigeneity*, we can find some ways of connecting. Again, not through one particular commonality, but maybe through many linkages that make a web of solidarity. As Jaadee Kung (2018) of the Haida Nation says:

Every species here in our world is different from the others. There are some things that will bring us together as one: some of us have similar traditional stories; some of us make the same kind of bread; we have similar songs; our beliefs have similarities, too. There will always be something that will draw us together, and it will help us to realize that we are not them and us, but that we are all of us. (pp. 78-79)

So, seeing ourselves on Abya Yala and Turtle Island as "the Indigenous Peoples" forms only part of the picture. We can relate to each other through a variety of similarities, each of which only some of us might share, and build a network through them. And I might say that we can also relate through how we learn to share our *contrasting* ideas and identities with each other.

Altogether, I am saying that understanding ourselves as "the Indigenous Peoples" opens up ways in which we can understand each other, rather than being "*the way*" to relate to each other. The Eagle and Condor prophecy, then, reveals a critical opportunity in this time through which we can find our relationships.

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The Prophecy is a possibility. And it is not necessarily a farfetched one. Maybe we do move back and forth, towards and away from each other, and in relation to each other, with an underlying sense of complementarity and connection. Skye Haggerty's poem called "born together" might describe this in a way that prose can't (2020):

born together
by Skye Haggerty

> **cognate: a word which is shared between languages,**
> **suggesting a common origin. For example:**
> **star, stern, stēlla, setāre, tara, astēr, astre**
> **These are points on a map which converges**
> **- and splits as we move towards and away from each other.**
> **Imagine, we have been creating constellations as long as**
> **there have been stars, making meaning**
> **out of lights in the night sky,**
> **trying to share our story.**

Part Five:
Conclusion

While borders are laid out in a colonial landscape, the world of Indigenous peoples is not as easily confined and contained. Nestled in our existence is the freedom to roam without documentation, without constraints, and importantly, without surveillance of our every move - yet, the colonial gaze is heavy on us. But within the people lies our ability to connect beyond the means of language and our dialects - we experience unity through our emotions, our spirituality, and our coming to know. A fight together, where the Eagle and Condor embrace each other in ways not seen for a very long time. Importantly, as an existence where we will liberate each other once again.

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Keywords: *Prophecy, Pachacuti, Indigenous Knowledges, Born Together*

Glossary
Abya Yala — Also known as Center and South America. In the Kuna language 'land of the vital blood or the land of full maturity'
del corazonar — of the heart (Spanish)

La frontera - Borderlands (Spanish)
Lingua franca — common language
Turtle Island — North America
Pachacuti — pacha is Earth, cuti is transformation/reversal. Refers to an Inca Emperor known as the 'reformer of the world'
Wâhkôhtowin - Interrelatedness

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Listen along on Spotify.

Temporada 2, Episodio 5

El águila y el cóndor (en español)

Juan Guevara Salamanca, Marieliv Flores Villalobos, Giovanni Ursella y Paulina Johnson

Sinopsis: En este episodio, la Dra. Johnson comparte la Profecía del Águila y el Cóndor y reflexiona sobre la relación entre tiempo, espacio y ancestralidad. Según la profecía, el Águila y el Cóndor pronto se unirán de nuevo con la gente y el conocimiento de América del Norte y del Sur. La Dra. Johnson explica como el tiempo no es necesariamente lineal y la importancia de la profecía dentro de las comunidades que siguen sus enseñanzas.

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Primera Parte:
La Profecía del Águila y el Cóndor

Las profecías predicen y hablan del carácter creativo de los humanos, ellas cuestionan y utilizan connotaciones divinas y religiosas para construir imaginativamente significados sobre el tiempo y las fuerzas de la creación. Las profecías y sus futuros contingentes no están predeterminados, sino que pueden o no suceder, formando parte del pasado en el momento que se pronuncian, anuncian y proclaman (Davison, 2022).

Para Byron Rangiwai (2021), académico maorí, las profecías se relacionan con la comprensión del tiempo y como herramienta explicativa, proporcionando contexto y el entendimiento de la cosmovisión de los pueblos y comunidades. La creación de profecías para imaginar un futuro pone de relieve los límites políticos que escapan a la objetivación racional y a la causalidad como única alternativa para el futuro.

Las filosofías indígenas rechazan una comprensión lineal del tiempo que pueda interpretar las profecías como un despliegue progresivo. Este significado lineal se opone a otros significados del tiempo en los que el futuro, el presente y el pasado se construyen cíclicamente, de modo que el futuro ya se conoce y se vive. La experiencia filosófica indígena del tiempo es cíclica, concomitante y simultánea. Las profecías desafían la linealidad del tiempo porque son pronunciadas como el pasado sucediendo en el futuro, conociendo el futuro en el pasado (Tindall y Bustos, 2012).

Las profecías funcionan como entidades en sí mismas. Tan pronto como son promulgadas, pueden conducir, guiar y restringir agencias y prácticas hacia su realización. Jelsing (2023) destaca este potencial de las profecías como sitios de resistencia que revelan la debilidad del colonialismo de los blancos en su tiempo proyectado.

Las profecías vinculan tiempo, espacio y ascendencia. Encarnan la práctica potencial de enmarcar y desplegar como una práctica narrativa y una entidad viva. Así, las profecías deben considerarse “simultáneamente materiales y espirituales, discursivas y basadas en el mundo físico” (Jelsing, 2023, p. 19

La profecía del Águila y el Cóndor

“Cuando el Águila del Norte
vuele con el Cóndor del Sur
el espíritu de la tierra
volverá a despertar”.
Profecía Inca

Según la profecía del Águila y el Cóndor, los humanos se separaron en dos caminos en la antigüedad: el camino del Águila y el camino del Cóndor. El Águila representa el camino de la razón, de lo laborioso e industrial, y de la energía masculina; el camino del Cóndor es el camino del corazón, 'del corazonar', de la intuición y el instinto, y de la energía femenina (Engle et al., 2022; Guerrero Arias, 2010; Tindall & Bustos, 2012). La profecía está presente a lo largo y ancho de la geografía extendida de Abya Yala y la Isla de la Tortuga, también conocida como las Américas, y concibe la separación del Águila y el Cóndor como parte de sus trayectorias, pero con el potencial de relaciones simbióticas debido a sus características y complementariedades.

Sin embargo, la profecía y las trayectorias del Águila y del Cóndor no representan necesariamente una división dicotómica Norte/Sur. En el mundo actual, el Águila está asociada a la Isla de la Tortuga (lo que ahora se conoce como América del Norte), mientras que el Cóndor es representativo de Abya Yala (lo que ahora se conoce como América del Sur). Así, la profecía llama al Águila y al Cóndor a juntarse de nuevo y unir sus relaciones ya establecidas pero ahora distanciadas y separadas.

La profecía sugiere que el Águila y el Cóndor, al reunirse, volarían en el mismo cielo, despertando una energía sagrada y poderosa, y "crear un nuevo nivel de conciencia para la humanidad" (Pájaro Jaguar, 2018) para enfrentar los desafíos globales como humanidad unida (Engle et al., 2022).

Según Willaru Huayta, líder espiritual de los Quetchuas, la libertad del Águila solo puede lograrse a través de la libertad del Cóndor y viceversa (Real Peoples Media, 2016). Por lo tanto, el reconocimiento y el destronamiento de las prácticas coloniales que restringen la realización de los lazos de solidaridad entre los pueblos indígenas y no indígenas son necesarios para pensar y vivir en un mundo diferente (KnewWays, 2008). El potencial de la profecía muestra las posibilidades de unirnos, pensar colectivamente y decolonizar nuestras diferencias y solidaridades (Engle et al., 2022).

Segunda parte:
Pachacuti: una reconciliación de nuestro espacio-tiempo

El reencuentro en los cielos del Águila y el Cóndor engendrará el tiempo y el espacio del Pachacuti/Pachakutik. El tiempo/espacio del Pachacuti/Pachakutik traerá sanación a la Madre Tierra como resultado de la unión de la razón y el corazón (Guerrero Arias, 2010). Etimológicamente, Pachacuti se refiere a Pacha

como Tierra y Cuti, como transformación/reversión. Es un momento espacial de resolución y confrontación, de transformación y renovación total; por eso los Incas creen que el orden podría restablecerse, pero sólo si el Cóndor y el Águila se unen y trabajan juntos (De Vivanco, 2012).

En la historia el Inca, Pachacuti/Pachakutik fue un emperador que restableció el orden del imperio y lo transformó políticamente, convirtiendo a Cusco en la capital del imperio Incaico. Debido a la trascendencia de su reinado, Pachacuti/Pachakutik es conocido como el "agitador de la tierra" (La Primera Nueva Crónica y Buen Gobierno, 1615).

La versión Inca de la profecía se refiere a sacudir el mundo para volcarlo a través ciclos de Pachacutis. Estos ciclos temporales también están presentes en las culturas Aymara y Quechua, dando testimonio de cómo los acontecimientos severos afectan a la vida en la Tierra. Pachacuti/Pachakutik es la oportunidad de transformar el espacio-tiempo y las relaciones que emergen de ellos. Según Tindall y Bustos (2012), cada Pachacuti/Pachakutik dura quinientos años. El último Pachacuti/Pachakutik fue dominado por el Águila, coincidiendo con la llegada, colonización, extracción y explotación por parte de los europeos en la Isla Tortuga y Abya Yala. Se cree que actualmente estamos viviendo el proceso de unificación del Águila y el Cóndor donde la difusión de las enseñanzas y tradiciones Indígenas deben estar al frente para resistir a las economías extractivistas y al cambio climático, pero principalmente para comprometerse con prácticas simbióticas armónicamente, y la restauración y regeneración de la Tierra (Tindall & Bustos, 2012).

Tercera parte:
El poder en la unidad

Comprender una profecía o un Conocimiento Indígena específico no es sólo reconocer su existencia, sino conectar con su significado y su interacción con las comunidades actuales que siguen sus enseñanzas. Sin embargo, hacer eso parece un misterio para mucha gente, aunque la Comisión de la Verdad y la Reconciliación de Canadá promueva prácticas de sanación indígenas, en colaboración con curanderos y sabios, para fortalecer la seguridad cultural de los pueblos indígenas y satisfacer sus necesidades y condiciones de vida (Viscogliosi et al., 2017). En este escenario, la pregunta es: ¿quién está disponible y dispuesto a abrir sus mentes y corazones a una comprensión más amplia de la vida y la historia? Teniendo en cuenta que la solidaridad es un término complejo que puede ayudarnos a cumplir nuestras expectativas de una asociación de la que

queremos formar parte, mientras que, por otro lado, requiere "conformidad en formas que podemos no comprender plenamente" (Suzack, 2021, p. 134).

La participación social implica "actividades que hacen que uno interactúe con otros en la comunidad" (Viscogliosi et al., 2017, p. 2). Entender el concepto dentro del Conocimiento Indígena de solidaridad intergeneracional significa que el foco está puesto en la interacción entre factores personales (como la edad, el género, la identidad sociocultural, los sistemas orgánicos y las capacidades de los miembros de la comunidad) con factores ambientales que determinan la dinámica de una sociedad (Viscogliosi et al., 2017). "La solidaridad intergeneracional implica una ayuda mutua en la que cada generación da y recibe de las generaciones siguientes y precedentes" (Viscogliosi et al., 2017, p. 2). Esta ayuda mutua delinea un sentido de responsabilidad que es compartida con toda la comunidad, ya que es una forma de consolidar el poder en unidad. Por lo tanto, desde una perspectiva indígena, el bienestar y la felicidad son el equilibrio entre el cuerpo, la mente, la emoción y el espíritu. Esto se basa en la creencia de que la conexión de cada uno con el idioma, la tierra, los seres de la creación y ancestros son factores claves para experimentar y promover un entorno y una familia afectuosos (Viscogliosi et al., 2017).

Como la historia y el presente no dejan de recordarnos, "el conocimiento indígena ha sido intencionadamente racializado, ofuscado y destruido por ejércitos y comunidades coloniales invasoras durante siglos [...] ha sido deliberadamente oscurecido por las reivindicaciones de las 'primicias' del Norte Global" (Mackay, 2022, p. 3), tratando de hacernos olvidar y borrar de nuestra memoria que las comunidades indígenas fueron y son extremadamente competentes e innovadoras en diversas áreas, como la filosofía, la salud pública, la medicina, la ingeniería, la agricultura, etc. La academia ha destacado el hecho de que las comunidades indígenas, ahora ubicadas y divididas en lo que se conoce como las Américas, solían compartir marcos y conocimientos con variaciones regionales por grandes agrupaciones y alianzas culturales, políticas y económicas [...] La academia identifica aspectos sociales y filosóficos compartidos: similitudes arquitectónicas y filosóficas, tradiciones agrícolas compartidas, evidencias lingüísticas compartidas (por ejemplo, lenguas de intercambio, definiciones similares de palabras, relaciones similares de palabras con historias y proverbios, etc.) y aplicaciones compartidas de matemáticas y geometrías. Argumentan que esto indica una estructura de pensamiento indígena compartida y generalizable, o al menos una amplia colaboración en la construcción del conocimiento entre los dos continentes' (Mackay, 2022, p. 3)

Los pueblos indígenas siguen encontrando formas de mantenerse fuertes.

Una forma de hacerlo es compartiendo el conocimiento sagrado transmitido de generación en generación por los sabios, especialmente las sabias, con el objetivo de reforzar los valores, la identidad cultural colectiva, las comunicaciones, las relaciones, los recuerdos y las formas de desarrollar la competencia y la creatividad (Clément, 2017; Viscogliosi et al., 2017). Es por ello que la comunidad es un 'espacio de acción' con fronteras geolocales permeables, donde las personas siguen conectándose y aprendiendo unas de otras sin el límite de la geografía física (Andrae-Marobela et al., 2012, p. 149).

Cuarta parte:
Atravesando lenguas y dialectos

La fuerza de la comunidad que se acaba de describir podría parecer que tiene una limitación al considerar la profecía del Águila y el Cóndor: ¿cómo puede construirse la unidad a través de la extensión de Abya Yala y la Isla de la Tortuga, entre la diversidad de todas sus naciones? No existe una única definición de indígena, al menos a escala internacional (Wang, 2015). Linzhu Wang menciona una reivindicación común del derecho a la autoidentificación, pero alude a que se trata de una resistencia a una noción 'objetiva' de indigeneidad que se impone a los grupos indígenas para separarlos, como hablé en el Episodio 5 de la Temporada 1).

Por lo tanto, al buscar la unidad, no voy a buscar una cosa en particular que los Pueblos Indígenas de Abya Yala y la Isla de la Tortuga puedan tener en común y que se revelaría a través de la profecía del Águila y el Cóndor. Dicho esto, nosotros tenemos formas de conectarnos, y lo hemos demostrado históricamente. Por ejemplo, la Confederación Haudenosaunee es un antiguo colectivo de naciones indígenas (PBS, 2018). Y también nos hemos conectado a través de las lenguas: el lenguaje de signos indígena se utilizaba para comunicarse entre las naciones de gran parte de la Isla de la Tortuga, a pesar de sus diferentes lenguas habladas e independientemente de la capacidad de escuchar (Skinner, 2023).

Por supuesto, las fronteras coloniales complican esta unidad. Las fronteras coloniales son líneas en un mapa -específicamente, son líneas en un mapa específicamente colonial-, pero son lo bastante poderosas como para moldear la identidad de las personas, como explora Gloria Anzaldúa en Borderlands/La frontera. Gloria Anzaldúa describe los territorios fronterizos, como la frontera entre México y Estados Unidos, como "un lugar vago e indeterminado creado por el residuo emocional de una frontera antinatural [...] en constante estado de

transición [...] y habitado por lo prohibido y vetado" (2007, p. 25).

Las fronteras coloniales se imponen y regulan no sólo a través de medios físicos, como la fuerza militar, sino también a través de nuestros pensamientos y nuestro lenguaje. Lo que puede dificultar la unidad de las naciones indígenas en toda, entre comillas 'América del Norte' y, entre comillas 'América del Sur' es la división colonial de 'Norte' y 'Sur'. Las fronteras coloniales no están escritas por el propio territorio. Si esta división te pareció natural, puedes pensar en cómo las lenguas habladas pueden separar a las personas sordas con las personas que oyen, o cómo los anglófonos se podrían ver a sí mismos separados de los francófonos; esto contrasta con el hecho de que la lengua de signos indígena niega la frontera entre oyentes y personas sordas, así como las fronteras entre muchas lenguas habladas, ya que se utilizaba independientemente de la sordera y como lingua franca.

Debo mencionar que existía, y sigue existiendo, el reconocimiento de los territorios de las diferentes naciones indígenas. Pero si comparamos esos territorios, los que son entendidos por las personas que pertenecen a esa tierra, y las fronteras coloniales, que necesitan la constante imposición del Estado a través de militares y legalidades, quizá no sea tan extraño imaginarnos a nosotros mismos 'más allá' de las fronteras coloniales para trascenderlas. A pesar de la frontera entre Estados Unidos y México, Gloria Anzaldúa entiende que "ser mexicano es un estado del alma, no de la mente, no de la ciudadanía. Ni águila ni serpiente, sino ambas. Y como el océano, ninguno de los dos animales respeta fronteras" (2007, p. 84).

Si limitamos nuestras identidades a lo que delimitan las fronteras, nos negaríamos a comprendernos a nosotros mismos a través del wâhkôhtowin, reconociendo nuestra interdependencia, cómo nos relacionamos los unos con los otros. Así que ni siquiera se trata de que podamos disociarnos de las formas coloniales, sino que, a través de la indigeneidad, podemos encontrar formas de conectarnos. De nuevo, no a través de un elemento común concreto, sino quizá a través de muchos vínculos, para crear una red de solidaridad. Como dice Jaadee Kung, de la Nación Haida:

Cada especie de nuestro mundo es diferente de las demás. Hay cosas que nos unen: algunos tenemos historias tradicionales parecidas; algunos hacemos el mismo tipo de pan; tenemos canciones parecidas; nuestras creencias también tienen similitudes. Siempre habrá algo que nos unirá, y nos ayudará a darnos cuenta de que no somos ellos y nosotros, sino que somos todos nosotros (2018, pp. 78-79).

Así pues, vernos a nosotros mismos en Abya Yala y en la Isla de la Tortuga como 'los Pueblos Indígenas' solo forma parte del cuadro. Podemos relacionarnos entre nosotros a través de una variedad de similitudes, cada una de las cuales solo algunos de nosotros podríamos compartir, y construir una red a través de ellas. Y podría decir que también podemos relacionarnos a través de cómo aprendemos a compartir entre nosotros nuestras ideas e identidades contrastadas.

Con todo esto, estoy diciendo que entendernos a nosotros mismos como 'los Pueblos Indígenas' abre caminos en los que podemos entendernos unos a otros, en lugar de ser 'la manera' de relacionarnos. La profecía del Águila y el Cóndor, entonces, revela una oportunidad crítica en este tiempo a través de la cual podemos encontrar nuestras relaciones.

La profecía es una posibilidad. Y no es necesariamente descabellada. Tal vez sí nos movemos hacia delante y hacia atrás, acercándonos y alejándonos unos de otros, y en relación con los demás, con un sentido subyacente de complementariedad y conexión. El poema de Skye Haggerty *Nacidos juntos* podría describir esto de una manera que la prosa no puede (2020):

nacidos juntos

de Skye Haggerty

cognado: palabra que se comparte entre varias lenguas,
que sugiere un origen común. Por ejemplo:
star, stern, stēlla, setāre, tara, astēr, astre
Son puntos de un mapa que converge
y se divide a medida que nos acercamos y alejamos.
Imagínate, llevamos creando constelaciones desde que
existen las estrellas, dando significado
desde las luces del cielo nocturno,
intentando compartir nuestra historia.

Quinta parte:

Conclusión

Mientras que las fronteras están trazadas en un paisaje colonial, el mundo de los pueblos indígenas no es tan fácil de confinar y contener. Nuestra existencia encierra la libertad de movernos sin documentación, sin restricciones y, lo que

es más importante, sin vigilancia de cada uno de nuestros movimientos. Pero en el interior de las personas reside nuestra capacidad para conectar más allá de los medios de la lengua y nuestros dialectos: experimentamos la unidad a través de nuestras emociones, nuestra espiritualidad y nuestro llegar a conocer. Una lucha conjunta, en la que el Águila y el Cóndor se abrazan de un modo que no se había visto en mucho tiempo. Una existencia en la que nos liberamos mutuamente.

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Palabras claves: Profecía, Pachacuti, Conocimiento Indígena, Nacidos Juntos

Glosario

Abya Yala — También conocido como Centro y Sur América. En el lenguaje Kuna 'tierra de sangre viva o tierra madura'
Lengua franca — lenguaje común
Isla de la tortuga — América del Norte
Pachacuti — pacha es Tierra, cuti es transformación. Hace referencia al Inca emperador conocido como 'transformador del mundo'
Wâhkôhtowin - Interrelaciones

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Listen along on Spotify.

Season 2, Episode 6

Belonging

Paulina Johnson and Natahnee Winder

Synopsis: What does it mean to come from a community? In this episode, we examine the concept of Indigenous identity through belonging and how this is shaped by connection. Importantly, we address what it means to be Indigenous within a university system during a time of pretendians and those who are Indigenous for convenience. It is a challenging and often controversial topic ahead, but discussing is needed within Canada's pressing reality.

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Part One:
Butterfly Skies

When I started my graduate studies in Ontario, I met who would become Dr. Natahnee Winder. Natahnee was working towards her PhD in Sociology, and I had just started my MA in History. Within the first moments of meeting, we were already making plans for dinner at her house – and luckily for her, I wasn't a psychopath. But her ability to bring me into her home and warmth meant that we were both from community. She knew the importance of being with another Indigenous person in this new place since I was from Alberta and she was from Colorado. We never questioned each other and who we were – we immediately knew that this was someone I could be vulnerable and authentic with. She embraced my loud auntie cackle and the fact that I laughed at my own jokes (and still do!). We were both secure in our Indigenous identity since we were brought up in ceremony, cleansed in our peoples' medicines, and raised by strong Indigenous women.

I had found a friend, a sister, a confidant, but an Indigenous voice of reason, hope, and admiration. Her words of kindness and support always echoed back to me that I could let the rez girl out if needed, but should keep her in when my emotions were at an all-time high. We definitely are two opposite ends of the spectrum, but this works to our advantage because her success is mine, and mine is hers. As first-generation scholars who navigated academia, and continue today within our roles as assistant professors, we learned that we may not have always continued on this path without each other.

This is because within the university system, the support for Indigenous peoples, while present, is not adequate for our grounding of place within the land and territory. Our ancestors were not tied to the land we walked in Ontario, nor found in the university's walls. But our close kinship as two women from sundance communities allowed us to become relations for this life and the generations that follow after us. Butterfly Woman, or Natahnee, allowed me to be who I am as we found our path together in the university, and learned that the sense of belonging is one that is not always so clear. We never had to challenge each other's authenticity because we were Indigenous through and through, but many do not have the same experiences as us and have been disconnected from community or are just learning. Therefore, we will focus on Indigeneity in this podcast episode and navigate who belongs and what it means to be Indigenous today.

Part Two:
Belonging

Belonging and how we see ourselves is crucial to Indigenous peoples. Our understanding of who we are is placed within a long line of ancestors, to connections within the spiritual and fourth-world planes of existence grounded in our communities, Nations, and lands. Who we belong to is vital to our knowledge and the collective consciousness within our dreams, epistemologies, visions, and prayers. Belonging means, most importantly, **connection** and who our **connections** are with. Connections are intricate weavings, held together by having meaningful conversations infused with laughter, being content in the silence, and unresolved trauma that often peaks its head out. For Indigenous scholars who have tackled the discussion of belonging and claims to being Indigenous, we see various views and statements that build upon this concept. Taiaiake Alfred (1999) states that "[c]ollective identity is derived from historical, cultural and political experience, and there is much pressure and expectation that it should, nay must, be historically and traditionally framed. This is evident in the calls by some [I]ndigenous intellectuals for a return to a cultural or traditional framework as an act of resistance and a measure of authenticity" (pp. 80-88). This return to a cultural or traditional framework becomes all the more critical as we begin to understand how self-identification plays a role in belonging.

Indigenous identity is, naturally, a very complex and nuanced topic. Indigenous kinship is an inherent calling and continuous return to one's community to uphold responsibilities and roles for maintaining Indigenous livelihood and bringing up the next generation. When self-identification is situational, meaning individuals who claim to be Indigenous when it is safe or claim to be Indigenous for convenience of personal benefits. This situational shifting of identity ignores the responsibilities of being a citizen to the Indigenous nation and the accountability that comes with it. Indigenous peoples who take an active role in their nation are constantly returning to community to uphold their responsibilities and carry on taking roles daily. This is why Indigeneity is significant; for many, it is a core aspect of our identities that we are rightfully protective of.

Part of the controversial nature of claiming Indigenous identity is how people abuse it. They use a few well-placed beaded accessories and a repertoire of the language and buzzwords that float around social media and university strategic plans. These individuals can pass themselves off without ever really knowing what it means to be Indigenous, and those who do not know any better do not know that it is all a facade. These individuals do not hold themselves accountable to Indigenous nations, even when they claim access to traditional knowl-

edge and knowledge of the land. Their true ancestors have no connection to the Indigenous territories these individuals attempt to recognize as being part of their Indigenous identity. Often these individuals rely on an extremely distant family member to legitimize their claims without proof, and have a script where they rehearse information on Indigenous communities that have been well-researched by Western academics and scientists. These pretendians have not lived these experiences of being on the land and living in Indigenous communities. And thus, what little resources and accommodations are allotted to Indigenous peoples and scholars are given to someone who has no right to them. There is no commitment nor desire to think about the ramifications of claiming a false identity and how it impacts the community, and how they have taken space from those who have never been given the space to share their insights or knowledge. Furthermore, academic pretendians fail to recognize there is no timeout from engaging in the Nation. Pretendians have a tendency to prioritize self-gain without any cognizant awareness that their actions and their words impact Indigenous communities and individuals. Indigenous scholars are careful with their actions and words because they know they are accountable to their ancestors, communities, and future generations.

Being Indigenous is rugged as fuck, and only the strongest have been chosen to be Creator's favourite. Not only are we conscious of the world that we are in, but we have to constantly be aware of our surroundings and who we can trust. [8:29-8:32 Do you like how I code-switched there? Me too.] This is why connection to community is essential to belonging for Indigenous peoples since our relationships are founded on those who came before us, and importantly, after.

While there is importance in understanding the impacts of colonization that has affected belonging — such as the Sixties Scoop, the Child Welfare system and the ongoing impacts from Residential Schools — maintaining those connections are essential and enforce why Indigenous parents and families constantly fight for their children to stay with them or their relations.

Part Three:
Belonging vs. Identity

Lakota Scholar Hilary Weaver states:

> *Indigenous identity is a truly complex and somewhat controversial topic. There is little agreement on precisely what constitutes an [I]ndigenous identity, how to measure it, and who truly has it. Indeed, there is not even a con-*

> *sensus on appropriate terms. Are we talking about Indians, American Indians, Natives, Native Americans, [I]ndigenous people[s], or First Nations people? Are we talking about Sioux or Lakota? Navajo or Din[é]? Chippewa, Ojibway, or Anishinabe? Once we get that sorted out, are we talking about race, ethnicity, cultural identity, tribal identity, acculturation, enculturation, bicultural identity, multicultural identity, or some other form?* (Weaver, 2001, p. 241)

Therefore, understanding belonging is more complex when we narrow in on the focus of identity. Identity is complex since the construction of identity works across multiple borders and dimensions that reorganize the ways of being and knowing oneself, almost like a machine pumping and churning different parts (Leve, 2011, p. 514). Thus, identity is understood as a powerful form of political currency that is a "morally and legally compelling aspect of personal and collective being that can be deployed as the basis of political claims" (Leve, 2011, p. 517). These political claims for Indigenous identity allows those who are finding out and reclaiming their identity to attempt to instantly belong. However, the question then becomes – should they occupy a space that they truthfully do not need to occupy at that moment?

This is because "Identity is shaped, in part, by recognition, absence of recognition, or misrecognition by others" (Weaver, 2001, p. 244). This means that identity is one component of many realities at play, and this is because belonging is a completely different relationship to the community one exists within and acts for.

This is particularly important in the context of universities, where discourses of reconciliation and decolonization are widespread, yet, as an Indigenous scholar, I keep finding myself in situations where I need to prove myself as an Indigenous woman. Telling those who I am, what family I belong to, and what community raised me – not that I have not done that time and time again, but to individuals who seem to doubt not me but others who they have come across. I am visibly Indigenous and get me in a room with rez natives, my humour and loud cackle comes out [11:51-11:52 I go back to being home]. And usually, when I am asked what family I belong to it's because they want to know if I am a cousin, not if I am pretending to be Indigenous.

In recent years, the term "Indigenous" has sparked debates on who can be identified as Indigenous and who has the right to do it (Canessa, 2007). According to Sharon Oosthoek (2023), the purpose of the Indian registration was to keep track of ethnically Indigenous peoples; however, under the Indian Act system, it has always been possible for people with no Indian heritage to have

Indian status. This is because Indigenous peoples have not been in charge of who belongs until many First Nations were given the ability to make their own citizenship or membership laws – and this happened in 1984. Meaning under the Indian Act, Indigenous women who married non-Indigenous men would lose their status, but Indigenous men who married non-Indigenous women would not. So, in many First Nations, if the Indigenous man passed away, his wife did not lose her status. If she remarried a non-Indigenous man, her children with that man would still be registered to the First Nation. I told you, it's complicated as fuck.

On the other hand, Weaver (2001) explains that identification "is based on recognition of a common origin or shared characteristics with another person, group, or ideal leading to solidarity and allegiance" (p. 243). This happened when I first met Natahnee. We recognized what we represented for each other as emerging junior scholars, because we knew who we were individually, to whom we belonged, and our shared obstacles for being Indigenous women in academia. Our allegiance to each other is because we have never questioned our belonging and who we are to each other.

So then the real question is, who is considered Indigenous?

Part Four:
Of Community

have met people who state they are from Samson Cree Nation, and then when I state I am from there too, they quickly say that they grew up somewhere else. It is an interesting dynamic in that scenario. One thing I know for sure is that if you were going to go to my community, ask who I was and give my family lineage, there would be multiple people who say, "I know who that is". Some would say nice things, others would say... well you know, it is what it is, and really who cares what they say. The point is that my community claims me. I belong to my community. I work for my community. And I am very protective of it. I work to ensure that my relationships within the community are continually managed – even though time gets the best of us all. This means going for tea, driving someone to the grocery store, or simply just showing up to a round dance or sweat lodge.

But let us consider what belonging really means. Joyce Green (2005), in her article "The Complexity of Indigenous Identity Formation and Politics in Canada: Self-Determination and Decolonisation," states:

> *Identity is something that we struggle against while it simultaneously provides us with the ground on which we resist. There is never a moment of pure, undiluted and uncontaminated cultural authenticity because identity and culture exist at specific moments which reflect historical, social, and political influences* (Eikjok, 2007; Hansen, 2004; Kuokkanen, 2007; Weedon, 2004). (pp. 80-88)

What this ultimately means is that what we are seeing today about belonging and identity is based on the historical, social, political, and, importantly, colonial realities that Indigenous peoples face. It is interesting, too, that when we consider resistance as part of the narrative, it changes the footing for those not aware of the collective cause. Where those who do not see the greater intersections and webs of confinement of coloniality struggle.

This is why identity fraud within universities is so convoluted, but also telling of Indigenous peoples. For instance, Shelly Johnson, an Associate Professor at Thompson Rivers University and holder of the Canada Research Chair in Indigenizing Higher Education, is Saulteaux from Keeseekoose First Nation in Saskatchewan, states in the article "Going beyond self-identification in recruiting Indigenous faculty":

> *Perhaps this is a point of building trust; when our circle of relationships begins to include people that we know in common, when we share our respective experiences and have independent, overlapping relationships with them... Sometimes non-Indigenous people will shy away from that and think it's too personal. I can think of a number of non-Indigenous colleagues whose families I've never met. (Oosthoek, 2023, paragraph 2)*

I am sure everyone I work with and the students I mentor and supervise have met my parents, and even my grandparents. This is the Indigenous way of doing things. Natahnee and I know each other's family and even ask how they are doing. This practice, though simple, is how we understand each other's kinship. We've shared meals with each other's families.

Kinship is vital for Indigenous scholars with whom we build trust because our belonging is not dependent on just ourselves, but the entirety of our collective. When we begin to understand the issues of self-identification versus group acceptance, we can acknowledge these complexities in four main points drawing from Native American and Indigenous Studies Association (NAISA) Council Statement on Indigenous Identity Fraud from 2015 (NAISA, 2023) and Leve's (2011) work on identity:

1. Being Indigenous does not only mean being a part of the culture; it also comes from the relationships one has with the community (NAISA, 2023, p. 114). While self-identification plays a huge part at the individual level, it is difficult to claim an Indigenous identity if you do not know the community. An important part of Indigenous identity is the relationships built over the years spent living in that community and people being able to recognize who you are. Kinships and family ties are created within Indigenous communities, regardless of who you are outside of that community. When you go home, people recognize you as one of them, and it makes it quite easy to identify a pretendian because they are not a familiar face to those who truly belong.

2. Belonging cannot simply be decided on an individual level. The measure of truth cannot simply be a person's belief. Still, it must come from relationships with Indigenous peoples, recognizing that they may disagree on the legitimacy of a particular person's or group's claims (NAISA, 2023, p.114).

3. Self-determination isn't the same thing as sovereignty, because self-determination means having control over our lives, such as our culture, language, political thoughts, and identity, but without the surveillance and control of the settler state of Canada. Sovereignty implies the practice of true freedom and autonomy away from the state, and this means that, as Indigenous peoples, we wouldn't need permission from any entity on how we live our lives, or who we claim. This is because the colonial state has constructed Indigenous identities that are tied to the political and economic interests of the settler-colonial state regarding land and territory to secure their state power ultimately (Ree, 1992, in Leve, 2011).

4. "Falsifying one's identity or relationship to particular Indigenous peoples is an act of appropriation, continuous with other forms of colonial violence" (NAISA, 2023, p. 114). Pretendians don't know how Indigenous peoples talk to each other, and they wouldn't understand my burnt jokes or references. But if they were always surrounded by those who do not know any better, in essence other non-Indigenous peoples, they could continue to exist under the radar without ever being questioned. We have to acknowledge one important aspect of this reality - many pretendians take advantage of Indigenous peoples' politeness. As Indigenous peoples, we are open, sometimes too open and welcoming - this is our greatest attribute, but it is our most harmful demise.

Part Five:
Born From the First Relatives

What does it mean to belong to the land? To come from the earth, to be shaped by the water, to have learned from the sky, and to have been moulded by the fire of existence. Belonging to the land means remembering the people who walked it before and those who will walk it after. Every action we take is with them in mind. It means answering to the land and working for the continuation. It means caring for it, as we are kin, and entrusting it to care for us.

Settler systems do not honour connection to the land because they do not consider it, or respect it as a relative. The land is a living being and we honor it as our relation. It would be hard to justify the treatment of land today if the settler population had the same view as us regarding how the land is a relative and should be treated as such - but yet, we are confronted with the statements "if you don't like it [indicating the extraction and abuse], then stop driving your car," or whatever notion of superiority placed in concepts of modernity fails for them to see that we are all in this together if and when the land fights back. Relationships with the land then become purposefully interrupted for this reason; to see it as anything but alive. It impacts our ability to answer to the land, to hold ourselves and each other accountable to the past and future generations. We have seen the destruction it has wrought, both for our world and our well-being.

The land holds our language, and since language is understood to be both a communicative pattern and an expression of cultural identity, connections to the land are fundamental to Indigenous knowledge systems and ways of living and relating (Greenwood & de Leeuw, 2012). English is not a powerful enough language to understand this connection and interdependent relationship; as Indigenous peoples, our reality is deeply embedded in the land and identity, and English cannot discern this meaning. The loss of the land is as heavy as the loss of our entire collective and families. Separating the land from who we are has never and will never exist for us.

The connection between the land and us goes beyond our comprehension and intelligence today; it is spiritual, intuitive, and all-encompassing. Métisse Redvers (2020) states:

> *[To] rediscover and re-establish a fundamental relationship with the land, one must first experience it directly through practical, culturally-rooted activities, languages, and interactions that return us to the land physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. By bringing land connection to the forefront in the dialogue within Indigenous mental health in Canada, we can*

> *draw on the resilience of the land itself to more effectively overcome ongoing impacts of colonization and land-degradation. (p. 102)*

The land is connected to the Indigenous way of being and knowing; this is a lived connection built over generations, shared orally and understood only through direct practices or experiences. Being connected to the land shapes how one sees and embodies the world.

If you were to ask an Indigenous person if they owned the land, the response would be not of possession, but of responsibility, not rights (Irwin et al., 1997). That concept of ownership is challenged today by political and economic realities. Where disconnect is all the more prevalent as we begin to understand the depth of meaning:

> *The constant interaction with the land, by knowing it with all five senses, guides individuals and provides what is needed to live in harmony with the environment, with each other, and with oneself. The reciprocal and dialogic relationship with nature provides not only the material needs but also the ethic, moral and spiritual underpinnings of living a good life. (Radu et al., 2014, p. 93)*

"For Indigenous peoples, the land is kin; Indigenous peoples learn from and with the land" (Mussi, 2022, p. 405). Therefore, belonging is much more important than self-identification and occupying spaces lacking this connection or simply for one's own benefit. It is for the continuation of our people, and the generation of life and belonging that extends beyond humans (Simpson, 2017, p. 3, as cited in Mussi, 2022, p. 45). This is fundamental to knowing that we can connect with and speak to the land without ever uttering a word – the land knows us, and we know it.

Part Six:
Being of Two Worlds

Oxford Dictionary defines safety as "a state of being safe and protected from danger or harm." This definition is contingent on the absence of harm rather than the presence of safety. Safety for me is that I don't have to worry if this will be the last time I walk on campus.

We, as Indigenous peoples, live in two worlds: the Indigenous world and the Western world. In Western spaces, we all must do a certain level of self-monitoring to keep ourselves safe. We must be careful of our audience when we tell

jokes and ensure we sound *correct.* It's beyond code-switching to change how I speak; it is changing our demeanour. It is much like wearing a costume, dressing up like a white person and trying to fit in the Western world, but never being able to do more than camouflage for a moment. The constant fear and reality of our existence are being called into question. It is knowing when someone is staring daggers right into you.

They only want me in my ribbon skirt when it makes *them* look good. I end up being too Indigenous for white people and too white for some Indigenous peoples. I am told to quit sounding white when I use big words, as if being white is a factor of intelligence. It is a never-ending struggle of wanting to be true to myself and my community, but being forced to adhere to someone else's idea of who I should be. It is easy for the pretendian to choose, when I often don't get the opportunity to.

To be considered for tenure, you must publish some articles in high-enough impact journals that prove by Western metrics that you are doing work. So those of us who work with community continually get denied these promotions because our work is not directly quantifiable in a way that the Western academy understands.

Môniyawak do not realize that this other world exists because they see theirs as the default and assume everyone lives the same way. They are surrounded by people who look, think and experience the world similarly. When I am conscious of who is around me, who I can let my guard down around, and who I am uncertain of because of the intuition in me, it is the gift the Creator gave all women.

We straddle the line between these two worlds; we know both spaces but still feel like strangers in them. We must play the game of capitalism to have enough money to keep ourselves and our families alive. But that game eats away at the other parts of us.

Navigating both cultures and coping with their conflicting priorities has become a survival skill (The Red Road Project, n.d.). A skill that is not known unless you are truly Indigenous in academia. We are constantly at battle, with ourselves in this system not designed for us.

Just because you hire an Indigenous person to fulfill a government-mandated quota doesn't mean you've done the job. You've done the first step. It is not just about giving us a long withheld seat at the table, but letting us have our

own table. You are not being inclusive if every board room feels like a hostile warzone when I walk in.

We deserve to be welcomed and allowed to speak without being told what to think.

Part Seven:
The Home Fire

> **Nestled in my spirit lies the cries to be heard,**
>
> **All around me is a world that tells me constantly I am too earthly,**
>
> **Never enough.**
>
> **Never adorned with enough dentalium or hide,**
>
> **Never more stoic or noble as those before,**
>
> **But I look at the photos of the past and do not see my family,**
>
> **I see what you want.**
>
> **An empty shell made for your taking.**
>
> **But you,**
>
> **Who has never felt my warmth,**
>
> **Cannot understand the flickering within me,**
>
> **From those who walked before,**
>
> **From the stars that share our lineage,**
>
> **You cannot see our connection,**
>
> **You cannot see my home,**
>
> **Because along the line that echoes my name,**

> **You do not hear, see, smell, touch, or taste us,**
>
> **We are from times past melded into the present and future,**
>
> **We are eternity mixed with reality,**
>
> **We are the home fire that you will always seek,**
>
> **And we will always be out of reach to you.**

Research Assistant(s): Kalias Bijman, Sam Dancey, Brook Kelela, Tarek Maussili, Jude McNaughton, August Schaffler, Gio Ursella, Mavi Flores Villalobos, Gigi Kirezi Wakana, Drake Worth

Keywords: *Self-identification, Self-determination, Belonging, Connection, Community*

Glossary

Moniyawak - non-Indigenous people; literally, “not of us” people

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Season 2, Episode 7

Five C's of White Supremacy

LUKE AARON WONNECK AND PAULINA JOHNSON

With shared stories from Samantha Dancey, Giovanni Ursella, Kalias Bijman, and Drake Worth

Synopsis: In this episode, members of the team reflect on how they have personally been involved in perpetuating stories that support and legitimize White supremacy, settler colonialism, and racism in Canada. The goal here is for us to help each other — and you, our listeners — learn to recognize and challenge these stories in our everyday lives. We bring you the Five C's of White Supremacy: Concentrate on the individual, Cut Off the Present, Constrain Possibilities, Classify Cultures, and Condemn the Oppressed.

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Part One:
Introduction

We live in a country where Whiteness reigns supreme. In Canada, being White — or what some scholars call "non-racialized" — means that you are far more likely to have money, food, status, freedom, and a long and healthy life. There is tons of evidence of this, and I don't want to spend too much time on it because I don't want to contribute to the perception that non-White people are "damaged" or "falling short" of White standards. Nonetheless, I think a few numbers from some recent Statistics Canada data are important to highlight the privilege and power that White people hold in this country. Consider the following:

- Only 12% of White people in Canada are considered "low income" compared to 21% of non-White people (Block et al., 2019, p. 10)

- 15% of White people live in food insecure households, compared to 33% of Indigenous people and 39% of Black people (Li et al., 2022, p. 4)

- Non-White people are 62% more likely to experience diabetes than White people (Government of Canada, 2022)

- Life expectancy is between 9 and 10 years shorter for First Nations people than it is for non-Indigenous people (Government of Canada, 2021).

Okay, that's enough. The question I hope you're asking yourself at this point is: How is it that this level of inequality and injustice has been allowed to happen, particularly in a nation that claims to be a beacon of tolerance and multiculturalism (Midzain-Gobin and Smith, 2021)? One important answer to this question lies in the stories that Canadians - especially White Canadians - tell about themselves, to themselves and the rest of the world. These stories help to *create* the image of Canada as a beacon of tolerance and multiculturalism. They erase ongoing histories of White supremacy, or make it seem like these histories are natural, inevitable, and even desirable. In the process, they make Canadians willing to accept the inequalities and injustices that continue to happen around them.

My goal within this episode is to give you some tools to recognize and challenge these stories. In particular, this episode includes five common "narrative tropes" used within these stories, along with gaps and inconsistencies in these tropes that you can learn to expose. These tropes are like the "building blocks" of

the stories — they are regularly used themes, arguments, or forms of logic that make the stories seem coherent and reasonable. Learning to recognize them will therefore help you to challenge the perpetuation of the stories that support White supremacy, regardless of the specific form they may take.

I'm not going to be the only one talking about these tropes though. Instead, I've asked five of my research assistants to share how they've seen these tropes in their everyday lives, and even participated in perpetuating them. This is not to single out my research assistants. On the contrary, it is to highlight how these tropes — and the stories they help construct — are pervasive throughout our society. Nobody is "above" being influenced by them — not even those people who are actively working to challenge White supremacy.

One other thing — we've called the five approaches the "Five C's of White Supremacy" because, well, we found a way to make them all start with the letter C. We figure that alliteration is a good way to help us remember them in the heat (or dullness) of the moment of our everyday lives.

Part Two:
The Five C's

1. Concentrate on the individual

Luke Wonneck here. I'm a PhD student with Dr. Johnson, and this is my second year with the Auntie Is In Podcast.

During my undergrad degree over a decade ago I did a study-abroad year in Sweden. I made some Swedish friends and one time I remember a couple of them asking me if Canada had issues with racism. I think this came up because there had recently been some anti-Islam demonstrations in southern Sweden that had made the news. My friends said that they were aware that racism was prevalent in the United States, but weren't as familiar with the Canadian context.

It took me a few moments to respond. I remember running through my memories of growing up in Calgary, trying to think of whether I'd ever seen anyone being racist. I couldn't think of anything, other than the occasional stereotype or joke about Indigenous people that I heard at school or soccer practice. So I told them "no": Other than these unfortunate but isolated incidents of anti-Indigenous sentiment, I didn't think that Canada really had issues with racism. As

a form of explanation, I also added that in Canada, you're usually surrounded by people with different cultural backgrounds. For example, growing up my friend group had included people who — or whose parents — had immigrated to Canada from China, Korea, Algeria, Cuba, and Mexico.

I've spent a fair bit of time reflecting on this response. And I've come to realize that its logic hinges on one crucial assumption: that racism is simply individual acts of prejudice. Because I hadn't seen too many of these kinds of acts, I had concluded that Canada wasn't really a racist place.

But the problem with this assumption is it misses the more systemic forms of racism in our society. In addition to individual acts of prejudice, racism also includes the way that Canada's Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program is structured to prevent its predominantly Latin American participants from gaining permanent residency here. The way that White settler forms of knowledge and logic are heard and understood within our legal systems while Indigenous ways of knowing are rendered mute. The way that Black and Indigenous people are disproportionately likely to live in areas of Canada that have hazardous levels of air and water pollution. The list goes on and on...

African American geographer Ruth Wilson Gilmore offers a definition of racism that can better encapsulate these various forms. In her book Golden Gulags (2007), Gilmore describes racism as, quote, "the state-sanctioned or extralegal production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerability to premature death" (p. 10). Now there's an academic mouthful, but my understanding is that it means that racism is everything society does to make specific groups of people more likely to die younger than they should.

Gilmore's definition also gives us clues about where to look for evidence of racism. In particular, it suggests that rather than focusing exclusively on individual acts of prejudice, we should consider the degree to which "group-differentiated vulnerability to premature death" is occurring in our society. In Canada, evidence for such vulnerability can be found in some of the stats that were mentioned earlier in this episode — stats that show how certain groups of people are more likely to be food insecure, experience poverty, suffer from preventable diseases, or have a lower life expectancy.

All this is to say, if someone asked me today whether Canada has issues with racism, I could easily find enough evidence to say "yes". Then, hopefully, we could start discussing the various forms of racism that exist here, and what we can do about them.

2. Cut Off the Present

Hello, my name is Sam. This is my second year on the podcast, and I'm in my fourth year of an honours degree in cellular and molecular biology. I grew up on the borders of Treaties Six and Seven, in the heart of Central Alberta.

The news is always on at my grandparents house, even though they hear the same stories morning and night. I very distinctly remember coming in from working in the yard one day not too long after reports began on the unmarked graves in Kamloops.

My grandma turned to me as I entered the living room and rhetorically said, "why can't they just get over it already?"

I stood there in silence for a long moment, contemplating my response. I muttered, "I don't know," before I turned and walked to the kitchen to grab a glass of lemonade.

From the other room, she continued her questioning, "why should I have to feel responsible for Residential Schools or have my tax dollars go into paying reparations. We never learned about it in school, we didn't even know it was happening."

I stalled, I was paralyzed as I ran through all of the ways I could possibly try to explain it to her. Try a different tactic that wouldn't end up with me feeling stupid and flustered for not being able to articulate myself. I've heard every trope, every stereotype come out of the mouths of my relatives, yet somehow I still struggle to counter them.

In this instance, my grandma relegated Indigenous experiences of colonialism to the past, a commonly used trope that creates the impression that these experiences are no longer relevant to contemporary society. This trope can also be observed in the all-too common rhetorical question: "how can we be guilty for the crimes of our ancestors?" Or, it can be found in former Prime Minister Stephen Harper's apology to Residential School victims, which, by expressing regret for quote, "a sad chapter in our history", he framed residential schools as a one-off historical anomaly that is over and done with (Dorrell, 2009, p. 32). Regardless of its specific form, this trope is used to evade settler accountability. It also has the effect of discounting Indigenous people who continue to express sadness, hurt, or anger about injustices as being resentful, vengeful, immature, or simply stuck in the past and unable to progress with the rest of quote, "modern" society. I won't pretend like I have some gotcha-style strategy to challenge all the ways that colonialism and Indigenous people are rel-

egated to the past. But recently I've been thinking how it might be helpful if I started to demand a bit more specificity whenever I hear the kinds of statements my grandma was making. For example, could I have asked my grandma *when* exactly Indigenous peoples should've "gotten over it"? *How much* mourning should Indigenous people be allowed to have? And perhaps, if the conversation broadened, another useful question could have been: when specifically did colonialism end exactly? Was it in the 1950's when the pass system was no longer enforced? Or in 1996 when the last residential school closed? How about in 2016, when Indigenous-led resistance resulted in the cancellation of the Northern Gateway pipeline?

Choosing a specific date here isn't easy because the reality is that colonialism has never ended — it just keeps shape-shifting into slightly different versions of itself. And the thing is, White settlers have been calling on Indigenous people to "get over it" for as long as they've been colonizing. Each time colonialism shape-shifts into something different, its former version becomes the benchmark that Indigenous people need to "get over".

Being a white settler, I was raised to be polite, maintain the status quo. It is always hardest to recognize the injustices that we are right in the thick of perpetuating, much less have the words and courage to explain them to other people. But it's something that I need to become better at, so that I can challenge any attempts to carve an innocent present away from an ongoing history of colonialism.

3. *Constrain Possibilities*

Hi; I'm Gio. I recently met a newcomer to Canada at a train station. She said that she had been staying at a shelter and was amazed at how ambulances would come if people needed help; where she was from, ambulances don't come to help you. She also commented on how "developed" it was here-look at this train, taking us places!

I didn't know what to say to someone who was describing being in a place where she felt like she was being cared for-I told her something like, "I'm glad that you've made it to a safer place." I don't think that this was the wrong thing to do. But I shouldn't have left it at that. I mean, I'm not trying to deny our blessings or diminish the importance of gratitude, but by having left the topic fixed on how lucky we are, I basically just reinforced the idea that seems to have been in her head, that Canada is better than her country.

I should have added that we're "developed" because we have stolen so much. The train is on stolen land, and I would argue that the trains' materials and labour are basically stolen under capitalism. And it might be remarkable to see a system where houseless people have a shelter to go to and are cared for by free ambulances, but it looks different when you see that the same system is creating houseless people and keeping them poor.

Notice that what I'm saying here is different from something like, "Canada also has its problems, but at least it's not as dangerous as other places"-- that's just another way of saying that Canada is better. I am trying to say that in order for Canada to be seen as "the better place", a bunch of things that we're doing have to be ignored. Our capitalism makes innocent the ways in which we exploit each other through work, and our settler colonialism makes claiming control over land the "right" way to do things. Somehow, both of these together make it just make sense for some people to own land and have poorer people give them money to have access to the basic human need of shelter. Like, I might feel like I'm doing my duty as a citizen to pay rent, and someday, I, too, hope to earn the right to take money from poorer people around me. I'm generalizing here, but my point is that this system is backward and dangerous and at the same time feels normal and even desired.

It bothers me that it has somehow taken me years to recognize that something as basic as having a place to live is done so poorly in my society , and further, that it's somehow the "smart thing to do" to become a landowner and keep the cycle going. Things like capitalism and settler colonialism make it seem like what *is* is what *should be*. They reason through things in a particular way to make sense out of their absurdity and cover up their faults. And the result is that they constrain possibilities for alternative ways of life — anything other than capitalism and colonialism is made invisible, impossible, savage, or undeveloped. This constraining power is clear to me at that train station encounter— it held me back from saying anything other than affirming Canada's superiority, even though at the same time I knew that I knew better.

4. *Classify Cultures*

Hi everyone, this is Kalias. This is my first year with the Auntie is In podcast, and I just finished my Bachelors degree in psychology. My family and I are immigrants from Western Europe. I've spent almost my entire life in Treaty Seven territory, without knowing what it was first called or who walked it before I did. For a long time, I chose not to wonder about that.

An older relative of mine once tried to argue with me that cultures before colonization were primitive, and that colonialism essentially did them a favour. At the time, I didn't recognize that calling Indigenous people "primitive" was an ancient, well-recycled talking-point that had already been efficiently torn to shreds by scholars around the world. But I understood that it was an insult and that it wasn't true, even if I didn't know why. So I tried to argue.

I don't remember what I said to him. But I remember the sinking feeling as my arguments failed. I came to what I thought was the only logical conclusion; that he was right, somehow. His points made sense, and mine didn't. In some technical way, he was right, though I still felt the resistance that came with knowing he wasn't and couldn't be. I knew that what he'd said was wrong, and rude, and racist. So how could he be right? Why did he make sense?

Over time, I've realized that my relative used the word "primitive" in two ways; to suggest that Indigenous peoples were not technologically sophisticated, and to impart a value judgement on their intelligence and their worth. Breaking down his argument like this has made it easier for me to challenge. First, we can argue that Indigenous peoples were sophisticated. For example, the development of the settler agricultural practice in North America was based on Indigenous agricultural knowledge, which was both gifted to and stolen by settlers (Ray, 2016, p. 239). Many North American Indigenous groups prescribed controlled forest fires to enhance the productivity of the ecosystems (Turner, 1999; Boutsalis et al., 2020). They did not have *less* technological advancement, as the idea of "primitive" would suggest. They had *different* technological advancement.

Second, the term "primitive" devalues the intelligence and worth of Indigenous people. This implicit value judgement is why I felt such resistance to my relative's arguments and why I was unable to articulate that resistance. Because the insult is implied, not stated. In *Decolonizing Methodologies*, Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2001) talks about how a characteristic of "primitive" peoples is the inability to use their minds to create, imagine or produce anything of value (p. 25). It doubts people's abilities to partake in something fundamentally human, and therefore doubts their humanity. To counter this value judgement, we should question the implicit ranking system being used. Why should technological sophistication — and not, for example, emotional intelligence, land stewardship, kindness towards others, or spiritual connectedness — be considered the marker of a civilized people? More fundamentally, we should also question the desire to create a universal ranking system for different cultures in the first place. Where does that desire come from? Can we live with, respect, and care

for others instead of always rushing to classify them?

Ultimately, my relative was dehumanizing modern-day Indigenous peoples based on an imagined version of how Indigenous peoples existed pre-contact. When we dehumanize people, it makes it easier to rationalize colonizing them. It makes it seem like they have been — and can be — *brought* or *gifted* civility and therefore, humanity. And that is ultimately what my relative's goal was; to justify colonization and settler presence on this land, by suggesting it benefits the people who were here before us.

5. *Condemn the Oppressed*

I'm Drake Worth, a third-year sociology major with an eight-year tenure in the Canadian Forces, now embarking on my first year with the Auntie Is In Podcast. Throughout my journey, I've come to recognize the subtle yet pervasive presence of unchallenged narratives within myself, despite being raised in what I like to think is an open-minded family. One such narrative I wish to highlight is the misinformed belief that issues I saw on the news about Indigenous communities were the responsibility of the communities themselves. I don't think I ever explicitly shared this belief out loud. But having it in the background allowed me to be a passive bystander to casual racism — overhearing derogatory remarks or seeing disrespectful imitations without questioning or confronting these actions. It allowed me to feel comfortable in my inaction — that Canada was doing all it could do to address the issues I was seeing, and there was certainly nothing I could do that would make a difference.

My turning point in challenging this belief came with a personal setback in 2018. This setback forced me to climb an ever-growing mountain of change in my life. Let me tell you, it was one of the hardest things I've ever done. My journey through the federal disability system was faced with systematic challenges and outright discrimination. As if managing my physical and mental health wasn't hard enough, now I have to face an intricate bureaucracy that feels like it works against me. The struggle for acknowledgment and support within the system provided me with a deeper understanding of the relentless barriers Indigenous peoples encounter. I began to recognize that these barriers were rooted not in a failure to recover from past harms but in an ongoing fight for basic rights and recognition within structures that are not designed to support their needs — sometimes quite intentionally.

Having this reflection allowed me to see the truth and explicitly tell myself I was wrong about issues in Indigenous communities being the responsibility

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of the communities alone. Shit, eh, reflecting wasn't easy and still isn't, but it's necessary. Instead, on or off reserve, uplifting and creating space for Indigenous voices is every Canadian's responsibility. This podcast is much more than entertainment. It is a revitalization and restoration of Indigenous ways of living, which has affected my life in insurmountable ways, helping me become a better husband, father and scholar by changing and expanding my perspectives of the world.

If I could go back in time, I would encourage myself to challenge these narratives earlier and challenge other's perspectives as well. My momma raised me to make myself heard, but it never occurred to me to lift up and make space for other voices. Now I realize that it is the responsibility of all Canadian citizens to right the wrongs — of our ancestors *and* of our current society.

Part Three:
Conclusion

When we do not know the truth, it becomes increasingly difficult to untangle the lies, misinformation, and confusion that extends out of racialized beliefs and assumptions about different peoples. It can be problematic when you're confronted with the truth and become all the more uncertain about what you've been told, or you can go about your business and never really change your views.

The five C's are important for listeners to understand the complexities of narrative tropes and how this spreads so much faster than one can control. By concentrating on individuals you make sure that you are not lumping the entire race of people together. When you realize that colonization is not a past or history but actually still a living reality, it's really hard to realize it in the present. This is because rather than put us in the past, it shows our humanity and that we are very much alive. Constraining possibilities is an integral part of realizing the modernization theory that settlers brought modernity and development to Indigenous Peoples and makes it appear as if we had nothing to give in return (I mean, I'm not talking in regards to our lives and land), when in reality we could give or offer knowledge, intelligence, or technology and science in return. This leads into the concept of classifying that still makes it seem like we are incapable. It's almost as if I, myself, cannot manage a large scale research team that researches Indigenous history - I mean I do. But that too shows us how our society would rather condemn me because I'm Indigenous rather than see my expertise in various fields I am trained in.

All together the 5 C's are the lived experiences of Indigenous Peoples that ensures our world and the settler society we find ourselves within are built onto a questionable foundation which has cracks that eventually will not support these tropes any longer. For listeners, this episode is not to make you feel terrible but to reflect on the misinformation that has been given to you and to question the intent in a critical and reflective manner that allows you to see the 5 C's — not to condemn but to change oneself for the better. Change is often mistaken for shame because it involves being uncomfortable, but really this is growth. And this growth is needed to tackle the narrative tropes that exist in this settler colonial society, that has built itself on the dehumanization of Indigenous People. We can simply no longer tolerate this.

Keywords: *White supremacy, Racism, Discrimination, Self Reflection, Narrative Tropes*

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Season 2, Episode 8

"In their own time/space"

Sam Dancey and Paulina Johnson

Synopsis: The mind in Nêhiyawak teachings is vast and all-encompassing; because it is, there are realities we do not understand or yet know about. The mind can shield us from danger and harm, force us to forget, and allow us to experience the world differently through our senses. All that we know as Indigenous peoples is to learn to respect those "in their own time/space" as we examine how the world is not the same for everyone, and because of this, we must look to those and learn from them because there is still much to learn especially about neurodivergence and what is a "disability."

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Part One:
For Henry George

My father's favourite cousin was late Henry George—the son of nokom, *grandmother,* Cecilia Saddleback. Henry George was beloved for his kindness and gentleness. He saw the world differently than we did. My father's greatest memories were sitting with Henry George and talking about what he liked to do. My father taught us when we were younger that it was our duty to make sure that when our friends made fun of those different from us, it was our responsibility to stand up for them. Late Henry George had the mental development of a child in a grown man's body, but I can still remember how happy he would be when he saw my father as a child—the innocence filled with love and respect. When we start to understand cognitive development, disability, and neurodivergence from an Indigenous perspective, we begin to see how vastly different our world is and what the Western world could learn from us regarding health and wellbeing.

For instance, the Māori word takiwātanga "*in their own time/space*" and is used to refer to autism. This word is used specifically to avoid deficit-centred language and embrace language that is self-affirming, easily understood and strength-based (Education Gazette, 2023). The Māori worldview and this very term build and maintain space for autistic individuals to interact with the world in the way they naturally would, the way which suits their differences. These differences are not something to be overcome so that autistic people can behave and function in a specific way. Instead, autistic people live on their own spectrum of functioning, in their own time and space, where what is considered "normal" is based on what is typical for a specific individual. For my community, those with autism are gifts from Creator, sent to us so that we can learn from them.

This episode is dedicated to the late Henry George, and all those who are gifts from Creator. [2:40 - 2:43 Wherever the disabilities or differences may be].

Part Two:
The Medicine Chest

A colonial view of health sees it as an absence of illness or injury (Cambridge University Press, n.d.). "Health," by this definition, is simply a state of lacking malady. However, more comprehensive definitions have become more popular, often including physical, mental and social well-being, creating a notion of

health as a process rather than a static state. Despite this broader definition, it is still limited in scope and is biased to Western empirical notions of health.

When Treaty 6 was created between our people, the British Crown, and Creator, the signatories made an effort to ensure current and future generations were cared for (Venne, 1997). The Medicine Chest Clause was intended to ensure that those under the Treaty had access to universal health care and wouldn't suffer from the diseases brought by settlers. This agreement did not mean that traditional Indigenous medicine or health care were given to the settlers in return. Instead, this sacred gift from Creator was to be protected.

Treaty includes not only Western ideas of physical health but also the more all-encompassing Nêhiyaw concept of "health." Nêhiyawêwin resists direct translation of the English word "health," or any word, really–Nêhiyawêwin has been described as a "polysynthetic" language, where one Nêhiyawêwin word encapsulates ideas that other languages like English might need sentences to explain (Gaudet & Chilton, 2018, p. 23). The word miyo-pimâtisowin has been used in the context of health. Miyo-pimâtisowin is "the good life" (Johnson et al., 2023. p. 24). But it also evokes a specific understanding of health. Miyo has to do with "good," and pimâtisowin has to do with walking through life. It is often paired with the verb for "seeking", implying a process rather than some attainable goal to "be healthy" (or failure, to "be unhealthy") (Gaudet & Chilton, 2018). Using miyo-pimâtisowin discussing health-related things reminds us that health is not limited to the biological or looking for a cure. Such teachings can only be seen in Anishinaabe culture, as told by Nicole Ineese-Nash, through the quote: "honouring oneself, one's relations, and all of creation" (Ineese-Nash, 2020, p.3).

Most Western definitions of health do not include any spirituality (Castellano, 2018). There is no one pan-Indigenous definition of wellness, but there are general overlaps in the holistic and intentional nature (Van Uchelen, 1997). Ultimately, health will look different for each individual, but we are all just trying to live the good life.

Part Three:
Medicine Wheel

While Canada's health care system focuses on physical and mental well-being, it fails to account for our emotional or spiritual well-being. This is a crit-

ical error because, as Nêhiyawak—*the four-spirit people*—our lives' physical and mental aspects must be harmonious with the emotional and spiritual. This unrecognized harmony is necessary for our overall health. This is a fundamental tenet of one of our most powerful teachers: the Medicine Wheel. So, what does it mean when our healthcare system only focuses on two of the four aspects of our health? It means Canada's healthcare system is missing half of the Medicine Wheel.

While the Medicine Wheel is specific to Turtle Island, its teachings are universally understood through our unique connections to land and shared experiences of colonialism (Chartrand, 1999; Turner & Simpson, 2008). The Medicine Wheel, as taught by Mohawk scholar Louis Montour, is a visual representation of the four dimensions of well-being. These are the spiritual, emotional, physical and intellectual quadrants, each of which must be harmonious [6:29 with each other] (Montour, 2000). While Montour is Mohawk, the Medicine Wheel can be found across many Turtle Island cultures as it was borne from fundamental truths that can be found across groups of people, including caring, honesty, humility, kindness, respect, sharing and trust (2000). There are four quadrants, just as there are four directions, four seasons, and four elements of the earth (Whiskeyjack, n.d.).

The Medicine Wheel can be understood and perceived in multiple ways. That's the beauty of it, and each person can see what they need in the teaching. Regardless of how an individual interprets the Medicine Wheel, there is always an underpinning of interconnectedness. A physical sickness has an impact on the emotional, mental and spiritual dimensions of a person. Similarly, a spiritual disturbance will affect a person's emotional, physical, and mental quadrants. Just as people are connected to each other and the land, the four elements in a person are connected to each other. That is, they all depend on each other for balance.

With that understanding, we can see how Indigenous health and well-being aren't just the absence of malady. Indigenous people cannot be "fixed" by a Western understanding of health that only understands a part of the Medicine Wheel. Healing rests in the hands of people who hold knowledge. What you witness on the land and in life provides remedies and an ability to share with those who need it (Deloria & Wildcat, 2001). Colonial systems need to shift away from trying to find "cures"; they are not the ones who can restore balance to the Wheel. Instead, our communities need support to facilitate reconnection with ourselves, each other, our ancestors, and our lands.

Part Four:
Disability and difference

In colonial socio-medical frameworks, the disadvantages and differences of disabilities are frequently the focus of conversation and research, especially in Indigenous communities (Yellowhorse, 2023). When researching this episode, our search results often were flooded with reports on health disparities and rates of disability rather than how Indigenous people view health. Just as Nêhiyawêwin has no direct word for health, there is also no word for disability. The label of disability itself is a colonial construct. In reality, people are disadvantaged due to institutions and structures, not their bodies or minds (Ineese-Nash, 2020). Rather than seeing what would be called a disability, Nêhiyawak views people with 'disabilities' as a gift of difference, which comes with unique ways of viewing and experiencing the world (Roberts, 2022). For example, people living without sight experience a heightening in other senses, resulting in an alternative perspective of life. The same is true for those of their own time. For example, some autistic people find things like eye contact and small talk challenging, but they have abilities in other areas that are exceptional, such as pattern recognition and deep understanding of specific topics. This way of understanding values the diversity of all human experiences, reflecting an inclusive and holistic approach to disability and mental health.

In the colonial world, autism is a highly stigmatized diagnosis that often leaves people feeling like there is something wrong with them. But for the Nêhiyawak, they believe that a piece of autistic children is left in the spirit world when they are born, so when they are in the world, they are more spiritually connected than others. It allows them to see the world with different eyes. While they may miss some things everyone else sees, they see many things others miss.

More recently, Western academics have begun to see how viewing conditions like this as differences rather than disabilities is a more human-centred approach. The concept of neurodiversity was originally coined about autism, and has since expanded to include conditions like ADHD, anxiety disorders, epilepsy, PTSD, and other Neuro-developmental disabilities (Walker, 2024). This concept positions these variations as part of the natural diversity of the human condition and challenges the medical model of disability by identifying social barriers as the primary issues. Among these social barriers is the lack of culturally appropriate services in many rural communities and reserves. The need for formal diagnosis and medical pathology to access resources can lead to misdiagnosis of people or not getting the right support [10:43 that they actually] need (Forming the Circle, 2023; Ineese-Nash, 2020). Disability also has been seen as

an individual moral failing in colonial contexts; this is in direct contradiction to the Indigenous ideology that sees what happens to one member of the community impacts all other members. A lack of culturally appropriate resources creates isolation in communities when this should be an occasion to provide a person with more support from the community.

As a result of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's calls to action, some government bodies have begun to address the need for culturally relevant services. Despite these initiatives, discriminatory laws persist and marginalize Indigenous communities, perpetuating the cycle of colonialism. Institutions are slow to change, so it becomes the responsibility of Canadians to recognize the distinct ways that people interact with the world around them.

Although neurodivergent Indigenous peoples may face hardship, they have expressed the importance of their relationships with others, the ability to access Traditional Knowledge, recognizing their strengths, encouraging self-determination, and connecting to culture (Forming The Circle, 2023). Where colonial society may see deficits, Indigenous perspectives see strength. By emphasizing capabilities instead of limitations, communities can be uplifted by their resilience and strength, allowing them to shine (Forming The Circle, 2023; Graham & Martin, 2016). Embracing diversity allows for cultivating an inclusive environment that creates space that meets everyone's needs. Everyone has different experiences and abilities, and those all have value (Forming The Circle, 2023).

Part Five:
How to heal

Some people blame us for the disparities we face. Tell us it is our choices that have gotten us here. Or that because we are Indigenous, we are evolutionarily weaker, but we are not. Colonialism has tried to eliminate us, but we are still here. They tried to take our traditional healing practices away, but our medicines have persisted. We are not fit for the world you forced us into, yet we fight, we adapt, and we survive.

If we had been allowed to continue our ways, and if people all had an Indigenous worldview, we would be able to have honest conversations about what is affecting us. We would not be shamed or threatened into silence. For Nêhiyawak, our relationships are one of the most critical aspects of health; how we interact is integral to our overall well-being (Graham and Martin, 2016). When trauma happens to one person in our family, we all feel it. It is not just the water that connects grandmother to daughter to grandchild, it is much larger than

that. It is the connection between everyone in our communities, our ancestors, those who have not come, and the land. We are all connected, so we cannot heal alone.

Part of being human is experiencing the full range of emotions we are capable of experiencing, and no matter that feeling it is important not to suppress it, but to acknowledge it, to *feel* it. When we are babies, we learn to laugh before we learn to walk, speak, or recognize ourselves in the mirror. It is a cliche to say that laughter is the best medicine, but in my experience, it is true. If you have heard me lecture, you know you would likely heard me make jokes about very serious subjects; that is how I know how to cope. [13:48 It is also how I related to the content itself]. It is through talking, crying and laughing that we get through life.

We have to talk about things to process them. Part of the nature of traumatic events is that they "loop" or get "stuck" as the brain continues to try to make sense of the event long after it has elapsed (Smith, n.d.). One way to get it "unstuck" is through expression, using art, music, writing it down, or talking through it. Just like any physical injury, if trauma and pain go unacknowledged, symptoms will fester and grow more intense.

A crucial part of healing is the need for Indigenous peoples to be able to express ourselves through our own cultures, families, and ancestors. Our ceremonies exist as a diverse range of art forms and practices which can and I quote, "tap into the physical, cultural, emotional and spiritual needs of the community" (Braganza, 2018, p. 8). Ceremony is an expression of feeling on an individual and community level, allowing us to connect with the spirit world, each other and with ourselves (Graham and Martin, 2016). Connection around the Medicine Wheel like this allows for healing, and these healing traditions are place-based, developed and maintained across generations living across the land. As such, there are natural variations between communities - there is no one standardized way for all Indigenous peoples to heal. Colonial health systems need to move away from standardization and instead understand the importance of self-determination in the process of healing.

Part Six:
Conclusion

The world that we know is only starting to realize the depth of knowledge in Indigenous health and healing. Unfortunately, when we consider this reality, I cannot help but think about all those that never got the chance to show their

gifts or the varieties of views that could better inform our world rather than be seen as a deficit or something to avoid or stigmatized. While there is much to think about and consider, we find in Indigenous knowledge and tradition that understanding the mental capacity of ourselves needs to be embraced with compassion, kindness, and patience, such as the Maori and Nêhiyawak views of neurodivergence of individuals who were made by Creator to fulfil their roles within our societies and who have *always* had a place.

Research Assistant(s): Kalias Bijman, Marc Jr. Doire, Jude McNaughton, Giovanni Ursella, Gigi Kirezi Wakana, and Drake Worth

Keywords: *Health, Well-Being, Mental Health, Autism, Disability, Neurodivergence, Healing, Medicine Wheel*

Glossary

Nêhiyawak - four spirit people
Nêhiyawêwin - language of the four spirit people (*Plains Cree*)
Nokom - grandmother
Miyo-pimâtisowin - the good life
Takiwātanga - in their own time/space (Māori)

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Season 2, Episode 9

The Spirit World

Paulina Johnson

Synopsis: The Spirit World for the Nêhiyawak is not the final journey; it is a return home – to our ancestors and those not yet here in the physical world. As we come to understand the spirit world and the journey home, Dr. Johnson reflects on the traditions and teachings of her people as she shares that death is not the end. It is only a transition to being a good ancestor.

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Part One:
From the Spirit World

When we enter the physical world, we are welcomed into our new journey surrounded by kinship and connection. Many newborns meet their parents but also their aunts, nôhkomwak, grandmothers, and câpans, great grandmothers. The family's women come to meet their newest member, but they also come to care for the mother, who will need help as they bond with their child. Notably, at this time, a newborn baby is the closest a human being will ever get to Creator (Kîsikâwapiwisk, personal communication in McAdam, 2015, p. 32). Nihtâwikiwin, birth, is a sacred and holy blessing for our women and Nation, as a child is:

> *"To learn one's cultural beliefs and way of living is not only a line to life, but all the way a person is to feel, see, think, and behave. Each child at birth is destined to be, or to do, something for his people. In order to achieve what he [or she] is destined to be, the child is taught and trained by observation and by living his cultural ways [the Elders use the phrase 'his native ways of life']." (Swampy, 1981, p. 28)*

Therefore, the womb is a sacred place and is our first cleansing or purification into the physical realm at birth (Johnson, 2017, p. 1112). All men, except the father, are not allowed to carry the baby until the otisiy, the belly button, has fallen off. When the Witâhâwasiwin, Naming Ceremony, occurs, "A feast would be held to honour a child with a name" (Swampy, 1981, p. 39). Four days before the naming ceremony, the grandparents will place an item of significance with the child's otisiy. The intent is to give the child skills or expertise with the item placed with the belly button, such as the hope for a skilled hunter or drum maker for males or as a good beader or thread maker for females. On the fourth day, the item and the belly button will be buried, and this burial is to make sure that the child is grounded in their land and community (Johnson, 2017, pp. 112-113).

Understanding new life, family, and belonging is essential to understanding how the Nêhiyawak view the world and their obligations and responsibilities to each other. The kinship dynamic is rooted in connection to all of Creation and, importantly, oneself.

Part Two:
Life Stages

Elder Mary Lee from Pelican Lake, Saskatchewan, shares that a Nêhiyaw person has four spirits. The emotional, mental, spiritual and physical spirits of

one's life are referred to as the Four Aspects of Self, and when they come together to be whole, they will represent the four parts of one's being (Four Directions, 2012). Within these Four Aspects of Self lies the teachings of the Medicine Wheel and the connections to life stages. The East represents children, the South represents Youth, the West represents adulthood, and the North represents elderhood. The East holds the spirits that will enter this physical world; therefore, the spiritual connection for newborns who carry the soul flame from Creator holds excellent reverence. The four parts must work in balance, but within the center of the medicine wheel is a fire.

Creator gifts this fire and connects to you as an individual, and where you must become aware of yourself. You take care of yourself first as you look outward. The Medicine Wheel represents our people's life journey. The Medicine Wheel teaches us how life comes abundantly bright while rising in the East but fades away as it moves into the North (Four Directions, 2012). What we do during our journey is our choice, but each life stage will come with different roles, guidance, and knowledge needed. One crucial teaching given by Elder Lee is never to forget the spirit. Spirit brought us here, and we must remember where we came from and the gifts given to us as human beings (Four Directions, 2012).

When the journey as older people comes to us, we are taught that the Old People are in the mental part of their journey, where they get to reflect and share the knowledge they have learned over their lived experiences and time on their journey in the physical world. However, when an Old Person is to return home, we are told that they will start to forget their adulthood and elderhood but remember their childhood so vividly. Where they begin to act like children and need help as children do. The Old Person gets to be a newborn one more time, and we adore these individuals and why they share the same name as their great-grandchildren as câpan. They remember how to continue on their next journey back home, the same route they took to get here. They return to being children one more time.

And for many of my family and community, when they return home, they are given the love and care they deserve, which we have often been denied here in this world because of colonization.

Part Three:
To the Spirit World

When we begin our journey to the spirit world as we transition from the physical world back home, our family takes care of us one last time. They mourn for

us for four days until it is time for us to join our ancestors. They will prepare a feast ceremony on the last day with our ceremonial foods, dishes, and treats we enjoyed on this earth. We will be sent on our journey and sung home when the sun is at its highest in the sky. We will be sent with prayers of admiration and gratitude so that we know that we were loved and to ensure that we continue on our journey. Our family will hold four years of ceremony for us as we journey through the spirit world. This is because four years in the physical world is equivalent to four days in the spirit world. Therefore, memorials and feasts will ensure we continue. Our family will not speak our names or show our photos for the first year because we will be tempted to return. Our family is reminded that our journey here on earth has ended, not our spirit though. They are told not to cry for us and miss us too much because that will make us wait around and make sure that that person is cared for before we continue. Our late relatives will be remembered a year later, and we will hear their laughs but know that they will be okay. Once they return home, they will remember the life that they had here and will reach their final journey, becoming an ancestor who has laid down their tobacco, offered their hopes and prayers, loved and lost, and, importantly, continued the teachings of those who first gifted them to us.

Part Four:
Journey Home

The journey home is one where we grieve but importantly, celebrate the life that has been lived. Within the Nêhiyawak way of life, we follow customs and traditions to ensure our family and friends are cared for. It is common for the physical body to be displayed to allow relatives to connect with the deceased before they are buried (Blair, 1995). This is because "it is important for people to see who is being buried and to know where the remains are going to be" (Blair, 1995, p. 515). It also demonstrates our respect to the body that has housed their spirit and who will return to the land that has given us so much.

When an individual or a community grieves, it is a journey that lasts for months but no more than a year. We are taught that when we transition into the spirit world, we can hear thoughts and feel the pain of those closest to us and rather than continue on our journey, we would return to ensure that our loved ones do not hurt. We are taught that children are also not to attend funerals or wakes because they are so innocent and know the way back to the spirit world that they will willingly take the person who has passed on.

Grief and despair run rampant when the pain of losing a loved one is carried in everything you do. It feels like you must "learn how to navigate this grief.

This mourning… will not necessarily have a recognizable end. We have lost a shared future - a future of family and life events, weddings, births, celebrations, accomplishments" (Gladue, 2008, p. 207). When grieving the loss of a relative, People turn to cultural traditions and communal efforts to find solace. This is because we are temporarily unable to process our emotions rationally and can find refuge in cultural traditions (Wahpasiw, 2017).

A giveaway ceremony, for instance, allows us to distribute personal belongings and property. This is because "the possessions of a dead person always reminded the relatives of their loss and so unnecessarily protracted the mourning period" (Hackett, 2005, p. 512). Often, families may place items with the physical body as it is believed that these objects, such as tools, tobacco or clothing, would be useful in the spirit world (Hackett, 2005).

Part Five:
Ancestor Dreams

My People do not like to talk about death, and this is because of our belief that what we put out there can become a reality. Louise Halfe (1989) shares in "The Circle: Death and Dying from a Native Perspective" stories of her father and the importance of one day of life:

> *"I watched my father's daily rituals with the sweet grass. In the morning he'd burn it and pray to God and all of His Creation. He would thank Him for sleeping through one more night and for all His numerous blessings and gifts, and of course would ask for guidance in the care of his family. In the evening the pattern repeated itself. I did not realize then the significance of living one day at a time with purpose, grateful for life's blessings, in the knowledge that it could all end abruptly." (p. 37)*

This understanding of gratitude is integral to understanding the transition to the spirit world, the power of life, and how everything moves in a circle. It shows us that death should not be feared but rather understood in a different sense than what the Western world tells us to think. Halfe (1989) continues to write:

> *"I have felt and examined my own feelings as I bade my final farewell. I have shared the feeling of other community members in their grief. We've talked during the time of grief very carefully, respectfully and non-judgmentally. We've watched one another wail even though no sounds could be heard. We have listened to the elders talk to us of mutual support and strength, of*

> *the need to re-examine our lives, and the value and purpose of it all. Often the elders will use the life of the deceased - whether good or bad - as an example. Cigarettes are passed around and we smoke one last time to pay respect to our loved ones. Elders, men, women and children sit in circles and exchange tales of old days of laughter, of tears and sadness. At wakes, laughter is acceptable, for it is a strong healing medicine. It lifts the spirit, it releases tension, it heals the soul. We are also allowed to cry. We hold, stroke and support one another in our grief. (It has been said that tears are the baptism of our soul, and hence, a rebirth of the spirit.) Without any form of community delegation events quietly take place. Moccasins are placed on the deceased which someone has beaded with loving care. Men hunt for fresh meat. The boys chop and haul wood and provide fresh water. The little girls sweep the floors, wipe off the tables and pick up the dirty dishes. The women are always cooking to keep the abundant food always available. Strangers, friends and relatives trickle in and out. There is always someone present all night long to stay with the deceased." (p. 38)*

When someone passes, "again the death and grief is shared communally…" (Halfe, 1989, p. 38), because it is. This is a community coming together to grieve, feel, and say goodbye to the person they all knew. Soon, a year will pass, and families may put on a round dance and feed their relative who is still on their journey to become an ancestor. This is the circle of life that Halfe (1989) is referring to, where:

> *"One can find honour in the circle of prayer, dance, music, personhood, birth and death. Symbolic in my culture are the circular teepee, sweat-lodge, sun-dance, drum, and pipe: these signify the continuation of life, the vastness and complexity of infinity. The movement of the seasons, the sun, the moon, the food web, they are all interdependent and circular." (p. 37)*

Where time and existence is not final. It is simply a way where we learn to walk each other home to immortality. To be an immortal auntie…. I wonder how loud the spirit world may get on a good night? I wonder how many uncles' hearts have been broken?

Death comes for us all, and we as Indigenous People are not accepting of death, but statistically, we know it all too well. Moreover, while I have been taught not to think about the spirit world and ensure that I continue living, I think about those who are in their grief, and I hope my People's beliefs help you in any way they can. Remember, we do not have "goodbye" in Nêhiyawewin; simply, "see you later," êkosi.

Research Assistant(s): Jessica Morrison and Drake Worth

Keywords: *Spirit World, Birth, Death, Life Stages, Êkosi*

Glossary

Câpans - Great grandmothers
Êkosi - See you later
Nôhkomwak- My grandmothers
Nêhiyawak - Four-Spirit People
Nêhiyawewin - The Four-Spirit Language
Nihtâwikiwin - Birth
Otisiy - belly button
Witâhâwasiwin - Naming Ceremony

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Season 2, Episode 10

Indigenous Feminisms

Marieliv Flores Villalobos, Giovanni Ursella, and Paulina Johnson

Synopsis: The colonial world that Indigenous womxn find themselves in is one riddled with what we should represent but not what we are truly capable of. In this episode, we present Indigenous feminisms for a transformative world where Indigenous womxn need to know they do not have to forgive anyone. Their existence is a resurgence against the harms we know but to embrace and forgive themselves. Dr. Johnson sets aside the weight of the expectations and shares who she rightfully is without compromise or hesitation.

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Part One:
Chaos Theory

Am I chaos,

When I see injustice and speak up against it,

Or am I chaos,

When you start to understand that everything that I am built of is as divine as my ancestors and generations you attack,

Am I chaos,

When I don't think how you think I should think or act how you think I should act,

Am I chaos,

because you've never seen a woman of my power and grace articulate matters that you've never actually ever had to contemplate,

my chaos apparently to you is just my existence…

Where my existence elicits fear, not power,

My existence is not meant to be silenced when I am meant to speak back,

My existence does not allow the whispers of what deficit I should embody come into my mind,

My existence has been a way for you to pretend it is in the service of care but really it is just control.

Have you not learned yet?

That my chaos and existence question your whole world?

My chaos and existence are not of your concern,

Because I am here to create a new paradigm,

a new world.

I am here to birth a new generation in my words and wisdom,

To shelter those after me,

To acknowledge the beauty in my voice as I challenge colonial philosophies,

To embrace the knowledge shared with me in dreams,

To watch the teachings layered in the setting of the sky,

To hold on to those who are told they are "too much,"

When all we ask is for humanity.

No, I am not chaos.

I am balance ensuring you that you know I am here.

I am balance for all the wrongs you forget.

I am balance because the universe carried within me does not accept any less.

So why would I let you decide what I represent?

When you have been destruction and I liberation.

I am made from the sweetness of berries,

of the softness of cedar,

of the strength of braided sweetgrass,

of the purity of sage,

of the ambers of tobacco,

and of the nobility of the stars.

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It is not me who is chaos,

Because I am sent by Creator.

Taught by Elder Brother.

Shaped by the Elements.

Watched by the Animal and Plant Nations.

And I have existed longer than your time has ever understood.

I will be here in the end,

For all eternity,

For every Nêhiyaw woman,

Till you finally feel me on your lips when you say,

"I was wrong,"

And mean it.

Part Two:
On resurgence and liberation

To understand chaos theory, we need to only look at balance. When injustice or inequality are occurring, chaos theory brings forward the notion that the universe in all its capacity will restore the imbalance and while many may think it is chaos, it is actually a settling of the dust that has been working slowly and slowly away from the balance of life and creation. We can also talk about the butterfly effect, which is subtle. Chaos is not a massive wave of radical change. All the opposite, it is a process of "small-scale adjustments and connections that are imperceptible in a time slice, but are, cumulatively and over time, momentously dynamic" (Garry et al., 2017, p. 374). This kind of chaos represents a non-linear movement. It is the driving force of evolution. In other words, my chaos based on my existence as an Indigenous woman is the fire that encourages me to remain true to myself even though society keeps trying to pigeonhole me into stereotypes or take advantage of what I represent.

Chaos is embodied in my person, which allows me to find creative solutions to settler colonialism and to imagine non-oppressive relationships and realities for my community (Garry et al., 2017). Thanks to Chaos, we are constantly creating our futures with unpredictable realities that reject formalized procedures of suppression (Garry et al., 2017)—all the while allowing me to exist in a world that is not made for me, with subtle changes along the way.

It has been proven that Indigenous women are among the most marginalized in today's colonized settler society. They do, however, play a vital role in resistance against colonialism. Navigating this paradox in a settler's world is shown to be quite difficult. Before colonization, Indigenous women were warriors, fighting alongside the men. They were healers, spiritual leaders, advisors and politicians (Stewart-Harawira, 2007). [6:25 - 6:34 In our present society, however, Indigenous women face specific challenges to even have a place in academia, become policy-makers, and community activists]. They are, and I quote, "the two wings of one bird and that bird is the knowledge of the interconnectedness of Everything" (Stewart-Harawira, 2007, p. 2). Only through the decolonization of Indigenous women can Indigenous communities truly be who they have always been and be liberated from the heteropatriarchy and re-establish their connections to their original roles.

Within the Anishinaabeg perspective, resistance comes from a collection of collectives where individuals represent their networks. Each relationship contributes significantly to their communities, so when a person or a being is hurt, the system is out of balance. The pain and consequences are not only the individual's struggle but their entire relationships' (Simpson, 2017). The Indigenous intelligence systems work differently. The knowledge of how to build resistance comes from their land, language, protocols, and culture. This means that this kind of understanding of collective and resistance is not something that non-Indigenous People can learn from reading academic papers or books. It is an embodiment of creation itself, an elixir of knowledge and [7:35 - 7:38 you are only given a drop that touches your tongue. It's not going to be enough].

Our resurgence practices include [7:44 - 7:51 not only the personal but the collective measures, and this includes features of the language, homeland, ceremonial cycles, and sacred living histories]. Actions like prayers, speaking Indigenous languages, and following protocols are daily acts of renewal that reinforce identity. In addition, recognition means affirming the presence and light in each other to nurture relationships. This is especially true in the case of Indigenous women, who experience love as the force that informs their refusal and resurgence decisions. Love is anything but what the English tells you. It is passion

met with care and safety, but importantly, liberation and transformation, Sâkihitowin is anything but just *love*; it is a connection to the universe felt in waves of liberation and freedom. But it's not that simple when, because of their positions in the community, Indigenous womxn are made targets of colonial violence (Flowers, 2015).

Unfortunately, after trying so hard to exist, succeed, or even guide settlers into Indigenous ways of knowing, Indigenous People are still getting hurt, silenced, exhausted or denied proper respect. Under that scenario, their refusal creates a space for resistance, guided by the desire to move towards new resurgent forms of living (Wrightson, 2020). Indigenous People have been imagining and pursuing their visions of a better future, rather than *just* dismantling the present. In this creation of the future, solidarity with others plays an important role, as Indigenous Peoples do not want to build a reality grounded on a colonial relationship (Wrightson, 2020).

I am trying really hard to build a resurgence within academia. It is through my focus on relationship-based work with colleagues and students that we build a protection zone for caring and listening to each other. This is my ultimate foundation of resurgence: to connect with people, allowing us to experience happiness, fear, hope, and disappointment in the academic setting instead of blocking our feelings, [9:46 - 9:52 or even suppressing them, or in my experiences, never actually ever talking about them]. But I also know that this makes me a target of white and colonial violence. I represent a threat to hegemonic institutions, not just because I am Indigenous, but because I am Indigenous and I am a woman. Take, for instance, the multitude of emails I've received [10:08 - 10:11 back in February. These are from individuals] calling me names to tell me how to feel, especially white men. [10:15 - 10:35 I don't know about you, but a white male probably is never going to experience the world as an Indigenous female. But they were really trying to tell me to shut my mouth and educate myself on Indigenous and settler relations. As if I haven't done that in the last 15 years. But what do I know, right? They have Wikipedia and Facebook] I simply said that two societies need to have important discussions regarding the history of colonialism in Canada. [10:45 - 11:09 And I want to make it very clear that Canada does, in fact, have a history of colonialism. I don't know about you, but I think that's why Forts have a very important role in Canadian history as colonial bodies. But as I said, my education and expertise is often... challenged] But these individuals, they only heard what they wanted to hear, [11:14 - 11:16 or well, where their intelligence can even get them, anyways,] which is their own uninformed voice, [11-20 - 11:34 playing in their head. What a shame. But that's the thing, many people don't like to get uncomfortable when they need to learn.

I have been uncomfortable my whole life. Oh, privilege. What a joy.]

Part Three:
Womxn

This conversation doesn't focus on just "women," just as decolonization is not limited to Indigenous matters, and feminism is not limited to women. I'm going to look at relationships between feminism and masculinities and build a notion of "womxn" with an "x", [12:04 - 12:17 meaning w-o-m-x-n, and this is to look beyond the female. Especially two spirit and queer women who aren't often acknowledge in feminism and literature]

Kyle Mays (2018), who is Saginaw Chippewa, looks at a side of Indigenous feminism that is not tied exclusively to women. Mays sees Indigenous feminism as a caring perspective that grows out of the people and the place that raises you. It is learned from women, and Mays specifically also lists "trans people, and people of all genders" as its teachers (2018, p. 69). In this way, anyone, [12:44 - 12:46 including who we identify as] men, can take up Indigenous feminism as part of how they live their lives.

Mays stresses that Indigenous feminism is not just an *option* for men, but it is an essential part of understanding one's masculinity. He says, "What I have learned, and what Indigenous men myself included should strive for, is to learn from our grandmothers, aunts, cousins, sisters, nieces, and non-gender binary people in our families and communities in order to resurrect our masculinities" (2018, p. 68). So, understanding who you are as a man isn't just about looking at the men around you. Mays suggests that masculinity that does not learn from women and non-binary people will be too limited to apply to today's world. To clarify, this also doesn't mean that fathers and uncles should not pass on their masculinities to younger men. No. This might make more sense with an example. Mays interviews Frank Waln about their song "My Stone", where Waln describes being raised by his mother, his Stone. Waln was, and I quote, "raised by a woman who made me a man" (p. 77). Talking about a book written by a Sincangu Lakota Elder from his community, Waln describes how this Elder and I quote:

> *talks about how back in the day, before we were colonized, the women did raise the kids, whether they were man or woman. Of course, men would show boys how to hunt, to show men how to do the things they needed to do to survive, but on a day-to-day basis, it was the women who were running shit and who were raising the kids. I was raised in that type of environment, raised by*

> *my mom, aunties, and grandma. [...] I guess you could say I was brought up in a way that my people used to live–in that matriarchal environment.*

If we really wanna create change in our communities, as Indigenous People, as Native people, I think that our women need to be leading those movements and those changes. And I figure if you just look at history, men, we need to take a step back. I think we've fucked it up too many times, man. As men, yes, we have the tools and the skills that our people need to survive, but as men, we need to be letting the women decide what we do with our abilities. (p. 117-118)

Notice how Waln is far from denying the importance of men in society. Men are essential. But if Indigenous feminisms aren't incorporated into how each of us lives our lives, we risk repeating and propagating the harms that we have built into ourselves. As Mays suggests, the importance that comes with being a man demands a responsibility to reconsider ourselves and how we relate to each other (p. 137). Mays talks about how decolonization involves, quote, "reimagining sexual relations that are not based on dominance and oppression. If Indigenous women and Two-Spirit folks do not feel safe with their brothas, how can we, in good conscience, reproduce that in so-called safe spaces?" (p. 137). That is, we know that non-binary people and women feel unsafe around men in specific places, so men have a responsibility to consider where this unsafety comes from so that it is not repeated when their guard is down. As part of decolonization, men must work at recognizing and interrupting the ways they take advantage of women and non-binary folk.

Colonization has embedded exploitation into our relationships, such as the relationships among women, non-binary people, and men – and this exploitation is embedded so deeply that we need to find ways of reflecting on to ourselves and ways of reconstructing these relationships, such as through Indigenous feminism or feminisms, where there are many forms of understanding the realities Indigenous womxn experience.

When I talk about womxn with an x, I am trying to stick a wedge in the gender binary that the English language propagates too easily. I am not talking about a new gender that is almost like a woman but doesn't quite fit that mold, and I am not trying to deny the existence of women with an e or a. I am using it as a reminder that we can get stuck seeing our genders within a binary when we use English, and propagate a hierarchy of gender through our language. It is a reminder to look at the words that we are using, a reminder to look at ourselves and our deeply-held hierarchies. It is a refusal to accept the harms that are taught to us as if they are truth.

Part Four:
On refusal to forgive

Understanding refusal from a gender perspective is essential as "[t]he nature of settler violence is gendered in its very patriarchal nature" (Lane, 2018, p. 199). It is true that Indigenous People learn how to navigate a system that is constantly looking for new ways of silencing them. Especially Indigenous women who carry the responsibility of being knowledge keepers and defenders of Indigenous sovereignty and the right to self-determination. Indigenous women have to survive in a settler reality while maintaining their cultural identity for themselves and their communities.

Indigenous women experience a particular kind of oppression because their sole existence is an obstacle to the settler [18:06 colonial project that is an] effort to possess the land. That is why settlers target their job, values, community relationships, and knowledge. Under this scenario, "refusal is an alternative to recognition" (Simpson, 2017, p. 177), as it is a way to reinforce who they are and what their rights are. According to Lane (2018), Indigenous women engage the power of refusal in order to unsettle colonial efforts of establishing their knowledge and power. Indigenous women are on the frontline of ancestral connection to land and healing practices, which means that their role is essential to protecting the existence of ways of life which are constantly threatened by capitalist values (Lane, 2018).

But let's be clear: refusal doesn't necessarily mean forgiveness. Especially when the emotional and mental work is reserved for the oppressed, where they are the ones who have to overcome violence, navigate and fight the system, and find the best way in which they can get closure. Moreover, "forgiveness assumes a singular event that can be reconciled, rather than structures of dispossession that are ongoing and reinforced through settler statecraft" (Flowers, 2015, p. 47). For example, this podcast is an [19:23 - 19:26 effort to acknowledge the ongoing oppression since contact against] Indigenous People while also highlighting the beauty of who we are. [19:20 - 19:31 Especially myself and the voice that I carry.] By doing this while creating a community, I am reclaiming and affirming my own power. Simpson (2017) states that "refusal comes with the requirement of having one's political sovereignty acknowledged and upheld, and raises the question of legitimacy for those who are usually in the position of recognizing: What is their authority to do so? Where does it come from? Who are they to do so?" (p. 11). In that way, my refusal is not just a negation to continue a battle within a system built and reinforced to be against me but also an

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affirmation of my sovereignty (Flowers, 2015). [20:14 - 20:23 My voice is resistant. The power and elegance of my voice is my own sovereignty because it is the ancestors who transcend through me.]

But what is on the other side of the coin? What does it mean for settlers to be living in a moment where Indigenous People develop new forms of resurgence? Well, they need to reflect on how to deploy their settler solidarity to support Indigenous People's resistance and fight the binary systems of women and men. Taking into account that "[c]o-existence through co-resistance is the responsibility of all settlers" (Flowers, 2015, p. 36), which implies making changes and dismantling their systems of exploitation based on the cues from Indigenous action and direction. In addition, under this relationship, it is required that settlers refuse and act on maintaining the basis of state oppression (Flowers, 2015).

Part Five:
Conclusion

As you can see from the many examples I have shared in Seasons 1 and 2 of this podcast, being an Indigenous woman in academia is not easy. Unfortunately, it is a very different experience up close and firsthand than listening to it. Maybe I will wear a body camera to let the world witness the comments and treatment I get first hand, but even if there were clear, hard evidence, there's going to be that person who says, "that cannot be true." Like I wake up every morning saying to Creator, "today's a good day to be stuck in a heteropatriarchal existence; lay it on me, Creator." [21:55 - 22:10 I want to get fucked up today. I want to be oppressed. I want to be disconnected from the land. That's so mess up. I don't think anyone in a conscious mind would think that's ok, but anyways.]

My sole existence in this world and right now in this time and place is understood as a threat to a system that is part of the ongoing colonial project. I can be teaching, giving a presentation or an interview, and there will always be a reminder of the settler power against me and what I represent. However, acknowledging that I am not alone in the process, that I have a community that supports me and that together, we can keep building resurgence, is the motivation that pushes me to continue even in the face of those who think I shouldn't exist. Too [22:43 fucking] bad for them. I exist in every manifestation of chaos. I, too, am subtle, yet transformative, [22:58 - 23:08 and balance will be brought in time. Because that is our natural law. So when you experience chaos, hope

you hear my voice and get fucked up].

Research Assistants: Giovanni Ursella and Gigi Kirezi Wakana

Keywords: *Chaos Theory, Balance, Resurgence, Liberation, Feminism, Indigenous Feminism, Indigenous Feminisms, Decolonial Love, Love, Transformation, Gender, Womxn, Representation*

Glossary

Sâkihitowin - love
Womxn - a notion of womanhood beyond the gender binary

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Season 2, Episode 11

Nêhiyaw Pimâtisiwin

Luke Aaron Wonneck and Paulina Johnson

Synopsis: In this episode, Dr. Johnson shares some teachings of Nêhiyaw Pimâtisiwin or the "Cree way of life." She particularly shows how government policies have attempted to destroy Nêhiyaw Pimâtisiwin and why they have ultimately failed.

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Part One:
Introduction

> *The present owners of this great domain were thoughtlessly, carelessly living on the surface. Like the butterfly flitting from plant to plant, so these men roamed and camped and dreamed, not of mines and means which were above and beneath them on every hand. (McDougall, 1911, p. 18)*

So said missionary and explorer John McDougall, based on his experiences with my people in the 1870s. You may remember the name "McDougall" from Season 1 Episode 11. There, I discussed how John's father, George, stole Manitou Asiniy to convert my people to Christianity. Clearly, the McDougalls were not the most open-minded of observers.

Unfortunately, though, McDougall's views on my people's way of life were not unique. On the contrary, most Europeans believed our hunting, fishing, and gathering practices were haphazard and instinctual. [1:36-1:38 I mean we can not all be bosses but that's a side episode] We were in a constant state of feast and famine, depending on the whims of nature. And crucially, we continued to hunt, fish, and gather only because we had not thought of — or perhaps, did not have the *capacity* to think of — a better way, which is to say European forms of agriculture and industry. [2:00 - 2:02 Whatever that may mean.]

These views have played a critical role in making it seem like colonialism was a legitimate process of improving otherwise "wasted" land and civilizing otherwise "wasteful" people. They have also been consistently challenged and debunked by Indigenous Elders, Knowledge Holders, Knowledge Keepers and communities — and more recently, Western-trained anthropologists, archaeologists, and historians. But they continue to persist in the background of our society, informing efforts to "develop the untapped economic potential" of our lands and "integrate" us into the "modern economy".

In this episode, I also challenge these views. I share some teachings related to Nêhiyaw Pimâtisiwin, or a Nêhiyaw "Cree way of life." These teachings highlight how Nêhiyaw Pimâtisiwin did not vanish when our people were exposed to European forms of agriculture and industry. Rather, it persisted in a unique form that is now gaining strength, as my people renew our relationships with

the human and non-human relatives that make our lands home.

Part Two:
Meanings of Nêhiyaw Pimâtisiwin

To explain some of the meanings of Nêhiyaw Pimâtisiwin, I begin by sharing an âtayôhkêwin, *a sacred story*, called *The Creation of Buffalo Lake*. This âtayôhkêwin is known by many within our community, but was shared most recently with me by Nêhiyaw legal theorist Darcy Lindberg via his dissertation *Nêhiyaw Âskiy Wiyasiwêwina*. I share Darcy's version here, with his permission:

> *Kayas (a long time ago), there was a time when a group of Nêhiyawak (Plains Cree peoples) were struggling to find food. This was around the time when paskwâwi-mostos (buffalo) were disappearing from the prairies. One hunter, knowing she would need assistance to find buffalo, went into ceremony to seek guidance toward a successful hunt. She engaged in ceremony for four days. Finally, upon the fourth evening, she dreamt about a place where she would find a buffalo. The next morning, she set off with another hunter. After travelling another four days they came upon the hill, and faithful to her dream, they found a sole buffalo on the other side. With care, the hunter approached and was able to pierce the animal with an arrow. The buffalo sprang away, leaving a trail of blood across the prairies.*
>
> *They followed this blood trail for another four days. Finally, they came to a spot where the buffalo had finally succumbed to its injury. Pulling the arrow from the buffalo, the two women were surprised to see water springing from the wound, rather than blood. They watched this for some time. The water formed a puddle, then a small pool, and then eventually a pond. The hunter who dreamt the buffalo left to gather the rest of the people. This took another four days. When she returned with them, they were surprised to see that the pond had turned into a large lake, in the shape of a buffalo.*
>
> *Understanding that the lake was a gift from k'sê-man'to*[1]*, the people understood that this would be a place of abundance for them. And the lake provided – it brought all sorts of animals, including buffalo from the prairies to its banks. It allowed large grasses, shrubs and trees to form at its shores. The lake became a place of abundance, and nourished the people for many years. But this is not where the story ends: one winter, years later, the people were*

2 k'sê-man'to is also spelled "kisê-manito", and translates to "kind compassionate Creator"

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> *crossing the lake to visit relatives who had settled on the other shore. While they were crossing, a young boy came across a buffalo horn sticking through the ice. You see, the people used to run buffalo into the shallows of the lake for a more successful hunt. They must have hunted so much that year, for one must have slipped through their attention, and eventually floated to the center of the lake before freeze up. The young boy wanted the horn, and he begged his mosôm (grandfather) for it.*
>
> *Understanding that it would be a transgression to take it, the mosôm said no. But, as young ones have a special gift for, he was able to work the tenderness of his mosôm until the grandfather finally relented. Taking his hatchet, he hit the ice around the horn to retrieve it. Instead of freeing the horn, the ice cracked up, first around the two, then around the rest of the community. While some were able to scramble across the ice to the other side and others back to the shore they came from, some were lost in the water.*
>
> (Lindberg, 2020, pp. 56-57; Italics in original.)

So what does this âtayôhkêwin tell us about Nêhiyaw Pimâtisiwin? Many different things, depending on your perspective. Âtayôhkêwina does not contain one single truth, and each person can take what they need to hear from them. Nonetheless, I want to highlight four teachings that this âtayôhkêwin has provided *me,* hoping they may also resonate with you.

The first teaching is that our existence depends on the generosity of the kisê-manito, the kind, compassionate *Creator*. From a Nêhiyaw perspective, plants and animals are sacred gifts embodied with the spirit of kisê-manito, not passive resources to be exploited. This means that a successful hunt or harvest is not so much due to our skill as it is to kisê-manito taking pity on us, as he does in the âtayôhkêwina by giving Buffalo Lake to the hunters' community. Nêhiyaw Pimâtisiwin is based on an openness to such gifts — a readiness to listen to and learn from acts of generosity that may exceed our prior expectations and understanding.

The second teaching is that we humans carry reciprocal obligations towards Creation. Honouring these obligations is the essence of Nêhiyaw Pimâtisiwin, as it maintains balance and helps to increase the willingness of kisê-manito to continue to share gifts with us. In contrast, avoiding or violating our obligations creates chaos and undermines our ability to sustain ourselves. This

contrast is starkly visible in the âtayôhkêwin. In the beginning, the hunter's commitment to four days of ceremony gave her guidance in finding the buffalo that brought abundance to her community. Later on, the mosôm's disrespectful act of attempting to take the horn undermined the stability of the community's essence, leading to disaster and death.

The third teaching is that the web of obligations that makes up Nêhiyaw Pimâtisiwin is grounded within particular places. Âtayôhkêwina, *The Creation of Buffalo Lake*, reinforces this groundedness because they contain guidance for how to live well in specific areas — not across our territory and definitely not across the whole world. For example, when I visit Buffalo Lake (which, by the way, is a real place an hour's drive southeast of where I live, not some mythical otherworld), I am reminded of its creation story. Through this story, the land informs how I act and what I do. Our lands are storied like this because they have been created in diverse ways and contain many different ancestors and plant and animal relatives. Thus, Nêhiyaw Pimâtisiwin is inherently non-colonizing — we cannot bring our way of life to other territories without first learning the stories and obligations that inhabit those territories.

The fourth teaching is that Nêhiyaw Pimâtisiwin is dynamic. Buffalo Lake wasn't always there — it became a lake and a place of abundance over time. It changed again when there was a transgression and the lake ice broke. The implication is that we also need to evolve and change to thrive in such a place. More than that — we need to carry out our web of obligations in ways that are responsive to what the land is doing and needs. Nêhiyaw Pimâtisiwin is the never-ending cycle of doing, listening, and learning that allows this responsiveness. It can be understood as a tree — firmly rooted in our lands and stories, but in a way that allows for growth and renewal as our lands and stories evolve in relation to each other.

Part Three:
Pre-Colonial Nêhiyaw Pimâtisiwin

So how was Nêhiyaw Pimâtisiwin growing and renewing itself before Europeans arrived in our territory? As the âtayôhkêwin suggests, the buffalo was a critically important relative for our way of life. We hunted buffalo throughout the year, although our methods varied: we would surround and chase down large herds of buffalo on horseback in the late spring and summer, and corral smaller herds into pounds built of rocks or logs in the autumn and winter (Mandelbaum et al., 1979). We would also honour and pray to the buffalo through cer-

emony; through hunting, handling, and speaking about our relative respectfully; and through leaving offerings before and after kills were made (Harrod, 2000; Lindberg, 2020). In addition, we would burn the land to create meadows, clearings, and fertile new grass growth for the buffalo to eat (Roos et al., 2018). Our burnings also reduced the risk of destructive wildfires, helped to prevent pest and disease outbreaks, and encouraged the growth of our staple fruit-producing species, such as saskatoons and chokecherries (Christianson et al., 2022).

As we would renew and carry out these obligations, the buffalo would take pity on us and shower us with gifts of immeasurable value. Perhaps most obviously, the buffalo was crucial for our physical sustenance — its meat, bone marrow, organs, and fat gave us protein, calories, and nutrients; its bones gave us tools, ornaments, toys, and weapons; its hide gave us clothing and shelter, its sinew gave us thread; its teeth gave us ornaments and jewellery; and on and on... even its scrotum gave us containers and rattles (Verbicky-Todd, 1984). [1:27 If you know, you know] Less obviously, the buffalo also gifted us with legal and political teachings (Hubbard, 2016; Lindberg, 2020). By observing it and passing down its âtayôhkêwina — such as the Creation of Buffalo Lake — we learned how to respect the land and each other. We knew our non-hierarchical form of governance, where leaders come and go as different needs arise. And we learned to give generously, as it did.

Of course, the buffalo was far from being our only relative. On the contrary, we were surrounded by abundant and diverse plants, animals, lands, and waters that we accepted gifts from and reciprocated. For example, in the spring and sometimes the fall, we would construct and rebuild weirs of rocks and logs to trap and harvest northern pike, whitefish, and many other fish species. These weirs were highly efficient, and we would often trap more than a thousand fish in a single night (Smith, 1991). [12:26 That's a lot of fish!] We would pick berries, leaves, and flowers for medicine in the summer and dig roots in the fall. At various times of the year, we would also hunt other animals, such as moose, deer, elk, hare, and birds (Mandelbaum et al., 1979) [12:39-12: 42 and uncles hahaha I'm sorry, I had too]. Moreover, we would trade some of what we harvested with our Mandan relatives in the Missouri River region in exchange for corn, beans, and tobacco (Fenn, 2015). Overall, renewing relationships like these gave us a place within Creation and made us who we were. We knew that other ways of life existed — such as the agriculture-based livelihood of our Mandan relatives — but we chose to honour the gifts we were given and the stories that accompanied them. As a result, we were healthy and strong — the tallest people in the world at the time (Steckel & Prince, 2001). I mean, I still am.

Part Four:
Weaving Farming into Nêhiyaw Pimâtisiwin

The genocide of our relative, the buffalo, began in the 1830s and steadily increased in rate until the late 1860s (Isenberg, 2012). The scale of this genocide — and the way that the buffalo were murdered — caused unspeakable grief and trauma among the buffalo and us (Hubbard, 2016). It was accompanied by disease, famine, and war. We fought hard to protect our relatives, initially by working to exclude intruders from hunting and later by petitioning the Canadian government to stop the slaughter (Carter, 2019).

But by the 1850s, we also knew that the writing was on the wall to some extent — the buffalo would soon no longer be able to support us as they had always done, and our way of life would need to adapt again. We were familiar with agriculture through our trade with our Mandan relatives, and some of our people in the eastern prairies had already been farming for at least five hundred years (Carter, 2007). Yet we were also humble. We knew that we had much to learn if agriculture was to provide us with gifts in the way that the buffalo had.

Thus, in the Treaty negotiations of the 1870s, we repeatedly requested that the Crown support us with transitioning into a more agriculturally based economy (Carter, 2019). In return for sharing the land with incoming settlers, we wanted advice and tools that would help us grow crops and livestock in our homelands. For example, Chief Ahtukukkoop, one of the main negotiators of Treaty Six, noted that:

> *[W]e have always lived and received our needs in clothing, shelter, and food from the countless multitudes of buffalo that have been with us since the earliest memory of our people. No one with open eyes and open minds can doubt that the buffalo will soon be a thing of the past. Will our people live as before when this comes to pass? No! They will die and become just another memory unless we find another way..."[t]he mother earth has always given us plenty with the grass that fed the buffalo. Surely we Indians can learn the ways of living that made the whiteman strong. (quoted in Whitehouse-Strong 2007, p. 26)*

It is important to note that while our Treaty negotiators, like Chief Ahtukukkoop, were interested in learning agricultural ways of living from the white man, they did not imagine that this would force us to abandon our ways of life. On the contrary, our negotiators firmly believed that we would be able to weave

agriculture into our existing web of land-based obligations. This belief explains why the negotiators were also adamant that our existing land-based practices — such as hunting, fishing, gathering, and ceremony — would not be interfered with by the Crown (Cardinal & Hildebrandt, 2000).

As it turned out, our Treaty negotiators were correct — in the years following negotiations, we developed a form of agriculture that was distinct from the one being imposed by Euro-Canadians (Carter, 2019, p. 192). For example, we didn't come to rely completely on crops and livestock. Instead, agriculture became part of a mixed economy that continued to include seasonal rounds of hunting, gathering, and fishing. Further, our farming systems were communal rather than individually oriented. Our shared knowledge, tools, labour, and harvests through our existing governance structures — the same ones that had allowed us to care for and hunt buffalo so effectively. You can catch a glimpse of this community orientation in Elder Isabel Small's account of the establishment of agriculture on the Ermineskin reserve:

> *Till time came when they were given oxen to try and put some crop in. To plow the land but were helping each other. When one was finished they would move on to the other. The women were very good workers, so they cut fence rails and just dragging them from the bush. My mother was helping, that's why I know these things. (Smallboy, 1975, p. 5)*

Such farming systems were becoming established despite the government's consistent neglect of its Treaty promises to support our agricultural transition with implements, seeds, and livestock (Carter, 2019). Often, the government's half-hearted attempts to fulfil its promises did more harm than good: for example, in the 1870s, the government sent many of our Nation cheap wild Montana cattle, which wasted our time, [17:51 - 17:52 why? Because Montana cattle] could not be tamed or hitched to a plow [17:57 - 17:58 It wasted our time, energy and resources] (Carter, 2007, p. 112). The government's neglect and outright indifference to our situation slowed us down and caused waves of starvation and disease among our people in the 1870s and 1880s (Carter, 2019). [18:10 - 18:12 And just let's be honest, they know that they were doing] Yet despite all this, by the late 1880s, our farming systems were becoming increasingly successful. Our land-based stories, ceremonies, and forms of governance allowed many of our Nations to increase their acreage under cultivation and produce crops and livestock of similar or greater quantity and quality over our White neighbours who did not face the same bureaucratic restrictions.

Part Five:
The Resurgence of Nêhiyaw Pimâtisiwin

Many of our White neighbours incorrectly believed that the agricultural success we achieved in the late 1880s and early 1890s was due to government intervention rather than despite it (Carter, 2007, p. 119). [18:53 - 18:55 I mean haters gonna hate] As a result, they began to petition the government to prevent us from "unfairly" competing with them in the marketplace. Government officials were all too willing to listen to these complaints, as they tended to be far removed from the realities our people were facing and already held the belief that we were at a lower stage of humanity that was incapable of anything beyond mere subsistence. The government — and our White neighbours — also had an interest in containing and assimilating us so that our lands could be made available for White settlement.

And so, from this interest came a whole slew of policies, programs, and regulations designed to destroy Nêhiyaw Pimâtisiwin. For example, the 1889 peasant farming policy prevented us from purchasing or using farm machinery so that we could "progress" through the evolutionary stage of peasantry before reaching the stage where we could compete with White settlers (Carter, 2007). Meanwhile, the severalty policy subdivided communal farmed reserve lands into individual allotments in order to sell off the excess land to White settlers while claiming to "implant a spirit of self-reliance and individualism" (Carter, 2007, p. 121) among us. Around that time and in the ensuing decades, the pass system required us to ask permission from the Indian agent to leave our reserves, and the permit system required this permission for buying and selling products and services (Carter, 2019). Then there were the residential school and social welfare systems, which tried to limit intergenerational transfer of our way of life while teaching our children that this way of life was savage and unhealthy (Milloy, 2017; Mandell et al., 2007). [10:38 - 20:45 And all I can think of is who were the real savages] On top of all of this, regulations banned our ceremonies and restricted our hunting and fishing practices (Pettipas, 1994; Calliou, 2000). Oh, and homesteading and agricultural policies for settlers incentivised the destruction of our animal and plant relatives and their habitats (Wetherell, 2016).

I could go on and on, and I shouldn't be talking in the past tense here. While some of these policies, programs, and regulations officially ended after years or decades in operation, many continue to this day. Regardless, their effects continue to ripple throughout our communities and lands.

And yet... we are still here. [21:29 - 21:34 because this Auntie ain't going motherfucking anywhere]. We have fought, and continue to fight, against all government attempts to destroy Nêhiyaw Pimâtisiwin. Even more importantly, Nêhiyaw Pimâtisiwin persists and is even growing in strength. A recent survey suggests that 57% of First Nation households on the prairies regularly hunt, fish, gather plants, or garden (Batal et al., 2021). Community gardening and farming incentives are popping up on reserves and within urban Indigenous communities (Martens, 2015). Our children and youth relatives increasingly participate in these initiatives and reconnect with their other plant and animal relatives through land-based learning through trips and camps (Martens & Cidro, 2020). Wild meat programs are contributing to school meals and supporting the needs of our Elders (Fournier, 2022). Our leaders and activists are writing laws and policies to reclaim autonomy over our reserve lands and even over our territories more broadly (Arcand et al., 2020). We are reintroducing ourselves and reconnecting with our relative, the buffalo. Over forty of our Nations — including my own — have recently agreed to the Buffalo Treaty, which means we have committed "to welcome BUFFALO to once again live among us as CREATOR intended by doing everything within our means so WE and BUFFALO will once again live together to nurture each other culturally and spiritually" (Buffalo Treaty, 2016, para. 3).

Part Six:
Conclusion

What does all of this mean? It means that John McDougall was wrong: We weren't merely "thoughtless" butterflies flitting from plant to plant. Instead, we were and are constantly trying to enact our responsibilities to the land by listening to and learning from the wisdom and generosity of our plant and animal relatives — including butterflies! This cycle of listening, learning, and acting has allowed us to thrive since the beginning of time. Given the current climate change crises and biodiversity loss, renewing it is now more critical than ever. Maybe it's time for others to start to consider Nêhiyaw Pimâtisiwin as more informative than one has ever expected. All I know is that it's a good day to be Indigenous. [23:53 - 24:10 And I want to share a quote, well more really a meme that I came across, and it says: What's your stance on environmental issues? And I am the Lorax. I speak for the trees, litter again and I'll break your fucking knees.]

Research Assistant(s): Sam Dancey and Brook Kelela

Keywords: *Nêhiyaw Pimâtisiwin, Buffalo, Indigenous Agriculture, Settler Colonialism, Treaty, Indigenous Food Sovereignty*

Glossary

Âtayôhkêwin - sacred story
Kayâs - long ago
K'sê-man'to (or kisê-manito) - kind compassionate Creator
Mosôm - grandfather
Nêhiyawak - Cree people
Nêhiyaw Pimâtisiwin - Cree way of life
Paskwâwi-mostos - buffalo
Paskwâwi-mostos sakihikan - Buffalo Lake

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Listen along on Spotify.

Season 2, Episode 12

Chief's Council

JA Morrow and Paulina Johnson

Synopsis: What stories do you remember when you were younger? Do you remember the ones that spoke to you the most? In this episode, Dr. Johnson goes through a series of short stories that reflect her lived experiences and interactions with the everyday mixed with elements from storytellers that came before.

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Part One:
Introduction

Do you remember the TV episodes that offered you a series of stories for you to think and ponder about? They gave you five stories you had to think about, whether they were fact or fiction. Well, we are going to share a series of stories with you. We will not have you consider if they are true or not. But we will ask you to listen and see how they impact you and make you think about the story itself. Indigenous cultures, mine specifically, are storytellers, versed in oral narratives that work to allow the listener to reflect on their lives and current interactions.

[1:13 - 1:25 And the sole reason that I started the podcast was that I thought that I had a very great voice for radio, I don't know]. These stories are particularly geared towards understanding my lived experience and the world around me, specifically the existing tensions I navigate in academia and the lasting aspects of my ancestors and closest relations. Lately, I have been with my brother Jim, who is white. [1:43 - 1:46 It is what it is. That's about it about him. That is his whole personality.] – I often ask him how it feels to be a representative of all white people as well. Haha, [1:53-1:56 I'm sorry those are all distasteful, but very much appropriate] he has a front seat to a lot of what I go through – racism, tears, successes, the downfalls, all of it.

[2:07 - 2:24 He technically is my project coordinator, as my role as Co-researcher for the Canadian Mountain Network, which will transition to Braiding Knowledge Canada. But he is more than that.] And this is simply because, if you'll let me borrow a line from Toni Morrison: To be Indigenous is to be held in contempt. We are played with when the masters are pleased and dismissed when they are not. It is a dysfunctional and abusive relationship. [2:39 - 2:43 And Jim has been front row and centred to all I've gone through]

The reasons our people's situation got so bad will never add up. Other paths were available. The people in power, though, have always chosen the hardest route. So, ours is a history of needless and ridiculous blunders, and Jim sees this all too well, especially working alongside me as a wîcihtâsow, *a helper or someone who supports me.* [3:11 - 3:41 But traditionally, I've taken Doctor JA Morrow, the first colonizer, as my brother. Ok, you're getting a lot of inside personal jokes right now. You're probably not following through. But more or less, Jim and I are very close. We work hand in hand together. We co-write a lot of the material, but also, specifically this episode, we have a very unique relationship. I'm not going to lie, I don't think I'd ever would have taken a white man as my brother. But Jim is an exception.]

A wîcihtâsow is so important because for generations, false hopes, betrayals, and distrust have poisoned our relations. The treaties said there would be peace and friendship. Yet, as soon as they were signed, these promises were broken. In their place is an informal truce that persists because Indigenous peoples are told to be compliant and turn the other cheek. Now, our lives are a hustle that exhausts body and soul.

So, let me tell you some stories, [4-16 4:18 for this episode is called Chief's Council]

Part Two:
Coyote's Council

Our stories tell us that we create living agreements and treaties for the greater good. Knowing this helps us appreciate how we relate to the world beyond ourselves. It also shapes our ways of supporting our kith and kin.

In the Nez Perce tradition, there was a great council that preceded the arrival of humans. As it goes, Coyote [4:56- 4:58 or Chief for this matter] learned that two-legged creatures would settle the land. More importantly, Coyote understood the newcomers would need help because they would arrive naked and without knowledge.

Coyote called together a great council. All his relations were there. Bear sat in the back. Magpie chattered with bison. Even a louse made it. After everyone finally got comfortable, Coyote stood up and explained what he knew about two legs and how they needed help. He told them that two legs are shivering with fear. Coyote then considered his next words carefully, "They are confused. They don't know what to do."

When Coyote was finished, the Council debated and debated. Everyone wanted to know why two legs were so naive. "They have to know something?" shouted a small voice in the back.

After some more debate, Wolf stepped forward. "I will teach them how to hunt," she said. After a pause, Wolf added that they would ask their kin to show two legs how to be social and raise their young. Deer stood up next. Without having to give a justification, they volunteered their antlers and skins for two legs to make tools and clothes. And on and on it went. Each animal stood up and gave something of themselves for the benefit of others.

To ensure their gifts last across generations, Coyote's Council created a round. It works kind of like a calendar. Within it was detailed information about the life journeys of those who would help two legs. This included times when skins could be taken.

In return for Council's givings, two legs were asked to show care. It was expected that the newcomers would be mindful and take responsibility for others and their ways of life. [6:54 - 7:03 And that is Coyote Council, or what I like to call Chief's Council, for my boy.]

Part Three:
Living Agreements

Though it's not my people's story, I like Coyote's Council. It's a reminder that how we relate to the world requires thoughtfulness and sacrifice. Treaties and agreements are fine. They're what we have. But we also need to remember that all our relations are connected in ways that are higher, bigger, and deeper. And when I think about what Coyote's Council gave us, as big as that was, I am reminded of the importance of small details and genuine intimacies.

According to settler legend, the Lenape sold Manhattan to a Dutch trader for $24 worth of trinkets and beads. This tenacious myth has been told and retold by textbooks, school teachers, and bigmouths at dinner tables. Yet there is very little evidence a sale happened.

By most accounts, the Lenape have never believed that land could be bought and sold. They were ahead of the Europeans in knowing that "Property is Theft!" Indeed, historical records show the Nations regularly opposed the selling of land and, instead, established living agreements for safe passage or access to resources like fisheries or berry patches. That being the case, if there was a deal between the Lenape and the Dutch, it was most likely a goodwill exchange for sharing the land.

There is a long tradition of Indigenous Nations creating living agreements between one another. Over time, these were extended to settlers. For example, in 1648, the Corchaug people of present-day Long Island gave written permission to a select group of English settlers to plant crops. But it came with a condition that the local Nation retained the "privileges of his Ancestors" to live with the land.

From the beginnings of our dealings with settlers, Indigenous peoples insisted that what they agreed to was one agreement among many - and some of those, like our connection to all our relations, take precedence.

Living agreements are rooted in reciprocity, respect, and renewal. Most of them refer to the sharing of ancestral lands in return for a commitment to care for all our relations. They also set out mutual responsibilities to ensure everyone keeps their promise. Come what may, the point is to forge a bond between one another that, in the words of a Treaty Six commissioner, lasts as long as “the sun shines, the grass grows, and rivers flow.”

James Sákéj Henderson, a Chickasaw legal scholar, says Natural Law is based on “shared kinship and ecological integrity.” When using Western academic language, we describe this as an “ecological context.” That is to say, Indigenous peoples have a deep connection with the land. It also means how we interact with all our relations defines how we relate to the rest of the world.

Stories like Coyote’s Council tell us how to live well with the land and other peoples. The problem is our stories have been replaced by treaty-derived formal claims of state and hierarchies of relations that tell us that are limited to the realities of the here and now. This is causing us to forget the small details and genuine intimacies of the living agreements that come before us. And when the last of us forget those, everybody else will forget what we owe one another. [10:31 - 10:36 Especially those small intimacies.]

Part Four:
Treaty Promises

When they signed treaties, our ancestors had high hopes. They considered those documents sacred, living pacts that would allow the land’s bounties to be shared by all peoples. For them, it was a way to create a future together.

Canada’s governments and courts say they share the hopes of the Nations that signed the treaties. Time and again, they have ratified, assented, and affirmed that our ancestors’ commitments are still intact. As a matter of fact, the Supreme Court of Canada says:

> *[I]t must be remembered that a Treaty represents an exchange of solemn promises between the Crown and the various Indian nations. It is an agreement whose nature is sacred. (R. v. Badger, 1996)*

How about that? The justice system, for once, got it right. [11:29 - 11:33 All jokes aside, and my white man voice,] there is truth in the idea that we put our faith in treaty because its source is more than human.

Realists and those who believe in common sense probably think we are a lost cause. So I will let them in on our secret: There is no other narrative.

Settler states have broken every one of our agreements. If they don't dismiss Coyote's Council as myth, they tell us that our Lenape cousins sold us out for a box full of beads. This means that treaties, no matter how flawed they may be, are what the state allows us to have - and without them, nothing remains. But knowing this comes with great responsibility. Perhaps the Irish poet Yeats put it best in "Aedh Wishes for the Cloths of Heaven":

> *But I, being poor, have only my dreams;*
> *I have spread my dreams under your feet;*
> *Tread softly because you tread on my dreams.*

Part Five:
Lice

A while ago, my brother Jim and I spoke at a workshop about treaty promises for people from Treaty 9 communities. We went with presentations and were prepared to lecture. But within minutes of starting, our plan fell apart. Something felt wrong. Maybe it was how we talked. Maybe it was how the other people in the room were looking at us. Whatever it was, we had to do something different.

Our audience travelled a long way from remote communities near James Bay. It did not seem right to make them sit for hours in a cold, featureless hotel conference room just to hear us tell them about broken promises – more than knowing it to be true, these are peoples who live with it every day. So we passed our microphones through the audience and let them speak for themselves.

That day, something incredible happened. The community members, without offerings or protocol, began to testify and share stories, teachings, and gifts with us. To our amazement, we learned that they still keep a living agreement with all our relations.

One hunter reminded the audience that his community had a working relationship with caribou. In his words, the Nation and herd know each other. "If we

work together," he said, "there is no such thing as over-hunting."

A community health leader followed with a story about lice. She explained that her community has a housing problem and people have to live close together - sometimes with multiple generations in one room. "We get lice," she said. Her voice lacked any judgment. It was a simple fact.

The health leader told everyone that she used to hate lice. In school, she had been taught that they were a pest. That opinion, however, changed after she was given a teaching from an Elder:

> *Lice are social. They like people. They want to be with us. And many of our children are lonely and need a friend. The lice find those children and stay with them when they are lonely.*

The health leader, her voice rising, acknowledged the kindness of lice. "I need them," she said. "They help me find the children who need our love."

I think about that teaching a lot. It reminds me that all our relations still care for us. Why is it that so many people are less relatable than the lice we fear or look down on?

Despite all the promises that we, the two legs, have broken, lice stick with us. Just as Wolf, in the Nez Perce story of Coyote's Council, taught us to be social, lice show us who is lonely. That is an act of humility and genuine concern for others, and it is our responsibility to take notice and care for those who need our affection.

There is nothing lousy about being loved.

Part of the reason for resharing what was told in that meeting is to remind you that all our relations are still pulling for us. Despite centuries of our being dispossessed, all is not lost as long as caribou and what we think is the lowly louse are still willing to work with us. And knowing that they still leave a seat at the Council open for us gives me hope.

Part Six:
My Spirit Animal Is a Cabbage

Last year, I was at an event where an Indigenous drummer asked audience members to walk like different animals. He started easy. The first was an ele-

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phant. Then a cat. A bear. A donkey.

With each dance, the night got more interesting. People loosened up. At the end, I saw a room full of môniyâw doing the worm. I had to shake my head and laugh. The drummer knew what he was doing.

I remember seeing a friend propped against a wall, taking in the scene. I asked when he would join the party. He flashed a smile and answered dryly, “My spirit animal is a cabbage.”

Spirit animals. People like the idea of having one. If you asked, I’d probably say mine is a mediocre white man. Hehe, probably not.

Spirit animals are a good joke. They allow us to confess how we relate to our environment without having to make it all about ourselves.

Imagine if the first thing someone, unprovoked, told you that they run into red flags headfirst. Damn it, that’s a rank pickup line. But fronting it with “My spirit animal is...” elevates the threat level from creeper to jort-wearing dad.

Beyond jokes, there’s a bigger problem with having a spirit animal: Why should we have only one? And why do they have to be spirits, especially when others tell us that caribou and louse are still with us?

Do you remember the Verve song “Bitter Sweet Symphony?” There’s a line in it:

> *But I’m a million different people*
> *From one day to the next*

The same has to be true for the other-than-human. We don’t have one spirit animal. We have millions of relations that are the result of thousands of years of our ancestors living with the world around us. And every day, each one of these connections directly impacts our lives.

Take for instance, the Bumble Bee. Bumble Bees know how to work together and exist in harmony as a collective working towards a common goal. Bumble Bees teach us how to work as a hive or a collective, ensuring each other’s needs are met and known, where there is only teamwork to prosper.

Part Seven:
Chief's Council

In the film *Scanner Darkly,* Keanu Reeves's character wonders about a surveillance camera in his living room. "What does a scanner see?" he asks. "Into the head? Down into the heart? Does it see into me? Into us? Clearly or darkly?"

Like Keanu and the scanner, I wonder what my dog Chief sees.

Though he is always watching, I refuse to believe that Chief is taking notes and reporting on me. If that was true, my file at his headquarters would line entire hallways floor to ceiling.

No. Chief may be a lot of things, but he's not a narc.

Chief is wise. He taught me that even though I think I am alone, he has my back with his unconditional love and to look at myself like he would — well beyond when I need to feed him.

Still, I wonder if Chief sees into me clearly or darkly. And if he's not a narc, what does he tell? Does he have a council?

I sometimes imagine that Chief has a Council. He and the other rez dogs probably take turns sitting on a stump in an open field and delight in one another's stories about two legs. Chief probably gets them rolling on the ground, belly laughing about the time he took a shit on a Mounties's foot. I'm also sure one of the Elder dogs regales the others about how a kind girl once fed her an entire bag of beef jerky outside the gas station [19:55 - 19:58 on their way to Ontario while she finished Graduate school.]

Does Chief's Council ever get serious? Do they tell each other about the terrible things they see? Do they cry about the failures of two legs to take responsibility for the pain they cause?

I bet they do.

Though times have changed and members have come and gone, I like to think Coyote's Council remains in session. They probably have debates and fact-finding tours. Maybe the [20:24 - 20:26 animals who saw us outside] the gas station and representatives of councils from other Nations give testimony. Do the lice ever get the chance to explain the importance of helping the next generation?

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For everyone's sake, I hope so.

Like the hunter from Treaty 9, I want us and the Council to know each other. Until recently, we had a good life together. And I can't bear the thought that it could ever end.

There is no other narrative.

Part Eight:
Conclusion

The stories shared in this episode flow within time and space. Rooted in connection but, importantly, held with regard. Many will say that the stories spoken may not be true. And maybe they aren't, but what if they are? The hope that lives within stories is the essence of uncertainty, which is curiosity. Curiosity can educate, inform, challenge, and change. Does Chief speak at night to the council? Or is it the fact we no longer understand what they say? Connection is vital to the world we are in. A story holds the power to transform and enlighten while allowing the listener to move within generations of those who came before without even knowing it.

The stories shared in this episode are important in remembering that Indigenous knowledge is not always linear or in place. It moves around like a firefly trying to be caught but always avoiding the grips to be held in a glass jar. Stories are just like that, and they cannot be held and contained; they must flow, breathe, and live. This is the real magic of Indigenous communities and People that many look for but do not adequately understand.

Keep us and our stories alive and breathing because they will always find those who needs them the most, because my brother Jim came into my life when I needed someone the most as I debated if I should leave academia for good. Maybe all the relations saw [20:33 - 20:39 that I needed support a wîcihtâsow] — the only thing is, really a white man? [20:46 - 20: 52 We definitely know it's reparations. That's what's up]

Keywords: *Storytelling, Stories, Chief, Coyote's Council*

Glossary

Onîsohkamâkew - A helper; a supporter; one who provides aid.
Wîcihtâsow - a helper or someone who supports me.

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Season 2, Episode 13

Kakêskimêw
Mentoring

Paulina Johnson with Victoria Delorme

Synopsis: How do we mentor in academic institutions as Indigenous People? How do we ensure the next generation has the tools and knowledge to ensure their safety, protection and respect. In this episode Dr. Johnson reflects on how she became a Professor and brings in one of her former students to share their experiences as an Indigenous student learning from and being mentored by Dr. Johnson and what advice helped her with as she navigated her own journey.

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Part One:
Introduction

Nikakêskimâw refers to I mentor him/her. Mentoring is an essential part of the Indigenous experience in academia. We do not always have the knowledge about how to navigate these institutions let alone know the processes that we find ourselves in. What I came to know as a student was through a series of successes and failures with a very steep learning curve all the way through. As I mentioned in episode one of this season, my intent to pursue academia was not what I really wanted to do but as Creator would have it, it is my path today.

So what have I learned? I have learned quite a bit from my years as a student at the University of Alberta and Western University to being the first Assistant Professor of Indigenous Studies at Concordia University of Edmonton to the sole Indigenous professor in my department today, as an Assistant Professor of Sociology. But rather than tell you all that I have seen, I wanted to bring you a voice of someone that has seen me grow within my capacity as a professor and this is Victoria Delorme.

Part Two:
Little Auntie

This portion of the episode is edited for clarity (don't worry, it's still 100% auntie certified).

Victoria Delorme [01:47] Tân'si nitisiyihkâson Victoria Delorme ohci niya Cowessess First Nation, but I currently live in Amiskwacîwâskahikan [Edmonton]. My current role with the University of Alberta is: I manage the Indigenous students Services office at the Augustana campus in Asiniskaw Sipisis, or what we know today as *Camrose*. I met Dr. Paulina Johnson at Concordia University of Edmonton (CUE) in my undergrad program at CUE.

Paulina Johnson All right, how about you tell me how we know each other in our relationship in the capacity today? Or what I'm trying to say is how do you know me?

[V] Oh, man, I met you I think it was halfway into my degree at Concordia. I was a third-year standing student in my degree at Concordia, for a Bachelor of Arts in Sociology. Actually, at the time, I just had my son. So he was I think at that time, he was about eight months old. And so I was super vulnerable as a new mom. I had just gotten over an RTW [Return to Work] and so then I was

just, " Oh my God." And finally at that time, Concordia had this Indigenous students' space. And that's where I met you. [Laughs] And it was, really weird. It was really different for me, because I got to see at that time, the transition when Concordia didn't have Indigenous student's support, they didn't have an Indigenous students center. And then they didn't have Indigenous people working there, visibly. Then all of a sudden, after I have my son, I like to come back. And there's all of these Indigenous things and Indigenous people and that was really strange. And so I was just, it's weird to say, but I was super infatuated. To see someone in a position that I've never seen a person be in before, an Indigenous woman and not to mention, Cree woman, that wasn't a reality. Everyone was always a blue-collar worker or working some sort of customer service, so that was really different for me to sort of see a possibility I didn't think that it was gonna exist. And so, I met you at this really weird transitional time and I'm just, holy shit. You can you can do this. And so then,, that was the time that I ended up busting the door in every one of your fucking courses. I was: Indigenous feminism's, taking it, this one taking it. This was the first time that I could do something like that. Learn from someone that had the opportunity to show me what I could do rather than learning from all of these non-Indigenous, Môniyâw, people that theoretically talk about my life, but they don't know what it is. So it was at that time where I was just okay this is not theory anymore. This actually exists. I think, in simple terms, I took some of your classes, [Both laugh].

[P] Yeah. So, Victoria and I met, I remember meeting you actually, when I interviewed for the position, as you guys were a part of the student kind of selection committee. And I remember, I had to do so how it set up on the interview as a professor is like. You do a teaching demonstration, a research demonstration, and you guys were at my teaching demonstration. And I just remember walking in this room and I was that's a fuck ton of people. I was expecting because usually interviews, there are maybe five to ten people, and I walk in and there's 40 plus, and I was damn. I hope I'm prepared. And to make myself you know, this, when I teach in lectures, I like to use jokes or bad jokes. And I was you know, it is only downhill from here. What else could go wrong? And, yeah, I said, my one bad joke. And then you guys are all hooked. I just remember everyone's faces because you did your lecture. Sometimes people are heads down. But everyone in that room was engaged. I had you eat it out of my hand. And then I remember dropping my presentation notes. And I was like, I didn't need them anyway. And I remember you had asked me a question about how I felt or something around along the lines of how I felt about when Indigenous students were in my class, what you thought your role in that class was, especially regarding emotional labour? And I said, it's not your job to answer those questions, but from professors, especially non-Indigenous professors. And I will never put you in a

position where you have to bring in your emotional labour in my courses, when I'm there to educate as an Indigenous person. And I just remember you are, you were like, Holy fuck, Oh, my God. Whoa, that's the day, I think that you fell in love with me. [Both laugh].

[V] I mean, you're right. That was a day. You know, as you were talking about it, I actually do remember that day because undergrads trauma you don't want to remember. Um, but I do remember that. And I do remember asking that. I remember hearing your response. And actually, just before, everyone would just be Indigenous. I'm just okay, I guess, I'm, you know, the experts of Indigenous things. What I do remember, though, is that when you're nervous, you talk all the wind out of your lungs so, [laughter] it was so good. It was so good. But no, I do remember that. And I remember it was really nice. And I remember actually afterwards, when they asked us about it, I'm just, if you don't hire her, that just doesn't make sense. You guys are not really going for what you're talking about. And so I'm just, man. I was really prepared for them to not hire Indigenous. That was the reality of it; they didn't want an Indigenous person, they wanted, I don't know, they wanted someone to talk about Indigenous things. And so we as students, I remember, we had gathered all together. And really leaned into it, just it has to be an Indigenous person. And this is, she's the one. I remember that when we fought for that, too. I mean, you got hired, and that was pretty dope. But that was rough.

[P] I mean, it's still is rough. But uh, so yeah, you took all my courses. I, when I was there, I had actually designed the Indigenous Studies minor and was working on the major. But one of the things of why I had left was that I didn't get to mentor in the way that I really wanted to. Meaning, I wanted to have graduate students but I also wanted to be somewhere where I could be supported. And kind of not have to be the person, you know, navigating that journey on my own. I wanted to be around people who have gone through it with me or who could go through it with me and experience that. And so I remember when I left Concordia, I felt really kind of not guilty, so much as worried, because I knew that I was leaving these students, Indigenous students who, didn't get an Indigenous professor, especially on topics about Indigenous peoples, who didn't get to hear straight from someone who had that lived experience. So, I definitely when I was there, I really tried to make sure that I made myself available to you guys. I wanted to mentor you guys, so that when you had to go forward and be your own humans, I left a little bit of knowledge for you to protect yourself, but also know how to advocate for yourself, and also just respect who you are as Indigenous people. And so you took all my courses. And I remember afterwards, you would kind of reach out to me when you needed advice, and you're not the only

one who does that. So I must be doing something right. But you would call me and be like, Is this real? And so you are not going crazy? Because you think you are. And so we really develop this mentor-mentee kind of relationship. And I, in my capacity, that was the first time where I was now a mentor, rather than being the mentee. And so what are your thoughts about that so far?

[V] I think a lot about the time at Concordia, specifically those last couple of years. One of the things I really liked was that you were there for, I believe, two years, and then you were gone. And then, it was really nice to see what mentorship and what someone actually, you know, someone that is aware of what your experiences are. And sees the reality of your experiences as an Indigenous person within an institution. And at this point, it doesn't really matter what kind of institution it is, there is very much a transactional relationship. And at the end of the day, the relationship ends, at five, or when the course ends, that's when the relationship ends. And that was something I wasn't really used to, as an Indigenous person, even now, with some of my friends that work within that work within universities. They would just refuse to talk about their research or their studies or even just talk academically because they're not on the clock anymore. And I found it so strange because one of the things that I started learning is that Indigenous people, we don't get to stop being Indigenous, we don't get to stop participating and building cultural ties and spiritual responsibilities. And it's you know, the ancestors can wait at 5pm. That didn't make sense. And so then, Concordia taught me a lot. And I say that, ironically, when people ask me, "Well, how was Concordia?" I say, it taught me a lot. It helped me a lot in navigating systemic racism. It taught me a lot in identifying what covert racism looks like, and how insidious it is, in relation to trying to build Indigenous communities or supporting other Indigenous people. And what really helped was that for the two short years that you were there, you started putting names to things to experiences that I didn't think were real. And so I think one of the things that I constantly get a lot and, and I know that you get this too is you're so articulate when we talk about, you know, whatever thing that they've come to talk to us about. I'm not here to fuck around. I'm, what do you want me to tell you? And so it was really important to see, into recognize that when we're in spaces, and it doesn't matter where there's always someone looking at you, watching you, and waiting for you to fall. And we got to be there for when you do fall because you can't walk through a landmine and not expect to fall. That we're there to pick each other up. And man, uni was so hard for me. And I just a new mom, all of that was I remember, I remember. And in the Indigenous feminism course you were talking about, I think it was traditional Nêhiyawak birthing practices, and I just started fucking crying. Because I've always felt really uncertain about specific experiences in my life, and the way that I'm supposed

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to feel about them. Because the normal is really violent, and very abrasive, and very focused on other experiences that my experiences with that just seems like it just doesn't make sense anymore. And so it's just nice to see a voice to a space and, and I think as I got to get to know you. I realized that your experience didn't come from a gift. It came from actually paying a higher toll to your own mental health to your own physical well-being. To some of your relationships where when you would give advice, to me or to other students, it wasn't coming from a place of l control or dominance, it was coming out of you have to be very careful. Because once you start falling into those spaces, these areas are gonna take advantage of you. And I was just, man I don't like listening. [laughs]. And so I remember you would give me these warnings, and I'm just: What the fuck does she know? And then walk into the place and, sure enough, whatever bad was gonna happen happened. And I'm just okay. So, I had to figure out, what my role as a person. Seeking to learn and to know that it wasn't just about being smart or intelligent, it was about understanding what it means to build relationships, understanding what it means to have responsibilities to communities, as well as your students and the people that you work with, and how to make sure that they're protected. Because afterwards, I can fall apart, I can, I can break. And I know that since that time in Concordia, it's never been the same. There's a different feel to that space, but at one moment, and for two years, it was fairly authentic. And that was really amazing.

[P] I think one of the toughest things is when you're guiding someone on their journey of relaying a wisdom that you've kind of come across on your own, it's really easy for us to be that's not gonna happen to me, right? Because I was right there, too. I was like, I'm educated, I am smart and witty, people will love me. And then I got derailed. And I was okay, they don't care about my humanity. They just want me for the presence without my voice. And so I was very articulate with a lot of the Indigenous students there that this is going to happen to you, this is a way to protect yourself, right? And I didn't really have to do that. But I wanted to because I didn't want you guys to go to the world. And not to be everything's problematic. I have a jaded point of view. But I wanted you to feel these are the realistic kinds of expectations that are going to be, no unrealistic expectations are going to be put on you. And you're basically going to have to say yes and no, but also have very strong boundaries. And more or less you're not the only one who was like, Oh, I don't think that's gonna happen. And then, some of you guys reach out to me, you were right. And I don't want to be right, right. I wish I wasn't, right. But it's just because it's that care and so many times. What I hate about academia is so kind of cold that it's competitive. Oh, that person's hurting, let's take advantage or let's surpass them, and I don't really see my role in this institution as that individual. I'm here for myself. Because for the

longest time, everyone was: Oh, you have such a big research team. Why do you give them publications, and I was, because they do the work with me. They're there with me. They're there in late into the evening afternoons, we have to get a deadline done, you know. And that's just something that I was never taught. Or I was never taught to do, especially within a family sense. But also community sense, right. And so I wanted to have you guys experience that the community kind of experience more or less community drive or in community love and connection. And I think it was really struggle for me leaving Concordia because I did when our Dean at the time, Dr. Tim Heath, he was there. He was very supportive of me, supportive of me, but also protective of me, not that I needed a white man to protect me. But he would say, "go do what you need to do." And that was the support that I needed, not "why are you doing what you do?" He was "go do it." No questions, no hesitation. And when he was he was leaving to retire. I asked myself, what's the next journey for myself? Because my goal was always to educate and inform, and just be that community kind of feel. And so, when I came here at U of A, I got that from Dr. Shirley Anne Tate, as my mentor, and Dr. Ken came, and Dr. Richard Westerman. These three individuals were my mentors. And so giving back to community, students, through their experiences was fundamental to me. Because it wasn't me trying to tell you what not to do, or don't do this master's program. Or how about this, it was more these are your options. These are how you should go about it. Especially, I remember, a few Indigenous students were, Oh, I got into the master's program. And I was: make sure you get funding! You know, this is what you do. This is how you negotiate. Or this is what you know, what are these opportunities for you? Because I had to learn that on my own. Especially with Dr. Natahnee Winder, because we were at Western together to First Generation Indigenous women, not knowing what we were doing. And a lot of times, we would be together but, Whoa, did they just say that? And then we'd be, Yeah, that's really fucked up, you know. But, we had to be accountable for each other's gaslighting so that we wouldn't get sucked into this, this bigger kind of dominance that was happening. And then, realizing how embedded systemic racism really is. And so yeah, it was, it was all from my own experiences. And for a short period before that, I was yo, yo, listen up, take notes. There's so many people who don't get to have that.

[V] I think that's really important. And I think the other portion of it, too, is I was not prepared for how quickly you have to turn around and start supporting other people. You don't even have time to process it, being the mentee, and then all of the sudden you are a mentor and it's just what, what, it's, it's wild, it's crazy. I guess it's my role, you know, at Augustana with the Indigenous student's services office, one of the things that I get is, you know, these Indigenous students coming into my office, and they're just looking for some sort of understanding or safety. And I'd only been in my role, I had graduated

in 2021. And that was the year after you had left, and then I was just started to mentoring myself. Oh, I wish I paid attention more. But I remember just having to reflect back a lot about my experience at Concordia and seeing what worked and what didn't work in, and what was the most impactful thing. I really value, you know, those opportunities in those moments that we get. Everyone likes it, you know, everything's in these big events or in these large spaces, these large visible spaces, but honestly, I feel the mentoring happens in those exhausted, closed room, offices where you can actually just be like, Yo, I'm feeling fucked up right now. And you'd be, Yo, cuz that's fucked up. But having that moment to actually unmask and, and unsettle yourself and then if you need to cry it out, cry it out, and then coming out. And then so when I started supporting my own students in their academic journeys, I found that it was really important to provide them that space to unmask, unload, on unwind themselves, and then feeling comfortable too, and then help them find themselves backed up. Because I cried, I cried a lot in university, and you saw me cry a lot in university. And so, that's really healing to just be with someone that you really don't have to explain anything. You just know. And that's really great.

[P] I think that's the most important aspect is being able to feel comfortable. And I think being a mentor has taught me that when you're not comfortable as a mentee, you're not going to be able to have a connection. And feel, okay, coming to ask someone for guidance, but also, what are my options? And how do I go about this? And I think connection is key to that. And I think the connection that I had with you, right. So, I left Concordia in 2021, then I came to U of A, but we still maintain those ties, of course, there's gonna be times when we don't talk at all. But then, there's those times where you able to check in with me and we still have the ability to have the humor, and then be able to be what do you need? And then there's you got the serious Paulina, and then you got the auntie Paulina, and then you got the questionable Paulina. Okay? I was gonna say something else, instead of questionable, you knew exactly what else I was gonna say. [Laughter].

You get that opportunity to have those connections with me in the very different professional standings I have, as Paulina on rez, or Paulina in front of students or Paulina out in front of boards, right? And you get to have all of those different personalities, just kidding. [Laughter]. But you have all that knowledge embedded in that connection and ability to come to me. And so I guess, on a final note, what would you tell yourself now, if you were a student still at Concordia? I was still technically there, we're gonna do some time travel real quick. What would you tell yourself now about what it means to actually just stop and listen and take it in? As a mentee?

[V] I think I would just tell everything, I would just tell myself you're allowed to be yourself, and you're allowed to be vulnerable with people. And if people make you feel you have done something wrong, being vulnerable, then those aren't your people. That when you go forward, people that are seeking something from you, rather than seeking to build a relationship with you is there not worth having, because, you know, at the end of the day, everything is just stuff but the relationship that you have is, I think, a far more important you know. I invested so much time and provided so much resources to things that really didn't matter. And I was really sad when you left. And I just felt weird. And trusting that you have a connection with the people that you've made connections with because I think a portion of man, we're both going through some shit. And we're just, Oh, we don't want to burden you man or you know, but trusting that lyou know, that relationship will be strong, it'll stay that way. But reaching out when you need to. I am always the big sister. It was so nice to not have to be the big sister. I'm always a big sister to women. And so being in a place where I just can be guided was really a treat. Not like you're super older, you're not kookum or anything but it just felt nice to shut off my brain and just be okay I can do this. I can learn from this. I think that's was really nice and I don't know Sisterhood is important and connecting and building those relationships and kinship is really important. And don't trust the wrong people, trust yourself. Keep going, it's still gonna suck, people are gonna reject you, and that's fine. And it gets easier, having kids gets easier. I think that's what I realized, you know, at the end of the day, If it's not fun, don't do it. Bottom line, if you can't have fun with it, why the fuck are you there?

[P] I think an end note of that is that even though we started out in this mentor-mentee relationship, our whole dynamic has shifted into, you know, a sisterhood. Of now, you too are in that mentor-mentor relationship. And you're able to guide me as well, too, right? So, all jokes and inside jokes aside. That is also really important for me is that you mattered for me, and you still do. And I hope you know that.

[V] I do now. [Both laugh].

Glossary

Amiskwaciŵâskahikan - Edmonton
Asiniskaw Sipisis - Camrose
Ni-kakês-kimâw - I mentor him/her
Nitisiyihkâson - My name is
Tân'si - Hello, greeting

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Season 2, Episode 14

okihcitâwak/ okihcitâwiskwêwak *Warrior Men and Women*

Paulina Johnson, JA Morrow, and Jude McNaughton

Synopsis: What does it mean to be a warrior today? And what about in the past? The concept of an okihcitâw, warrior, or okihcitâwiskwêw, woman warrior, is surrounded by myths of Manifest Destiny and the Noble Savage – they are more myth than reality. Let us break it down to what it has always been and what specific role it will always play.

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Part One:
The person who stands up for what is right

[00:37-00:39 Contrary to popular belief,] I don't speak for all Indigenous people. But I've talked to enough of us to know that a lot of our people feel that something is not right. It's like we're meant for something else. You know what I'm talking about? That nagging sense that no matter how hard the world pushes against you, that somewhere deep within you, there's something stronger - something better - waiting to push back just as hard. That's what I'm talking about.

If you know, you know.

Have you ever heard that song "Electric Avenue" by Eddy Grant? The one that goes:

> *We gonna rock down to Electric Avenue*
> *And then we'll take it higher*

[1:24 -1:26 That's the best I can do at singing]

That song has an interesting history. It's about a 1981 race riot in a neighborhood in London, England, called Brixton. A lot of Caribbean immigrants lived there. And in the years leading up to the riot, the neighborhood had a lot of social and economic problems.

In April of 1981, the relationship between the police and community members, especially young men, broke down. For days, people rioted and set fire to buildings until 2500 police officers from across England swarmed Brixton.

When Eddy Grant says they're going to take it higher, he means the riot will move to a major shopping street in Brixton.

But this episode isn't about riots. It's about warriors. I mention Eddy Grant and Brixton because of another line in the version of "Electric Avenue" he sang and it goes:

> *Workin' so hard like a soldier*
> *Can't afford a thing on TV*
> *Deep in my heart, I am warrior*
> *Can't get food for them kid*

Again, if you know, you know.

Grant is singing about that feeling of being meant for something else. Of knowing that inside you is a warrior that is being held back. This is somebody all of us, regardless of gender, could have been. But for whatever reason, though, we've given up on that part of ourselves that lives deep within our hearts. This is the person we know that we're capable of, the person who stands up for what is right and knows when and how hard to push back.

One of the most enduring images of an Indigenous warrior in Canada is not of a ripped naked half-man on horse - there's no William Knifeman here. [03:06-03:09 And again, if you know, you know.] Instead, the lasting image of a warrior is much more recent. It comes from the 1990 Oka Crisis when a picture was taken of a Canadian soldier and an Ojibwe activist named Brad Larocque staring each other down.

In that picture, which is now known as Face to Face, Larocque is wearing camouflage. There's a gun slung over his back. His face is hidden behind a bandana. His eyes are behind large sunglasses. His hair was obscured by a hat.

The power in the picture of Larocque is not in the sight of him. It's in his presence. Looking at it, you get that sense that he's a sacred protector, that he's someone who has been taking on the role of protecting the land and community from danger. You can imagine him as what the Lakota scholar Vine Deloria (1998) has described as being someone who:

> *[H]ad a sense of personal worth, of a mission to be accomplished, and of a relationship with the life forces of the greater cosmos in a measure that we have not seen since. Fighting overwhelming odds, suffering the loneliness of knowing the situation was hopeless, and maintaining their sense of person was an achievement few of us can conceive and none of us can match.*

Part Two:
Warriors

There are contrasting implications between the English word *warrior* and the Anishinaabemowin word Ogichidaa. In her book *Warrior Life: Indigenous Resistance & Resurgence*, Palmater (2020) notes the English term *warrior* is "an embodiment of conflict based in the root word 'war'" and that "absent of violence, a warrior in English seems to have no purpose" (p. ix). The word Ogichidaa can be broken into three distinct parts: ogi, gichi, and ode. The three

translate to English as an *esteemed large heart* (Palmater, 2020, p. ix). Within this context, Ogichidaa defines a warrior as someone "held in high esteem due to their 'large heart'... this kind of warrior is not one defined by violence but by love" (Palmater, 2020, p. ix).

The Ogichidaa Palmater describes is a paragon of love, responsibility, and humility, willingness to self-sacrifice, and above all, the desire to forge and maintain peace. The Ogichidaa protects and cares for their community and its members, especially those who are the most vulnerable or under-served or underrepresented. They serve with love and do so without expecting a reward or recognition, though their actions are revered nonetheless. Their actions are born of love and are undertaken for the sake of love (Palmater, 2020, p. x). There is repetition of terminology that provokes a messy but deeply important discussion: *serving and protecting* a community.

In *Nationhood Interrupted: Revitalizing nêhiyaw Legal Systems* (2015), Sylvia McAdam accounts how her great-grandmother fulfilled her role as okihcitâwiskwêw, the best translation she gives us is from meaning mother and warrior woman (p. 54). Women play an essential and integral role in Nêhiyawak societies, and the okihcitâwiskwêwak, *women warriors,* hold specific influence and authority that places them as advisors to the okimâw, *chief*, and his headmen. In Nêhiyaw society, okimâw had to give freely of his possessions to those who needed them; the term is derived from the verbal form of "gift-giving" (Waugh, 1996, p. 66). The role of the okihcitâwiskwêwak was to speak on behalf of the land. [06:59 Including] Whether [07:00 or not] it would be surrendered, and [07:02 especially now] through the patriarchal customs of the British Crown (McAdam, 2015, p. 55). A woman's connection to land is based on the understanding that the earth is female (McAdam, 2015, p. 56). Knowledge of our spiritual connection between land and women has yet to be acknowledged by the settler nation we have come to know today.

This teaching of a warrior woman is rooted in the concept of Pimâcihowin. It provides guidance on how individuals should conduct themselves when exercising their duty to provide for their life needs from the gifts provided by [07:32] Creator. These teachings are central to the training provided by Nêhiyawak to their People, enabling them to achieve independence and providing for their needs, families and communities. The teachings related to tipiyawêwisowin, *self-sufficiency,* allowed the individual direction and guidance by laying out the requirements for achieving a sense of self-worth, dignity, and independence - values that are essential to a Nation's internal peace, harmony, and security.

Pimâcihowin is fundamental to one's way of life, but commitment is fundamental through the actions of an Ogichidaa. For instance, the kakêskihkêmowina, *teachings,* include unwritten but well-known codes of behaviour for the Nêhiyawak with Pimâcihowin (Cardinal & Hildebrand, 2010, pp. 44-45). The codes of behaviour that a person was encouraged to acquire are:

> **iyinisiwin:** the ability to develop a keen mind;
>
> **nahihtamowin:** the ability to develop a keen sense of hearing;
>
> **nahâsiwin:** the ability to develop alert and discerning faculties;
>
> **nisitohtamowin:** the ability to develop understanding;
>
> **kakayiwatisiwin:** the ability to develop an inner sense of industriousness or inner ability or desire to be hardworking;
>
> **astoskewimahcihowin:** the inner desire or need to work;
>
> **waskawîwin:** inner energy to move or develop a sense of personal initiative;
>
> **manatisiwin:** the inner capacity of respect; and [08:50 importantly],
>
> **kisêwâtisiwim:** the capacity to be kind. (Cardinal & Hildebrand, 2010, p. 45)

These codes are connected to Mother Earth and aim to create a livelihood founded on the virtues of the Nêhiyawak Nation. Pimâcihowin ensures the continuation of Nêhiyaw livelihood, which is essential for the persistence of our culture, language, and being.

Therefore, when we look at the concept of Ogichidaa it lies in the continuation of our livelihood, and that is, Pimâcihowin.

Part Three:
Battle of Cutknife Hill

Understanding what it means to be a warrior is seen in the years leading up to colonization. One story I would like to tell you is the Battle of Cutknife Hill and the fight for the remaining years against colonial rule and domination to

maintain. Especially during the 1870s when relationships between Indigenous peoples and the Canadian Government were deteriorating. Many Indigenous communities started to resist the injustice upon them as they faced starvation and famine. What was once a land of opportunity and abundance became desolate. Colonization impacted the very essence of [09:58 our livelihoods].

At Fort Battleford, Saskatchewan, Lietenant-Colonel (LCol.) William Otter was on his way to the fort with some of his men to protect settlers from the nearby Nêhiyaw and Assiniboine Nations. [10:10-10:11 Essentially he was to be stationed there]. The Nations at this time felt deceit from the lack of Treaty promises and obligations as they were starving. Chief Poundmaker, whose Band reached Fort Battleford intended to receive the promised rations, but left empty-handed. He had come to the fort with the intentions of being genuine but did not receive that from the Indian Agent in charge of rations (Valour Canada, n.d., para. 1-3).

Shortly after LCol. Otter arrived at the fort with orders from General Middleton to leave the Nêhiyawak and Assiniboine alone; he travelled 60 kilometers in search of Poundmaker's Band.

I will account the story shared by Jon Guttman in the *Canadian Military Magazine* titled "The Battle of Cut Knife Hill: Fine Day Teaches Canadians a Lesson in Fire and Maneuver," and I quote:

> *...Leaving about half of his force at Battleford, Otter departed at 1600 hours on May 1 with a flying column of 392 men, 75 of whom were NWMP [NorthWest Mounted Police], with a rearguard contingent of Battleford Rifles. Whoever was not mounted rode in the wagons. Besides their single-shot Snider-Enfield and repeating Winchester rifles, Otter's men were supported by B Battery's two 7-pounder rifled cannon and a Gatling gun. The weather was cloudy and drizzling, but the force made good progress through low wooded hills. Scouting reports had pinpointed Poundmaker's band east of Cut Knife Creek, but when Otter's force reached it early on the morning of May 2, they found the camp deserted. Poundmaker's people had in fact settled in on the far side of Cut Knife Hill to the west.*
>
> *Neither force was aware of the other's proximity until Jacob, a Cree elder who habitually went for an early morning ride, spotted the Canadians and galloped back to alert the camp. As sleepy Cree and Assiniboine hastily dressed and stumbled out of their teepees, Poundmaker, the Cree's political leader, deferred command to his war chief, Fine Day (Kamiokisihwew). With a mixed bag of bows and arrows, muzzle-loaders, shotguns and a few up-to-date rifles*

and limited ammunition available to his warriors, Fine Day selected about 100 braves and relegated half of them to escorting the women, children and elderly from danger and guarding them. The rest he divided into squads of four or five.

Meanwhile, Canadian scouts were advancing just north of Cut Knife Hill. At about 200 meters to their left, they spotted the teepees and lodges. Dismounting, they sent their horses back and took up positions just below the brow of the hill. Upon sighting the scouts, the First Nations likewise dropped to the ground and at 0500 hours hostilities commenced with a mutual fusillade.

To his preponderance in infantry firepower Otter soon added his 7-pounders, which began firing into Poundmaker's abandoned encampment, followed by the Gatling gun. Fine Day had a more intimate knowledge of the terrain, however, and also recognized that, as long as they kept their heads down, his braves were under the trajectory of the crew-served weapons. As Canadian troops advanced up the hill, he could also see that the best place for his warriors was in the coulees, ravines, trees and bushes to either side of them. Signaling his squads using a hand mirror, he directed an alternating but deadly accurate fire that convinced the Canadians that they were facing more warriors than were there.

Behind the firing line, brigade surgeon F.W. Strange formed the wagons into a hollow square, in which he set up his medical station. Soon he was treating 16 wounded, two of whom would die later.

At least one of the elderly 7-pounders broke up upon firing, its barrel rolling down the hill. The crew retrieved it, bound it back together with bits of wood and rope, and fought on. At one point Fine Day signaled a frontal assault on the guns, only to face a countercharge by members of the 2 QOR, NWMP and some gunners. A Nez Percé, probably a refugee from the 1877 war in Idaho who had settled among the Cree, fell dead alongside another warrior, and English-born Corporal Ralf Sleigh took a fatal round in the head before the Canadians retreated with several more men wounded.

After six hours of fighting on a day that became increasingly hot, Colonel Otter took stock of the situation. His 2 QOR had acquitted itself well, but it and other advancing units were in danger of being enfiladed by the First Nations who he noticed advancing on either flank. Familiar with what had befallen Lieutenant-Colonel George A. Custer's 7th U.S. Cavalry Regiment at the Little Bighorn River on June 25, 1876, he had the wounded piled on the wagons and

> *ordered a general retirement, covered by two lines of Battleford Rifles, joined by the Gatling and remaining operational 7-pounder once they got east of Cut Knife Creek.*
>
> *Although Otter's retreat was in commendably good order, his exposed troops were still vulnerable to a follow-up attack by the First Nations warriors. Poundmaker is generally given credit for ordering Fine Day to let the soldiers go, though it is just as likely that Fine Day judged his warriors too few or too low on ammunition to make it worthwhile. (Guttman, 2017, para. 10-21).*

The reality of Cut Knife Hill is that it was the first successful defeat of the Canadian Militia on home "territory" during the Northwest Rebellion. What is telling about the story is that not many know that it happened. Many also do not know of Chief Fineday as Chief Poundmaker's War Chief, or that the two chiefs coordinated the community and nation at all times. After the Battle of Cutknife Hill and the North-West Resistance of 1885, Chief Poundmaker was convicted by the Canadian Government of treason felony. In 2019, 134 years after his trial and conviction, then-Prime Minister Justin Trudeau fully exonerated *Chief Poundmaker* (Government of Canada, 2022). [15:57-16:45 The reality of the battle of Cut Knife Hill is that many people assumed that Indigenous peoples never fought back or resisted to the hands that they were dealt. This is not to say that this is a call to arms or resistance in violence. But the thing is, how Canada portrays Indigenous history is that we just settled and took all the hostilities and hardships upon ourselves when it absolutely is not true. The battle of Cut Knife Hill described by the military historian also doesn't actually portray the indigenous mindset of war. It wasn't for bloodshed, it was for protection. What was the best way to protect their people? The thing is you can write it one way, but as the African proverb goes: *until a lion learns to write, every story will glorify the hunter*].

If the world around you were changing and shifting into a reality you never expected, you would do all you could to hold on to your livelihood. This is what Chief Poundmaker and okihcitâw/okihcitâwiskwêw hold on to. Our wars today are very different than those of the past.

Importantly, in 2018, I became an okihcitâwiskwêw in my community. A role bestowed upon me by my First Nation and Women's Advisory Council. A role intended to defend the land, People, and those who cannot speak for themselves. I am not Chief Poundmaker or Chief Fineday, but I carry this role with the intention of my community in this life. [17:26-17:34 I carry it with the importance of knowing that it is about love, as well compassion and kindness]. Which

questions, then, what would you do if you were in our position, witnessing the world around you shift and change?

Part Four:
A New Landscape of Defending – Climate Warriors and Land Defenders

Today, Indigenous Peoples in Canada face two real challenges. First, we were systematically stripped of our lands due to colonization. This led to economic, social, and political conflicts between indigenous groups and the state. Second, colonization created psychological and social divisions within our communities. Some of us identify with the colonizers and accept Canadian authority, while others keep it Indigenous and assert their nation's authority.

As I alluded to at the beginning of this episode, the warrior never left us. The modern history of Indigenous peoples is primarily about our battle to overcome the impacts of colonization and the ways Canadian governments have stripped us of our lands. These stories can be seen in the picture of Brad Larocque at Oka and, more recently, in national media coverage of the Wet'suwet'en Land Defenders.

While I'm on the topic, it is worth retelling the story of the Wet'suwet'en. Their source of struggle is a Coastal GasLink's pipeline construction that cuts through their territory in British Columbia's Northern Central Interior in half. All five Wet'suwet'en clans and their Chiefs oppose this project, saying that they have not consented to the pipeline according to their laws and customs.

It is also worth noting that the Wet'suwet'en are matriarchal. This aspect of their culture highlights the intersection of indigeneity, race, and gender in their struggle.

In protest of the pipeline's construction, the Wet'suwet'en have raised groups of land defenders. These people come from their own community, while others - like the Mohawk activist Layla Staats, who was featured in the film *Boil Alert* - made their way across North America and the world to stand up to private security and Mounties who bulldoze buildings and desecrate ceremonial spaces. These Defenders are the new generation of okihcitâw willing to sacrifice their freedom to protect Indigenous lands and communities.

For their actions, the Wet'suwet'en Land Defenders are criminalized. In

December 2018, the British Columbia Supreme Court gave Coastal GasLink a temporary order stopping the Land Defenders from blocking pipeline construction. Then, in December 2019, the BCSC issued another order with enforcement provisions. Since then, the Canadian government and the Province of British Columbia have made court orders to keep constant watch, harass, and forcibly remove and imprison Land Defenders. In three major police operations between 2019 and 2021, a total of 74 people were arrested and detained.

In December 2022, five Land Defenders pleaded guilty to their charges. The result was a ban from their ancestral land – this outcome shows that the Canadian government still fears okihcitâw. The idea that Indigenous people will defend their land is a real threat to the authority of the state.

Also important to the story of the Wet'suwet'en is the criminalization of Indigenous peoples and the lengths Canada will go to abuse and dispossess our bodies. The way the government has chosen to police looks nothing like Andy Griffith and Barney Fife in Mayberry. No. There is no polite 'cop talks' or a warning of 'I know your father'. Hell, even Judge Dredd had a sense of justice. Really, when it comes to policing Indigenous communities, it is full-force military tactics, attack dogs, and helicopters that are a meanspirited and cruel continuation of past colonial repression and trauma.

In recent years, there have been conversations in law enforcement about officers needing to act as *guardians* rather than *warriors* in both the Canadian and American settler-state contexts. The implications of defining the English *warrior* by capability and obligation for violence are echoed in police institutions in both settler-states. In a 2020 article from The Globe and Mail, Toronto, police chief Norm Lipinski states in an interview, "For the Surrey police service, I am looking for guardians, not warriors," highlighting that "a police officer's job is mostly managing human struggles, not crime" (Bailey, 2020). This quote emphasizes the English context of *warrior* as removed from aiding in "human struggles" and that the role is instead defined by *crime-fighting*. This is a belief shared by Dr. Samantha J Simon, an assistant professor in the schools of Government and Public Policy and Sociology at the University of Arizona. Her work is centered around violence in relation to gender and race, as well as organizational inequality, with the brunt of her ethnographic studies focusing on the training and hiring processes in police academies.

In her journal titled *Training for War: Academy Socialization and Warrior Policing*, Dr. Simon (2023) examines the "warrior-guardian construct". She references the American establishment of the Task Force on 21st Century

Policing, which "generated 59 recommendations and 92 action items" in their final report. At the top of the list of recommendations was that law enforcement should embrace the mindset of a guardian rather than a warrior. A task force member and executive director of the Washington State Criminal Justice Training Commission is quoted stating that a warrior's mission is the same as a soldier's: to conquer, and that officers should instead adopt the mission of a guardian: to protect (Simon, 2023). There is also contradictions recorded in this ethnographic research. On one hand, it appears that officers were taught to embody both the warrior and the guardian, and on the other hand, "cadets were taught that in order to be guardians, they must *first* be warriors" (Simon, 2023). This implies that they viewed their relationship with the public as a war. How does one serve and protect when the public is viewed as an enemy with whom they are at war? Simply put, one cannot.

When we look at the creation of the North West Mounted Police, who we call Simâkanis, translating to *those with long swords*. Their creation to my people was one of protection, but it was and is anything but that. The North-West Mounted Police (NWMP) was established in 1873 under the direction of Prime Minister John A. MacDonald, who sought to create a new military-style police force to control First Nations and Métis while the government was trying to populate the West with new settlers. With permission and authority from Ottawa, the NWMP marched into the West in 1874 to serve as a colonial control for politicians and lawmakers. The newly established NWMP now acted as a paramilitary force with powers to act as an additional source of repression for Indigenous peoples.

NWMP officers acted as Justices of Peace and had the power to apprehend and sentence offenders and enforce the Indian Act policies like the Pass System. Barracks of the NWMP were often used for court proceedings and housing offenders in temporary prisons. Together with the Indian Agents, the NWMP enforced the laws of the Indian Act by policing Indigenous children to attend residential schools. The NWMP acted as an active arm of colonialism directed by the Canadian government, which still happens today. I only hope that the NWMP, who are now the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), see where we learn to defend and why we do what we do, which is not as protectors but as [25:29 okihcitâw and okihcitâwiskwêwak] warrior women and men. [25:33-25:37 Not for violence and war, but for love and protection].

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Part Five:
Conclusion

Our world has changed. We are post-apocalyptic, but we maintain the roots of our culture and knowledge to defend those who are vulnerable and those who "struggle" in this world. Even if we are targeted, made hypervisible, or our voices shake, my intention is not to criticize the systems in place [26:01 they are doing what they were designed to do], and I aim not to explain what a warrior is but ultimately what a warrior represents. This is the true power of one who puts their life on the line, especially for People, Nations, and Relations that they advocate for is the literal embodiment of "responsibility, showing up whenever a community calls upon them but also *serving when no one is watching*" (Palmater, 2020, p. ix, emphasis added). [26:27-26:36 This is what it means to be a true warrior. And I only hope that I am fulfilling this obligation for my community].

Research Assistant(s): Krystal Louie and Drake Worth

Keywords: *Woman Warrior, Battle of Cutknife Hill, Land Defenders*

Glossary

Astoskewimahcihowin - the inner desire or need to work;
Iyinisiwin - the ability to develop a keen mind;
Kakêskihkêmowina - teachings, specifically of ceremony
Kisêwâtisiwim - the capacity to be kind
Nahihtamowin - the ability to develop a keen sense of hearing; being an effective listener
Nahâsiwin - the ability to develop alert and discerning faculties; finely tuned awareness/perception
Nisitohtamowin - the ability to develop understanding; perceiving through the senses
Ogichidaa (Anishinaabemowin) - warrior, directly means a person with an esteemed large heart
Okihcitâw - warrior
Okihcitâwiskwêwak - Women warriors
Okimâw - Chief
Pimâcihowin - the act of making a (good) living
Pîhtokahânapiwiyin - Chief Poundmaker
Simâkanis - those with the long swords; North West Mounted Police
Tipiyawêwisowin - self-sufficiency,
Waskawîwin - inner energy to move or develop a sense of personal initiative; motion

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Season 2, Episode 15

The Auntie Manifesto

Paulina Johnson, Idylla Wakana Kirezi, Jessica Morrison, and Marieliv Flores Villalobos

Synopsis: Manifestation is one of the most integral aspects of surviving a world not designed for you as an underrepresented and marginalized womxn. The Auntie Manifesto isn't your typical episode; no, it's breathing life into those who are exhausted and need some of our heart fire to relight who they have always been. Listen, speak, and call out to the universe your power, softness, and wisdom, which is you and your spirit alone.

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Part One:
Ancestrally Connected

This manifestation is for our Black, Indigenous, and Womxn of Colour to let them know they are seen, heard, and felt. To remove the many layers of exhaustion that this world gives us without request. We acknowledge your sacrifice to continue even when you don't want to, or when it's too much. You think you are alone, but we are here manifesting a prayer for you to carry you where you need to go. Give us your burdens, put down the weight heavy on your shoulders, and walk with us.

Speak these words into existence and meet us in the world that we only know. Our immersion in these realities that we only understand will unify us all as we carry each other forward.

> **You can't test the bloodline that I come from,**
>
> **Because you don't hold my spirit,**
>
> **And you can't disturb my emotions.**
>
> **My bloodline is ancestrally connected,**
>
> **My mind is the master of my fate.**
>
> **Blessed by the medicines grounded,**
>
> **And universally divine.**
>
> **My blood is the ochre,**
>
> **Protecting my energy and heart.**
>
> **The land that marks my feet,**
>
> **Nurtures my flame.**

The berries that dye my fingers,

Comforts me in every bite - renewing the ties between generations.

I hold space for you and I,

So that we can carry our liberation.

Free from the chains around us,

That tells us how to feel.

You are never alone in your presence,

Protected by those who came before you.

Shielded by their experiences,

Trust in the blood memory.

We are here because of those before us who found love,

And remember that you are delicate.

Listen to the dreams and voices inside you,

They speak to you and guide you.

Transfer that knowledge through the generations of eyes that have seen,

For the next generation to carry out that journey

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Part Two:
To the Aunties Before

I find comfort in knowing that I am never alone on the path I walk on. I am forever guarded and embraced by the warmth of the Aunties before me. The unique hardships we, as BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) individuals, face are painful; they leave scars and lead us to think the world can never hold space for us. And although the scars never fully disappear, they do heal through the wisdom left by those who walked the same path as me. This wisdom offers comfort that we can never find anywhere else. With this, hear the words of those who came before you.

Winona La Duke - From the Auntie who honours and protects the earth

- "The Earth is our Mother. From her we get our life, and our ability to live. It is our responsibility to care for our mother, and in caring for our Mother, we care for ourselves. Women, all females are the manifestation of Mother Earth in human form." (p. 78)

- "Native American teachings describe the relations all around— animals, fish, trees, and rocks—as our brothers, sisters, uncles, and grandpas. Our relations to each other, our prayers whispered across generations to our relatives [...] bind our cultures together." (p. 130-131)

- "What we have is because someone stood up before. What are our seventh generation will have is a consequence of our actions today." (p. 19)

Maria Campbell - From the Auntie who remembers and tells our stories

- "The novels and the poems that people write — are a way that we can talk to each other without having barriers between us." (2019, para. 3)

- "In storytelling, laughter is important. It opens you up. It opens all of the places in you that have sealed up. I always remember when we performed my play, *The Book of Jessica*, in Saskatoon years ago. Some people in the audience were crying and feeling really sad. But all of the Indigenous people who were there were laughing at all the places where other people were crying. Laughter is a way to open you up so that you can let toxins out. You let the medicine come in." (2019, para. 6-8)

- "The old people always say *payatick*, which means "careful." Think before you speak; words have power. The words and the story have work to do, and that breath is the, you know, sort of like the foundation." (Gingell, 2004, p. 191-192)

Lee Maracle - From the Auntie who writes our story

- I tire easily these days ... Sometimes I feel the tiredness is old, as old as the colonial process itself. On those days I am energized by the fact that it is not my fatigue but the fatigue of the oppressor's system which haunts me. On other days the tiredness is deeply personal. (p. 10)

- "I succeeded on my own, why can't you?" is a dispassionate call to the majority of Native people to forsake one another. The end result is each of us digging our own way out of the hole, filling up the path with dirt as we go. Such things as justice and principles prevent the whole people from becoming dispassionate. Until all of us are free, the few who think they are remain tainted with enslavement. (p. 13)

Haunani-Kay Trask - From the Auntie who reminds us where we come from

- Our story remains unwritten. It rests within the culture, which is inseparable from the land. To know this is to know our history. To write this is to write of the land and the people who are born from her. (p. 121)

Part Three:

Be Cautious when you hear...

[07:06 Be cautious when you hear] "I don't think it's a problem."

There is much ignorance in this statement. Instead of saying unnecessary and unproductive things about topics you don't understand, consider asking how and why it is a problem. This will open a conversation and bring different views into perspective.

[07:29 Be cautious when you hear] "It's not that bad."

Dismissing valid feelings of prejudice due to personal biases is a significant

problem that needs to be addressed. Biases can cause us to overlook or downplay someone else's experiences, which can lead to further harm and injustice. Recognizing and confronting our biases can create a more equitable society where everyone's feelings are heard and respected.

[07:59 Be cautious when you hear] "It happened so long ago, it's in the past."

History has a tendency to repeat. You can't justify the present by dismissing what has happened prior to today. Without acknowledging what came before us, we can't move forward properly. Would you grow a flower bed on a heap of garbage to mask the view? Probably not. This is essentially what you are doing when you tell someone that their feelings about the past aren't relevant or valid. You expect us to notice the flowers instead of the foundation.

[08:35 Be cautious when you hear] "I didn't see it that way."

This can easily be used as an excuse not to make the primary effort to recognize the privileges, discrimination, and power imbalances in daily life. Be open to other views and put yourself in someone else's shoes. Empathy can take you further than your narrow mind state.

[08:57 Be cautious when you hear] "I care about you."

Care is a cop-out by those who have never known privilege,

Our paths are not singular. They converge and diverge in [09:08 a multitude of] different ways [09:11 from anywhere from two to infinity].

Part Four:
*We need **you***

Growing up, Black, Indigenous, and Womxn of Colour have been told that we must adjust ourselves to fit into the categories of the world. It takes immense strength to refuse the forces that break us into pieces to a point where we can no longer recognize who we are and to what community we belong. Do not worry. We have all been there. We understand that after experiencing that, it is not easy to love ourselves. However, with every step we take to rebuild our connection with the land, culture, family, and friends, we are creating new dreams and

hope for our present and future.

Some days, it can be hard. But I am here to tell you that we need you. You are a key part of our love revolution, and we are here for you when you want to fight and rest. You exist at this moment, in this place and timeline, to experience joy. Because you are part of this creation. It is time to acknowledge the fear that has been imposed on us, to thank it for taking care of us and set it free. Now, we have each other to protect in our paths of joy.

> Delicate and sensitive.
>
> We need to stay together.
>
> Power in numbers, together we will overcome
>
> Power in presence; show up as your authentic self
>
> If your surroundings are less than ideal, put your dreams into tunnel vision
>
> And if you feel alone, know that your ancestors are with you in all ways; call onto them
>
> They will assist you in overcoming your trials and tribulations
>
> There is strength in your weakness
>
> You carry purpose with endless possibilities; don't let this world limit your destiny
>
> The world would not be the same without you
>
> Your life must come full circle
>
> Celebrate you
>
> Every single chance you get.

So meet us, where the laughter does not hide our pain, where we can remove the veils and masks we have come to know all too well, and, importantly, where your love is anti-colonial as it has always been. Rest your woes with us, and let us take care of you since you have been taking care of others for far too long. We

feel everything you are facing because we are you.

Keywords: *Manifestation, Black, Indigenous, Womxn of Colour, BIPOC, Auntie, Care, Experiences, Anti-Colonial*

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Season 2, Episode 16

A(u)nti(e)-Colonial Love Ties

Paulina Johnson et al.

Synopsis: The research assistants (RA's) reflect on Season Two. They tell us who they are, what it means for them to be a part of a decolonial project, what they have learned that they want to bring into the future, and their hopes for the future for themselves and the listeners. This episode explores what it means to be a community and a research team.

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Part One:
Maintaining kinship

When we understand connection, we often place it within the context of belonging. Yet, it is more than that, it is hope, commitment, respect, and kindness. Season Two brings together the research team from Season One with new faces and new areas of interest as we continue to share the importance of decolonial work as we expand the reach of the auntie is in. This podcast is the work of numerous hours of research, writing, editing, producing, and teamwork. Where we come together at the University of Alberta and create a work with the ultimate goal of liberation, acceptance, and transformation.

When I use the terms love, respect, and kindness, it is not rooted in colonial ideologies or philosophies - it is from my community, my People, and my family. It is love without constraints, hope without fear, respect without domination. What makes this podcast important is the voices you do not hear in the previous episodes, but as we did last season, here they are to share what it means for them to be part of liberation heart work and the journeys that they are all on.

Part Two:
Auntie's Favourites

Luke Aaron Wonneck [2:05]:

My name is Luke Wonneck and I'm a PhD candidate in Sociology here at the U of A. What's really given me hope this season is the younger folks on our podcast team. We have quite a few people in their early 20s, for whom high school isn't such a distant memory... and boy are they on it! They know a heck of a lot about the colonial history of this country — the ways in which Indigenous peoples' relationships with their territories have been attacked to create space for settler society. They are willing to listen to Indigenous perspectives while critically examining their own role in perpetuating this history. And perhaps most importantly, they've combined this knowledge and willingness with sensitivity towards others on an emotional, interpersonal level. They care deeply for Dr. J and the rest of the team, and work to lift each other up through stressful and busy times. For example, one young team member who wishes to remain anonymous organized a collective Christmas gift basket for Dr. J this past December.

Now I'm 32 years old. Perhaps not an old fart quite yet, but I have been on this earth at least a decade longer than some of our team members. And I can

tell you, when I was in my early 20s I wasn't thinking about decolonization or Indigenous resurgence. It wasn't remotely on my radar. No, I was doing an environmental science undergrad degree, and I was pretty sure Western science had the answers to the environmental crises we were facing (and continue to face). On the one hand, natural sciences were going to tell us what a sustainable future would look like, and on the other hand, social sciences were going to tell us how to get society on board.

It's taken me the better part of the past decade to figure out that the solution I was envisioning ignored the connections between environmental destruction and colonization, perpetuated the erasure of Indigenous presence and knowledge from these lands, and therefore wasn't going to be very effective — quite the opposite. That's why it's so humbling for me to work with young folks who have already had similar realizations and carry their knowledge with such care. I've learned much from them over the past six months, and know they will have many more gifts to offer the rest of us in the coming years — whether or not we're expecting them.

Marieliv Flores Villalobos [4:04]:

I am Marieliv Flores Villalobos. I moved to Canada two years ago from Peru. Even though I miss my family, friends, food and being close to the ocean, I am also happy to be able to call home to this land now known as Edmonton. I am a Ph.D. student at the School of Public Health. Last year has been a journey to explore the reasons and motivation for what I am doing here. One of the answers is that I want to keep working on women's rights specifically in our sexual health and rights.

The other answer is connected to my personal and collective analysis of what is my role and responsibilities in the decolonial project led by Indigenous peoples. I am grateful and honoured to be part of this Podcast as it has allowed me to connect with very wise people who are not afraid of sharing their doubts, concerns, and criticism of our actions. So for now, my responsibility is to keep learning with my mind and spirit, while keeping my heart open to the teachings and calls to action from Indigenous people, to speak up when there is an attempt to disguise settler power, and to be critical of my own actions.

During my time working on the podcast, I have learned the importance of teamwork. Academia is a space that promotes isolation and jealousy in a goal-oriented environment, as it rewards the person with more grants and publications. With this team, I am learning that process-orientated dynamics have a greater impact on research, researchers, and relationships. This is something

that I want to bring into my professional and personal future.

If I imagine my future, I hope to have the opportunity to share the methodology of our work so that other people in academia can also experience the joy and love in this environment and the support of a community when things do not work out. As social scientists, we are taught to question, be curious, and be objective to follow rigour, however thanks to my mentor Denise and my auntie Paulina, I know that there is nothing more powerful than being able to connect with our hearts to amplify voices. My hope for my fellow social scientists is that we can feel more comfortable acknowledging our biases and being transparent in our relationships.

Juan Guevara Salamanca [6:31]:

Hi! To those who actively listen to us, you may already recognize me as the Colombian dude with two last names. Yes, this is Juan! Again. I am the son of Luis Ernesto and Ruby and the proud partner of a marvellous, brilliant, and talented Colombian woman who joined us for a couple of episodes in Season 1. Gina is her name, and I am so astonished by her capacity to adapt, love, and care that I could spend the next 10 hours in a boring soliloquy of attributes and admiration (I guess it would be boring for you all). I just wanted to share a little about myself and my relations because our relations matter! They speak of the transformational process we all experience throughout life in how we relate to Others and ourselves. They require commitment and action in caring for and loving each other. And these elements are precisely what it means to be part of a decolonial project: to consider Others in manners in which we accept and care for them, but also for ourselves; in co-constituting renewed forms to relate and to respond when needed; to react when facing challenges and difficulties; and to support each other in the hideousness of our times.

One of the main messages I take home from this season is the assurance that I am not walking alone; Others always accompany me. In some way the prophecy of the Eagle and the Condor speak up for this becoming together in solidarity, with the commitment to decolonizing ourselves together in a process that implies endurance, constancy and discipline. I hope we all can learn to see the beauty in each Others' eyes and that love is traversed by those Others' eyes: we are always in connection with Others, but colonial practices retrieve us from the awareness and the transformational process that Others have on ourselves.

Sam Dancey [8:50]:

Hello, my name is Sam Dancey. You might have heard me on Episode Seven,

as well as some of the episodes from last season. I am currently wrapping up my honours degree in cellular and molecular biology at MacEwan University. For most of my life when I thought about my future, I always saw myself as a scientist, doing research in a lab and only really interacting with other scientists. This is because my entire life I've struggled with feeling like I belong, except for when I am with cells and plants. However, in the last year, I have realized that although I still hold a lot of love for molecular biology and science as a whole, it was not built for me. And it was not built for any of the people I care about. At least not in its current form. I still consider myself a scientist and I probably always will. My definition of science is constantly evolving. I think it will continue to change, and I'm learning to be okay with that. I'm learning to be okay with not having concrete answers to everything, and accepting things the way they are. I am also coming to know that if I'm meant to understand something deeper, I will, I just have to be patient and give it time.

When I look to the future, I want there to be a world where Indigenous Knowledge is understood to be equal to other sources. Where Indigenous voices and words are not only heard but actually listened to. I want there to be a future where academia is run through the principles of relationality, and people are encouraged to live the good life, and actually be people.

I have come to realize that the people you work with are the largest factor in determining how much you enjoy whatever you do. Co-authorship allows everyone to use their strengths and share the workload, to fight and flourish together, and to support each other at every step of the way. Being a part of this podcast is much more than being one member of a research group, it is creating a community. It is the people on this podcast team that I actually belong with.

Now when I imagine my future as a scientist, I do not see myself alone in a lab, I see myself as part of a team of people who have taken the time to get to know me. Who care more about each other and the importance of the work we do, than what someone else thinks we *should* be doing. I want a future where the people doing science, however you want to define science, are first and foremost, people. Decolonization to me means rehumanization at every step of the process.

Kalias Bijman [11:34]:

My name is Kalias Bijman, I have a BA in Psychology from the University of Alberta. My family came to Canada from Western Europe in 2007.

Being a part of a decolonial project means trying to dismantle settler colo-

nialism while also living under it. It involves balancing between resistance and adherence. As much as we'd love to resist fully and completely, to hold nothing back, that isn't always possible when careers and livelihoods are on the line. Decolonial projects have to pick their battles. And sometimes that hurts. It can feel like we're compromising our goals and ourselves to appease something we dislike, something we're trying to change and make better. But working in a team means that we support each other through those hard times. And it means we have a place to go where we don't need to compromise, where we can be ourselves completely and be accepted. We are surrounded on all sides by a system that hurts the many for the sake of the few. But here, there is a safe haven. And there is room for all of us. That is something I've never experienced in my life.

What I have learned here is that my resistance as a white settler, when it is uninformed by Indigenous knowledges and perspectives, can be damaging. I have learned to step back and listen, to recognize when I'm doing something for the right reasons as opposed to doing it just to *feel* like I've done something of value. And I've learned that not every moment needs to be spent doing something productive. Existing as you are is in itself an act of resistance. I hope to learn how to better resist a system from within a system, and to do so in ways that feel authentic to who I am.

I hope the future of this podcast contains less and less compromises. I hope that one day we can resist completely, without risking all that we do. I hope that these voices inspire you to resist in the ways that may be uncomfortable, but also ways that feel true to who you are. I hope you can take comfort in knowing that we are rooting for you, we are fighting for you, and you are safe with us.

Drake Worth [13:22]:

My name is Drake Worth, I am a third-year sociology student with a minor in Native Studies and have recently transitioned from the Canadian Armed Forces. When embarking on my academic journey, I encountered a sea of uncertainty, anxiety, and overwhelming stress, leading me to question my newfound purpose. The turning point came when I became part of The Auntie Is In team; it was clear from the start that this wasn't just any podcast but a community united by a profoundly significant cause.

To me, participating in a decolonial project entails deconstructing and reevaluating the worldviews I once held to embrace a broader spectrum of realities beyond my own. This transformation, I believe, is crucial in truly honouring Dr. Johnson and her relentless efforts in pioneering this decolonial initiative. This endeavour has emerged as the most consequential and meaningful project I've

ever engaged with, possessing the potential to enhance the lives of countless Indigenous people.

Under the mentorship of Dr. J and Dr. Morrow, I've been exposed to the nuanced aspects of ongoing colonization, recognizing the imperative for all Canadians to play an active role in advancing toward equality. The pivotal lesson for me has been the realization that decolonization isn't confined to a finite timeline but is a lifelong commitment. Engaging with Dr. J's community has led to the formation of bonds that I am dedicated to nurturing and sustaining at all costs.

Looking forward, I aspire to continue dismantling the influence of colonialism in my personal life and across the nation. I am eager to maintain the guidance of inspiring Indigenous mentors on this path. Most importantly, I yearn for a broader acknowledgment of the critical importance of Indigenous relationships and the transformative impact Indigenous leaders can wield in fostering a harmonious coexistence with the Earth and all its inhabitants.

Idylla "Gigi" Wakana [15:42]:

My name is Idylla Wakana, mostly known as Gigi, and I come from a small country at the heart of Africa called Burundi. I am currently finishing my undergraduate studies in psychology at the University of Alberta. Although I am hoping to specialize in psychology, I do want to branch out in the future and work in different fields such as sociology or anthropology.

I have had to navigate the Western academic world, having been primarily raised in an African and European academic environment, which was a challenge for me. However, those challenges have helped shape who I am today and led me to meet this team. As one of the newer research assistants, I have learned more than I ever expected to. It has been a privilege to listen to Dr. Johnson teach and share Indigenous knowledge with us, and for that, I am grateful. One of the most important things I have learned while being a part of this team is that there is always more to learn.

While many people, including myself, understand the basics of colonialism and its impacts on society, there is still an infinite amount of knowledge to be gained. I come from a place where the impacts of colonialism are still evident today and learning here helps me understand these impacts better. Talking about colonialism can be a heavy topic, but this space helps alleviate some of the heaviness and offer different ways to tackle the subject.

I believe that the knowledge I gain here will help me make a difference in various aspects of my life and in the communities I belong to. My hope is to extend this knowledge to a broader audience and change their perspective on colonialism, as it has changed mine. I also hope that Indigenous knowledge will be fully incorporated into Western academia, and I am excited to continue volunteering for this team to learn more.

Giovanni Ursella [17:32]:

Hi, I'm Gio. I have lived pretty much my whole life in one area, in Edmonton and central Alberta. But it also feels to me like I am starting to live in a different place–it's hard to describe, but I have noticed it start to feel different. It reminds me of how Dr. Johnson taught me in Indigenous Feminisms class about place-making–I feel like I am slowly becoming part of making "this place", whatever it is. I could call this "citizenship" or "democratic engagement" or something, but more than that, I think that there is a responsibility and a kind of caring that I am touching.

This is at least part of what being involved with this podcast means to me: Dr. Johnson is showing us a way to be a part of the world around us. I don't contribute as much content as my stellar podcast-mates do, but I don't feel like our worth in this project is judged like that. We get things done under the leadership of Dr. Johnson and Jim and Sam and the grad students and really, all of us, without being crushed in order to have podcast content squeezed out of us, and then judged by the products of that squeezing.

I do feel like we are working together, and meeting role models and seeing different forms of leadership in our group is something that I hope to carry forward and out of this group. I am not a good leader in the conventional sense–this sounds so bad, but it is hard for me to think of how I could act as a leader without just trying to get people to do what I want them to do. Being part of this great group shows me how leadership can involve finding things that you can offer to others and speaking out when a mistake is made or something needs to be addressed. And having fun, too!

As for my hopes for the future.... I find it hard to talk about what I hope for the future. It can honestly feel very bleak–I think too much about the climate crisis and the different ways that we devalue each other, like through settler colonialism and racism and capitalism and whatnot. Until I can see a more positive future, I hope that I can keep being a part of this podcast and find other ways to connect with everything. And being part of this podcast reminds me that it's

okay that I don't see that future, because we're working together to make that future! Or to make this place? I don't know, I just mean that I hope that you and I can keep trying to notice the amazing things around us and see each other in different ways and do things together!

Jude McNaughton [20:02]:

My name is Jude McNaughton; I use they/them or he/him pronouns, and I am an undergraduate student at Grant MacEwan University where I am majoring in anthropology and minoring in gender studies. I am a môniyâw, *settler*, living in amiskwacîwâskahikan; I was born in Treaty Six territory and have lived here for the entirety of my 25 years of life.

Being part of a decolonial project like this means the world to me. On one hand it is working together to seek justice for the communities and the land that I so deeply love; on the other hand, it is an undertaking to learn who my ancestors were, and fighting to right centuries old wrongs. It is purpose. It is continually holding our settler-state accountable, and demanding that the original spirit of Treaty be honored and upheld. It means standing up and showing up for community with the utmost love in our hearts, and doing it because of that love.

Throughout my journey on this team, I have ultimately learned the indomitable strength of community. The more we stand together and care for one another the stronger we become, and suddenly any future we seek to build is possible to achieve. Forge strength from the love and community around you. Lean on them to rest when you are weary, and once your strength has returned to you, lend it to those who need rest in turn. This is how the strength of community replenishes and grows. As well, I now see the community that extends beyond my human relations; those other beings with whom we coexist, and who are necessary in order for thriving life to continue. I have learned that the only thing that differentiates us is the form we have taken; the circumstances of our birth. Otherwise, we carry the same spark of life within us. We need each other. I truly believe that if humans have a purpose on this earth, it is to be stewards of the land and guardians of life. I want to bring all I've learned to the generations of my family that will follow me.

My hope for the future is an assertion. This movement, this moment in time right now, marks a global paradigm shift. I have been wonderfully awe-struck by the impact our team has had within our various communities, and we are but one ripple in a much larger wave. We will see justice in our lifetime. We will stand together, and we will build something beautiful. It's already begun.

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August Schaffler [22:25]:

Hi, I'm August Schaffler, and my pronouns are they/them. I just graduated from MacEwan University with a bachelor's degree in Design. And I'm the head graphic designer for the Auntie Is In Podcast. I'm a settler that's lived in Amiskwacîwâskahikan (Edmonton) for all 24 years of my life.

For me, being part of a decolonial project means having hope for the future. I often hear people my age say that they don't think they'll live past 40 because they expect the climate to collapse before then. It's true that things look bleak right now, and we have a hard few years ahead of us. But we owe it to the land and to each other to keep fighting. It's our responsibility as treaty people and as human beings that exist in the world. Working on this podcast has taught me what it feels like to be part of a community that really genuinely cares for each other. It's been hard work, releasing 32 episodes in two books of scripts in less than two years. And we've come so far in such a short period of time. I'm so grateful to have the opportunity to take everyone's research and writing and represent it with my design skills. My work really can't exist without theirs. And it means so much to me to get to work with words that are this important.

My hope for the future of this podcast is that many, many more people get the chance to learn about and practice Indigenous ways of knowing. I hope more of us really truly start to believe that a better future is possible. One where we care for each other and the land in ways colonialism deems dangerous or inconvenient. We owe it to each other and the generations that come after us to believe that better things are on the horizon. We can't build a better future without being able to visualize one. It's hard work, but it's work worth doing.

Krystal Louie [24:09]:

My name is Krystal Louie, and I am in my last semester of undergraduate studies, majoring in Psychology and minoring in Sociology at the University of Alberta. I was born and raised in Calgary, and I started living in Edmonton to attend university.

Being part of a decolonial project includes actively challenging and dismantling colonial narratives and systems of oppression. It involves amplifying and uplifting Indigenous people and their voices, knowledge, stories, narratives, and perspectives. We empower Indigenous people by actively listening to individuals sharing their stories and providing a safe space to do so. It is a commitment to care and showing support for our Indigenous people and communities. It is seeking justice and accountability for past and present injustices while dismantling biased opinions we have within ourselves. Most importantly, it is about

fostering understanding and care for members of our community.

As one of the newer members, I've had the opportunity to learn from and collaborate with Dr. J and Dr. Morrow and other members of the team. The podcast community has been welcoming and supportive while also challenging me to improve and grow individually and academically. I am incredibly grateful for opportunities to learn more about Indigenous cultural stories and practices from Dr. J. I learned about and developed awareness of Indigenous cultural practices and traditions through the opportunities and experiences provided by Dr. J and Dr. Morrow. Learning how to respectfully engage with Indigenous communities can assist in facilitating my interactions in future cross-cultural contexts.

My hope is that we continue to inspire each other to change, be better, actively listen, and learn from each other. We are only at the beginning of change, and there is much more work to be done. But I will continue to hope and fight for change where Indigenous people are listened to, and their voices are proudly heard.

Jessica Morrison [26:18]:

My name is Jessica Morrison and I was born and raised in Alberta. I'm of mixed settler and Indigenous ancestry and a member of the Métis Nation of Alberta. I'm currently in my fourth year of a Bachelor's in Technology program at the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT).

Growing up I wasn't connected to my culture and often struggled with my identity. By participating in The Auntie podcast, I can reconnect while also helping others do the same. Language is an essential way to reclaim and strengthen heritage. I'm honored to participate in the ceremonies, community engagements, and Indigenous representation that Dr. Johnson has gracefully organized for us. It is truly profound for me to establish these connections within this work.

Through researching relevant literature on Indigenous themes, a strong foundation is built for truth to be spoken, inspiring us to seek knowledge and understanding. I have learned the importance of collaboration, teamwork, and resilience.

My very specific hope for the future is for The Auntie podcast to gain 1 million listeners. I believe this is an incredibly valuable resource for educational

settings to preserve knowledge systems that are at risk of being lost. We are taking action to ensure that Indigenous voices are heard. May these connections and stories be appreciated and respected by all who listen.

Brook Kelela [27:51]:

Selam! My name is Brook Kelela and I am a University of Alberta graduate with an honors BA in Sociology. I stand proudly on the shoulders of my parents, Alem and Sebela, my younger sister Liya, as well as all my gracious friends, colleagues and mentors. And I am lucky to come from a vibrant country on the horn of Africa – Ethiopia.

During my time at the U of A, my studies focused on Environmental Sociology and I had the privilege of writing my honors paper on the conservation efforts around trees in Ethiopia. It was amidst this time of my life that I took a qualitative methodologies course that altered the way I looked at the world. In this class, my professor assigned us a reading by Corrine Glesne, titled "Research as Solidarity". Here, Glesne asks the age-old question that echoes in my mind at least once every single day - *how do we know what we know?* Ever since this question first altered my brain chemistry, I had made it a goal of mine to become an active member of discussions, groups and projects which decolonize the politics of knowledge.

Being a part of the Auntie Is In Chronicles is a privilege, and I cannot thank Dr. Johnson enough for allowing me to contribute to this meaningful project. Because of this project, I- an immigrant from Ethiopia- can actively reflect on the dark histories of Canada and gain a deeper understanding of my role as a settler in the colonial project. It is also here that I can listen and embrace Indigenous ways of knowing and doing. And finally, it is here that I can familiarise myself with ethics of community, hospitality, and reciprocity in research. These are all tools that I hope to bring with me into any and all spaces in which I exist.

My hopes are that this project can make others also question how they know what they know. Whose agendas are pushed in the ways we view the world, and whose voices are oppressed, silenced and illegitimised because of it? As for me, I hope to continue listening to and learning from Indigenous knowledge, and strive to always keep an open mind and open heart wherever I go.

Hiy hiy to all those who have shared their hearts with us in this journey.

Part Three:
What a world we could create

We have learned a lot since season one. We have grown and learned to work within the challenges of change. Alongside me during this season are Dr. JA Morrow and Dr. Remy Bocquillon who have been fundamental to my journey but importantly the podcast. When I say it's not only the work of myself - I mean it. Every Friday afternoon, we meet to work on the podcast and share ourselves with each other. From our inside jokes to our looks of uncertainty to each other - we have grown and will continue to challenge each other to push the boundaries of what is not known and could be known. We think about the importance of the world that we could create if we were given the opportunity. It might be a little rezzy, but it sure would be a lot of anti-colonial love if it were or a lot of auntie love if it were - I guess we better start hiding the uncles then.

Keywords: *Kinship, Decolonial, Reflection, Community, Hope*

Glossary
Amiskwaciŵâskahikan - Edmonton
Hiy hiy - Thank you
Môniyâw - Settler (Literally "not of us")

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