

The Ecopolitics Podcast - S01E08: Indigenous Environmental Knowledge and Politics
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Host: Peter Andrée (Carleton University)

Guests: Dan Longboat (Trent University) and Larry McDermott (Plenty Canada)

Recorded September 17, 2020

In this week's episode, we are joined by Larry McDermott (Shabot Obaadjiwan First Nation), Executive Director of Plenty Canada and Dr. Dan Longboat (Turtle Clan member of the Mohawk Nation), Associate Professor at the Chanie Wenjack School for Indigenous Studies at Trent University. Dan and Larry discuss lessons for sustainability inherent in Indigenous knowledges as well as Indigenous interpretations of the Royal Proclamation of 1763 and other early treaties between their peoples and the British Crown. Together, we explore how reconciliation involves reinvigorating the reciprocal relationships Indigenous peoples have practiced for centuries to protect and honour what Anishnaabe refer to as Minobimaatisiwin – 'the good life'.

Ecopolitics Podcast - Episode 8 Indigenous Environmental Knowledge and Politics

Dan Longboat: Go right back to the very beginning when Europeans were first coming in and they were kind of starting to destroy the land our people admonished them then, and there's different writings and recordings of spokesmen telling the early colonists about how to live and why they were supposed to live this way. And to follow the, you know, follow this natural law. And colonists often times refused, much to their own detriment as well. And you know, many times their colonies failed. The point of it is that when you take that and pass that through time and bring it up to the current time that we're in right now, you see that our message has always been the same. About how people need to live, how people need to be, how we need to understand the world, how we need to understand ourselves and our relationship to the natural world.

[00:00:47] **Peter Andrée:** Welcome to the Ecopolitics Podcast. This podcast series tackles some of the big questions in the field of environmental politics for university students in Canada. I'm Peter Andrée from Carleton University and my cohost for the show is Ryan Katz-Rosene from the University of Ottawa though he's not joining us for today's conversation.

[00:01:08] Over the summer. I've been reading "Being Salmon, Being Human" by the Norwegian author, Martin Lee Mueller. Central to this book is an exploration of the differences between how the modern aquaculture industry born in the author's home country of Norway treats salmon simply as commodities compared with how the Indigenous people of the Pacific Northwest, specifically the Klallam people with whom the author has spent a great deal of time, have treated salmon over at least the last 7,000 years

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as part of a web of relations, their extended family, upon which they both rely and to which they owe responsibilities. The book points out that Indigenous people in the Americas have long had the technological capacity to over harvest species like salmon, if they were to choose to. But that central to the notion of being Indigenous, of indigeneity are the knowledge, social structures, and forms of governance developed over many generations of inhabitation and embeddedness in place that make it possible to use and live within diverse environments, even under considerable human population densities, over in quotes "mind-boggling" - from a European perspective - spans of time.

[00:02:21] With our guests today, I'm hoping we can begin to unpack these issues, discussing both what specific Indigenous knowledges and perspectives have to say about what it means to live in relation to the land, water, and other species. And then also to look at what the founding treaties between Canada's Indigenous people in the crown, in the colonial context, mean from the perspective of Indigenous people? What do Indigenous perspectives on knowledge and governance imply for how we relate to one another and the environment in Canada today? I'll be talking about these issues with Dr. Dan Longboat and Larry McDermott. Dan is a Turtle Clan member of the Mohawk Nation and a citizen of the Rotinonshón:ni, originally from Ohswekenm the Six Nations community on the grand river.

[00:03:09] Dan is an associate professor in the School for Indigenous Studies at Trent University and founding director of the Indigenous Environmental Science and Studies program, granting both bachelor's of arts and bachelors of science degrees since 2009. This program is an innovative and multidisciplinary undergraduate program that brings together principles of both Indigenous and Western knowledge systems for both Indigenous and non Indigenous learners.

[00:03:36] And then Larry McDermott is Algonquin from Shabot Obaadjiwan First Nation. He's also executive director of Plenty Canada. Larry is actively involved with numerous organizations, including the International Indigenous Forum for Biodiversity, the Canadian Environmental Network, UNESCO, and the Ontario Recovery Strategy for the American Eel. A former three-time mayor, longtime council member of Lanark County, Larry was the first chair of the Rural Forum of the Federation of Canadian municipalities. He also served as a commissioner for the Ontario Human Rights Commission and was on the Ontario Species at Risk Public Advisory Committee.

[00:04:16] Miigwetch and Nia: wen to each of you for joining us on the ecopolitics podcast today.

[00:04:23] Dan, given how I set up the show, I'd like to begin with, with asking you a question about what being Indigenous means to you in the context of the environmental education work that you do at places like Trent University and beyond. You're Mohawk, which is one of the Six Nations of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, Also known as the Longhouse peoples, your people have lived in this part of North America for many, many generations. What does it mean to bring a Haudenosaunee perspective to the work that you do in environmental and sustainability education?

[00:04:55] **Dan Longboat:** Great question, Peter, let me maybe first start by saying [Mohawk] - greetings everyone - [Mohawk] - and I hope that you are happy, well, and at peace. So I'm very happy to be here today - [Mohawk] as Peter had mentioned I'm a Mohawk, Turtle Clan from Ohsweken and Grand River territory. And I'm very happy to be participating with with my good friend, Larry McDermott. And with you Peter, another good friend, and longtime friend. So I'm very happy to be here today.

[00:05:39] So our kind of knowledge system for us, in particular as Haudenosaunee, is that our knowledge system is embedded within our language. And so when you look at, you know, what does it mean to be Indigenous? We don't have a word that, you know, is similar to Indigenous - our closest word that we would have would be *onkwehonwe* - *onkwe* refers to your like your physical being, not your physical body, your physical body is [Mohawk] but your physical being is *onkwe*, as opposed to your spiritual being. *Honwe*, whenever you hear *-honwe* on the end of a word, like [Mohawk] that means your [Mohawk] is your shoes and [Mohawk] would be - [Mohawk] would be moccasins, the real one. And so *-honwe* then it often refers to the real or the original one.

[00:06:32] So when we talk about what it means to be Indigenous, we take that word apart, *onkwehonwe*, the real people, the original people. And the understanding of that is not just like, you're the kind of real people and everybody else's knockoffs of you. It's really talking about that to call yourself *onkwehnwe*, to call yourself a real human being, you are responsible for, connected to, are a carrier for, and you are an exemplary of the original instructions that we were given as human beings at the time of our creation, that's embedded within our creation teachings.

[00:07:07] And so they talked to us then about those original instructions about how to be. There's a whole lot of them. But they actually tell us, then you know, about how we're supposed to be in the world, how we're supposed to live. To have great love for one another, to learn how to live within the cycles and balances of the natural world, and to give thanks. And that's only three short ones over quite

a long list of instructions, but the idea behind it is that you become the living example of all of those pieces. So in order for you to be an Indigenous person, You know, you are meant to be living in a world and to exude the love, kindness, compassion, empathy, respect, honour, trust, all of those things, beautiful things that we oftentimes refer to sort of some symbolically as, as the good mind or [Mohawk] - it means a beautiful mind. And to be a, and this doesn't mean your mind, like your brain, it means mindfulness. And again, keeping in mind that the language is based on, you know, a very high percent, 70, 80% of our language is verb based. So it really comes down to a understanding that it's a description of different things.

[00:08:18] So to be honest to be an Indigenous person, to be onkwehonwe, means then that you exude all of those principles and those original instructions that we were given at the time of creation of the human beings that we have faithfully carried and enabled us to live in a way that has worked to sustain and to perpetuate, and to work for the continuation of life. And that's really what really being Indigenous is all about. That any people anywhere in the world that call themselves Indigenous, or coming from the land, or coming from that place, or being the real people have had to live in a way that works symbiotically with the natural world so much so that, you know, the question then becomes did the culture make the environment, or did the environment make the culture. And I think the idea behind it is that the cultures living in place over a millennia have been able to survive and exist in a way that works in a beautiful symbiotic relationship with the natural world that has enabled both the natural world, as well as the human world, to be able to flourish, not just subsist, not just, you know, to sustain themselves, but to actually flourish as a civilization, as human beings.

[00:09:39] That doesn't mean in the quality or of the, you know, in the, let's call it the quantity of life, right, the material possessions. It's really talking about a quality of life that really has enabled, you know, great health. Great physical strength and great sense of mindfulness. Great - I want to call it a spiritual integrity and spiritual power - all of those elements that we see that, you know, mind, body and spirit are all tied together. And that becomes a way of the human beings. Nature, the human beings are tied together in that relationship.

[00:10:20] And so you know, as we, hopefully we go through this, we have a chance to talk a little bit more about Indigenous knowledge. Then we can talk about the roots of that and the understandings that's embedded within the knowledge system. Well, that's really, you know, how we bring forward our understanding of that, because again, at the end of the day, we are all, as human beings, we are all

Indigenous from somewhere, to quote, my good friend, Joe Sheridan from York University.

Understanding that we are all Indigenous from somewhere. We have some peoples have left their homeland and chose to live different places and really in order to be able to sustain it to perpetuate life, then it comes down to having an understanding of the importance of, and the relevant and the critical value of Indigenous ways of life and learning from those, if you're going to choose to live in the places, anywhere in the world, so that the ecosystem human beings can continue to flourish. So that's what we bring to school. That's what we teach in our classes. And that's what our perspective has been, with great success.

[00:11:28] **Peter Andréé:** Thanks so much Dan, for opening it up and yes, indeed. Welcome to the podcast. And I'm now going to see if we can bring Larry in on this conversation and, and first off, welcome to you, Larry to the eco politics podcast.

[00:11:41] And I'd like to ask the same question of you. What does being Algonquin from Shabot Obaadjiwan First Nation mean for you in terms of how you approach the work you've done over the years, which has been all over the map, right? Working on human rights issues as a local government counselor in Lanark Highlands, or working with a variety of organizations and efforts intended to protect biodiversity in Canada and beyond. What has it meant to be Algonquin doing that work?

[00:12:07] **Larry McDermott:** [Algonquin] Peter, chi-miigwech for the opportunity to share with you and respond to that question. Many things pop in my head. Especially when you brought in you know, the other areas that I've worked in. I think of the Convention on Biological Diversity and having been in Rio in 1992 and sharing with other Indigenous peoples - elders who have since passed, amazing elders and the wisdom that they shared.

[00:12:46] But I'm going to I'm going to back up from that and just say that. For me at conception, the responsibility that comes with that gift of life is celebrate life. And to accept the responsibility for the continuation of life, that we are the bridge between ancestors that came before us and future generations, both born and unborn. In fact, we often talk of seven generations in both directions. And how that affects the path we walk. The core of being Algonquin, and it's expressed in the language as Dan has pointed out, the gift of life as a life that's more than mere subsistence. It's a beautiful life. And we believe that everyone has the opportunity to live that life.

[00:13:45] In Algonquin, we say "Minobimaatisiwin" and that I guess somewhat translated to English is, is to live that good life. And we live that good life when we are in harmony with natural law, when we recognize that the life within us as the same as the life within all of creation, and that we aren't separate, that what we think, what we do, how we carry ourselves affects the whole universe. And we have a responsibility to make sure that, in expressing our gratitude for this life we're given, to recognize that responsibility.

[00:14:36] And so we're given certain ceremonies in our tradition. Then we recognize that that's part of our culture and keeping those ceremonies and passing those ceremonies onto the next generation so that they can keep those ceremonies alive. And through those ceremonies we are able to communicate to our ancestors, to all of creation. and to make sure that those ripples that we create in the pond, the pond, the spiritual pond of life are done with good intentions. And with that, a good heart and mind. So that's, that's for me at the core of what being Algonquin means.

[00:15:30] I have found myself in a diversity of of life experiences. I was very fortunate to have good elders around in circumstances where I was clearly a minority. There was clearly Western culture.

[00:15:50] I'm true to our teachings, but I'm also mindful that at times I'm an ambassador for other Indigenous peoples. But I try to be careful about how I represent myself and I represent myself as an Algonquin. but I've had the great, good fortune traveling internationally, and I've seen common denominators, certainly in terms of our stories, our ways of knowing and an understanding of our core responsibilities. Miigwech.

[00:16:28] **Peter André:** Miigwech, Larry, what I'm really hearing from the two of you that sort of some common denominators is this clearly a strong sense of of identity and responsibility, and a sort of an ethic of how to live, and ethic being, I guess a Western word for it. But The good mind that Dan was talking about and how this has embedded in culture and language, ceremonies.

[00:16:57] And the sense I have from both of you is that, and you've expressly said this, Larry, you know, you've often experienced herself as a minority living in this Western world. And and perhaps as an ambassador for these values, and indeed, it's a big part of why we're talking about with both of you here today in the context of the environmental crisis. When so many people are, and many of our students are looking to see what we can learn from people who have lived on the land for a very long periods of time compared to a Western culture, which tends to be rather - has a short time frame in mind, let's say.

[00:17:43] So Dan, you were talking about Indigenous knowledge, which is very much part of language for you. Students might be familiar with the term Indigenous knowledge or traditional ecological knowledge we sometimes hear. And then Larry referred to the Anishinaabeg concept of - let's see if I get it right - Minobimaatisiwin which means the good life and involves concepts are revival, rebirth and renewal.

[00:18:16] For you as Haudenosaunee, what does Indigenous knowledge mean to you and how do you understand its relevance in relation to the environmental crisis that we're all going through these days? How do you think Indigenous knowledge, if it can, or how do you think it can, help us find a pathway out of this mess?

[00:18:34] **Dan Longboat:** I think that, you know, if you kind of look back and and again, you know, you look at some of the literature that's been created over the past few decades recognizes Indigenous knowledge and talks about that. And you look back even further into anthropology and ethnology and you know, they oftentimes make reference to Indigenous knowledge, something along the lines of, and I, you know, and again you know, keeping in mind that people by and large don't know about, you know, the nature of Indigenous knowledge, but Brundtland when she did her work on Our Common Future and brought that sort of light to Indigenous knowledge where she talked about In terms of sustainable development, that the knowledge that Indigenous peoples have and living in place for very long period of time, you know, is of great benefit to all of humanity.

[00:19:28] She kind of really put a spotlight on Indigenous knowledge. And when you go back, when you look at kind of the definition, the common understanding or definition of Indigenous knowledge within, you know, the Western academy of anthropology and of ethnology et cetera, and now environmental science, is really talking about the idea that, you know, Indigenous peoples living in place over a long period of time have been able to amass a huge amount of knowledge of what it means to live in place through a process of trial and error.

[00:19:59] I mean, the first part is probably right, but the second part is nothing further from the truth than that. It's that our people never live by trial and error. When you start to look at the tens of thousands, if not the hundreds of thousands, if not the, you know, the millions upon millions of combinations of plant medicines and other medicines, you know, animal, tree, birds, fish, all of those things as medicines. and you look at the possible combinations of them in treating human health

conditions, human illness, and human sickness and disease. Like you can't look at the possible combinations of all of those medicines and create through trial and error. I don't care if you lived, you know, for a million years in a place, you just, it's just the, the physics or the math behind it is just too astronomical. Like you'd, you'd never do it.

[00:20:56] But the people have done it. They've used, you know, medicines to treat human health and illnesses. The point of it is, is that our knowledge didn't come from trial and error. When you go back and you begin to look at the oral tradition, it talks about recognizing the integrity of the knowledge in terms of that our peoples, our great ancestors, their minds were so good and our hearts were so pure that they could actually talk to creation. They could actually talk to all of nature, the natural world. And so whenever they needed certain things, and when you go back into again, in our creation teaching, it talks about that when various elements were made, they were given instructions just like, as I referred to as the original instructions for the human beings, all things in creation, all things in the natural world have their own instructions.

[00:21:46] We just have to understand that all of these things are working for the continuation of life. Nothing works for its own demise. Understanding that and looking at the nature. of the knowledge. Whenever the people needed knowledge or needed to address something, they went to the natural world and they simply asked them and they came and either they manifested themselves to our great ancestors in a form and spoke to them.

[00:22:11] They came in dreams. They came in visions and in the process of doing that, they came forward and they said, like, as in treating medicines, as an example, here's the medicines that you will use to treat the conditions that's plaguing the people right now. And they gave us those medicines and they said, so not only did they give up their own lives to help support us to human beings, but then they also gave us the songs, the dances, the words, the practice that goes with all of those things. And it was our responsibility then to to use those medicines. But at the same time, as Larry talked about, our responsibility is to also give them back. It's a reciprocal relationship. So while they give their lives up for us, we give them back our gratitude, our appreciation, our respect, our honour to them and care for them in whatever capacity that we can to care for them.

[00:23:03] So that both plants and animals or both the natural world and the human beings are intricately tied together and have, you know, have carried one another, right from the very first breath

of the first human beings, all the way up until the very last breath of the last human beings whenever that's going to be.

[00:23:20] That knowledge then comes from a place of spirit, which is different than from Western understandings of the world where all knowledge has come, not from a place of spirit, but from the minds of human beings and not just all human beings, but only certain human beings, men, and not all men, but only white men. And so to build up an entire existence on the minds of men, which are fallible, when you go back and you contrast that with and compare that with Indigenous knowledge that where that knowledge comes from a place of spirit and it has carried in and enabled our people to flourish, you know, through thousands of generations of human beings, right up to where we are today, it still has the capacity to enable us to continue to flourish on for many, many more generations. And let's maybe hope another thousand generations ahead of us. But the point of it is that we have that responsibility to engage with that knowledge, to respect it, to understand it, to live it. And that'd becomes part of as Larry talked about that Minobimaatisiwin, that's a beautiful, you know, Anishnaabeg word that talks about, you know, when I spoke to my good friend, Shirley Williams, she said sometimes when you'll see, not always, but when you see that "-win" on the end of the word Minobimaatisiwin, she says, that means it has to do with the art of something.

[00:24:46] And she says it, when you look at that, she says, it means the art of living well, It's like, Oh man, the art of living well, what does that mean? So our people are not only involved in, in science of understanding and knowledge and being able to live in the world, but it's also an art form to be able to live well as, so when you say put those things together and understand the nature of language, understanding the nature of our knowledge, that knowledge comes from a place that is perfect.

[00:25:15] And. Oh, the only reason that it may not be working now we can say, Oh, this thing is not right, or that's not going well. We failed to maintain our relationship with nature as human beings, we fail to maintain that. And so now we're, you know, now we're seeing the brunt of that. Because as Larry talked about, there are natural laws and there are processes that our ancestors have understood and that passed on to us and we pass onto coming generations and more so now, we pass on to everyone because again, you know, we can, can be, as Indigenous peoples, we can be as green as we want to be and be as, kind of, sustainable as we want. But at the end of the day, we live in a world where everybody else is all around us. And so we need to be able to teach that as well. And to go back to some of the early discussions amongst the Mohawk Nation way back in the late sixties and early seventies, when

they picked men to be able to say, You're staying home and you're going to learn these songs and you're going to carry on our traditions within the community, but some of you other ones will go and you'll, you will share our knowledge and share our understanding of it, because they had a firm belief way back then as we still continue to do now, that our knowledge is world knowledge and that we have a tremendous contribution to make. And you know, again, I go back to the, you know, the words of my, of our great friend, Larry and I, Oren Lyons, who's a faith keeper from Onondaga Nation in Syracuse. Oren says that that you know, what we're in, right now is a, it's a crisis. And that he said that the only way for, for our survival to move forward - and he was instrumental in being able to create the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Coming from that perspective is a view of that, you know, in discussions with eminent Indigenous peoples that were brought together to be able to create that document comes down to really like four words after like 30 years of writing and 30 years of talking and researching together, he says all of that, that whole process comes that declaration comes down to four words: "Value change for survival". So which means then if we're going to continue to survive in the world that we're living in now we've got to change our values and no more should it be values of, I guess, competition, of destruction at the expense and the destruction of the natural world for our own short term benefit, it's really turning those things around and inheriting and understanding and engaging and supporting and honouring Indigenous values about how to live in place, how to live in land, how to live with one another, the physical, the spiritual, all of those pieces that we have held on to, those are the things that the world actually needs to know right now.

[00:28:07] **Peter André:** Thank you, Dan. There's a lot in what you've just said, and I'm just in particular going to pick up on this idea that you know, as you said, Indigenous knowledge, you put it, it's not, doesn't come from trial and error, but from many generations passed down and its origins are in this sort of in the relationships between people and the more-than-human, the rest of the natural world.

[00:28:32] And what's interesting. I was thinking as you were talking. You know, this whole idea that direct communication between humans and the rest of nature is something that the you know, Western science and Western world views are not very good at thinking through. And yet, if you look at some of the cutting edge work in botany, for example, it's talking about how trees communicate among themselves in a forest, how they share things in a forest and how they will even share with other species. And so Western science is catching up, I think, on some of the percepts that are, they're already in your cultural understandings.

[00:29:17] And so this idea of relations, I think I just want to turn with that idea to Larry, because it seems to me central also to the Indigenous understanding of treaties and of how we were - we being settlers and Indigenous people in this place that we now call Canada - how we were intended to work together to live in this place. Larry, you've done a lot of thinking about treaty relations. As I understand it, Indigenous people in the Americas have a long history of treaties with one another and such treaties helped to establish norms of good conduct between nations.

[00:30:02] And their renewal over time through ceremony and celebration was an important part of defining a people and its relationship to its neighbors. For example, there was an important treaty between your two peoples; the Anishnaabeg and the peoples of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy about how to share the rich resources in the area that is now Southeastern Ontario from around Toronto to say the border between Ontario, Quebec, and New Yorkstate today.

[00:30:30] This treaty going back to the 1100s, I think for the Haudenosaunee was known as a 'dish with one spoon'. My understanding is the name refers to the idea of people all eating out of a single dish, that is, hunting in a shared territory with the one spoon signifying that the people sharing the territory are expected to limit the game they take, to leave enough for others and for the future.

[00:30:53] Anishnaabeg scholar and activist Leanne Simpson has written an excellent article that I use in some of my classes describing these treaty processes among Indigenous people prior to contact notice, noting how the Anishinaabeg also saw themselves in deep and rich treaty relationship with the animal nations. So this wasn't just about between tribes. It was this history and cultural understanding of treaties as living relational commitments, which informed Indigenous people in Canada, as they started to negotiate treaties with newcomers coming from Europe and particular representatives of the British Crown three centuries ago.

[00:31:32] Can I ask you to talk a bit, Larry, about the Royal Proclamation of 1763 and the subsequent Treaty of Niagara? Why are these documents so important to understanding Canada as we know it today? And how do you understand the responsibilities laid out in these treaties regarding the relationship between Indigenous people and the crown and the relationship between people and the diverse species we all rely upon in this land, which has come to become known about a hundred years later as Canada?

[00:32:00] **Larry McDermott:** Thank you, Peter. A great question. I'm glad you brought up the dish with one spoon because it was a multi - in the true sense - a multinational, multilateral agreement, and there were protocols. We had the edge of the forest ceremony and it was a ceremony in which you spent time polishing your relationship. and it was predicated on, again, those responsibilities not only to pass to our ancestors and to future generations but to all of, all of the life. And so there were responsibilities in monitoring whatever you're harvesting that you did it mindful of the fact that you're sharing it with another nation, you're sharing it with, and both nations are committed to those future generations. They're committed to the love of the species that they're harvesting. So there was that understanding and there was - There are cross cultural practices that addressed our understandings. And so we knew each other. It'd be like in Europe, how people know five languages, well you know, we knew we knew languages, we knew cultural practices and we look forward to them and we, and we saw it as a celebration, a time of being able to enrich that life, you know, that we have. We saw it as that's very important.

[00:33:45] And I have, I had elders - one elder who passed away in the nineties who taught about meeting where three rivers join, not far from here and how we met with Mohawk people and had done even through the periods where Europeans talk about us fighting for different European powers and ignoring you know, our relationship. But my elders said that our oral history says otherwise. There were some that lined up, but that there were also relationships that endured those colonial struggles to take over our land and maintain those important relationships.

[00:34:37] Okay. So what about the Proclamation of 1763? Well Sir William Johnson lobbied before the Privy Council against General Amherst, who just wanted to wage war, that if you respect Indigenous peoples, you issue a proclamation that we are equal. You draw a line in the sand, so to speak, and North of that line is Indigenous territory and shall ever be. And you go and you make treaty based on William Johnson's understanding. And again, he had eight children with Molly Brant. So pretty good idea of Haudenosaunee traditions, but he also knew well Anishnaabeg traditions. He knew about things like the covenant chain. He knew how to make wampum, much less what its purpose was. He knew the ceremonies.

[00:35:46] And so when that when the Treaty of 1764, Treaty of Niagara convened in early August of 1764 and 24 nations from across a big chunk of the continent. Some those nations took three months to get there and three months to get home. He also knew that if you're going to make an agreement, if

you're gonna create an Alliance, that the way you do that, as you do it in the most solemn way, that you do it in ceremony. So pipes were brought up, tobacco was shared. And part of the deal that came from the 24 nations was that Okay, we'll accept Western law, predominantly British law, with concessions to French law, but we expect you to honour our laws which are anchored in natural law.

[00:36:53] So the agreement to share the land and was, was without equivocating on our fundamental responsibility as Indigenous peoples to the land. Those responsibilities, They're unshakeable as an elder, actually Elder William Commanda, who influenced me a lot, he said, Men can make all the laws he wants, but if those laws aren't anchored in natural law, he'll just - he'll hurt himself or even destroy himself.

[00:37:32] And so that's exactly what we're up against. But the relationship, the peace and friends, the ship that was created at the Treaty of Niagara, which is considered the foundation of what is now Canada was based on - that we would care for the land, that first and foremost, we would honour our responsibilities to creation. And the crown can't say it didn't understand because it did. Because it brought pipes, it brought wampum and it understood full well. And so when the treaty process was finalized, it was finalized in utmost solemn prayer. If ever, ever you tell your truth. Without any equivocation you'd do so in that ceremony. And so the crown knew that and the crown made their promises through Sir William Johnson.

[00:38:34] And of course the 24 nations also made their promise - and it actually was the reason that there was such great loyalty during the war of 1812, and without Indigenous loyalty, without Indigenous sacrifice, the defense of then the crown's borders with the upstart Americans that war would have been lost. And so there was a promise between general Brock and Tecumseh, the Indigenous leader, that there'd be an Indigenous state created in what are now the Midwestern States and in the Prairie provinces in Canada.

[00:39:25] And so the British brought that up at the Treaty of Ghent, but at the Treaty of Ghent, There weren't any Indigenous people. But the Americans understood the commitment that the British crown had made through General Brock to Tecumseh. And so Henry Clay, this Southern rabble rouser, who the northern representatives didn't like, but ended up carrying the day, he basically out negotiated the British and a British just wanted to get it over. There was pressure to get out of war. People were - their citizens were tired of the cost. And so they threw Indigenous peoples overboard. However, in article

nine of the Treaty of Ghent, they promised to uphold everything that had been said that the Treaty of Niagara and the Treaty of Fort Stanwix and a couple of other treaties. And they said all rights will be honoured and respected, but they actually had cooked up a scheme where there was no enforcement mechanism in the treaty of Ghent. So it was the ultimate integrity gap. And if you ask me when it comes to reconciliation, What has happened since 1815 in which the Pledge of the Crown Belt was handed over to all but one of those nations that were at the Treaty of Niagara and that belt insinuated that it would be love and affection that will get us through in the future that there would be challenges, but we didn't know that the intent even then was to abandon the relationship. Abandoned - for one side to abandon the integrity associated with the truth spoken in 1764.

[00:41:26] So as far as I'm concerned anything that wavers from that treaty in 1764 is treason. And there's a lot of treason been committed since 1815 and reconciliation is to get back to that truth. And the beauty of reconciling and getting back to that point is we'll solve the biodiversity crisis. We'll solve the inappropriate relationships that we have for the land and water. And we'll also solve the inappropriate relationships that patriarchy has inherently - The fact that we have not listened to women's voice. And so I like to call it balancing the canoe. Right now that canoe's taken on water, but managing to slowly but surely tip it back the way it's meant to be and stop it from taking on water, but it's still taken on water. That's the loss of biodiversity. That's the increasing climate change. That's the missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls. But at least we're talking and at least we're even having the awkward conversations that are uncomfortable, but we're having them. And so there's hope and our youth are hope too. Miigwech.

[00:42:53] **Peter André:** Miigwech Larry. I think many of our listeners this will be a new interpretation and a new look back at Canadian history. And I hope people are inspired to look up these treaties and learn more. Learn more about about it. And I think you're very, you're very gentle and kind by referring to what happened between 1812 and today as an integrity gap. your, your second word treasonous is probably a more appropriate.

[00:43:26] And, but I just want to ask you just to follow up before we go back to Dan. Because at the end of what you were talking about, you're talking about how you see in this era of at least talk about reconciliation some hope, and I know that you've been part of various processes that are trying to let's call it rekindle the spirit of the Treaty of Niagara.

[00:43:52] you've mentioned that the pathways one process, which is meant to bring a key aspect of the convention UN Convention on Biological Diversity, which is the idea of having protected areas over a substantial part of Canada and doing that in a way that really is in collaboration with Canada's Indigenous people. And you've been part of that process and have introduced me to the idea of Ethical space. Which I think, you know, I just want you to connect the dots for us here, because the sense I'm getting is that the ethical space that you and others talk about today is, is what you feel like was intended back in the era of the Royal proclamation and the treaty of Niagara. Can you just tell us a bit about that?

[00:44:43] **Larry McDermott:** Absolutely Peter. Ethical space. Yeah. Isn't something we invented, in fact, we borrowed as much as we could from those gifts of knowledge and ways of knowing and ways of relating and applied them in the Pathways One process. I still pinch myself that it happened, that you had representatives from all the territories, provinces, the feds Indigenous peoples, obviously we couldn't represent every nation, but that we came, we came together and we looked at Canada's treaty obligations under the conventions on biological diversity and climate change and said to ourselves let's do this in the best way we know how, and so there was an agreement with a minister at the time, Catherine McKenna and with the minister of environment, her co-chair Shannon Phillips from Alberta and that was led by Dr Reg Crowshoe. And so we spent time well, first of all, we launched it in pipe ceremony, and then we spent time talking about those seven gifts because that's the tradition that Dr Crowshoe and I share so out of it came important recommendations including the recognition of some aspects of our worldview, that we are one species among many. William Commanda used to say we're no more important than the smallest insect. And at first I went, Oh? But Now for me, it's so obvious. So. You know, there were, there were sharing of knowledge systems, which is part of ethical space. There was a, and so are they in this case, those seven gifts, but it could be many other Indigenous iterations Indigenous ways of knowing and we operated on the basis of a circle, everybody is equal. We said that in the opening pipe ceremony, that when people participated what was said should be done without fear, without fear of even the boss-subordinate relationship or other models of hierarchy. That there was no room for a hierarchy. And even a shared governance system involving Indigenous ways of knowing.

[00:47:30] One prominent woman came to me at the IUCN annual meeting after this process. And she said, Larry, I don't know, but I just feel like - and we did ceremony before and at the end of every meeting so that - I don't know, but it seems like the smudge really united our minds and our hearts, and

we were able to do things that we wouldn't have been able to do otherwise. And I thought to myself. Yep. Been working on that for thousands of years, happy to share it with you. I mean, that's what went through my mind.

[00:48:05] And it was very much part of the process, you know, we shared the, our best traditions, ways of knowing. And I actually think that we rise together and Canada's conservation vision are leap years ahead of anything that has happened in this country in a long, long time. And I, but I'm kind of surprised how quickly a government, ENGOs, environmental nongovernment organizations, academia, fall back to the de facto way of being. And so that.

[00:48:49] You know, I'll wrap this up by saying I think the way we're going to address these big problems is transformational thinking. That's going to take effort. It's going to take some discomfort. That's going to take not being habitual, but being mindful. Miigwech.

[00:49:08] **Peter André:** Miigwech Larry. I think what you've just described for us is really the, you know, this goes to the starting questions that I was asking Dan about in terms of what we can learn from. Indigenous cultures in relation to this crisis that we're going through now of climate and biodiversity and so on. And what you're talking about in the ethical space idea is about respectful process, relational process, deep listening, commitment, values. And Dan talked about, we need a value change for survival as being core to ideas like sustainable development.

[00:49:51] So you know, I think we've drawn a nice circle in this conversation here today. I have a last question for Dan and I'd like you to reflect a bit, Dan, on how everything we've been talking about relates to this current moment of environmental politics in Canada, which remains a time of considerable contestation despite growing dialogue about how we might move forward towards reconciliation.

[00:50:18] For example, over the last decade, we've seen the rise of Idle No More. It's a peaceful, revolutionary social movement that's taken root across Turtle Island, mainly led by Indigenous women and youth. Idle No More's stated goal is to honour Indigenous sovereignty and protect the land, water, and sky. It was initially a response to the dismantling of the environmental protection laws by the Harper government in Canada.

[00:50:44] It has now grown into a continent wide network of urban and rural Indigenous people working with non-Indigenous allies to further Indigenous rights and environmental protection and seeing those things as connected. And while, of course there's some First Nations that are supportive of pipeline projects on their territories for the jobs they're expected to create, on the whole we've seen tremendous Indigenous resistance to resource extraction efforts in Canada. Whether it's shale gas fracking on the traditional lands of the Miqmaq in Northern New Brunswick or Indigenous resistance to pipelines on the West Coast. How do you see the relationship between the Indigenous knowledge that we've been talking about today and these calls for respect and entrenchment of Indigenous rights in Canada?

[00:51:30] **Dan Longboat:** Oh, man. Another, another good question. And there's probably another long answer on this one. I guess the premise of everything is really understanding that, you know, what is enabled us to survive as Indigenous peoples, anywhere in the world in place over a very long period of time is a very strict understanding, a very strict set of laws that is sometimes oftentimes referred to as natural law, that has really proven for us over a long period of time that living by those is not law. As in how we understand law today. It is a manifestation of great beauty. And I think that when you hear the indigenous voice, right from the very beginning and again, when you go back in our, in our history, as Haudenosaunee you know, our history has not been one of

[00:52:31] you know bright, shiny things and you know, all flowers and roses. And we've made a lot of mistakes and in our past and you know, you can go back in history and be able to see those things. But because of that, our people have learned and we keep those kind of mistakes and the understanding of those mistakes alive. So the reason for that is that never to do them again. And so the idea behind it is that over a period of time that we have addressed and can be continually renewed in our humanity as to what that actually means to live in place, what it actually means to care for one another, what it actually means to have a relationship, you know, with the natural world. in both a physical and a spiritual aspect of it. And so that unique way of life that we've been given as Indigenous peoples in the world has really enabled all of us. As I mentioned earlier, to really flourish as civilizations.

[00:53:38] Going back to that understanding of the messages, the ways of life, the values, the principles, the understandings of that, the words have always, and the thinking have always been the same throughout time so that when the visitors came to, newcomers came to our lands. we shared those with them openly and our message then. And even though, as Larry pointed out, many things have transpired

since then much to our detriment and much to the detriment of the natural world as well. That our message has continually been constant all the way through it is it has been continuous and it has been constant.

[00:54:20] So we've been given, you know, a unique opportunity now in this, at this time in this process that some refer to as reconciliation to be able to have a voice and to be able to have the opportunity to share and to bring knowledge forward. And again, the message has always been the same, right? From our very earliest ancestors to where we are today.

[00:54:45] But the point of it is that as if we're going to move forward and begin to understand the environmental issues and crisis that were here, these are not just economic issues, easy to put them in that way. They're not just political issues. They're not just social issues. They're all of them.

[00:55:02] Plus they're a spiritual issue as well and more, even more. So I think that there's a unique, a heightened consciousness that is coming up from peoples, from all around the world that are understanding that we cannot continue to live the way we are. That there's a cost to maintaining this kind of so-called way of life, that we are all sort of somewhat enjoying and some are at the expense of this way of life.

[00:55:28] But the idea behind it is that this way of life that we build is really as human beings in a modern context, is that the expense of the natural world and we can't live like that anymore. So understanding that, and then going back to those original understandings of it, this one becomes really a spiritual question.

[00:55:48] And so what we oftentimes refer to that in our classrooms is that we talk about that this time in particular is all about the the restrengthening and I want to call it the revitalization of human spiritual integrity. So it's going back and understanding that we as human beings, as sacred spirits and our relationship to all of the spiritual world around us, all of the non, you know, the unseen world around us and engaging with all of nature as beings that we have a relationship to them.

[00:56:22] And they to us and our responsibility is to care for them and to work for the continuation of life. So for us, a lot of these things that people and you kind of talked about that, you know, in terms of botany, a botanist's understanding that, you know, trees talk to one another, our ancestors knew that millennia ago many millennia go and we were told that that's how they communicate with one another.

[00:56:47] And I really love the way, you know, my great friend, Norma General, who's a faith keeper at Cayuga Longhouse at Grand River. She talks about this. She says, and just imagine this, she says, Imagine in your mind, a beautiful forest. And she says that beautiful forest. I see all types of different trees in there. Those trees have attracted all types of different animals and insects and butterflies and all types of things have thrived there. And she says, when you walk in there, how beautiful it smells and how beautiful the songs are and how beautiful the sights are, and she says, so when you see that she says, understand that that's what the creator has provided for us. But she says, you know, if we, as the human beings had the power to be able to roll back the earth, we would see that all of those trees, so their roots are all touching one another.

[00:57:42] It's just as though that they are holding hands with one another. And she says, now, she says, understanding that we, as the human beings are just like that forest. No tree is exactly like the other tree. They're all different trees of different sizes. Even the ones that are the same in terms of their species are different in their appearance and different in the way that they are, that they look.

[00:58:05] So there's pine trees, Oak trees, maple trees Poplar trees, all types of different trees that exist side by side in there. She says, that's just like us the human beings. We are all different. And we are all different, like different trees. We are all different people. What she says, just like the trees are, we should be as human beings. We should be the ones that are all holding hands, working for the continuation of life. Just like those trees are. So you know that to me, as Larry had talked about earlier, that's the solution to, you know, our way forward in whatever venue you want to call it, whether it's reconciliation or whether it's just really getting down to business and understanding that if we're going to live, we have to live by Indigenous principles and values.

[00:58:51] **Peter André:** I want to thank you both so much for or sharing your knowledge today. You each have deep knowledge that I think is really valuable for the students in our courses that are going to be listening to this. And it was an honour for me to to spend this time with you both.

[00:59:10] One of the things I heard you talking about just now Dan was you know, just in response to this sort of political question about, Idle No More is you just said, you know, the message has been continuous and constant for so long, right. And that's so central to this story today is that there is a, there is a deep message we can all learn from being Indigenous on the land as a way of being that can tell us a lot today. And the two of you, I think really helped our listeners get some tastes of that from the

perspectives that you bring as a Haudenosaunee and Algonquin. So I just want to give you a, if you have any final words for our students. Larry?

[01:00:06] **Larry McDermott:** Just that no matter what walk of life students may pursue later on, if they benefit from this land, they share the responsibilities to this land. That message is part of natural law. And if we don't honour that law collectively we won't improve the circumstances we find ourselves in right now. The takeaway is that we are connected to everything. That Western science is telling us the more we push nature. Although I feel like the way it's being said it's as if we're not part of that.

[01:00:48] But the more we push The rest of life in our greed, in our obsession with a lifestyle that's not sustainable, that we, that all good science underscores the fact that it isn't sustainable. the more we will create havoc, but we have an alternative. A beautiful alternative and we just, we need to work together and we need to listen. We need to listen to those trees. We need to listen to the land, to the water and You know, this is really a sum of all. It's a, I feel all rights - in Canada we say section 35 rights are collective. as Far as I'm concerned, all rights are collective because we're all connected.

[01:01:38] The word for that in Algonquin is Ginawaydaganuc. And that's understood from the four sources of intelligence, which includes empathy and spirituality. So find a way to make sure that a part of making the decisions that you don't fall into the trap of greed, competition. That's unhealthy where somebody's getting hurt and find that you know, that, Minobimaatisiwin you know, living that good life with a, with those good relationships. Thanks for listening. I wish your students a great future. You are the future and I wish you well. Miigwech.

[01:02:24] **Peter Andr e:** Miigwech Larry. And Dan, do you have any final words?

[01:02:29] **Dan Longboat:** My message would be to really be fearless in your pursuit of knowledge. You know, judge well, the knowledge and to see that, you know, what makes sense and what doesn't make sense. If it worked for the continuation of life, then it fulfills our responsibility as human beings. You know, within our traditions, as Haudenosaunee, we were so fortunate that we have a lot of different prophecies that we've been given.

[01:02:50] But one, you know, in particular, the teachings of Handsome Lake, Sganyad i:yo, they talk about Handsome Lake had this vision. He was given a visitation by beings, four beings that took him up and showed him different things. And they showed him that we as human beings have two paths to

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follow and we have to make a choice whether we're going to work for the continuation of life or were they going to work for I guess really the destruction of the earth.

[01:03:19] One way ends in pain, hardship and suffering, and the other way ends in health and happiness, beauty and love. And so we, as human beings have to open up our minds to that and to understand that now's the time to be able to make a choice. And so my message to your students is really to, you know, to open up your heart, to open up your mind, to open up your feelings, to open up your spirit and to embrace those things that work for the continuation of life.

[01:03:46] So Peter, I want to thank you and thank you to my brother, my great brother, Larry, and I want to wish you the best, going forward and the best to your students as well in their life and their lifelong journey of learning. And so thank you so much for inviting me - [Mohawk].

[01:04:03] **Peter Andrée:** Nia: wen Dan thank you for those words.

[01:04:07] And thank you to both of you and miigwech to you, Larry for participating in today's Ecopolitics Podcast. For our listeners, don't forget to check out other episodes in the series at ecopoliticspodcast.ca. Please do send us your feedback on these episodes. We really appreciate hearing from our listeners and I look forward to speaking with you again in our next episode.