

ECOPOLITICS PODCAST EPISODE 4.8: Mindful Approaches to Ecopolitics

Additional Pedagogical Resources

Summary: *In this powerful and personal episode, host **Peter Andrée** is joined by **Dr. Jeff Ganohalidoh Corntassel** (University of Victoria, Cherokee Nation) and **Dr. James Rowe** (University of Victoria, author of *Radical Mindfulness*) to explore how mindfulness, ceremony, and heart-centred practices offer resources for witnessing and metabolizing the emotional grief associated with environmental and social injustice.*

Together, they discuss how inner awareness, land-based ritual, and work with psychedelic medicine can support healing and resilience in the face of climate anxiety, ecological grief, and systemic injustice. Drawing on Indigenous teachings, contemplative practice, and personal experience, this episode invites listeners to reflect on what it means to walk with feeling in ecopolitical spaces—and how relational and embodied approaches can help us build a more grounded, compassionate politics in the Anthropocene.

Key Takeaways:

- Mindfulness encompasses not only seated meditation but also ceremony, community rituals, walking with awareness (wane'ado), and heart-centred practices that reconnect the body, mind, and emotions.
- Dr. Corntassel emphasizes how heart-centred thinking counters colonial fragmentation. Colonialism and modern institutions often reward disembodied, intellect-first engagement. Practicing heart-centred thinking and relational awareness is a form of resistance and Indigenous resurgence.
- Drawing from *Radical Mindfulness*, Dr. Rowe argues that unaddressed existential fear contributes to domination and control, from white supremacy to ecological destruction. Inner work and community support help transform fear into compassion and connection.
- Collective rituals and remembrance practices help communities process loss and move forward. Processing not only personal, but also intergenerational and ecological grief through ceremony, storytelling, and embodied acts of remembrance, such as the Cherokee “Remember the Removal” bike ride, can offer personal and collective healing.
- Guided experiences with psilocybin and MDMA can offer valuable insight for healing grief, connecting with ancestors, and deepening awareness. Such substances need to be approached with care, intention, respect, and community support.

Discussion Questions:

- How does mindfulness, when defined as a relational and embodied practice, reshape how you engage with environmental politics and education? How does the practice of mindfulness challenge traditional political or academic approaches to environmental issues?
- What does wane'ado (walking with feeling) teach us about our responsibilities to place and to others?
- What does the immanence of death mean for you? How do you think fear of death relates to systems of domination (e.g., white supremacy, human supremacy)? What role have spiritual practices played in addressing these systems? What role could they play?
- Why might addressing grief be important for environmental justice and Indigenous resurgence? How might ceremony function as both personal and political healing?
- What place do (or could) sacred or psychedelic medicines play in environmental or political practice? What ethical, cultural, and safety considerations should be taken into account?
- Is collective grief acknowledged and processed in environmental movements or environmental politics classrooms? How could it be?

Learn More About our Guests:

Dr. Jeff Ganohalidoh Corntassel is a writer, teacher and father from the Cherokee Nation. As Professor in Indigenous Studies at the University of Victoria, his research and teaching interests focus on “Everyday Acts of Resurgence” and the intersections between Indigenous internationalisms, resurgence, climate change, gender, and community well-being. Jeff situates his work at the grassroots level through many Indigenous-led community-based programs and initiatives, ranging from local food movement initiatives and land-based renewal projects to addressing gendered colonial violence and protecting homelands. He is currently completing work on his forthcoming book, *Sustainable Self-Determination*, which examines Indigenous climate justice, food security, and gender-based resurgence.

- Corntassel, J. (2022). [The Art of Reclaiming, Renaming, and Reoccupying: Inspiring Everyday Acts of Resurgence](#). *Rooted: A Publication on Indigenous Law*.
- Corntassel, J. (2024). Reinvigorating Ancestral Practices: Honoring Land and Water Defenders, Indigenous Internationalisms and Community Protocols. *BIG Review*. <https://doi.org/10.18357/BIGR51202421799> .
- Corntassel, J. (2012). Re-envisioning resurgence: Indigenous pathways to decolonization and sustainable self-determination. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, 1(1), 86–101. Retrieved from <https://jps.library.utoronto.ca/index.php/des/article/view/18627>

Dr. James K. Rowe is an associate professor of Environmental Studies at the University of Victoria and the author of *Radical Mindfulness: Why Transforming Fear of Death is Politically Vital*. His research is motivated by a desire to understand and strengthen social movements working towards social and ecological justice. James' work cuts across three main areas – political theory, social movement strategy, and political economy – in order to develop an integrated and critical understanding of the challenges social movements face.

- Rowe, J. (2023). [*Radical Mindfulness: Why Transforming Fear of Death is Politically Vital*](#). Routledge.
- Rowe, J. K. (2025, March 10). *Is fear of death the root cause of injustice?* Lion's Roar. <https://www.lionsroar.com/is-fear-of-death-the-root-cause-of-injustice/>

Resources in the Episode:

Indigenous Resurgence, Relationality & Ceremony

- Referenced by James Rowe, [*It Stops Here: Standing Up for Our Lands, Our Waters, and Our People*](#) by Tseil-Waututh leader Reuben George describes how ceremony, healing, and resistance intersect in Indigenous movements.
- Learn more about the Cherokee Nation's [*Remember the Removal Bike Ride*](#).
- In [*Season 1 Ep 9: Ecofeminism and Queer Ecology*](#) with Dr. Catriona Sandilands and Dr. Sherilyn McGregor we discuss further the mind-body dualism in Western thought and its impacts, through settler colonialism on Turtle Island.

Mindfulness, Mortality & Inner Awareness

- [Here](#), you can find Dr. James Rowe's book, "Radical Mindfulness: Why Transforming Fear of Death is Politically Vital"
- Johanna Macy's work on themes of ecological grief and emotional processing are also a [valuable resource](#). Johanna also talks about the Climate Crisis as Spiritual Path in an interview [here](#).

Additional resources:

Mindfulness:

- J. Kabat-Zinn's 1990 book the [*Full Catastrophe Living: How to cope with stress, pain and illness using mindfulness meditation*](#), is a foundational text in secular mindfulness.
- Jack Kornfield explores how compassion and contemplative presence can guide us through times of political polarization and crisis in [this podcast episode](#).
- For more critical analysis of the political implications of mindfulness, check out:
 - Will Legette's (2021) [*Can Mindfulness really change the world? The political character of meditative practices*](#),

- James Rowe's (2016) [Micropolitics and Collective Liberation: Mind/Body Practice and Left Social Movements](#)
- Ronald Purser's (2019) [McMindfulness: How Mindfulness Became the New Capitalist Spirituality](#).

Psychedelics and entheogens:

- As mentioned in the podcast, James Rowe profiles [Tseil-Waututh leader Reuben George](#), highlighting how Indigenous-led psychedelic ceremony is being used to heal intergenerational trauma
- Michael Pollen's How to Change Your Mind is available as a [book](#) and a [TV series](#) that explores the history, science, and therapeutic potential of psychedelics.