

John Reid (00:00):

Language contains many of the codes that provide a vehicle for connection, and more particularly, it sets the grounds for a set of ethics and ways of moving within the world. Certainly, when I think of it from that perspective, I first of all draw from a Māori perspective on the notion of whakapapa, which means that we are all in an interconnected genealogy of creation all the way back to the progenitors of all of it, which are the earth, sky, and progenitors before them, too. What it does is it weaves together an interconnected cosmos in which you are situated.

Peter Andréé (00:42):

Welcome back to the Ecopolitics Podcast, Season 4: The Politics of the Anthropocene. I'm Peter Andréé, and I teach at Carleton University in political science. And as listeners know, my co-host for this series is normally Ryan Katz-Rosene from the University of Ottawa, but today I am again with Tehya Quachegan as my co-host. Tehya is from the Moose Cree First Nation, and she's a master's student at Lakehead University. And she is here for part two of a series called Living Relations. So, it's so great to be with you again, Tehya.

Tehya Quachegan (01:21):

Thank you for that introduction, Peter, and it's great to be here again with you as well.

Peter Andréé (01:25):

So, as I just mentioned, this is part two of our exploration of the Living Relations Partnership Project. So, this is a transnational collaboration between indigenous and settler partners, including researchers from Canada and Aotearoa (New Zealand).

Tehya Quachegan (01:43):

If you missed part one, we introduced the project and some of its incredible contributors. Today we're going to continue those conversations, welcoming back some familiar voices, but also introducing new ones that you didn't get to hear from last time. And this includes someone you mentioned last time, Peter.

Peter Andréé (01:59):

Oh, that's right. Yeah, it's Dr. John Reid, my co-director for this project from Aotearoa (New Zealand). And John was actually a previous guest on this podcast. Some may remember from season two. He's with us here today, so welcome to the podcast again, John.

John Reid (02:15):

Thank you, Peter. Kia Ora.

Peter Andréé (02:15):

So, it's great to have you here. And before we go any further, I'd love to have you remind the listeners, if they don't remember you from season two, a little bit about who you are, what you do, and then your summary of what this Living Relations Project is all about.

John Reid (02:33):

Yeah, sure, Peter. So, I descend from early colonial settlers who married into Māori tribes here in New Zealand, in the North Island. Into two tribes in particular, Te Arawai, Ngāti Pikiao. So, I've got a dual ancestry or history in New Zealand, and that kind of informs what I do and my

orientation within my work. So, in terms of my work over the last 25 years or so, I've focused on sustainability issues through an indigenous lens. In particular, I've worked very closely with Iwi, which are tribes in New Zealand, and Hapū subtribes. And in particular, I've worked most closely with **Ngāti Tahu**, which is an Iwi in the South Island of New Zealand. Their tribal territory makes up about two-thirds of the South Island of New Zealand, or maybe three-quarters. And I've been working with them since they went through their settlement process in 1998. So, I started a few years later. And through that, it's been a wonderful journey of applying my knowledge around sustainability combined with indigenous insights. But in particular, I focused on land and water sustainability, and I've had a lot of strong focus on food-related issues and sustainable food production.

Peter Andréé (03:49):

That's a great introduction to yourself, John. Thanks. And that gives listeners some context. And so, here we are talking about the Living Relations Project that you and I co-direct. How would you sum this project up?

John Reid (04:01):

Well, given that it's so multifaceted, multidisciplinary, it's sometimes hard to sum something up that is so fascinating and interesting. But what I would say is that it is a shared learning space where we have indigenous insights flowing into sort of a thread or a narrative, a combined narrative for us to tell a story from an indigenous perspective of how you can relate to **whenua**, or land, in a more holistic, integrated and sacred way. So, for me, it's that storytelling component and weaving multiple stories together to generate this kind of broader insight that we can then share more broadly amongst indigenous communities. But I think there's a lot to offer the world globally in terms of what indigenous initiatives are happening on the ground, how they perceive and understand both environment and food production, and then how we can then take that more broadly globally.

Peter Andréé (05:03):

That's a great way to sum it up and what you didn't say there, but is the particular context we're working on are our two contexts, right? The Canada part of Turtle Island and Aotearoa (New Zealand), and bringing these indigenous-led food systems initiatives into conversation between these two contexts.

John Reid (05:25):

Yes, precisely.

Peter Andréé (05:27):

And so, that's what we're getting back into today. And Tehya, you brought us through episode 1, and so where do you want to take us in episode 2?

Tehya Quachegan (05:37):

Yes. So first, thank you so much for introducing yourself, John. It's amazing to hear the work that you do and also to hear your thoughts on the project. And I'm excited to introduce some other new voices today. But before I do that, I just wanted to remind everyone that these come from conversations that happen between members of the Advisory Circle and Research Circle at the project's initial, which happened last August in N'Dakimenan, the traditional territory of the Teme Augama Anishinaabe, and that's in northeastern Ontario. So, in addition to some folks

who we already heard from in the first episode, this is who we'll be hearing from today. First up, here's Martha Stiegman from York University.

Martha Stiegman (06:14):

My name is Martha Stiegman. I am of mixed white settler ancestry, mostly French via Louisiana on my father's side and Quebec on my mother's side. I grew up in Mi'kmaq territory in Nova Scotia, and I've been involved in a number of different community-based research projects that have explored what it means to be a treaty person in the context of food and in the context of fishing for Mi'kmaq and for settler people.

Tehya Quachegan (06:45):

And now that we've met Martha, here's some thoughts she had regarding food sovereignty and treaty relations.

Martha Stiegman (06:50):

Food sovereignty and indigenous food sovereignty in the context of treaty relations has been a main thread that's connected most of the work that I've done in the last 20 years. But it's also been a very important way for me to – it's really changed my identity in terms of how I understand who I am, where I belong, what my responsibilities are, and what it means to live a good life and to be a responsible person in the place where I live.

Peter Andrée (07:19):

I should add in here, Tehya, that we've had Martha on this podcast before as a guest in conversation with one of her indigenous partners, Sherry Pictou. Sherry now actually teaches at Dalhousie University, so that was way back in season 1. So, who's next here?

Tehya Quachegan (07:36):

Next, we're going to hear from Fiona Wiremu. Her research spans Māori knowledge systems, the natural environment, indigenous economies, and food sovereignty. She also serves in governance roles across health, social, and employment sectors, where she works to address the impacts of colonization. But I'll let you all hear from her now.

Fiona Wiremu (07:54):

My name is Fiona Wiremu, and I am from the Māori tribe of Tūhoe and Ngāti Ranginui in New Zealand. I have been part of Kai sovereignty, which is a little bit more than food, but Kai sovereignty, Kai governance projects for about 10 years now. I'm an avid lover of food, so I have a vested interest in food and Kai in particular. I've had a relationship with a number of people already attached to this project. In particular, I wanted to explore the opportunities of relationship for Māori with Canada and Canadians and First Nations to see how we could develop that further, particularly for my people, for Māori.

Tehya Quachegan (08:43):

So that was Fiona, and now we'll hear from Kristen Lowitt, an assistant professor at Queens University, who reflects on food systems as more of a pathway towards justice and reconciliation.

Kristen Lowitt (08:55):

I'm Kristen Lowitt, and I'm an assistant professor in the School of Environmental Studies at Queen's University, which is situated on the traditional territory of the Anishinaabe and the Haudenosaunee peoples. My research program is around food systems and sustainability

broadly, and I'm interested in food sovereignty, and I think increasingly in the last few years, as a non-indigenous person who lives in Canada doing that work, I realize you can't really think about sovereignty without asking whose lands, whose waters are we on, are we living on? Are we eating on? So, I'm thinking more and doing more in terms of the realm of indigenous settler kind of partnership-based research, thinking about food systems as a pathway to reconciliation and what my role is in that work, right? As someone who can support communities or do praxis-based research.

Tehya Quachegan (09:44):

Next is Dr. Elizabeth Macpherson, or Liz, who's joining us from Aotearoa as well. Liz is a Pākehā, which is a New Zealander of European settler descent, Professor of Law and Rutherford Discovery Fellow (RDF) at the University of Canterbury. She researches comparative environmental, natural resources and constitutional law and leads the RDF program, Blue Carbon Futures in Aotearoa, New Zealand Law Climate Resilience.

Elizabeth Macpherson (10:09):

Yeah, when John and Peter first asked me to be involved in this project, I had a few initial imposter syndrome scenarios, but one was around, I don't consider myself to be a researcher on food systems or food sovereignty. But then, as soon as I became part of that conversation and spoke to people, and understood what they were talking about at the wānanga we had in Ōtautahi (Christchurch) a year ago, I realized that it's all the same thing. It's land back, water back, and territorial governance in order to enable that system. And of course, eating from the land where you live and that you are related to and that you know makes sense, rather than importing.

Peter Andrée (10:55):

Tehya, I'm really enjoying these different voices and perspectives that are coming together here. And I noticed Liz mentioned both John and I and this imposter syndrome. So, I'm just going to turn to John. These are clearly people that you and I asked to work together in this project. I'm wondering what your response is when you hear someone like Liz talking about how she felt she didn't really belong right away. What do you see that someone like Liz is offering here?

John Reid (11:21):

Yeah, well, Liz is a highly talented and gifted researcher and legal expert, and she just has so much depth of knowledge around environmental governance and law. The way in which environments are managed and the legal structures around it seem pretty essential to me in terms of the way in which food is produced in a particular way in which indigenous people may influence or control that production within their territories. And so, that's where my thinking was coming from and bringing in that perspective. I think the other would be Fiona, who has so much on-ground experience and is deeply respected, just like Liz is, too, but deeply respected across indigenous communities and tribal authorities as being a voice of depth and weight in terms of these particular issues.

Peter Andrée (12:13):

Yeah, that's neat, John and I certainly saw what they brought to this gathering. I was there last August. I know that you had to be out of the country at that point. And I also saw the huge value that scholars like Martha and Kristen, with deep research relationships working with indigenous

people, brought to this project as well. So, I'll turn it back to you, Tehya. Who do you want to introduce next?

Tehya Quachegan (12:36):

I'll introduce Nikki Auten, and she's our co-chair of the Indigenous Advisory Circle that actually guides the Living Relations Project.

Nikki Auten (12:42):

I'm Mohawk from Tyendinaga. I am Turtle Clan. I have been in Tyendinaga for a good portion of my life. I grew up in the town beside called Deseronto.

Tehya Quachegan (12:52):

Nikki is also an instructor at the First Nations Technical Institute, and here she is saying how she got interested in food systems.

Nikki Auten (13:00):

I wanted to understand food because all of my mother's people passed away from diabetes related heart attacks, and by the age of 56 or 60, not good, long lives. So, I was really concerned about that, and I was concerned for my own health, recognizing that I had unhealthy habits. I came into the work through that health lens and grew into recognizing how the globalized food system that we're in today is impacting the environment, is impacting food, scarcity, is impacting all of these things, right?

Peter Andrée (13:36):

Yeah, Nikki is a really interesting person, and it's amazing that she's one of the co-chairs of our advisory circle. And one of the things that I'll just mention is she's developing curriculum right now across a variety of programs, including a new Indigenous Sustainable Food Systems program. She's also been deeply involved in the development of the Kenhte:ke Seed Sanctuary and Learning Center in Tyendinaga.

Tehya Quachegan (14:01):

Thank you so much for adding that, Peter. And finally, let's hear from Sean Connolly, who is a senior lecturer in the School of Geography at the University of Otago

Sean Connolly (14:10):

Kia ora. I'm a settler who comes from a place just south of Lake Ontario, what was a little village, Sharon, it's now been swallowed by suburbia. That's where I grew up, but I now live in Ōtepoti (Dunedin) in Aotearoa. One of the areas that I sort of fell into research was food systems, and just concern about the environment, and doing research on sustainability initiatives, and just kept coming across the same message that food is essential, and food is both a driver for a whole range of environmental problems. But I think if we are able to think about food differently, it provides all kinds of opportunities to address those problems because we can start to think of food in a much more holistic way, where it's tied to place, tied to the environment, tied to us as people.

Peter Andrée (15:05):

Thanks so much for giving us these quotes from each of these participants in today's episode, Tehya. And what I heard in all of them, and again in Sean's quote at the end, was sort of how he fell into food systems research. And because food is so central to our lives, also to environmental challenges and solutions.

(15:24):

Now I just want to remind our listeners about where we've already been. So, you introduced several themes in the first episode that really struck you when you listened to these conversations. Those themes were, well, first about the relationship to place, how people's relationship to place really formed their identities and how they engaged in this work and even how it nourishes them spiritually. We also heard about the settler colonial contexts and the treaty histories of these two countries. We heard about partnership-based research as well, and some of what we need to do as academics and as researchers to recognize the relations of power that we're working in and how we can work in our institutions to really foreground indigenous community voices and their solutions. And then there were a number of examples that some of our guests provided about the food systems revitalization that's happening on the ground in their communities. Alright, so that's where we've been, and now where are we going? What's the first theme you want to bring to us today?

Tehya Quachegan (16:29):

I'm so glad you summarized the last episode, and you really detailed kind of what we tried to capture in that. And it was hard. I recognized that some parts were heavy. So, this episode really is more focused on some more themes that we really didn't get to hear from or explore further. So, the first one, and it's a pretty broad one, but it's land, water, and language, and it kind of has the idea that land shapes language and then language expresses relationships. And also kind of viewing language as a governance system itself. It's all connected to food, water, and place.

Peter Andrée (17:05):

So, what did you hear that really connected this idea of land, water, language and place?

Tehya Quachegan (17:13):

Well, in the last episode, and who I really wanted to mention again in this one is that we heard from Mary Laronde, and she is the Advisor Circle member from N-Dakimenan, and that's actually where the gathering took place. And she spoke about how language reflects our relationship to the land and how it emerges from that connection over time. And for Anishinaabe people, language isn't just a way to communicate, but it carries worldview knowledge and ways of relating to both land and life. So, what Mary said really helped me think more deeply about the links between land, language, knowledge, and worldview and how they're all kind of woven together. Now, I want to bring back Nikki, who also spoke about this connection and how it's been part of her own personal and family journey.

Nikki Auten (17:59):

My journey took me on learning my language so that I could understand through language, growing my own food, so that I could make changes in my family.

Tehya Quachegan (18:07):

I really like that Nikki highlights her language journey. It really is a journey, learning your own language. I relate to that in learning my own Cree language. And then I really want to come back to Mary, and she also reminded us that water is central to these relationships. And that everything from the animals to the land itself depends on it. And she asked an important question about what we're doing to protect it.

Mary Laronde (18:31):

Everything depends on the water. All the birds and the animals and everything that lives on land rely on that water as well. And so, what kinds of things do we put in place to start being able to protect, and steward, and manage activity on the land that's going to protect this deep water by the shore?

Tehya Quachegan (18:59):

When Mary was saying that, she was actually in conversation with Liz, and Liz really picked up on this theme of how people in water are deeply interrelated.

Elizabeth Macpherson (19:09):

When Māori introduce themselves, they usually say 'Ko wai au', which is like 'who am I' before I introduce myself, but 'Ko wai au' means 'who are my waters'? And it's like, from what waters do you come? And it signifies, from the way that I've been explained it, but I think it's really beautiful, that we all come from water because we come from our mother's waters in the womb, but we also come from water. Our bodies are made up of water, and we are part of a landscape that's full of water.

Tehya Quachegan (19:45):

And then Liz kind of expanded and reflected on how, and especially as a settler scholar of European background in Aotearoa, how working with indigenous peoples reminds her that we are all deeply connected to water.

Elizabeth Macpherson (19:57):

Maybe you live on the coast and it's a bay or a harbour, but what's the water that you're connected to? Because we can all feel a relational connection to water somewhere in the world, I think. But for Western people and in a capitalist context, we've kind of lost that a lot of the time. So, working with indigenous first nations and being reminded about the very basic, that yeah, of course, we are embedded in a landscape that's a wet landscape, and we can't live without that.

Tehya Quachegan (20:28):

So, I really loved that dialogue that happened between them and wanted to include it. And they asked some really important questions, like how are we protecting the water? What's the water that you're connected to? And just overall, how we can't live without water. And that kind of brings in that idea that water is more than a resource, it's a living relation, and it's something we're all tied to. And that connection extends beyond drinking or swimming or even ceremony. It includes how we relate to the fish and the governance systems around them.

Peter Andrée (20:58):

Yeah, I really love that theme and the conversations you brought to the fore here. You've got this theme of language, land, and water and how that relates to indigenous people and their food systems. And I'm curious, John, what's coming to mind for you as you hear these quotes?

John Reid (21:15):

Well, I think that language contains many of the codes that provide a vehicle for connection and embodied connection and to the formation of a type of environmental consciousness that enables us to relate more deeply. And more particularly, it sets the grounds for a set of ethics and ways of moving within the world. Certainly, when I think of it from that perspective, I first of all draw from a Māori perspective on the notion of whakapapa, which means that we are all in an interconnected genealogy of creation. Basically, a river is my cousin or my ancestor. Every

living creature, a tree, a bird, is a cousin or a relation of mine all the way back to the progenitors of all of it, which are the earth, sky, and progenitors before them, too. What it does is it weaves together an interconnected cosmos in which you are situated.

(22:19):

So that's the first thing that makes me think in terms of language. If you're raised within whakapapa, that is how you start orienting yourself in the world. And of course, what flows from that is a different way of relating. I think the second type of terminology would be mauri, that is, the unfolding of life or the life force of things unfolding. And to me, that also is a point of language that enables us to see that life is a sacred thing unfolding. We all have mauri, and we can see that. We can see if the mauri is sick, for example, a river is sick, things can't grow in a sick river, so the mauri is depleted. So, it gives us a framework to think about our way of relating to the environment.

(23:07):

Another key term would be utu, it relates to balance, or the relationship, or the relationship balance between different entities, between humans and the environment, between humans themselves. And it's about how you ensure that you're in a relationship of balance or ideally tauutuutu, a relationship of reciprocity, where you keep investing in the environment and invest in you, and it's an ongoing cascade of growing mauri. So, those are just sort of three things of what I think about when I think of language. And I think probably the other one is wairua, which means it's translated poorly into English as spirit, but it actually means bringing back to the theme of water. It means two waters, body and spirit, amongst other definitions. So, thinking of the body and the spirit as water, as well. So, those are just some initial thoughts around language.

Peter Andrée (23:58):

Yeah, that's fantastic, John. Super interesting. And one of the challenges for this project is that the common language between our two contexts is the settler language of English, and there's limitations to that that we need to be really conscious of as we navigate the space. Especially because of the importance within so many indigenous languages of having the value embedded in the languages. So, thank you. And I'll pass it back to Tehya. What's the next theme, Tehya?

Tehya Quachegan (24:27):

Thanks, Peter. And just to close on that, I really loved how that flowed, and I really loved how John tied in the language. And it's inspiring. It makes me think I need to learn some more there, some more Cree words. So, I loved it. And now we're going to get into our next theme. It's another big one. It's climate, biodiversity and land protection. So, that is, kind of, the role of indigenous rights and governance in this work, especially as it relates to our food systems.

Peter Andrée (24:57):

That does sound like a big one. So, how do we start?

Tehya Quachegan (25:00):

Well, we'll let our participants speak. We'll start hearing from them again, and we'll start with Nikki, and she kind of sets the tone with this insight from Haudenosaunee seed keeping work.

Nikki Auten (25:10):

As we move forward, one of the big things that we talk about in Haudenosaunee circles, seed keeping circle specifically, is that climate change is a thing. We know that climate change is a thing. Migration of plants, animals is a thing that's happening with that climate change. When we are thinking about our collective futures, one of the things we have to think about is what plants are migrating to where? How are we going to be prepared for that?

Tehya Quachegan (25:37):

I really wanted to include that because I think, especially as a young person, or younger, I have a lot of climate anxiety, and I know a lot of people my age relate to that. So again, I appreciate that Nikki is kind of asking those questions that maybe you don't fully put into the context of climate change, which is like, where are our plants going to go? What can we do? And that kind of future-focused awareness also came through in Fiona's reflections on agriculture and climate change.

Fiona Wiremu (26:06):

And even there, you've got climate change that might have an impact upon it and wipe it all out, which it did for one whole region. Wiped out our whole production.

Tehya Quachegan (26:14):

So yeah, just quickly, you could kind of already hear that example of how climate change is already affecting people, especially indigenous peoples. But I want to let Fiona go on and make her point on sovereignty and decision-making.

Fiona Wiremu (26:27):

So, when I'm thinking about what a transition to a sustainable food system means for our community, it is ownership and control from the turning over of soil in the waterways. It is decision-making from the beginning to the end. Wherever that end is, whether it's on someone's plate, whether it's for export, that's what sustainable systems for our community should be. The inhibitors to that we already know exist. But that would be what I'd be aiming for, and that can only come around by having sovereignty over our rights.

Tehya Quachegan (27:11):

So, in the end there, we could see how Fiona tied what she was speaking about, that vision, directly to governance. And now I want to bring in Martha, who can kind of help us bring this to the Canadian context for indigenous peoples and how the politics of recognition undermines real sustainability.

Martha Stiegman (27:29):

So Glen Coulthard's analysis about the politics of recognition, the idea that the Canadian state will recognize indigenous rights on their own, on the state's terms, in ways that do not challenge capitalist economies and do not challenge the jurisdictional authority of the Canadian state or Canadian claims to underlying title and sovereignty.

Peter Andrée (27:52):

Okay, so I hear where we're going here. Fiona is talking about the importance of recognizing indigenous rights to get sustainability correct on indigenous lands. And then Martha's bringing in the point that when the state comes in to recognize indigenous rights, it often only goes a little way. There isn't a deep recognition of the underlying title in sovereignty. This raises important questions about where we're going in this project, and some of these answers are coming to

questions that these peers were asking each other about what a transition to a sustainable food system looks like for their community, in the context they work in? And I gather Martha spoke to that pretty directly.

Martha Stiegman (28:42):

A sustainable transition, a move past capitalism, a move past the raping of the earth that we're seeing, needs to happen everywhere in order for there to be contexts for these kinds of sustainable transitions to happen in indigenous and non-indigenous contexts.

Tehya Quachegan (28:59):

So, what Martha said there was really powerful, and she also emphasized that settlers need to learn from indigenous peoples.

Martha Stiegman (29:07):

I've heard so many of my indigenous collaborators talk about the need for settlers to learn from indigenous people. That if we're going to get out of this climate crisis, that it's going to be because settler culture has to understand that this idea that land is alienable, that it's a resource that can be exploited for profit, that we're separate from 'nature', that's a cultural construct that needs to be eviscerated. And this cross-cultural learning is the way that settler society is going to learn that.

Peter Andrée (29:48):

Wow, these are some big ideas and some radical politics, basically saying that maybe some of the European Western ways of doing things, the capitalist system, need to really be rethought from the ground up and that indigenous perspectives have something really important to offer. I want to turn to you, John, because I think in Aotearoa (New Zealand) there's a real breadth of approaches, right, from indigenous people working within the capitalist system to further economic development and sovereignty, as well as those who challenge it. And I'm curious where you see this all coming together.

John Reid (30:28):

Well, I think first of all, you see some of those broader economic and political systems are almost like zombies in a way, walking us toward disaster in terms of our environment, which has its social and economic implications as well. And with that context in mind, what I'm seeing in the New Zealand condition is a very strong collaboration in many instances and wonderful examples that we'll see through our Living Relations research where Māori communities are working with settler communities to come up with solutions within their tribal territories, particularly at a catchment level. I think there's some wonderful examples of how these things can work. In particular, how broader governance at that scale can work to address environmental issues, particularly in the Ngāi Tahu context that I'm most familiar with, generate Mahinga Kai or wild foods. Wild foods is the measure of the health of an environment. And I think to me that's probably where I'm seeing significant encouraging systems and models that can be replicated at a local level and cascade through a network to create change in that manner.

Peter Andrée (31:48):

Thanks, John. I think it's really interesting how I introduced that by saying we can have a big debate about capitalism and these big systems, and your response is to say, But look at the work that can happen on the ground in collaboration to make working systems that produce

food, maybe food for domestic consumption and export. And that the measure of success in part is about are the wild foods, the traditional foods, the Mahinga Kai, there to show us that the ecosystems are healthy and strong.

(32:21):

I wonder if you can just kind of touch on one other thing because this has come up in some of our Living Relations discussions, and that's the place of legal personhood for natural entities.

John Reid (32:32):

So we've got three examples now where a legal personhood has been attributed to in first instance a landscape or Te Urewera, which is in the North Island, which is a national park, the Whanganui river on the west coast of the North Island, and also Taranaki Maunga, a mountain, a volcano has also been given legal personhood or just about to be given legal person. I'm not sure which that is. In terms of the indigenous perspective, of course, much of the environment is given personhood in this sense in terms of the languaging of the environment. So, it makes sense in some respects to be also place that personhood in legal sense onto those entities. What it does is, and I think the impact on governance around this is that, what you do is you give the environment a voice at the table. So, if we think about democratic governance, currently it's people sitting around making decisions, but what happens if we've got a river at a table, or a mountain at a table, or a national park at the table, making the decisions? And so, I think that is the real governance innovation.

Tehya Quachegan (33:45):

Thank you so much for kind of explaining that to us, John. And there's a lot of interest in Canada in learning more about these indigenous governance concepts from Aotearoa, and whether they might be useful here. And I would even say they are especially relevant or needed in Ontario regarding Bill 5, for example, and my own community, for example, Moose Cree is holding emergency meetings on how to protect the land? What can we do? I really appreciate that we got to have this conversation.

Peter Andrée (34:16):

Yeah, I'm glad you're bringing that, Tehya. These are very real politics. I was at Queens Park earlier this summer at a protest with a lot of chiefs from around Ontario, Northern Ontario, including Chief Shelly [Moore-Frappier] from Temagami First Nation. And that was interesting because just last August, we were at Bear Island with guests from Aotearoa (New Zealand) talking about legal personhood as one of the tools that communities here may use. Temagami First Nation, for example, imagine recognizing the legal personhood of Lake Temagami. It really resonated for them to think about their lake and their mountains as their ancestors and what it means to respect their ancestors the way they would if they were living people, because these are their living relations. So, now what's your final theme for this episode?

Tehya Quachegan (35:13):

Thanks, Peter. I do want to bring it back to food systems. And so this final theme is revitalizing food systems in ways that are really grounded in indigenous values and knowledge that help build a better future for all of us.

Peter Andrée (35:31):

And that's a real core assumption underpinning all of our work that revitalizing traditional food systems is good for indigenous people, and it's good for broader society as well. So, what did you hear from our speakers on this?

Tehya Quachegan (35:43):

Well, first, when Nikki and Sean were in conversation together, their words kind of really summed up the importance of reawakening cultural relationships with food.

Nikki Auten (35:53):

When I think about the next generation, I really think about making sure they have not only the growing knowledge, but the cultural knowledge that goes with that for me. That the ceremony doesn't get lost because that's how we build relationships. That they understand how not only should they be interacting with the plants, but how do the plants in return interact with them.

Tehya Quachegan (36:15):

So, we just heard from Nikki, and she was talking about that next generation, and I can appreciate that because in my teachings, that's something we're always mindful of, thinking of that next generation. And I also just want to acknowledge that she brought ceremony into this, and especially in youth spaces, just being a youth myself, that's something I keep hearing is that we really need those ceremonies. We can't lose those ceremonies. So, I just wanted to emphasize that. And on the topic of next generation, we're also thinking about the future, and I want to pass it over to Sean, who kind of shares his vision for that future.

Sean Connelly (36:49):

I think it's one where we all value food in much deeper kinds of ways. So, we don't engage in food practices as a means of filling our bellies when we're hungry, but we rediscover the cultural meaning behind food. And I think by doing that, you're automatically engaged in questions of where food comes from, how is it being gathered, who is producing it, and really valuing the significant work and care that goes into making that food available so that we all benefit from it. So, for me, it is, I think, something that's part of the problem, but can be addressed by more food consciousness and awareness.

Tehya Quachegan (37:39):

And I'm going to turn it over to Fiona now, who kind of follows and expands on this theme, and she summed up the work ahead in this way:

Fiona Wiremu (37:46):

You have to educate everyone. So, you have to bring everyone along the journey. You have to educate our children. You have to make sure that there's safe spaces so that they can take up all of their identity and be able to apply that. And so, we have to stop saying it's the next generation's responsibility, and we have to take responsibility now.

Tehya Quachegan (38:07):

And then Fiona also talked about the place of allyship with non-indigenous peoples.

Fiona Wiremu (38:12):

Many people outside of indigenous communities actually want the same thing. They just have a different lens to it. So many people, whoever you are, want clean water. Doesn't matter what race you are; you want clean water. You want to have food that's edible, and that's both healthy and nutritious and has flavour. Those are all common themes irrespective of who we are.

They're common to being a person, a human. So, when we can find that commonality in the stories and we can connect that with both indigenous and non-indigenous, then change will happen because you do need both sides for the change. While I aspire for sovereignty, the reality is that we need our allies. And our allies need us because this earth can't sustain the current practices that we have. It just can't. And so, if we want to exist and we want our children to exist and our grandchildren to exist in the future, we have to make a stand, but we have to make it together.

Tehya Quachegan (39:11):

And Nikki said something similar about the importance of working together in projects like this.

Nikki Auten (39:16):

Recognizing that we're all fighting the same fight, even though we're on different continents. So, sharing the stories, I think, helps fuel it. I think fuel the fire to keep going, that we may find strategies in each other's stories that might work for us, that we may be able to employ in some way or another.

Tehya Quachegan (39:36):

Here you'll hear Kristen reflecting on the role of non-indigenous people in this work.

Kristen Lowitt (39:40):

You can't disconnect the piece of justice from what is sustainable. And I think you can't have sustainable food systems if they are on land that is stolen or taken. And I think we see that in many ways, including the fact that it even harms non-indigenous communities in terms of our lack of connection to land and the unhealthy food that we're eating. So, how do we repair those relations around food? It requires really thinking about why are we in the place that we're in and those bigger structures. I'm excited about this project in that sense because I think it can really bring the equity and sustainability pieces together and highlight that through the stories of the different contexts that we're working in.

Peter Andrée (40:21):

It's really neat to hear those last three speakers together, Nikki and Fiona talking about the place of allies and non-indigenous people in this work. They recognize it's important. And then Kristen's talking about what it takes when you're a non-indigenous person working in this space and the importance of thinking carefully about your positionality in these deep webs of power relations. And only after we've been doing that can we work in ways that are kind of productive, revitalizing traditional food systems, and through that kind of making a world that's better for all of us. So, John, I want to turn to you and get your final thoughts based on all you've been hearing today. Where do you think the Living Relations partnership is at, and where is it heading?

John Reid (41:12):

So yeah, I think the project is in a great spot. We've just got a wonderful advisory circle of inspiring leaders from indigenous communities. It cascades down to a great team of researchers and below that into a wonderful array of case studies that can tell these stories of what communities are doing, indigenous communities, how they're relating, delivering outcomes for themselves in terms of their own food sovereignty. But drawing on those previous themes, how we are weaving that also into a broader change within settler communities and that broader settler colonial context. So, for me, it's a wonderful story, which is detailing a healing journey.

Peter Andrée (41:59):

Yeah, thanks, John. That's a nice summation. And I would add we also have very talented research assistants in the project, like Tehya.

John Reid (42:08):

Indeed.

Peter Andrée (42:09):

So, Tehya, now that you've spent all of this time with these interviews, pulling out all these quotes, what are your reflections on what you've heard? How does this fit with the work you're doing as a student and a young indigenous person with deep commitments to your own nation, to food sovereignty, to sustainability, to a brighter future?

Tehya Quachegan (42:28):

Thanks, Peter. I really loved working on this and just being trusted with the stories, and especially hearing from John today. It's just been great, I wanted to say. But I think one of the biggest things that stayed with me throughout listening to all these interviews is just how deeply connected everything is. So, that's food, land, water, language, governance, and the relationships we hold with each other and with the natural world. So, as a young indigenous person, as a [Word Here] person, and especially as someone doing this work from within my own community and nation or to represent them or to help them, I'm always just thinking about responsibility. And kind of stepping away from a political sense, but more of a personal one, and just how am I showing up for my people, and especially how am I showing up for the land that raised me?

(43:18):

And this project just reminded me that our stories carry those answers, whether it's about revitalizing language through food, asserting sovereignty through governance or building solidarity across continents. These conversations show that indigenous peoples already have the tools and we're already doing the work. So, as a grad student, I hear a lot about theory, but listening to folks speak from their own lived experiences is just so grounding. And it reminds me that this isn't just about research or policy, it's actually about survival. And not just that, but resurgence. So, being trusted with these stories and being here today, it's changed how I see my own role. And it's not just about amplifying voices, it's about being in relationship, being in accountability, and just in motion together. And I'm so grateful for that.

Peter Andrée (44:12):

Thank you, Tehya. It was so great to work with you as my co-host. And in fact, one of the mandates that John and I have been given by the Advisory Circle is really to make sure that we are bringing in a next generation in our work. And so, it's so great to work with you as part of that next generation. And I also want to say thank you to John, the Living Relations co-director, for joining us today.

John Reid (44:38):

Thank you, Peter. And thank you, Tehya, lovely to meet you. I'm looking forward to continuing this journey.

Peter Andrée (44:46):

And thank you to all the members of the Living Relations Team who agreed to have bits of their conversations with each other shared through the podcast medium, both in this episode and the previous one. And finally, I want to thank the research assistants who made this episode possible. They are Stella Oliver, Catherine Littlefield, and Sondos Kataite.

(45:06):

And I want to thank the Living Relations Partners, Plenty Canada, First Nations of Na Cho Nyuk Dun, First Nations Technical Institute, the Ngāi Tahu Research Center, and finally, the Carlton Center for Community Innovation. I want to give a shout-out to Temagami First Nation, the members of the Teme Augama Anishinaabe, on whose territory we recorded these conversations in August of 2024. And I want to thank our funder, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

(45:37):

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