

ECOPOLITICS PODCAST EPISODE 4.10: Living Relations pt.2

Additional Pedagogical Resources

Summary: *This episode is our second installment on the Living Relations partnership, focusing on transnational collaboration between Indigenous and settler partners from Canada and Aotearoa (New Zealand). Hosts Peter Andrée and Tehya Quachegan are joined by project co-director John Reid to share insights from members of its Indigenous Advisory Circle and Research Circle.*

Building on the themes introduced in part 1, this conversation turns to the connections between land, water, and language; the role of Indigenous rights and governance in shaping climate-resilient futures; and the revitalization of food systems rooted in Indigenous values and knowledge. Together, the voices in this episode reflect on what it means to revitalize food systems through Indigenous governance, community-led research, and cross-cultural partnerships — and why revitalizing Indigenous food systems matters not only for Indigenous peoples but for all of us navigating the challenges of the Anthropocene.

Key Takeaways:

- Both Indigenous and settler voices stressed that food, water, and sustainability are shared concerns, and solutions require solidarity across cultures and even continents.
- Land, water, and language are connected. Many Indigenous speakers explained how their languages express relationships with the natural world and guide ethical ways of living.
- For Indigenous communities, having control over food systems is tied to rights, governance, and cultural survival. Food sovereignty is deeply connected to self-determination.
- From shifting plant ranges to crop loss, communities are experiencing the impacts of climate change firsthand and responding with traditional knowledge and practices.
- Ceremony, intergenerational learning, and cultural practices tied to food are central to healthy, sustainable communities.

Discussion Questions:

- What water and lands do you feel most connected to, and why?
- What is your experience with language as embodying a relationship to land and water? How do Indigenous perspectives on language help us think differently about environment and governance?
- How does one's positionality (e.g., as Indigenous, settler, newcomer, researcher, student) shape how we engage with environmental and food issues?

- In what ways can food systems serve as a pathway toward justice and reconciliation between Indigenous and settler communities?
- Climate change is already reshaping food systems globally. How are Indigenous communities uniquely positioned to respond, and what can we learn from their approaches?
- What role could new concepts like legal personhood for rivers, mountains, or forests play in advancing environmental sustainability and justice?
- How can sharing knowledge and experiences across continents (such as between Canada and Aotearoa/New Zealand) strengthen movements for climate resilience and food sovereignty?

Learn More About Our Co-Host and Guests:

Tehya Quachegan is from Moose Cree First Nation and Thunder Bay, Ontario. She is a student researcher and advocate, committed to supporting the involvement of northern First Nations youth in Indigenous food initiatives. She is currently pursuing a Master of Environmental Studies at Lakehead University, building on an Honours Bachelor's degree in Psychology and Indigenous Studies from Western University. As a Research Assistant with the Living Relations Project, Tehya helps to share stories gathered through conversations among participants from Canada and Aotearoa New Zealand.

Dr. John Reid is the co-director of the Living Relations Project and a specialist in Indigenous economic development, with a particular focus on land, freshwater, and ocean sustainability. He is of Māori heritage and a registered member of Ngāti Pikiao. He was recently appointed Professor of Environmental Systems and Indigenous Knowledge at the Ngāi Tahu Research Centre, University of Canterbury. In this role, he works across the Faculty of Engineering and alongside Māori hapū (subtribes) and iwi (tribes) to design and implement new environmental technologies. Prior to this appointment, John spent 19 years as both a consultant and academic, developing businesses and pioneering novel economic development approaches with Māori iwi in Aotearoa New Zealand. He has led several national research programmes at the intersection of sustainable resource use, Indigenous knowledge, and economic development, and is widely published across these fields.

Tayohseron:tye Nikki Auten is a Kanyen'keha:ka (Mohawk) woman and born turtle clan. She currently resides in her home community of Tyendinaga. She is the proud mother of three adult children and the grandmother of one incredible human. You can often find Nikki engaged in one of her hobbies, including painting, growing food and saving seeds, learning languages, and sewing. Nikki has worked as an instructor at both the college and university levels and is currently employed with First Nations Technical Institute as the Program Manager for the Indigenous Sustainable Food Systems program. She actively volunteers in her community with the Mohawk Agricultural Fair and the



Kenhte:ke Seed Sanctuary and Learning Centre. She is also involved with the urban Indigenous community in Kingston through her work with the Hwy 15 Indigenous Food Sovereignty Garden.

Fiona Wiremu is from the New Zealand tribes of Tūhoe (Ngāti Hāmua, Te Mahurehure, Ngāti Koura) and Ngāti Ranginui (Ngai Tamarāwaho). Her areas of research include Mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge) inclusive of language, culture and identity; Whai Rawa (Māori economies); Te Tai Ao (The Natural Environment); Mauri Ora (Human Flourishing); and Māori community self-development initiatives inclusive of food sovereignty research. She is an educator of Indigenous Business teaching at an indigenous-university (Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangi), in Aotearoa New Zealand. Fiona holds a number of governance roles across the health, social and employment sectors with these intersecting to reduce the ongoing effects of colonization.

Mary Laronde is a member of the Temagami First Nation (TFN) and past Director of Land Stewardship. Temagami First Nation represents the Indigenous People of N'Dakimenan (Our Land), comprising 4000 square miles of land in what is now called Northeastern Ontario.

Sean Connelly is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Geography at the University of Otago. He researches sustainability and environmental management, focusing on agri-food system change and community responses to sustainability challenges. He writes a regular column "[Seeds for Change](#)" in the Otago Daily Times on food and sustainability.

Dr Elizabeth Macpherson is a Pākehā (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 programme Blue Carbon Futures in Aotearoa New Zealand: Law, Climate, Resilience.

Kristen Lowitt is an Assistant Professor in the School of Environmental Studies at Queen's University. Her research goals are directed towards working with communities to build just and sustainable food systems in rural and coastal settings. She brings expertise in the role of small-scale fisheries in sustainable food systems to the RC. Lowitt has developed partnerships with First Nations communities at the intersections of fisheries governance, and brings networks across the Great Lakes watershed.

Episode Resources:

Living Relations Project

- In case you missed it, make sure to take a listen to [Living Relations - Part 1](#) featuring a wide array of other members of the Living Relations Project Team.

- Learn more about the [Living Relations Project](#), a 2024–2027 collaboration between Indigenous and settler partners in Aotearoa and Canada featured in this episode.

Indigenous Knowledge & Governance

- For further resources on Māori and Indigenous knowledge informing climate policy, check out John Reid's [Adapting to climate change through nature-based solutions and indigenous knowledge: the case for landscape-scale ecosystem regeneration in the Rokohouia Delta](#).
- John was also a guest on [Episode 2.10: Dairy Cows, Climate Change and Settler Colonialism: Insights from Aotearoa/New Zealand](#).
- John gave a presentation at Carleton in 2024 called "[The Quiet Environmental Revolution](#)", about how the Waitangi Treaty settlement process (between Māori and the Crown) is transforming environmental policy and the transition to sustainable enterprise in the food and fibre sectors of Aotearoa New Zealand

Food Sovereignty & Sustainability

- Martha Stiegman references [Glen Coulthard's Red Skin, White Masks](#) critique of the "politics of recognition" to show how state recognition often undermines true sovereignty.
- Martha was also featured in Season 1 of the Ecopolitics podcast exploring [Mi'kmaq treaty relations and fisheries](#) with Dr. Sherry Pictou.
- Stiegman, M., & Pictou, S. (2023). We Story the Land: Exploring Mi'kmaq food sovereignty, Indigenous law and treaty relations. *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 1-24.
- Check out [Advancing Radical Food Geographies Praxis through Participatory Film](#) for more of Kristen Lowitt's research work alongside Charles Levkoe exploring food systems, reconciliation, and settler-Indigenous partnerships
- Kristen Lowitt and Charles Levkoe worked with Batchewana First Nation to create [Lake Superior Our Helper: Stories from Batchewanaung Anishinabek Fisheries film](#) about the essential role of fishing in Batchewana First Nation's sustenance, identity, and livelihood from time immemorial.
- Together with Batchewana First Nation of the Ojibways and the Saugeen Ojibway Nation, Kristen Lowitt and Charles Levkoe co-authored a chapter on "[Indigenous self-determination and food sovereignty through fisheries governance in the Great Lakes region](#)" in a book co-edited by Peter André
- Fiona Wiremu was the principle investigator on a research project that produced this [extensive report and literature review on kai governance, kai sovereignty, kai security, and the \(re\)production of kai in Aotearoa](#) Kai refers to food, but also to other gathered/harvested consumables

Law & Governance Innovation

- John Reid shares insights on the potential and innovation of legal personhood for rivers, mountains, and landscapes for governance. Elizabeth Macpherson

discusses further [the implications of legal personhood for the Whanganui River here.](#)

- Fisher, K., Makey, L., Macpherson, E., Paul, A., Rennie, H., Talbot-Jones, J., & Jorgensen, E. (2022). Broadening environmental governance ontologies to enhance ecosystem-based management in Aotearoa New Zealand. *Maritime Studies*, 21(4), 609–629. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40152-022-00278-x>.

Settler-Indigenous Engagement in Food Systems Work

- Bartlett, C., Marshall, M., Marshall, A. (2012). Two-eyed seeing and other lessons learned within a co-learning journey of bringing together indigenous and mainstream knowledges and ways of knowing. *Journal of Environmental Studies and Sciences*, 2, 331–340.
- Littlefield, C., Stollmeyer, M., Andrée, P., Ballamingie, P., and C.Z. Levkoe. (2024) Exploring settler-Indigenous engagement in food systems governance. *Agric Hum Values*. 41 (2024): 1085–1101