**Cultural Transformation**

*"Indigenous Perspectives" - Monthly Broadcast on HealthyLife.Net*

*# 32–August 24, 2023*

For audio podcast: http://www.ecologia.org/news/32.CulturalTransformation.mp3

*Heritage foods on display at the Green Corn Festival, August 19, 2023;*
*all were grown on the Kahnawà:ke Reserve:*
*Tuscarora white corn, blue corn, red popcorn, apples, garlic, green beans and their dried beans*

## Segment One

Randy Kritkausky: Greetings, or may I say Bozho in Potawatomi, to those joining us for today's Indigenous Perspectives show. I'm Randy Kritkausky, an enrolled Potawatomi tribal member, and the co-host of Indigenous Perspectives.

Carolyn Schmidt: And I'm Carolyn Schmidt, the other co-host. We're presently in Vermont, recording this first segment of our show on Cultural Transformation. In our Land Acknowledgment we recognize Vermont as part of N'dakinna, the unceded traditional territory of the Abenaki people who for centuries lived on and cultivated

the lands now included in present-day northern New England and southeastern Canada.

Randy: Today we also acknowledge that we are on Turtle Island, which is the unceded land of our other-than-human kin who occupied this territory for millennia, if not millions of years, before the arrival of European settlers. We benefit from their good stewardship of these lands before all of the settlers, both my Indigenous ancestors and Europeans arrived. During the show we will be traveling across the international border between the United States and Canada, and taking you along.

Carolyn: Today's show builds on the discussions of Cultural Appropriation and Cultural Appreciation in our previous two shows. The goal is to discuss how both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people today can participate and share in the process of Cultural Transformation as we each in our own way seek a new and more sustainable and equitable way of life.

Randy: So this really raises the question of exactly what cultural transformation looks like. And as Carolyn just mentioned, it is different for Indigenous people and for people of European settler descent. At the same time, both of us, mainstream and Indigenous, are in the same dilemma and challenge here in the 21st century, trying to figure out how to revive parts of our cultures, recreate parts of our cultures, and most importantly, invent something new that is going to allow us to survive and thrive in the 21st century. So what this program is really about is how we can work together - mainstream people and Indigenous people - to engage mutually in a supportive way in this re-creation and transformative process.

Carolyn: And I'd add one of the many challenges in this whole vision of the process is for each people, especially peoples in the minority, like the Indigenous peoples, to be able to maintain their sense of their core traditions and not feel they're going to lose everything. So that's an important dimension of this interaction.

Randy: One of the problems we're dealing with, or one of the challenges we're dealing with, is there is a prevailing notion that there is really one model of cultural transformation. And that model is that the transformation is limited to assimilation, diminution, and eventual erasure of Indigenous and other unique minority cultures. This assumption - incredibly problematic - lies at the root of many misunderstandings and many of the tensions and hostilities that sometime exist between mainstream and Indigenous peoples.

Carolyn: I'd just like to add here also that when we look at the problems of cultural appropriation, usually the sense is that with cultural appropriation, people from the dominant society are taking - transforming, cheapening and monetizing - the cultural, intellectual, artistic collective properties of the Indigenous cultures. So we obviously need to make sure that that gets avoided and we work on respectful mutual ways to do these interactions.

Randy: We're bringing a somewhat unique perspective to this whole issue because Carolyn and I have benefitted from living part time in Canada, in Montréal (named Mooniyang in my traditional Aninishinaabe language) as well as living in Vermont. This multicultural experience is teaching us that there are cultural alternatives to the prevailing notion of cultural assimilation found in the United States. We begin today's program on the U.S. side of the border where historically "the melting pot" is both the dominant cultural notion and indeed public policy.

For centuries, those who were not English speaking peoples and did not have membership and participation in American society came to these shores being greeted with the expectation that they would shed previous ethnic identities and "become American", as the phrase was. In the 19th century, 20th century, this policy was inflicted on Native Americans through the infamous Indian residential schools. But the melting pot as a goal has been inflicted on every group of immigrants who have arrived on the shores, after English speaking, colonizers arrived and established what the rules of inclusion are.

Carolyn: Yes. And obviously rules of rules of inclusion imply rules of exclusion. Okay, on the other hand, Québec province, where Montréal is by far the largest city, is a Francophone province that hosts a bilingual French and English society. And more than that, Québec has become profoundly multi-ethnic. It celebrates a spirit of cultural diversity that is best described with the metaphor of a salad bowl. This isn't mine, it's been around for quite some time in discussing Canada, where distinct flavors and colors are preserved within a common space. In other words, a salad bowl keeps the distinct individual contributions identifiable and intact, rather than reducing them to some underlying bland commonality as in a melting pot. So later on today, we'll be driving up to the Canadian border and we'll be greeted by a Canadian border guard who will first address us in French and then English. And they are always ready to interrogate us in whichever of the two languages we prefer to use.

Randy: However, before we encounter the humans who monitor this settler imposed boundary, chances are that we will greeted by raptors - hawks and eagles who frequently circle overhead and who remind us that they freely crisscross an artificial boundary line without passports. They inspire us to seek avenues to reducing political, social and cultural boundaries that separate us, create fear and anxiety, and impede our ability to participate in and enjoy other cultural traditions.

Carolyn: And last weekend, we attended an outdoor book fair, on the shores of Lac St. Louis in southern Montréal. And this salad bowl theme was everywhere in the uniqueness, variety, and comfort level of all the different publishers and their books. For example, one publisher, Racine/Roots, offers some children's books in French and some in English. One title is *Movers, Shakers, History Makers - the Canadian Black History Book of Rhymes*.[1] And about each person, they have a rhyme about them.

Randy: Another publisher had books and online resources and videos produced by and for the Deaf community, the publisher is based in Ontario, which is mainly English speaking, and they're reaching out to connect with other French speaking Deaf communities in Québec and Ontario producing more French language based materials. We learned that there are different versions of sign language, depending on one's cultural spoken language. There's American Sign Language, just one of them. There are also Indigenous sign languages.

Carolyn: And then there was the Hannenorak booth – Hannenorak is an independent publishing house, based in Wendake, where the Huron-Wendat Indigenous people have a reserve. It's a very small reserve. It's in the area around Québec City, and it's obviously a hub for creativity and contributions. Many of their books are compilations of stories, biographies and/or interviews that showcase contributions from a variety of Indigenous First Nations people from Québec and surrounding Canadian provinces. Materials in these books are printed in three languages – French, English, and the native language of the narrator of that particular story. So the powerful underlying message is of meaning and beauty in diversity – one doesn't have to push out any of the others.

And on the theme of cultural transformation as a dynamic and ongoing process - the stories from the Wendat tradition in these books are only in French and English;

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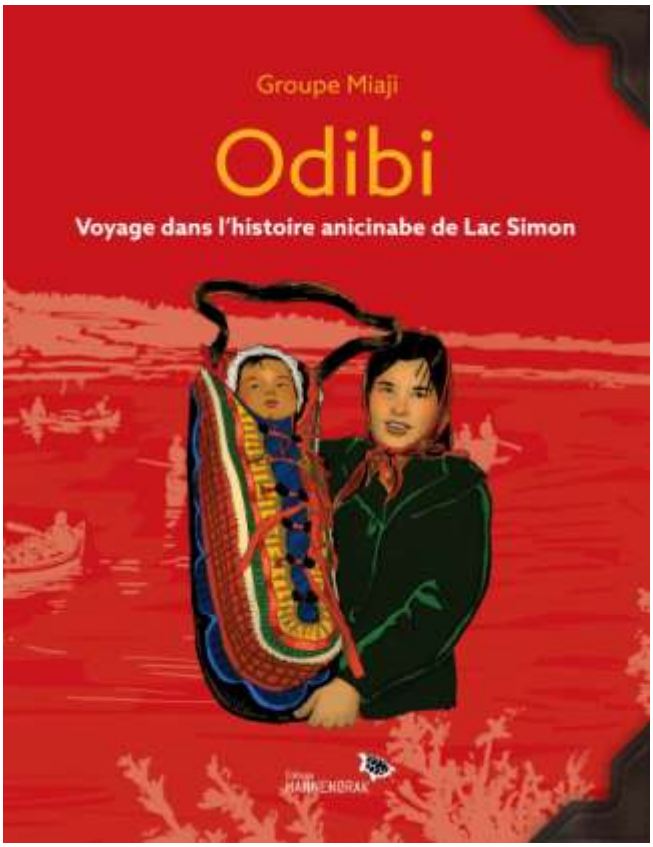
[1]Aquilah Newton: *Movers, Shakers, History Makers – the Canadian Black History Book of Rhymes*. 2021. www.bigdreamers.ca

there's a note that says "Through community efforts, after a long dormancy, the Wendat language is slowly coming back to life, though unfortunately not quickly enough for us to include it in here." So this is cultural transformation in process. It's dynamic, and it - it moves.

Randy: One of the books we saw, *Contes de la Tortue / Tales from the Turtle*[2] was literally flying off the table as parents grabbed it up. And its hardback version has beautiful illustrations, and it wasn't cheap; it was $40 Canadian dollars. Each of the eleven stories was written by an Indigenous writer from one of the various Indigenous Peoples of Quebec - - Aninishinaabe, Inuk, Abenaki, Wendat, Naskapi – and the reader gets to see how that group's written language (except for Wendat) looks. The author of one of those stories said that a goal is to "make our stories and people more visible." She also said that "there's a fine line between appropriation and respect; one difference is that learning grows out of respect."




Carolyn: And another book, *Odibi – voyage dans l'histoire anicinabe de Lac Simon*[3], tells the history of a particular real Indigenous community, from pre-Contact times

[2] *Contes de la Tortue / Tales from the Turtle*. Wendake (Québec): Editions Hannenorak, 2022.
[3] Groupe Miaji: *Odibi- Voyage dans l'histoire anicinabe de Lac Simon*. Wendake (Québec): Editions Hannenorak, 2022.

of traveling and living close to the land, to European – maybe French, some British - contact and colonization, , loss of land, residential schools and loss of language and damage to family bonds, relocation – the village got moved, the people had to move with it – and adaptation to a changed life. The illustrations are in color at the start, then black-and-white when documenting the damaging periods in the 19th and 20th centuries. And toward the end, they come back to color when explaining present-day changes and new growth in this particular community.

And the publishing company itself is a major agent of cultural transformation – promoting Indigenous languages, presenting and making visible the varieties of stories and their lessons, providing income to and showcasing the researchers, authors and illustrators.

Hannenorak, like other independent media in Canada, benefits from support from governmental agencies such as the Québec Council of Arts and Letters. This tangible acknowledgment of the importance of diverse voices and independent publishers shows the – to me, the more general Canadian societal support for these values. And I guess this has particularly struck me looking at so many of the distressing conflicts going on in the United States about whose history gets taught in schools. And, you know, the assumption that if you teach something about Blacks, then it's somehow hurting the whites. So this is a whole different world in this approach in Canada.

And the Hannenorak publishers only brought young people's books to this particular event. But I saw on their website, they have an incredible catalogue of books for adults also.

And to quote from Shayne Michael, the author/editor of another compilation, she says, quote: "This project wasn't an easy one. As an Indigenous person myself, it was important for me to develop mutual trust: Indigenous person to Indigenous person, person to person. Every step had to be carried out with the utmost respect. Respect for each and every person. Respect for every point to be researched, respect for every culture, respect for the writing." And she goes on, "Whether you are Indigenous yourself, or just curious to learn more about our world, we hope it will inspire you….And don't stop here: keep on learning about Indigenous cultures! It is so important to continue the conversation, keep talking about these nations and sharing their stories of individuals and groups. Today, we have more and more

resources to learn about Indigenous and Inuit nations. It's up to all of us to make a difference for the future!"[4]

Randy: And that really gets us back to the theme of today's show, which is cultural transformation and re-creation, and how we accomplish this together by sharing what our different cultures have to offer one another.

Carolyn: Yes, and also in the Hannenorak booth, we met one of the authors who is also a dancer, and she was wearing lovely and distinctive Mohawk regalia. She's from the Mohawk community on the Kahnawà:ke reserve, across the lake. So we discussed recent controversies that Randy and I have been involved in on this side of the Vermont border.

These controversies involve a Canadian Abenaki community which is continually harassing our Vermont state recognized Abenaki tribes. The Canadian relatives of the Vermont Abenaki are threatened by the fact that Vermont kin have been reviving and teaching their once nearly lost indigenous language. The Vermont Abenaki have also become widely recognized for writing, publishing and widely disseminating Native American stories including Abenaki stories. The Canadian Abenaki claim that both actions are "theft" and that someone else featuring their culture diminishes its value, dilutes it, "steals it" rather than strengthening it by helping it to sink roots more deeply into place and the mainstream.

Randy: This is an incredible example of what some people consider to be cultural appropriation in this case. It's not between the mainstream white culture and Indigenous people. It's an internecine struggle within the Indigenous community of people struggling to lay exclusive claim to their own traditions. This became even more bizarre here in Vermont a few weeks ago when we had a seminar with a school and the name of the school is taken from a very popular Native American story, the Turtle Island story. And they have been accused of cultural appropriation by someone from the Abenaki community in Vermont, who believes they shouldn't use the name or the concept because it somehow dilutes the value of that to the Indigenous community. It was really distressing for us to have to explain to our colleagues here in Vermont that not all Indigenous people are quite so ultra hypersensitive about borrowing and sharing.

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[4] *Shayne Michael: Nos Racines / Our Roots*, page 5. Wendake (Québec): Editions Hannenorak, 2022.

And all across North America, many Indigenous peoples and First Nations have Turtle Island creation stories. There are a lot of different versions, but it's nobody's exclusive story and nobody's exclusive vision in the first place. Let alone the fact that a beautiful story is worth, you know, worth sharing. So the dancer and author from Kahnawà:ke that we met that, that we met last week was surprised and saddened when we talked about these situations with her. And she said that all Indigenous people should welcome the interest and embrace of their cultures by people from the dominant societies pointing out was after 500 years of attempted erasure.

So that is the theme of today's program: that we must learn to share and we are not diminished in what we hold by sharing it. Our newfound acquaintance who made this very bold assertion about the need to share and not hoard and hide our cultures, was in no way oblivious to the dangers of forced assimilation. It turned out, and I was really knocked over when she shared her family history, which involved a grandfather who attended the infamous Carlisle Indian Residential School, the very same school, and at the very same time that my grandfather was there.

It was a really wonderful confirming reality check that people can go through this kind of traumatic cultural assimilation experience and come out the other side a generation or two later wanting to share. When I told her about my grandfather's inability to discuss the experience at school and how I gained insights into that by seeing a play in Montreal called Children of God, the new colleague that we met explained that she too had learned about her grandfather's experience by attending the same play.

Then she added, we must move on and let go of the pain and anger over the past. That was a theme of our podcasts #9 and #10 on Truth and Healing, applied to the residential schools in the US and Canada and Aboriginal experiences in Australia. Our new colleague was further expanding upon the notion that "We must keep the pride. You can't live in your anger. We're taking a stand and trying to continue to decide where we must go from here." And the "we" was a collective "we", not just an Indigenous community, but the mainstream and Indigenous peoples working together toward transformation.

Carolyn: So now Randy and I are about to head north, back to Mooniyang - Montréal - to attend the Green Corn Festival on the Kahnawà:ke Reserve. We'll see how the present day Mohawk community has revived this traditional celebration and how they are sharing it with non-Indigenous visitors. Stay tuned for our next segment.

**Segment Two**

Carolyn: Welcome back to Indigenous Perspectives, and we're speaking to you now from Montréal, and we acknowledge that this is the land that has traditionally been the territory of the Anishinaabe, the Mohawks (the Haudenosaunee), and a number of other Indigenous groups because it's been a large meeting place for centuries. This is, in Anishinaabe language, Mooniyang. And we recognize, today particularly, that the Mohawk name is Tio'tia:ke *[pronounced "Jiaojakwe"]* because we're going to be talking about the Green Corn Festival on the Kahnawà:ke Mohawk Reserve. This is located on the shore of the St. Lawrence River, just south of Montréal.

And the Green Corn Festival is a traditional seasonal celebration of the growth of the corn. You're showing your appreciation for the fact that the corn is growing well and you're anticipating the harvest, which will be another festival , in October. So the people on the Kahnawà:ke reserve revived - eight years ago - the Green Corn Festival, originally sort of an initiative of the tourism bureaus of Kahnawà:ke and a large non-indigenous city across the lake, Chateauguay. The idea was that if they work together, they increase tourism and interest in the Kahnawà:ke events and culture and people. So now it has morphed into something rather different, something that we did not expect and something much better actually, than we had expected. So we arrived there Saturday, walked across the field, and what did we see first?

Randy: Well, the first thing that greets you is some very friendly people, first of all, who walk up and welcome you. And secondly, a table full of wonderful food, a giant food basket with corn and tomatoes and squash. And it's an example of what the food sovereignty people are doing at Kahnawà:ke , which is producing food. And then very interestingly, sharing it, literally distributing it, giving it away at what outsiders might think is a roadside vegetable and food stand. But it's not being sold. It's there for the offering, for sharing for anyone who needs it to come and take what they want. And apropos of our previous segment's discussion, what we're trying to investigate and document here is that Indigenous people very often find that sharing, giving away, is mutually beneficial and mutually enjoyable. It's not losing something.

Carolyn mentioned that this festival began eight years ago as a cooperative project between the neighboring city of Chateauguay and Kahnawà:ke . And the idea was to share information and to share cultures believing that both cultures would benefit, which is really the theme of this show. What was remarkable about the sharing of

the food is that there were prepared foods and there were displays of how to make the food. And this just incredible openness and desire to bring outsiders into the process and see how it's done.

Carolyn: And I double-checked with a number of people, and a key point that everyone made was all the food was grown on their own reserve. Now, this is a place that has a lot of people - there are 8,000 people altogether living on a territory that's just 19 square miles. They don't have much farmland. So this is where people have literally been doing backyard and finding places that they can grow their own food on what would seem like a small scale, but with a tremendously impressive impact and growth. And the variety of traditional foods are growing. Heritage foods, different kinds of corn, different kinds of – there are the Kahnawà:ke green beans. So this certainly is a revival and a renewal of traditional foods in a modern day context.

Randy: And it's a cultural rebirth and a cultural transformation. But really at its base, it's a physical effort to bring health back to the community, because on both sides of the U.S. - Canadian border for decades people on the reserves didn't produce their own food very much. They were given food very often, surplus food by the government, and it was very unhealthy. So, you know, we have on our territories, our Indigenous territories, very high levels of diabetes, for example. So food sovereignty is a cultural transformation and rediscovering and recreating a healthy diet in order to improve not just the physical wellbeing, but the spiritual wellbeing of the people on the reserve - or in the United States, it would be on the reservation.

*Squash tarts, colorful bean and corn salad, cornbread with cranberries – made from locally sourced ingredients*

Carolyn: And another dimension, though, I remember talking to one of the community members in Kahnawà:ke before Covid, and she had - her dream had been to work on some kind of food sovereignty and, you know, healthy foods initiative. And now, a number of years later she's doing it and they're doing it as a group. They have a Food Sovereignty Action team. It's part of the Kahnawà:ke Collective Impact, which is a sort of an umbrella organization that's been created with volunteers and paid people from the community and also with government support from outside. So it's got a lot of - a lot of themes going on here to make this work.

Randy: One of the producers of the food in the basket struck up a conversation with me. He had just had a conversation with one of his colleagues and he said, you know, we're standing here thinking we're a lot like those mycelium networks in the forest that share information with one another, to one another's mutual benefit, but also , through the same network, share nutrients. And I thought that was the perfect metaphor for what we saw and a perfect organic metaphor for what's happening there.

Carolyn: Oh, and, and speaking of organic, one thing that really impressed me knowing the problems that people in Vermont have had with getting meaningful composting programs up and working really adequately is that they *[the people at Kahnawà:ke]* have a community-based composting project, which dovetails with the gardening. So people - the people who contribute their compost, their food waste to be composted can return when the compost is ready. And they get that to use in their own gardens. So that's not only a reward for their composting, but it's a real incentive to do a good job and keep the compost clean. So this is a really key point in making something work as opposed to just being a nice theory.

Randy: There's a critical ingredient in this success story of cultural transformation. It would be easy to visit the Corn Festival and think, oh, this is another one of those nice bottom up initiatives that communities have that very often are not going to endure very long. But what is unique about this particular example is that it is well funded by the Canadian government. And the funding channel came through a kind of reparations, if you wish, to the reserve for a residential school "scoop, " it was called, in the 1960s when children were literally lifted out of their families and taken to residential schools.

Carolyn: Just - Randy, just a bit of a correction. This wave we're talking about in the sixties was children being taken from their families, Indigenous children, and given

to be adopted to non-Indigenous families all over Canada. So these children were taken from their families and that whole tie was broken. So it's, it's even worse than residential schools 'cause the children were taken away permanently.

Randy: It involved both. And my point is that the critical ingredient for a cultural transformation, for a social transformation, is to have the kind of mycelium lateral organic connections that my new colleague informed me about, but also to have adequate funding coming from above. And this is where I think the Canadian success formula is about two decades ahead of what we're experiencing on the other side of the border, because we're now in the United States only slowly beginning to fund these kinds of initiatives on American reservations.

Carolyn: Well, on that note, we'll end up Segment Two, and stay tuned for Segment Three.

**Segment Three**

Carolyn: Welcome back to the third segment of this version of Indigenous Perspectives. So we're going to pick up and move along the conversation about cultural transformation.

Randy: And as we do that, we're going to loop back to the first segment of this program, but also to the previous program, the topic of which was cultural appropriation and cultural appreciation. Because one of the drivers of our concern and one of the drivers of our purpose in these two programs is to enable people in the mainstream and in Indigenous communities to find common ground and comfort, sharing information with one another without feeling that it's being taken or used in a disrespectful manner. Now, when we walked into this wonderful festival yesterday, the first dominant notion was: we want to share with you, we want to show you, we want to share our stories, we want to share our technology. You know, we want to show you how we start a fire, with the man who had the outdoor survival skills.

So the question is, why is it that some people on one *[the Canadian]* side of one border default to, we all win by sharing? And we're a little bit behind on the U.S. side of the border. And I think it has to do, as we suggested earlier in our programs, with the dominant *[Canadian]* societal notion of rejoicing in differences and not feeling threatened by people who are different and who want to learn and

sometimes practice and borrow our teachings. That's the great takeaway we just keep discovering up here, whether it was the book fair last week or the Corn Festival yesterday.

Carolyn: Yes, that's a good point, Randy. And I think one of the points that the Wilderness Survival teacher made was that - I mean, he was really interested in teaching anyone who wanted to learn about these various techniques to again, start fires or to how to walk quietly in the woods so as not to disturb the animals. And the whole point was he said, you know, there are givers and there are takers in life and the earth has been giving, she has been giving to us all the time, and humans have been taking, and we need to turn this around. He definitely saw it as something that everyone, regardless of whether they're Indigenous or not, you know, it was the whole "we're all on this together"- message.

*Learning how to make fire by rolling and rubbing cotton mixed with finely sifted wood ash between two wooden boards. Other wilderness skills taught at the Green Corn Festival included "fox walking" – you stand very straight, balance on one foot, lift the other foot up and forward, putting that foot down very slowly, outer edge first. Moving very slowly and quietly means that animals are not alerted to your presence.*

Randy: What was remarkable about this man, you know, he was showing young kids how to do starting a fire with a flint, how to start a fire with a bow, starting a fire with rolling something, which I had never seen before, and he had only recently discovered. But his work now in his retirement is with schools, elementary and secondary schools -

Carolyn: - and college -

Randy: yes - who are eager, eager to integrate this into their curriculum and who in Canada are mandated to do this. And this is in stark contrast to the presentation that I made a few weeks ago in Vermont, trying to tell people at a children's school

that it was okay to use Native American names in their curriculum and for their school. So we have this enormous range and we have this challenge, and it's as much of a challenge for Indigenous communities as it is for the mainstream. We all have to get comfortable understanding that Indigenous culture is not like a pie where if you divide it up, the more people who are participating in the division and sharing, the less there is for each participant. It's more like love and joy and going to a performance. The more people who are sharing, the richer the experience and the more we all gain.

Carolyn: Yes, and I'd say also the people at the Green Corn Festival, the Kahnawà:ke citizens, were not monetizing their knowledge in any way. Their knowledge - they were happy to give it. They were selling things; we bought some, there was honey, you know, there were earrings, you know, a number of things you could buy and obviously that helps people's family income. But the main message was about sharing the information to encourage everyone to slow down our lives, to do more food sovereignty, growing our own, taking the time. And Randy also noticed afterwards, we didn't see anybody talking on a phone, a "smartphone", the whole timewe were there. There were people who used them to take some photos and things like that, but everybody was engaging with the other people and with the activities.

Randy: It really was a joyous, very low key, but very joyous event where the dominant notion was, we all benefit by sharing, we all benefit by participating. And I don't think the word or the concept of cultural appropriation was uttered or even as a shadow in the background. This was a different culture on the different side of the border and a totally different cultural ethic from the top down to the very grassroots.

Carolyn: Okay, well that's a very good point to end Segment Three on. Everybody stay tuned for Segment Four.

**Segment Four**

Carolyn: Welcome back to the fourth segment of this Indigenous Perspectives show. We're talking about the theme of cultural transformation. We've been talking about the Green Corn Festival in Kahnawà:ke , in Quebec province in Canada, and we now have some more reflections on what it takes to make cultural transformation really happen.

Randy: This is an enormously complicated topic. People spend their whole lives talking about social change. And when we talk about social change and

transformation in an Indigenous community, sometimes it belies or challenges a notion that many people within Indigenous communities and within the mainstream harbor. And that notion is that somehow out there, there is in some reservation or some place, a pure form of Indigenous culture from pre-colonial times preserved in something like the insect in amber. And that is not how Indigenous culture has survived, and it certainly is not how it has recreated itself and how it is reviving itself.

*The flag of the Six Nations of the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) Confederation flies over the sports field complex where the Green Corn Festival was held. Electric lines and motor vehicles indicate that Kahnewà:ke is also linked to the larger Canadian society.*

One of the beauties of what we saw at the Corn Festival is the ability of the people who are engaged in food sovereignty to learn from modern agricultural techniques, things like proper methods of backyard composting, but also to understand more deeply where we are headed collectively as a society in the 21st century. Challenges that Indigenous people traditionally did not deal with. And if there's a single overarching concern that I think unites us, those who are Indigenous and those who are not, it's concern about the thriving and surviving and quality of life as we go forward dealing with the incredible formidable challenges before us.

Carolyn: So for challenges, you're talking about ecological challenges - climate change and you know, deforestation, biodiversity loss, but you're also talking about challenges, about how we deal with other people and how we work, how we cooperate.

Randy: Correct. And if, and if we hoard information, if we hoard resources and try to make it on our own individual life rafts, then none of us makes it. One of the

examples that we dealt with recently back on the other side of the border, in Vermont a couple of weeks ago, was dealing with the flood victims that Vermont made national news about. We had horrendous floods; in our capital, the main street was flooded out. And people immediately began to ask the question about how do we transform, how do we re-create what was here? Or do we re-create what was here?

So we held a community meeting, and the purpose of the community meeting was to share a bit of a challenging perspective on re-creating what was in Vermont. And we asked the question, do you just build back again like you did before, and put the river back in the channel that it didn't want to stay in? Or do you begin to think like Indigenous people and begin to respect nature and try not to dominate it, but to work with it? And that I think, is where we Indigenous people have something to teach people in the mainstream: how to be respectful and how to be humble. That's what I loved about the Corn Festival yesterday. It had very, very humble beginnings and humble roots and incredibly practical approach to transforming and reviving a culture.

Carolyn: Well, I think an important point also is after any kind of damage or when you perceive a problem, there's a real sense of urgency, at least that I feel, and I think it's many people share, you just sort of want to, you want to rebuild or "build back better" or "build back stronger" or whatever it happens to be. But the focus tends to be on getting our lives back to where they were before. And that's the whole rebuilding part, which is totally understandable and obviously necessary to a certain extent. But the recreating involves envisioning something different. And in this case, taking a leaf from Indigenous thoughts and connections with nature to - the hope would be to rebuild, re-creating with a sense of working better with the natural environment, the rivers, all these patterns that affect us, that we really can't control the way the 19th and 20th century settler dominant groups viewed nature.

Randy: I think the thing that was startling and invigorating and hopeful about the meeting we held in Vermont was the willingness of the group that gathered to press the restart button and ask fundamental questions about who we are, who we want to be, and what our values are. And to consider the possibility that Indigenous cultures that for four or five hundred years white society tried to erase, are now being looked at as a source of inspiration. So the challenge for those of us who are in Indigenous communities is to not slam the door in the face of people who are asking and wanting to borrow from our teachings. It's to share those teachings, in the

forms of the books that we talked about earlier in this segment or in the forms of just displays and hands-on how to do it, little workshops like we saw yesterday at Kahnawà:ke . This is how cultural transformation is going to happen, and it's going to happen in these mycelium-like grassroots connections. But also, as we've said several times in this program, it's going to happen if and only if our leaders are willing to fund, support and encourage this kind of crossover, this kind of cultural cross-fertilization between Indigenous peoples and people in the mainstream.

Carolyn: Okay. Again, that's an important point. And how can we - just to, to flip it back to the cultural appropriation concerns - do you have any guidelines or suggestions for people to make them feel more comfortable, whether they're Indigenous or non-Indigenous, more comfortable with when they can share and not be concerned about the appropriation issue?

Randy: Well, we could make it very complex or we could make it very simple. So let's make it very simple for the closing of this program. Do it with respect. Do it without fear, and do it without being crippled by the anxiety that, you know, you might say something that's wrong or that might be viewed as ignorant. I think we all need to be forgiving of one another, and all of us need to understand that as we begin to explore one another's cultures and share across those cultural boundaries, mistakes will be made. There will be awkward moments, there will be silences, there will be people who will howl and protest that we're going the wrong way, but we have to feel comfortable having the courage to begin the process of sharing and begin the process of recognizing our own limits. Again, comes back to humility. We will make mistakes, but in the end, we will all benefit by sharing, just like the food basket at Kanawake yesterday, come and take it. It's there for the offering. Somebody comes and takes too much, takes a handful, we need to let them know, no, that's not the way it's done. But we don't need to fear people come and sharing our corn. That's, that's not who we are or who we want to be.

Carolyn: Well, that's a great image for a recreated, more sustainable and more cooperative future. Thank you, Randy.

Randy: I want to say Migwetch to our listeners and our readers of our transcripts, we hope you've learned something from this show today. We hope you'll take a little bit of time to reflect on what we've said , and a little bit of time to listen to the natural world around you and the lessons that it brings.

Carolyn: Migwetch.

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*"Indigenous Perspectives" monthly podcast is hosted by Randy Kritkausky and Carolyn Schmidt, and broadcast on the fourth Thursday of each month, 12 noon Eastern Time (US & Canada), on HealthyLife.net.*



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