

Kim TallBear: "Disrupting Settlement, Sex, and Nature"

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**info@obxlabs.net**

[pause]

[foreign language]

**0:00:16 Skawennati Fragnito:** Welcome. In the Mohawk language, the word for the Mohawk language is Kanien'keha. And the word in Kanien'keha for this place, Montreal, is Tiohtià: Ke. And I'm privileged to welcome all of you and especially Kim to Haudenosaunee territory. I'm gonna just say that before every meeting, my people would say some words. In fact, it's called the Ohen: Ton Karihwatehkwen, words before all else. And it's a pretty long thing so I'm not gonna do the whole thing but in it, we thank all of the natural world. And the first thing we thank is the people. And so what we say is [0:01:03]        Akwe: Kon énska entsitewahwe'nón: Ni nonkwa'nikón: Ra tanon Teiethinonhwera: Ton ne Onkwehshón:'a. Today we bring our minds together as one as we give greetings and thanks for the people. And we remind ourselves... This part's not in the Mohawk version. We remind ourselves that we have been given the duty to live in harmony with each other and with all living things. And so this I hope sets the tone for this wonderful talk we're about to hear. Nia: Wen ko: Wa.

[applause]

**0:01:45 Jason Lewis:** So we're very pleased to welcome you all to the first of the Future Imaginary Lecture Series. Skawennati and I run a research network called Aboriginal Territories in Cyberspace. And a couple of years ago we started working on what's called the Initiative for Indigenous Futures. And this is a partnership with universities and communities that are looking at how to develop multiple visions of tomorrow so we can help understand where we wanna go today. We have four main components, we do residencies, we do workshops, we do symposia. We also are trying to build an archive. And the whole idea is to encourage and enable youth and elders, artists, academics and technologists to imagine how we and our communities will look seven generations from now.

**0:02:30 JL:** So this lecture series provides a public forum in which our most innovative indigenous thinkers, makers and activists can come here to Concordia, to Montreal, and share their visions of the future or their way of thinking about the future. The goal is to center indigenous views of the future in public conversations and to be challenged and inspired by these views. As the Kiowa and Comanche author N. Scott Momaday once wrote, "We are what we imagine. Our very existence consists in our imagination of ourselves. Our best destiny is to imagine, at least, completely who and what, and that we are." So before I introduce our speaker, I wanna turn the mic over to our honored guest tonight, Concordia University's new provost, Graham Carr.

[applause]

**0:03:24 Graham Carr:** Thanks very much, Jason. Thanks very much, Skawennati. It's great to be here this evening. I think it's fair to say that universities have a lot of work to do in terms of addressing issues around the truth and reconciliation and issues around indigeneity in the university

and relationships with indigenous peoples and indigenous communities with whom we're in touch. Fortunately, literally the day after I became Provost, I had the privilege to travel with Elizabeth Fast, one of our indigenous scholars and Charmaine Lyn, our Executive Director of Community Engagement, to the University of Alberta where there was a two-day forum on the role that universities should be playing with respect to the truth and the reconciliation process. And one of the takeaways that I think all of us had from that, is that different universities in different parts of the country are at different points on that journey.

**0:04:30 GC:** And here at Concordia, while we are, I think, doing a number of positive things in indigenous space, we are a long ways behind where many other universities are in other parts of the country. And I think that's a challenge for all Quebec universities as well. So I'm also pleased to say that one of the initiatives that the university has committed to as a result of our strategic directions process is to make a priority of addressing questions of indigeneity within the university context. Part of the truth and reconciliation process of course is dealing with a long and painful history and it's also about dealing with the present. But in this context, at Concordia, where we're talking about the future imaginary, particularly in a university that prides itself as a next generation university, one of the things that I think we need to be thinking about, is there are all kinds of next generations. There are next generation students, there are next generation seniors.

**0:05:44 GC:** But demographically, the single biggest cohort of next generation people in Canada are First Nations peoples. And so it's all the more important for a university that wants to position itself as a next generation university, that we address this. I guess, the last thing I would say is one of the happy byproducts of being at the forum in Alberta two weeks ago, was that I had the opportunity, we had the opportunity, to hear Kim TallBear speak. So I was looking forward to the next opportunity, didn't expect it to be coming quite so quickly, and I'm thrilled to be here this evening at all.

[foreign language]

**0:06:34 GC:** And we're so happy to have you here this evening and thank you all for being here.

[applause]

**0:06:45 JL:** So just one more thing before I do introduce Dr. TallBear, I wanna thank our sponsors. So the Hexagram Research Network is the primary co-sponsor of this event with additional support provided by the Simone de Beauvoir Institute, The Department of Geography Planning and Environment, and Geograds, the graduate student association of that department. I also want to thank the Milieux Institute for Art, Culture and Technology, for providing us with a home base from which we do all of our work.

**0:07:16 JL:** So our guest tonight, I'm very excited to be hosting her. I first came across her book, *Native American DNA: Tribal Belonging and the False Promise of Genetic Science*, several years ago. I was struck immediately by her ability to forcefully examine the intersection of indigenous knowledge and western science and to clearly articulate how the science serves the colonial project of indigenous erasure and eradication. I then went on a bit of a TallBear binge, reading her other written work and watching videos of her talks online. It's nice, there's at least eight or nine videos of

her talking online. I encourage people to go check them out.

**0:07:52 JL:** So her thinking has helped me reframe my thinking about indigeneity, scientific methodology, the role of technology in our cultures, our kin relationships, and the agency of the other or more than human. So really mind expanding stuff. It's been a real pleasure to walk through your thoughts. So officially, Dr. Kim TallBear is an Associate Professor in the Faculty of Native Studies at the University of Alberta where she's also a newly-minted Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Peoples, Technoscience and the Environment. She co-produces the new Edmonton sexy storytelling show, *Prairie Confessions*, modeled on the popular Austin show, *Texas Bedpost Confessions*. Building on lessons learned with geneticists about how race categories get settled, Dr. TallBear is working on a new book that interrogates colonial commitments to settlement in place within disciplines and monogamous, state-sanctioned relationships. She's a citizen of the Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate in South Dakota. Please join me in welcoming Dr. Kim TallBear to Concordia University.

[applause]

0:09:13 Dr. Kim TallBear: Thank you for that welcome. And I have to say I'm intimidated to be on Haudenosaunee territory because you guys are known to be militant and powerful.

[laughter]

**0:09:26 DT:** So I'll do my best. So I'm gonna get right to it. This is a very different talk than the talk that I gave in Alberta a couple weeks ago. As I move from thinking about the politics of genetics in particular to thinking about the politics of marriage, monogamy, and thinking about moving towards what I would call indigenous or critical relationality. But I hope by the end of the talk you'll see that these things really are deeply connected. So I'm going to start with a 100. And I do these... Write these hundreds as part of a creative writing practice with six other writers around the country. It was an online writing group that I was part of. And I was writing about non-monogamy, but I ended up beginning to write about expanding my ideas into relationships with other kinds of kin. And this is kind of a point when I was making that change. So this one is called *Sufficiency*.

**0:10:22 DT:** At a give away, we do them often at pow wows, the family honors one of our own by thanking the people who jingle and shimmer in circle. They are with us. We give gifts in both generous show and as acts of faith in sufficiency. One does not hoard. We may lament incomplete colonial conversions, our too little bank savings the circle we hope will sustain. We sustain it. Not so strange then that I declined to hoard love and another's body for myself. I cannot have faith in scarcity. I have tried. It cut me from the circle. Established hierarchies between humans and other-than-humans, for example, the human versus animal divide are co-constituted with hierarchies established between humans. Animal is a term that commonly denigrates particular humans as savage or less evolved. In North America, settler categorization and management of land and water, as common or privately owned, as conserved or open for exploitation and development has been entangled with state management of women, children, slaves, indigenous people and other-than-human bodies.

**0:11:53 DT:** Such bodies have been seen as less evolved, as in need of taming, as right for exploitation or development. Vulnerable human bodies, like vulnerable other-than-human bodies, vulnerable earth and water bodies have been objects of intervention, knowledge and control. My previous work has focused on forms of genetic science that construct racial categories as both methods and justifications of control of indigenous and other bodies and lives. This newest work challenges compulsory monogamy and hetero and homonormative couple-centric marriage. They too have been important techniques of ownership and state management of indigenous and other human bodies. They too have been objects of the scientific gaze, both natural and social sciences.

**0:12:45 DT:** My work is informed by Scott Morgensen's work on Queer Settler Colonialism, especially his use of the term settler sexuality. In turn, Morgensen cites and builds on the work of indigenous feminists and queer critiques of US, in particular, sexual colonization. When he defines settler sexuality as, "The heteropatriarchal and sexual modernity exemplary of white settler civilization." Morgensen also builds on a Foucauldian explanation of sexual modernity as state biopolitical management of bodies and populations.

**0:13:22 DT:** Perhaps, and even more fundamental binary or hierarchy of life than that of civilized versus savage or culture versus nature, binaries commonly applied to women, indigenous people, people of color, queers, the disabled, is that of life versus not life. For example Mel Chen describes an animacy hierarchy that deanimates certain bodies below others, with humans and western heterosexual males among us, occupying the highest perch. Monogamy and marriage are also part of sustaining an animacy hierarchy in which some bodies are viewed as more animate, alive, and vibrant than others. Think about all of the processes in our society that shore up this institution of marriage and all the other kinds of relationships that are excluded from that.

**0:14:09 DT:** I therefore situate a critique of compulsory monogamy in marriage, not only within feminist, indigenous and queer critiques of settler sexuality, but also within indigenous and queer critiques of the divide between humans and other-than-humans. I draw on scholarship that helps us see the possibilities for disaggregating these objects, sexuality and spirituality, that a settler world view has made for us as it still seeks to modernize us, to evolve us into citizens, absorbable into the white nation. Rather we can focus on understanding both sexuality and spirituality as sets of relations and power exchange between humans and between humans and other powerful beings.

**0:14:52 DT:** Settler relations, be that marriage and sex between humans or forms of hierarchical intimacy between humans and nature is not economically, emotionally, and materially sustainable for lots of persons, both indigenous and not, both human and not. Rather thinking about going back or forward into indigenous forms of relationality and other practices of critical relationality, this can offer us more sustainable intimacies for the planet.

**0:15:26 DT:** So I wanna talk now about imposing monogamy on settler marriage in a little bit more detail. It was not always so that the monogamist couple ideal reigned. Historian Nancy Cott argues with respect to the US that the Christian model of lifelong marriage, monogamist marriage, was not a dominant world view until the late 19th century, that it took work to make monogamist marriage seem like a forgone conclusion, and that people had to choose to make marriage the foundation of the new nation. Sarah Carter shows how marriage was part of the national agenda in Canada too. The marriage fortress was established to guard the Canadian way of life. Feminist science study

scholar Angela Willey shows how turn of the 20th century sexologists influenced a major shift in European and American cultures toward embracing now dominant notions of romantic love, monogamy, individual autonomy, and couple centrality.

**0:16:21 DT:** While monogamy had been part of oppressive Christian ideals, sexologists made it into secular human nature. More highly evolved people, they said, should not participate in the less evolved practices of non-monogamy, nor should they be bound by arranged marriages. Rather they should be free partners, willingly choosing one another and involved in, quote, "A project of personal fulfilment and self-actualization." Their more evolved, enlightened, and individualistic coupling was juxtaposed with the savage others who were their foils, I.e. Polygamists who engaged in arranged marriage, that also centered accompanying extended kinship responsibilities.

**0:17:04 DT:** At the same time that settler monogamy and marriage were solidified as central to both US and Canadian nation building, indigenous peoples in these countries were being viciously restrained, conceptually and physically, inside colonial borders and institutions that included residential schools, churches, and missions all designed to save the man and kill the Indian. Part of saving indigenous people from their savagery meant coercing and indoctrinating them into the monogamist couple-centric nuclear family. Kim Anderson, a Cree/Métis feminist, writes that one of the biggest targets of colonialism was the indigenous family, in which women had occupied positions of authority and controlled property. The colonial state targeted women's power, it tied land tenure rights to heterosexual, one on one, lifelong marriages, thus tying women's economic well being to men who controlled private property, indeed women and children were property. The confining and unsustainable nuclear family today is still the evangelical ideal for the settler state.

**0:18:21 DT:** I might be ahead of myself here. Let me stick on this one for a minute. So I want to talk about two forms of indigenous relationality and the words 'Tiyóspaye' and 'Oyate' will be defined in a minute. 155 years after the Dakota US war of 1862 when my ancestors were supposedly brought under colonial control, the fundamental social unit of our peoples remains the extended kin group. The Dakota word for extended family is Tiyóspaye. The word for the people which is sometimes translated as nation is Oyate. In reservation communities the Tiyóspaye hooks up into the Oyate and governance happens in ways that demonstrate the connection between the two.

**0:19:04 DT:** I was a happy child in those moments when I sat at my great grandmother's dining room table with four generations and later in her life, five generations. We gathered in her small dining room, people overflowing into the equally small living room. All the generations eating, laughing, playing cards, drinking coffee, talking tribal politics and eating again. The children would run in and out. I would sit quietly next to my grandmother's, hoping no one would notice me because children's games bored me and I preferred to listen to the adults' funny stories and wild tribal politics. Couples and marriages in nuclear family got little play there. The matriarch of our family, my great grandmother, was always laughing. She would cheat at cards.

**0:19:46 DT:** She told funny, poignant stories about our family and others, both natives and whites in our small town throughout the 20th century. Aunts and uncles contributed childhood memories to build on her stories. Tribal politics were always on the menu. My mother would link that into national and global politics. A great grandchild might be recognized for a recent accomplishment,

and the newest baby would be doted upon as a newly arrived human who chose our family. The mom might be 18 and unmarried, but she had help. As Kim Anderson explains, "Our traditional societies had been sustained by strong kin relations in which women had significant authority. There was no such thing as a single mother because native women and their children lived and worked in extended kin networks."

**0:20:34 DT:** So it didn't matter so much in 1976 when I was eight years old that my mother moved to Minneapolis for work. There were few jobs for her in South Dakota and urbane Minneapolis intimidated me. Along with my seven-year-old sister I stayed behind with our great grandmother in our small reservation town. My mom was only 28 years old at the time and she took my two youngest siblings to the city. I suppose that was enough for her to handle and she knew her eldest two were cared for.

**0:21:01 DT:** Her work in Minneapolis was important. It was a highly political time. The American Indian Movement was working on community development projects like survival schools and low income housing for urban natives. My mom became a successful grant writer and eventually brought those skills back to the reservation to help start tribally-controlled schools and housing on the reservation. Beyond producing and care-taking extended biological family, the Tiyóspaye is also cultivated and nurtured by making kin. Dakota and other indigenous peoples have ceremonies to adopt kin. In my extended family, we also engage in a lot of legal adoption aided by the Indian Child Welfare Act that prioritizes the adoption of indigenous children by tribal families. Children's ongoing cultural connection to tribal communities is emphasized in that legislation which indigenous peoples lobbied assertively for as one response to the colonial kidnapping of children from indigenous families who were deemed unfit for not exhibiting normative settler family structures. Despite much colonial violence against our families, we are in everyday practice, still adept at making kin.

**0:22:15 DT:** So with hindsight I see that my road to ethical non-monogamy as a critical practice informed by the politics of indigeniety, race and political economy, began early in life, as I was nurtured within a Tiyóspaye and Oyate. Yet, ironically, I was also subjected regularly by both whites and indigenous peoples ourselves to narratives of shortcoming and failure.

**0:22:38 DT:** I regularly heard descriptions of Native American broken families, teenage pregnancies and unmarried mothers. I observed extreme serial monogamy, disruptions to nuclear family and other failed attempts to paint over our Tiyóspaye, a normative middle class veneer. I thought it was our failures to live up to that ideal that turned me off a future of domesticity and marriage and that's why I ran for coastal cities and higher education and why I asserted from a very early age that I would never get married. I did eventually marry, both legally and in a Dakota neo-traditional ceremony when I was nearly 30. Despite my youthful disavowals, even I didn't have the oppositional momentum to jump the tracks of the marriage railroad.

**0:23:24 DT:** Today I'm nearly 50 and I see that it was not my family's so-called failures that dampened my enthusiasm for couple domesticity, rather, I was suffocating all my life under the weight of the aspirational ideal of a middle class nuclear family including heteronormative coupledness even while I had lived contentedly, it turns out, a counter narrative to that settler ideal. Unsurprisingly the feeling of suffocation intensified after marriage. My co-parent is an anti-racist,

feminist, indigenous rights supporting cisgendered white male who until recently was always the primary caretaker of our now teenager.

**0:24:03 DT:** I do not blame him as an individual for my misery in the marriage system. We must collectively oppose a system of compulsory settler sexuality and kinship that marks indigenous and other relations as deviant. So he as an individual did the best that he could. In this opposition, this includes opposing state policies that reward normative kinship ties. For example, monogamous legal marriage over other forms of kinship obligation. It includes advocating for policies, for example: Universal health care, easier child custody arrangements, non-monogamous and more than couple bonds that support a more expansive definition of family. Decolonization is not an individual choice, this takes a collectivity advocating for systemic change. The present settler sexuality system attempts to railroad all of us into rigid relationship forms established historically to serve the heteronormative and increasingly also homonormative imperial state and its unsustainable private property interests and institutions.

**0:25:05 DT:** Present, past, future. I resist a lineal progressive representation of movement forward to something better and movement back to something pure. I bring voices and practices into conversation from across what is called time in English. There are many live conversationalists at my table, both embodied and no longer embodied and I lean in to hear them all. I tried to grasp ways of relating that Dakota people and other indigenous peoples' practice historically from what it is possible to know, after the colonial disruption to our ancestors' practices and our memories of how they related, marriage was different from relatively recent settler formations. Before settler-imposed monogamy, marriages helped to forge important the Dakota kinship alliances, but divorce for both men and women was possible.

**0:25:54 DT:** In addition, more than two genders were recognized and there was an element of flexibility in gender identification. People we might call gender queer today also entered into "traditional Dakota marriages" with partners who might be what we'd today consider cisgendered. But as I try to write this, I engage in essentially nonsensical conceptual time travel with categories that will lose their integrity if I try to teleport them back in time or forward. So much has gone dormant, will go dormant. So much has been imposed onto indigenous peoples, both heteronormative settler sexuality categories, and now also queer categories. The record is also clear that there was plural marriage for men. What were/are the spaces for plural relations for and between women then?

**0:26:44 DT:** An indigenous feminist scholar from a people related to mine has confessed to me, her suspicion that the multiple wives of one husband, if they were not sisters as they sometimes were, may have had what we'd today call sexual relations between them. She whispered this to me as if we were blaspheming. But in a world before settler colonialism outside of the particular bio-social assemblages that now structure settler notions of gender, sex, and sexuality, persons and the intimacies between them were no doubt worked quite differently. Recognizing such possibilities and looking for answers to such questions is an important step to unsettling settler sex and family. This is a formidable task, one that will be met with resistance by many indigenous people.

**0:27:34 DT:** Our shaming and victimization including in sexual ways has been extreme. Christianity ensured that speaking of, and engaging in so-called sexual relations in the ways of our



ancestors was severely curtailed. Our ancestors lied, omitted, were beaten, locked up, raped, grew ashamed, suicidal, forgot. We have inherited all of that. And we have inherited Christian sexual mores and settler state biopolitics that monitor, measure and pathologize our bodies and peoples. With that history, as the cliff looming behind us, it is no small thing to ask indigenous thinkers to consider the advantages of what we might call ethical non-monogamy.

**0:28:22 DT:** With the community's knowledge and a partner's consent, few of us will have that choice. I suspect there are especially younger indigenous people who might join me in thinking hard on the non-monogamous arrangements of our ancestors. We have been so keen to embrace other decolonizing projects to consider the wisdom of our ancestor's ways of thinking, why should we not also consider non-monogamous family forms in our communities?

**0:28:51 DT:** I've had especially white feminists bristle at my refusal to condemn Dakota historical practices of plural marriage. How can I support polygamy? With that word for them meaning one man with several wives. It can also refer to one woman with multiple other partners. Their views on non-monogamy are conditioned by their impressions of non-consensual or not rigorously consensual forms of non-monogamy in which men alone have multiple wives. They often cite Mormon or Muslim polygamies. I can't speak with much expertise to the variety of non-monogamous practices among those peoples, although I know that there are varying levels of consent and not all polygamy should be painted with the same broad brush.

**0:29:33 DT:** But I ask us as indigenous people to learn what we can about the role of non-monogamy and our ancestors' practices which importantly were often not attached to proselytizing religions, that's key, and which feature greater autonomy for women. What I know from my ancestors, again is that women controlled household property and marriage did not bind them to men economically in a harsh way of settler marriage historically. What were the values underlying our ancestor's non-monogamy that might articulate with 21st-century indigenous lives?

**0:30:09 DT:** Many indigenous communities still exhibit a framework of extended kinship, where responsibilities are more diffusely distributed, where we work as groups of women or men, or other gendered people ideally to share child care, housing, and other resources. In my experience, our ways of relating often seem to contradict the monogamous couple and nuclear family. I'm interested in seeing us explicitly, not only implicitly, decenter those family forms. Perhaps our allegiances and commitments are more strongly conditioned than we realize by a sense of community that exceeds, rather than fails to meet the requirements of settler sex and family. The abuse and neglect in so many indigenous families, born of colonial kidnapping, incarceration, rape, and killing is very real. But perhaps our relentless moves to caretake in Tiyóspaye more than a normative settler family forms.

**0:31:09 DT:** Maybe that's not simply the best that we can do, maybe it's the best way to heal. I've seen sociological research recently under the label of indigenous masculinities research that is pro indigenous fatherhood, but which continues to center the normative two-parent nuclear family form without question. Colonial notions of family insidiously continue to stigmatize us, as they represent the standard against which we are measured. Perhaps our kinship arrangements are actually culturally, emotionally, financially, and environmentally more sustainable than a nuclear family two-parent model that we are failing at and that's why we are "failing". If we already often share the

care of children, economic sustenance, and housing, why must sex be reserved for the monogamous couple?

**0:31:57 DT:** Sexual monogamy can, in one interpretation, be seen as hoarding another person's body and desire, which seems at odds with the broader ethic of sharing that undergirds extended kinship. What if my colleague's suspicion is correct? Is it so uncomfortable to imagine women and partnership also with the same spouse, with everyone's gender identification more complex than biology alone, sharing not only, say, daily work, but also in the need or desire arose sharing touch as a form of care relating or connection?

**0:32:34 DT:** So I'm gonna jump to a little bit of theory now, and talk about the idea of disaggregating sex in order to reaggregate relations. And I'm drawing on the work of David Delgado Shorter and you can read along. He's in a World Cultures, I think it's called, at UCLA. And David is an ethnographer, but also works with... He has a class on UFOs and supernatural stuff, and because he's in LA, he has UFO psychics come in to his... [laughter] He was like, "Oh, it's so cool. [0:33:02]        daily."

[laughter]

**0:33:05 DT:** Okay, so... But he's really helped me think through these things recently, and so I'd like to share with you what I've learned. Sexuality is not like power. Sexuality is a form of power. And of the forms of power, sexuality, in particular, might prove uniquely efficacious in both individual and collective healing. Further, I will suggest that sexuality's power might be forceful enough to soothe the pains of colonization and the scars of internal colonization. In an essay entitled *Simply Sexuality*, indigenous study scholar, David Shorter, focuses on moreakamem, healers, sears, powerful people among the Yoeme and indigenous people living on both sides of the Mexico-US border.

**0:33:51 DT:** He originally set out to understand the spiritual aspects of what they do, to examine moreakamem as powerful healers. But his analysis has come to untangle both sexuality and spirituality, and I use scare quotes around those two words. During his field work with southern Yoeme in Sonora, Mexico, an elder told Shorter that individuals who engage in non-monogamous and/or non-heterosexual relationships are commonly also moreakamem. This is not always the case, but it often the case. In fact, in northern Yoeme communities in Arizona, moreakamem has come to be conflated with terms such as gay, lesbian, two-spirit, and other less positive terms. The healer or sear aspect of the word has been lost for the Yoeme in the US, who have much ethnic overlap with Catholic Mexican-American communities.

**0:34:41 DT:** Shorter found that he could not understand the powerful spiritual roles in community of moreakamem, without also understanding their so-called sexuality. Shorter explains that in many indigenous context, there is an interconnectedness in all aspects of life. So following the connections between sex and spirit among the Yoeme was akin to following a strand of a spider's web. In English, we are accustomed to thinking of spirituality or spirit, sexuality or sex, as things. With that ontological lens, moreakamem becomes an object, a class of person defined along either sexual and/or spiritual lines. However, within their context, sexuality and spirituality can both be seen as actually constituted of human relational activities. They are sets of relations through which

power is acquired and exchanged, in reciprocal fashion between persons, not all of them human. In describing how relations or the relational sharing of power become things in a non-indigenous framework, Shorter uses the term, get ready for this, 'objectivating the intersubjective.'

[laughter]

**0:35:53 DT:** Yeah.

[laughter]

**0:35:55 DT:** My undergrads do papers based on this theory, so it works for them. Okay. In his spirituality essay, he explains that intersubjective like related emphasizes mutual connectivity, shared responsibility, and interdependent well-being. So, we might think of sexuality, spirituality, and nature too, not as things at all, but as sets of relations in which power and sometimes material sustenance circulates. We might resist objectivating the intersubjective. We might resist hardening relations into objects, which might make us more attuned to relating justly in practice. To return to moreakamem and resisting a classification of them as gay or non-monogamous, we can see them instead as relating. They have reciprocity with and receive power in their encounters with spirits, ancestors, dreams, non-human animals, and also in the human realm, when they use their power to see for and heal other humans suffering from love or money problems, addictions, and other afflictions of mind and body.

**0:37:01 DT:** Emphasizing relations and exchange, Shorter explains that the social role of moreakamem is not a means of individual self-empowerment. A moreakame does not identify themselves as such, although we identify them as a moreakame in order to refer to them. They do not accentuate their pertinent personal characteristics and capacities. For example, their sexuality or their power to heal. Shorter explains that moreakamem focus rather on their work in community, that they work tirelessly and selflessly to maintain right relations. And they resist having those relational activities and that power objectified into these categories.

**0:37:43 DT:** So, understanding moreakamem relationality in community can help us to understand their so-called sexuality and ours too as a form of reciprocity and power exchange. We can begin to unthread it from being an object, like gay or straight, that is constituted once and unchanging. So-called sexuality is one form of relating and sharing of power that is reconstituted over and over based on the intersubjective dynamism of two or more persons. Shorter encourages us to see that for moreakamem and for all of us, sexuality can be understood as a way of being that directly and intentionally mediates social relations across the family, clan, pueblo, tribe, and other forms of relations, including other-than-human persons. We may come back to that in Q&A.

[chuckle]

**0:38:34 DT:** So, with this understanding sexuality begins to look more like a type of power particularly one capable of healing. Shorter does not reveal the details of moreakamem sexual relations beyond noting they're often non-normative sexualities, but his theoretical treatment of sexuality as relational power exchanges instructive for pondering how indigenous people and others might find ways in collectivity to oppose secular sexuality and marriage. Given the goal of thinking

relationally, what might indigenizing sexuality mean? I hope it is clear by now that that question is actually oxymoronic, rather we might consider that the goal is to disaggregate so-called sexuality, not back to tradition, not forward into progress, but into and back out into that spider's web of relations or any net visual that works for you, so I like this internet visual too.

**0:39:32 DT:** That is a web or net in which relations exchange power, and power is intention thus holding the web or community together. So, this is my thought experiment. As part of decolonial efforts, can we work ourselves into a web of relations and I'm thinking in terms of space and not a time concept now, and I thank you for people here for really making grapple with time more explicitly than I have. But as I was thinking about this talk, I resist the notion of linear time and I realized that I went immediately to a space metaphor and to reconstructing and changing space. So, I'm sure somebody else has written on that but I'm gonna be looking into that now.

**0:40:08 DT:** So, in small moments of possibility then, can we resist naming sex between persons and can we resist naming sexuality as an object? Can such disaggregation help us decolonize the ways in which we engage other bodies intimately, whether those are human bodies or bodies of water or land? By focusing on actual states of relation, on being in good relation and with less monitoring and regulation of categories, might that spur more just interactions? We could do the same thought experiment then with spirituality too, for it is also about relationality and engaging other bodies, maybe just not always material bodies. We won't escape the moments when sex or sexuality, spirit or spirituality is the best that we can do with this limited English language, but we can lean toward disaggregating objects and instead focus on promiscuously reaggregating relations.

**0:41:04 DT:** Can we see ourselves as relating and exchanging power and reciprocity in ways that we now label as sex in support of a stronger Tiyóspaye or extended kin network, with both living relations and those whose bodies we come from and whose bodies will come in part from us? I'm thinking of both the human and other than human bodies with whom we are co-constituted when I talk about thinking about and building a stronger Tiyóspaye. But to return to the by now mundane topic about of ethical non-monogamy, in relating with more than one partner in my life, I have come to regularly ponder how this serves kinship across my life. How do these relations serve others? What about our respect of children? Multiple romantic relations can help raise and mentor children in community. How do our relations serve our other partners?

**0:41:54 DT:** I have found affectionate and supportive friendship with partners of my partners. This is a key benefit for me of ethical non-monogamy. How does the different sustenance I gain from multiple lovers collectively fortify me and make me more available to contribute in the world? If I am richly fed, what and who am I able to feed? What is possible with a model in which love and relations are not considered scarce objects to be hoarded and protected, but which proliferate beyond the confines of the socially constituted couple? What began as a personal political experiment in ethical non-monogamy is turning to de-emphasizing monogamy and non-monogamy as objectified forms of sexuality, and again, I'm indebted to my fellow feminist science study scholar Angela Willey, who just wrote a book called "Undoing Monogamy, The Politics of Science and The Possibilities of Biology", for inspiring my newly established will to unsettle both concepts. I am caught up sometimes in objectivating the interest objective, that is when I identify myself as non-monogamist as a sort of form of sexuality. But let me be clear that I view ethical non-monogamy as but a step in decolonizing from compulsory settler sexuality; it's a placeholder until

I/we find other ways of framing and naming more diffuse sustainable and intimate relations.

**0:43:20 DT:** As an indigenous thinker I'm constantly translating. I see indigenous thinkers across the disciplines and outside the academy doing similar work, combining our fundamental cultural orientations to the world with new possibilities and frameworks for living and relating. Our peoples have been doing this collectively in the Americas for over five centuries, translating, pushing back against colonial frameworks and adapting them. We've done it with respect to syncretic forms of religion and ceremony, with dress, music, language, so-called art and performance.

**0:43:53 DT:** Why should we not also articulate other ways to lust, love and make kin? A de-objectified reconstituting of right relations and nurturing healing exchanges of power seem an important next step. Within the grand scheme of things, purposeful and open non-monogamy and reconceiving of more just intimacies with other-than-humans, and I'm thinking here of the theoretical and world reconceiving work of Idle No More and of the water protectors at Standing Rock right now. These seem like important next steps. Settler love, marriage and kin, and hetero/homo human-centric and mono-normative forms does not have to be all there is. Settler relations with land and water do not have to be all there is. I have to have faith in that. I'm only beginning to imagine.

[applause]

**0:45:00 JL:** Thank you very much, Kim. And so now, we are gonna open it up for questions from the audience. You should get over there.

[background conversation]

**0:45:15 JL:** So, any questions to start off with? Or observations or comments? Go ahead.

**0:45:27 Speaker 5:** I just wanted to say...

[foreign language]

**0:45:39 DT:** I only understand the [0:45:40]       .

[chuckle]

**0:45:42 S5:** I'm just thinking all of the words in my father and my mother's language that are just of this kind of enormous, enormous, like sort of gratitude and acknowledgement and very spirited like...

**0:45:57 DT:** Thank you.

**0:46:00 S5:** Gift of reception, I guess. So I just wanted to say thank you. I really feel like this was so crucial for me to come and listen to you talk, and to... I can't even, my repressed colonial taps can't really let out right now what's happening for me, but I just wanted to say, thank you so much.

**0:46:23 DT:** Thank you.

**0:46:23 S5:** It is so huge... Oh my God! [laughter] yeah. I'm from Tsuu T'ina.

**0:46:31 DT:** From where?

**0:46:31 GC:** Tsuu T'ina.

**0:46:32 DT:** Where's that?

**0:46:33 GC:** Right beside Calgary, Treaty 7. In the middle of the black...

**0:46:36 DT:** You know I'm American so I'm still learning my geography...

**0:46:38 S5:** Okay, yeah, yeah, yeah...

[laughter]

**0:46:41 S5:** I think I [0:46:42]       . Yeah.

**0:46:43 DT:** I just moved there, but yeah. I grew up... I'm from South Dakota.

**0:46:47 S5:** I've been using the term 'two spirit' but feeling limitations on it, on at the same time.

**0:46:53 DT:** Well, we need more writing about that. I think that's really interesting the work that's been done in that area.

**0:47:00 S5:** Yeah. I'm just so thankful right now. I feel like I have a thousand questions but I can't verbalize them right now, so... So much.

**0:47:10 DT:** We can be in touch by email or something. Right there.

**0:47:17 Speaker 6:** Hi, there. My name is Kathy and [0:47:19]        really thought-provoking, so thank you. I'm also a scholar, and I study violence, and I imagine that you have thoughts, a lot about how we can transform relationships into peaceful, loving, caring ones through changing the nature of relationships. And I just wondered if you would share some of your thoughts about that.

[laughter]

**0:47:43 DT:** Well I'm doing a personal experiment. What I thought about is kind of contained in this talk. I wasn't a sexuality study scholar, so a lot of what I've learned in the last few years as I've taken this on and tried to relate it back to my environmental and technoscience work has come from younger scholars, particularly those working in queer theory. And then also feminist scholars that are not just feminist science studies people, but I come from feminist science study so I don't come

through a traditional feminist genealogy, I didn't really do woman of color feminism, it's all feminist technoscience stuff. So yeah, I feel like I don't have anything to offer than probably many other people in this room have better answers to that question than I do. But I do think that comparing our intimate relations with non-human bodies, in this case, we're talking about water and land and the concept of consent which should guide our relations with human bodies, I think. And then you get tricky, it gets tricky, and there's a divide between lesser notions of sentience and agency and then indigenous ideas about non-human animals as kin and non-human bodies as kin. But there's actually really interesting anthropological work happening right now where you've got non-indigenous anthropologists trying to find a way to explain to the academy how one can have knowing intellectual exchanges with non-human animals.

**0:49:10 DT:** There are ways in which indigenous peoples have had relations, maybe consent is not the right word but relations of reciprocity and exchange in which, I've begun to think a lot about how sex is like eating, we have sex with our relatives and we're all related, I don't mean incest, we're all related in this room. But we also eat our relatives, and that's the difference between western and indigenous anthologies, we know that we are eating our relatives and you don't get to live without killing. So I go back to what Donna Haraway says about who and what is made kill-able. And so in all of this language, we need to try to get at how do we justly relate intimately with other bodies that actually sometimes have to materially sustain us, and so I have been thinking a lot about this language of consent and how can we transform that into another kind of language. And I think going back to indigenous practices in terms of how indigenous people hunt, how they've lived on the land helps us get at these more just ways of relating that if they're not fully embodied within this notion of consent, we need to come up with some other words for talking about that.

**0:50:18 DT:** So that's where I am in terms of thinking about these things side by side, but it's been really helpful for me to link up personal decolonial practices with thinking about my previous environmental work and the kind of ways that I support environmental activists doing this work. And I see women at the forefront of these movements, and the women I don't think this is just coincidental who are organizing with Idle No More and who are organizing at Standing Rock, are also actually doing work around reproductive justice, around sexual decolonization. They are making the links, too, in their practice and I actually, my theory is informed by the theory that I see them working out on the ground in their activism. That's probably not an answer to your question, but that's where I went with those thoughts, yeah.

**0:51:01 JL:** Next. Go ahead.

**0:51:12 Speaker 7:** I don't actually know how to ask my question but I'm so impressed by all those ideas that I've heard for the first time just now. The idea of sustainability, I don't actually understand what you mean by that 'cause usually we think of sustainability in an environmental context. But you seem to have...

**0:51:36 DT:** How would you define it in an environmental context?

**0:51:39 S7:** What's that?

**0:51:41 DT:** How would it be defined in an environmental context?

**0:51:42 S7:** Well, see... Is that, you're asking me a question?

[laughter]

**0:51:50 S7:** I'm not supposed to be answering questions.

[laughter]

**0:51:53 S7:** Well, I guess, just having something that is... That we can see that it will last in time.

**0:52:10 DT:** Yeah, not using more than... Yeah, I never tried to define environmental sustainability. But I'll tell you what, so I really had my eyes open to expanding the definition of that when I theorized around the edges of a Green Building Project. When I was at Berkeley, there were a group of architects and engineers there who were working with the Pinoleville Pomo Nation in Mendocino County. And there was a feminist engineer, Alice Agogino at Berkeley, like she's cool, and so, feminism matters in changing science. So Alice got a group of grad students and her students were very super diverse class-wise, race-wise, from different geographical locations.

**0:52:46 DT:** And they went up to Pinoleville and Pinoleville wanted to build green houses. But the US Green Building standards are super urban-centric, and these are rural people, you can't tell them to live in little townhouses above stores, and they've got bunches of kids and they've got dance regalia, and they hunt and they make canoes. And so they needed a different kind of house, but this pushed up against the sustainability criteria of US Green Building, and so they argued for this notion of cultural sustainability.

**0:53:12 DT:** And so, what did that mean? It meant that they had to meet with architects and engineers to tweak the designs in that house to maximize the environmental sustainability, while also making space for the sustaining of those cultural practices and relations. And there was a real conversation, and in that conversation, they realized, it's not only engineers and architects that have technical knowledge, and it's not only community people that have culture. They all have technological ideas and they all have cultural grounding, I resist the word bias, but everybody's grounded culturally in some kind of way.

**0:53:45 DT:** And so that was the first step, and then I begin to think also in relationship to the non-monogamy stuff about emotional sustainability, not asking too much of a relationship. And I think this, a couple-centric relationship is maybe quite unsustainable for many of us. And what else is lost, what other kinds of relations are not nurtured in the community when the nuclear family and the couple gets privilege over that extended web of relations? Now that you ask this, I will go back to standard notions, definitions of sustainability, and I will try to incorporate that into a definition of what I mean when I say this. I think so... That would actually be really helpful for my own thinking, so thank you for that.

[laughter]



**0:54:24 DT:** This is really new stuff. I still feel a bit like I'm meandering around, but, you know, when you do academic work and you have a hunch, you eventually get to the place where you're like, "There's a reason that..." I'm not just kind of crazy, these things are connected. Right?

**0:54:41 JL:** In the back there and then over here.

**0:54:44 Speaker 8:** I'm curious what you thought about, or could reflect on relational qualities or emotions of paranoia, jealousy that undergird or support these settler notions of monogamy, and I guess the power of those relations...

**0:55:04 DT:** I was thinking about that today actually, because if you get into non-monogamous communities, right? And contemporary 21st century urban, you know, polyamory type stuff, there's a whole... Most of the conversations are not as politicized as I'm talking about. Right? The majority of the conversations are about how to manage jealousy. Okay. But, I think Angela Willey's book, *Undoing Monogamy*, so she does... She looks at monogamy and non-monogamy. There's this debate going on in communities. Right? Whether it's scientists or whether it's polyamory practitioners, you know, is monogamy genetic, or is non-monogamy more natural? And this is the debate and Angie Willey is saying no, they're both bio-social. Right? She was in a lab at Emory University, that's studying the "Monogamy gene" in prairie voles and comparing those to another species of vole and they're looking at pair bonding and then she studied the scientist at the same time. Right?

[laughter]

**0:56:01 DT:** And the way that they have a will to see monogamy and then pose, kind of, heteronormative couple-centric relationships onto these prairie voles in the lab, it's fascinating. And so... But what she comes down in the end is, look, I'm not going to say that non-monogamy is more natural than monogamy, even though that's the standpoint I'm coming from. I would like to see somebody study the biosocial constitution of jealousy, and paranoia, and all that. I think there are ways in which... I'm not willing to say that jealousy is simply social conditioning, I think there's also probably, you know, embodied aspects of that, that we could also study in a material way. It's, I don't know what else to say besides that I think... But being an intellectual to me, if I understand something I feel that I can overcome it, which may not always be the case. Right? We want to understand this, if that's gonna make a huge difference. Hopefully it does. Yeah.

**0:56:58 JL:** Yes. You.

**0:57:01 Speaker 9:** Next Monday, Amy Goodman from Democracy Now Pacifica News Station...

**0:57:09 DT:** I love her.

**0:57:10 S9:** Will be going to North Dakota and turning herself in, because she has been arrested for covering the attacks on the indigenous people working to stop the pipeline, and she will need our support. It will be covered on Democracy Now next Monday, for sure, and else where, for that

week. But they're thinking of increasing the charges against her. And she's going to challenge that.

**0:57:40 DT:** That's great.

**0:57:41 S9:** Give her support next week.

**0:57:43 DT:** Yeah. She's been pretty badass in her coverage of this... Yeah. Read the media coming out of North Dakota though; out of the Bismarck Trib. It's just... That's the world I grew up in. Oh my goodness. Yeah. It's good there's a national and international eye on that right now.

**0:58:00 JL:** Thank you. Right there. Yes, and then back.

**0:58:04 Speaker 10:** Yes. Me, right? Okay.

**0:58:04 JL:** Yes.

**0:58:05 S1:** You were talking about how there's a matriarchal system sort of within the indigenous community and now how this changed to the man being the lead of the house now, and [0:58:18]        co-living with child and the mother or something, I wasn't really clear. But, what can be done about that now?

**0:58:25 DT:** Well, you know, I didn't call it matriarchal even though there are, in some...

[background conversation]

**0:58:29 DT:** Yeah. But just, that women had more agency rights.

**0:58:32 S1:** Yeah.

**0:58:35 DT:** You know, I'm not somebody who studies, sort of, matriarchal and patriarchal kin forms historically so... You know it's really it's very interesting... When I'm talking about the, sort of imposition of property regimes, not only on land, but bodies, that was done through federal policy. Right? I imagine it was parallel in Canada, but in the US, there were a series of federal policies, to again, save the man or the person and kill the Indian. And those were about individual... Dividing collective land bases into individual allotments, the head of household, who was a man would get 160 acres; he could get more acres if he had a wife and more acres if he had kids. But the woman couldn't hold the property on her own, so she automatically had to get married to have that kind of support base. Right? And a job was to break up the tribal land base. I don't really make pronouncements about our cultural practices in that way, but I look more at the impositions of settler structural notions. But, I would say that the gender pattern of colonization is such that, we still have, at least in US tribes, I don't know what it is in Canada, disproportionate numbers of women who have attained higher education.

**0:59:42 DT:** Colonization affects different genders, differently. Right? And woman, we also see disproportionately, women in jobs like professors and in professional jobs. It's really quite

interesting. We do have women in all of these positions of leadership and authority. At the same time, we've still got gender patterns of sexual violence. So there's these really contradictory things that are happening in our communities. Whenever people say, "What should we do?" I'm not a planner anymore and in fact that's why I'm not a planner. I used to be an environmental planner and a community planner 'cause I don't really know what to do other than to try to think through these things and help us think about... I do think that new ways of thinking about the world can help us envision new ways of being and acting. So I'm gonna cop out and say I became an academic 'cause I don't have any policy prescription.

[background conversation]

**1:00:38 JL:** There, at the back there, yes.

**1:00:41 Speaker 11:** I'm just wondering, why is the situation in Standing Rock related to your talk?

**1:00:48 DT:** What about it? Why is it related to my talk?

**1:00:51 S1:** Why is it related?

**1:00:52 DT:** Oh, because I was talking about, so if we expand the notion of having more just intimate relations, I'm trying to disaggregate sex as an object. So we tend to fetishize this form of relating, that really tends to coalesce around the penis and the vagina and that sexuality is kind of, we draw all these kind of disparate body parts and practices into this object that we then name sex or sexuality in order for the state, for science, for religion, basically for men to have managed historically. So if we're talking about breaking that apart and engaging in more intimate, justless hierarchical relations that are less likely to be managed by the colonial state, that also implicates the way we relate with non-human bodies, with land, with water and you have activists who are involved and I don't know more who are involved in Standing Rock.

**1:01:40 DT:** A lot of indigenous environmental activism and has in fact, been led by women who as I said earlier are working simultaneously on what we might think of as environmental protection projects, but they're also working on these forms of sexual decolonization and reproductive justice. So there are links being made between how we engage in less hierarchical, more just and sustained relations and those relations can be called our relationships to the land or living in harmony with nature, but they can also be called how are we living in harmony? How are we having consensual productive intimate relations with other human bodies? So I'm looking at the way human bodies relate to non-human bodies in various forms of intimacy. Sex is one way of relating, just one way. We have other forms of intercourse. We have conversation as a form of intercourse. We have various forms of touch. We have intellectual kinds of intercourse. So does that help? Maybe I need to expand that conversation out more.

**1:02:37 S1:** Is there anything that we can learn 'cause I don't really know what's going on...

**1:02:40 DT:** Oh, what's going on at Standing Rock?

**1:02:42 S1:** And so I'm trying to figure out whether there is a relationship.

**1:02:46 DT:** Oh, so you just wanted an explanation of Standing Rock?

[laughter]

**1:02:51 S1:** I was wondering [1:02:51]        what is its relationship with what you just talked about.

**1:02:53 DT:** Yeah, I'm sorry. I'm assuming everybody knows that, I know... So at Standing Rock, there is resistance to the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline, which I think the company is called Energy Transfer Partners which is building the pipeline and there was inadequate consultation done by Army Corps of Engineers with tribes, and in the US, we have a pretty strong language of a government to government relationship and all of the federal agencies are required to go through these consultative processes and they... I don't know what happened behind the scenes, but they did not go through an adequate consultative process. The Standing Rock Sioux Tribe which is a federally recognized tribe, established a camp. There are now several camps that have been established by different groups of activists and people coming in. So when Standing Rock established a camp, you also have native people coming from reservations all over the country establishing their own camps kind of coming in to help support the blockage of the construction of that pipeline.

**1:03:48 DT:** And right now, there are probably people in this room that know more about the details than me are... It's unclear if there's a stop. Army Corps has said they're not going to allow the further construction until they engage in consultation. Who knows what that means, but right now you've actually had people tying themselves to the equipment and then they have stopped construction. Then what you had is you had the company that's building the pipeline bring in dogs. I don't know if you've seen the stuff in the media but there were dogs brought in by private security. There are conversations going on right now by law enforcement in North Dakota as to whether they're gonna continue to be involved or not. There's a tribal land here some of the camps are on. There's federal land. There's private property, 'cause we have real checkerboarded situations in terms of land tenure in that area. There's all these different kinds of laws and policies coming into effect to try to figure out if the... The media calls them protestors, they call themselves water protectors.

**1:04:41 DT:** They're worried about, the pipeline was going right under the Missouri, which a big source of water and the pipeline had been moved to that location because people I think it was up in Bismarck which is the capital, didn't want it going in their backyard. So they sent it down to run right through Indian country. So that's what's going on at Standing Rock, but the activism coming out of there is really interesting and again, it's led by women and a lot of the women that I know there are also working on... There are women there who are also working on sex worker rights advocacy. So those linkages are not coming out in the press, but they're there.

**1:05:22 Speaker 12:** You just said something that really kind of [1:05:25]        part an idea... Well you were talking about consent and the importance of consent and then the inadequacy of

consultation, and I think there's something really important there, 'cause consultation is not consent, and some companies sometimes are different situation where people kind of say, "Oh well we consulted them, but they didn't necessarily consent." So I think that's a really important difference to be made in terms of having those just relationships.

**1:05:56 DT:** Right. No, it's interesting if you look at both what you can see in the mainstream media and what you can see in indigenous media, and then, just what I'm getting on Facebook cause I've got a lot of fellow tribal citizens at the camp. They're waging this war on multiple fronts. So, the tribe and Chairman Archambault are using their attorneys and they're going through the government-to-government channels of the colonial state, but you've also got activists out there that are tribal members from multiple tribes. So, they're definitely taking multiple tactics. It looks like from the outside sometimes that you've got these sold-out colonized tribal leaders going through the normal routes. Then, you've got the real radicals over here. But there is a lot of relations happening and conversations happening between different actors there, and they're pursuing whatever means I think they can to stop this construction or slow it down. So, yeah, but I do think that they're very critical of the consultation process, obviously, but still pursuing that as one avenue of resistance or slowing things down.

**1:07:07 Speaker 13:** Thank you for your beautiful thinking. I wanna encourage you not to prematurely close off the possibility of policy relevant outcomes of...

[laughter]

**1:07:19 DT:** I'm not.

[laughter]

**1:07:22 S1:** About 15 years ago, the Law Commission of Canada which is relatively progressive law reform body in Canada produced a report called "Beyond Conjuality." What it did was it looked at areas in Canadian law that supported heterosexual coupling as the ideal form of human relationship at the expense of all other forms of relationship, and made recommendations about law reform that would tear that down and support... It reconfigured Canadian law to try to support a greater variety of close, what that report defined as close adult personal relationships on the understanding that what was, the good that the law was going after there was supporting human relationships, not just that particularly narrow category. But that's much narrower than what your vision here is presenting us with, but it just makes me think that there is a kind of... There has been and could be an opening onto ways of thinking about things like law reform and institutional reform that could reflect the kind of thinking that you're doing around expansive conceptions of human and non-human relationality that are directed toward a fairly straightforward view.

**1:08:57 DT:** So, you know, a University of Calgary... I can't remember his name. A researcher there just came out with a study, a couple of weeks ago, on polyamorous families and there are some legal recommendations in that as well. I hear it's getting a little pushback but CBC did an article with some polyamorous families in Edmonton after that came out. Yeah. No. I do think changes in the law like that can help us be attuned to our non-human relations in better ways, too. I think you've got to chip away at it or reconstitute these fundamental orientations to the world, and

this fundamental orientation to the world can get exhibited in the way that we produce human family.

**1:09:36 DT:** But I think that that also... It's not an accident, I think, that indigenous peoples have had and I'll talk about my people, had these really emphasis on making kin through a variety of forms, not only having sex, but also adopting kin and we still do that. And having that attunement lean over into the way that they're, we call non-human beings, relatives, too. So, there's a lot of avenues to come at this from, and I originally started when I was looking at histories of race and looking at the way that geneticists cohere kin around genetic lineages and then, looking at the histories of how hierarchies of race and evolution have informed their thinking and continue to inform the way they categorize and name populations and races. Those fundamental ways of seeing the world deeply infuse our sciences and all of our institutions, and there's a lot of ways to go at it. So yeah, I want somebody to have those policy recommendations but [chuckle] that's not my skill-set.

**1:10:46 JL:** I was asked that in a talk a couple of days ago.

**1:10:47 DT:** Were you?

**1:10:48 JL:** Yeah, about policy recommendations and I was like, "I don't do policy."

[laughter]

**1:10:54 JL:** There we go.

**1:10:55 Speaker 14:** I wanted to ask about the past and looking at this part of your PowerPoint, and I guess I was thinking about sustainability. In a sense, we think of sustainability as we're projecting forward, but I wondered about, if you thought or how you might or we might think about it, sustainable or ethical relationship with the indigenous past or with ancestors?

**1:11:25 DT:** That's a really good question. Do you have an idea? That's clever of me... [chuckle] I can tell you what I mean by this and maybe there's an answer in there. I just wrote an article for Anthropology News actually about this little bit of history that's here. So, this is a Little Crow or Taoyateduta. He's my four greats grandfather and he was the chief that reluctantly led the Dakota War against settlers in Minnesota in 1862 and after that, 38 Dakota warriors were hung in Mankato, Minnesota.

**1:12:01 DT:** Lincoln signed the order for their execution. The Reservation Era began for Dakota people exiled into what's now South and North Dakota. But if you look at the history leading up to those, the decade before 1862, Little Crow had, and with other chiefs, had been going back and forth between Washington DC and our tribal areas. And had been... I'm rereading this history now because there's other people working on kinship stuff. You can go back and read that history as they weren't only treaty-making but they were also, it could be seen as attempting to make kin because they had made kin relations with previous non-indigenous people but who hadn't exactly settled in the same way and weren't trying to build a new state. We tend to look at Little Crow as a perplexing

kind of person historically because he made decisions that seem compromised or seem to have misjudged the situation. But if Dakota people and they had been making kin for quite a long time with European or European American people who were moving through that territory, engaged in trading and things like that, there were attempts to do that it looks like with the emergence of the Settler State and that wasn't going to work because the Settler State is bad kin.

**1:13:25 DT:** They're just terrible, terrible relatives. And so I'm kind of looking at the way he was making... He made kin not only through treaty relations or attempted to but he also had multiple wives, four sisters and he went around Dakota country. He left his father's village when he was 20 and for 20 years travelled and moved around through different Dakota villages, and made kin and learned how to be a diplomat through making kin. And so it's really interesting to reread that history so I'm thinking about making kin as a form of diplomacy. And not only making kin through sex, which we've continued to do. Indigenous peoples have done that but we don't think about it as a form of diplomacy anymore. We talk about this government to government relationship. We talk about indigenous sovereignty, because we have been kind of drawn up into this thinking about the nation and indigenous nations and that's a really good strategy just like the consultative process at Standing Rock, but that's not the only strategy, it's got its limitations and so I'm interested in being promiscuous with strategies as well for how to expand indigenous sovereignty, right? So that probably doesn't get into sustainability but...

**1:14:35 S1:** No, but it's really...

[laughter]

**1:14:37 DT:** But I am gonna think more about defining that and hopefully I can answer these questions the next time I get asked.

**1:14:44 JL:** So one more from the audience and then I'm going to ask a question.

**1:14:46 DT:** Sure.

[laughter]

**1:14:49 JL:** Yes, yes.

**1:14:51 Speaker 15:** Thank you, Kim, for that. It was really, very exciting. I was really moved by the way you talked about hoarding for the future and how that might be a response to colonial forms of possession and the enforcement of colonial forms of possession. And so my question is, I was trying to think about how hoarding and forms of protection might be responses to conditions of scarcity, right, enforced conditions of scarcity, and I'm very moved by the way in which you're thinking about this disaggregating process and these kinship relationships as providing conditions of sustainability in response to those forms of scarcity, in response to these kinds of threats to life, living, relationships and so my question is really about how those forms of disaggregating objects, how those forms of relationality deal with the kind of double edged sword of dispossession.

[chuckle]

**1:15:57 S1:** Like on the one hand, there's a resistant form of dispossession that's not hoarding for the future, that is these kinds of forms of expanded kinship and relationality, and on the other hand there's a kind of persistence of colonial forms of dispossession that make people have to continue to do more with less, to continue to have to fill these sustaining relationships under conditions of threat. And can you maybe speak a little bit about that dispossession as this mode of loving more, loving more really, and in the face of dispossession as pipeline construction, the constraints of the monogamous family, the kinds of pressures that are always being put on people who are subject to a great deal of abandonment.

**1:16:52 DT:** When I talk about hoarding for the future, I actually don't think, at least in the indigenous communities I grew up in, we do a terrible job at hoarding. We never have any savings at all. [laughter] Unless we become middle class like me but I'm still not good at it. Because there's always, being in an extended family, people need things and you are called upon if you have a good income, you are called upon to provide money, especially if you are not there doing the work. Right? And so there's always a crisis, there's always somebody in the community in need and you've gotta help sustain that. So I wasn't really talking about us when I'm talking about hoarding. I'm talking about the settler culture that's imposed upon us.

**1:17:36 S1:** [1:17:36] [redacted] not, a position of not hoarding.

**1:17:39 DT:** But of just letting that go away.

**1:17:40 S1:** [1:17:40] [redacted] yourself...

**1:17:41 DT:** Yeah.

**1:17:41 S1:** Putting yourself in a position to not hoard. Now what that means in terms of a kind of letting go.

**1:17:50 DT:** Well, I guess I feel like we haven't really had a choice about it. And instead of pathologizing ourselves for failing to... Or for not having a choice, or for falling down on the job of living up to settler cultural ideas, I guess my point was just that we should embrace the fact that what we're doing is not deviant. We're actually still sustaining ourselves in these webs of relation. Maybe I'm not really understanding your question.

**1:18:26 S1:** I guess...

**1:18:28 DT:** But I want to, so.

[laughter]

**1:18:32 S1:** See, what the forces of colonial power tend to be is to enforce particular forms of possession, right?



**1:18:40 DT:** Mm-hmm.

**1:18:41 S1:** And ideology as a possession and at the same time, continually dispossess people of everything. And so how do these forms of sustainability of kinship, of disaggregating objects, how do those... Those are forms of dispossession against colonial forms of [1:19:09] [redacted] right? But they're also working against the scarcity of dispossession as a kind of material [1:19:15] [redacted] taking away. And so, one of the things that that can do is being, is more rich, it forms an exchange and more rich, but it's also more enforced forms of making be with less of taking away, of abnegating from responsibility, because people are caring for themselves, because...

**1:19:46 DT:** Let's talk more... We're having dinner later, let's talk. Because I think there's something really interesting here and Krista also did psychoanalysis stuff, which I haven't. And I suspect there's something... [laughter] 'Cause I'm sitting there thinking about that, there's some interesting conceptual contradictions happening here, right? So I do wanna talk...

**1:20:04 S1:** I'm doing it from the standpoint of power and this is about how... What dispossession is, how you negotiate the relationship between an imposed structure of possession...

**1:20:18 DT:** And how I'm still calling for a [1:20:19] [redacted] delay...

**1:20:20 S1:** As the kind of material fact of life within indigenous states...

**1:20:28 DT:** Yeah. Well, let's talk about it more 'cause I'm interested to figure out why I'm not understanding the...

**1:20:36 JL:** Maybe the conceptual knots can be sort of lubricated a bit with some wine.

[laughter]

**1:20:39 DT:** That was very poetic. I love that.

**1:20:42 JL:** So my question is, when I first called and talked to you about coming and speaking, one of the things that you said to me was that you weren't sure about this sort of language of the future. So thinking in terms of linear time, past, present, future. And then when we were talking yesterday, we were talking about, you like to think of it as you're in an ever-changing present. I'm wondering if you can just expand on that a little bit in terms of where you might see the worth of this kind of future thinking or where maybe these need to be turned around into a different kind of thinking to be useful for the sorts of things you wanna see happen.

**1:21:25 DT:** Well I mean I only know from my perspective of having to respond to it, it made me, as I was saying earlier, I think, if I'm unwilling to engage in the concept of past and future, how else am I going to talk about these things, these visions for the kinds of changes that we can see or how we think about the seventh generation. And so I went back to, and I am gonna do more of this now after having to respond to this in this paper. I went back to a spatial metaphor and a metaphor about

material transfer. So I'm thinking about the web, the sort of web and that different weavings can happen and reweavings. But I also was thinking about, if I think about seven generations and I want to resist this sort of linear kind of future thing, how do I talk about that? Well, multiple generations come from our body. There's a material transfer from our body to the bodies that come from our bodies. There's also material transfer as humans and non-humans co-constitute one another. And so that's where I'm gonna go. But I'm not saying other people shouldn't think in terms of futures because obviously, you all doing that has been very generative for me, even if I might use another kind of language. I mean I remember I had a student in a class two years ago at University of Texas talk about Afrofuturisms and I said, "What is that?" And then they said, "Oh there's indigenous futurisms too." And I said, "Ah, I don't like that, but I don't know why."

[laughter]

**1:22:52 DT:** But it's really productive for me, it's really productive. And then the technology aspect's really interesting too. And as we were talking about earlier today, I... One of the other reasons I wanna resist the notion of linearity is because it's too tied to progress, and progress this way and backwards in this and this direction. And people across time and space have used various forms of technology. I wanna resist high-tech stuff as the kinds of technology we should focus on, to do things in the world. And I really think we undersell the intellectual prowess and the really complex forms of development of our ancient ancestors. Vine Deloria Jr said this a lot, he said there's a lot that's been lost and we are sitting here. For him, it was in the 20th century assuming that they were all cavemen banging on rocks. I think we really undersell the knowledge that ancient people had and the knowledge that non-humans have.

**1:23:56 DT:** And every time the new scientific study comes out and they're like, "Oh, dolphins are self-aware." It's like, well why wasn't your fundamental assumption that maybe... But the fundamental assumption is something else, right? And if we go into our research with these fundamental questions that deanimate or put non-humans into a lower hierarchy, it's gonna take us longer to see, actually, what they do know and what they do do, because we're not willing to see it in the first place. So anyway, that's kind of a tangent, but it's been really generative for me and I am gonna work that into the rewriting of this book chapter.

**1:24:28 JL:** Great.

**1:24:28 DT:** Yeah. Thank you. Thank you.

**1:24:30 JL:** Well, thank you very much, Kim. It's been fabulous. Thank you all for showing up on a Friday night and joining us in this conversation.

**1:24:35 DT:** Oh yeah, it's Friday.

[applause]