"Crossing Boundaries: Off-Rez Mixed Marriages"

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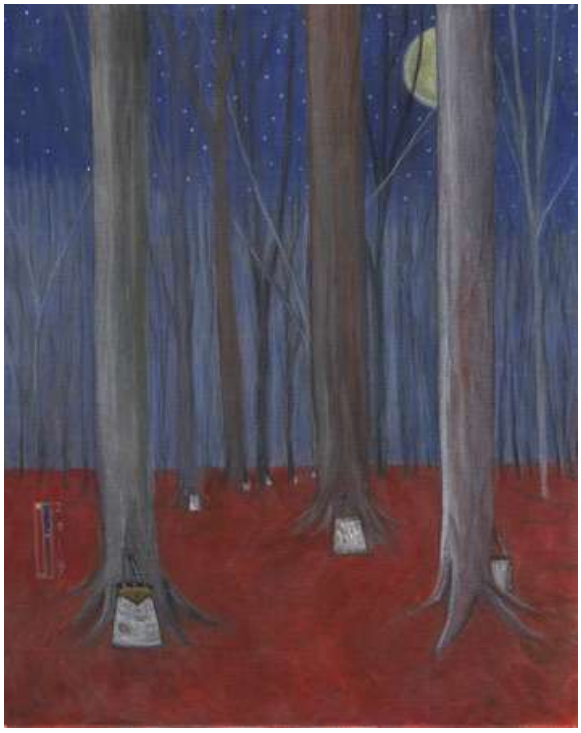

SKIGAMIZIGE-GIIZIS / Sugarbush Moon - *April (4)*
From *13 Moons of the Anishinaabe* by Patricia LeBon Herb
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Segment One

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, along with Carolyn Schmidt. Today's discussion features two couples of mixed marriages – that is, one Indigenous and one non-Indigenous partner. We'll be exploring what we can learn about dynamic indigenous cultures today, and the personal growth of individuals and couples, through looking at the experiences of off-reservation mixed marriages.

Perhaps what we're going to deal with today is a little bit counterintuitive, because there's a prevailing cultural notion that when people marry outside of

their ethnic group, or their religious group, that some kind of dilution of culture - some kind of loss of culture - is a great risk. I think what we're going to find today is that that isn't always the case. And sometimes it's the opposite.

Carolyn Schmidt: Indigenous Perspectives originates from Vermont in the United States, and is located on lands that the Abenaki people call N'dakinna. It's the unceded traditional territory of the Abenaki people, who for thousands of years have been stewards of the lands found here and across the border in Québec province in Canada.

We welcome today's guests, Patricia LeBon Herb and Guntram Herb, an off-rez mixed marriage couple who live in Vermont. They'll each introduce themselves. Patty, you're the indigenous one – like Randy –so I think you should go first!

Patricia LeBon Herb: Thank you, Carolyn, miigwech.

Aaniin *["Hello"]*

Nindizhinikaaz Ziibinggkowe, nindoodem Mickinuc, nindonjibaa Mackinaw, nindaa Middlebury, Vermont. What I just said in Aninishinaabemowin *[the Aninishinaabe language, general term for language shared among the Ojibwe, Odawa and Potawatomi]* is the customary way to introduce oneself.

My name is River Woman; I am from the Turtle Clan. I'm a member of the Sault Ste. Marie tribe of Chippewa Indians; my ancestors come from Mackinaw Island, Michigan; I currently live in Middlebury, Vermont.

I will tell you a little bit about myself. So I look at it like:

The Front Yard
Is where I present myself to the world
The Backyard
Physically and metaphorically speaking
is where I go to figure things out
in simple language.
It is a slow process
I am of the Turtle clan after all :)
In the back yard are the
medicines, plants, flowers

wildly rooted to earth,
where there is
an abundance of trees
where I lay tobacco down
and pray.
A river flows behind the house
it is no coincidence
that I'm named Ziibinggkowe
which means
River Woman in Ojibway
Here in the backyard
I listen and try to understand
a complex story.
I look up to the sky
from where I sit, lie or stand
whether it be indoors or out
every day has something
new to teach me.
I look out and visit with my grandfather
and mother whom I lost through
the assimilation process.
I have more rights and freedom
in regards to healing, to exercise my spiritual
practices, than what they had.

Think about that for a second.

My grandfather was born at
the turn of the century.
In order for many to survive
they needed to assimilate.
My grandfather was able to go to college
and later he worked
at the shipyards.
I have more freedom
then what he and my mother had.
And for this I am grateful.
We are Native Americans.
However the outside world wants
to *define* us is their story,
often a false narrative,

which does not concern me much
anymore. In high school and
college I did not have one Native
American teacher. Times are changing.
We are moving forward recovering what
was lost, we are evolving and reclaiming ourselves
becoming active citizens in the
modern world.

I go to the creek to visit
my recently deceased brother
whose indigenous name is: Waywaziibboonsin
(also known as Chuck) his name means:
The glistening stones
along the river bank
that is where his name lies.
Our native names are important
we grow into them and say them
when we connect and honor others.

My backyard is
where I weep, laugh, sing, harvest —
relearning our not-lost language.
I go to our medicine wheel
where I stand in silence to connect to all
living things of this earth, its people
plants, animals, water, sky and earth.
A ceremony after loss, a ceremony
for what is here today. It is a kind of a
homecoming.
I am a Belgian Native American woman.
Anishinaabe, Ojibway-Odawan
young Elder living in
Middlebury Vermont.
Together with my
husband and grown children
we are on a transformational
journey.
We all have our stories
and this one is mine.
Miigwech.

Randy: Thanks Patty, for sharing the poem with us. Like me, I think you find it sometimes easier to express what you're going through, and your journey, in writing than sort of spontaneously speaking. And I love the way you can get so much into a poem.

So what we're going to do is jump off from your poem about a personal journey that involves Guntram, to discussing, as I said in the introduction, an exploration of how that partnership works and how together you've grown into this awakening. So Guntram, let us hand off this part now to you. Why don't you introduce yourself? So the listeners know who the other half of this relationship is.

Guntram Herb: Miigwech - thank you, Randy. My name is Guntram Herb; I'm a geographer - teach geography and global studies at Middlebury College where I'm a professor, and the Chair right now. And together, Patty and I have been on this journey to understand the indigenous heritage that is so much part of her. And it's come out more recently because I've been able to incorporate some of this in my professional work as a scholar. And we actually had a project that we worked on together, on indigenous borderlands.

And for me, this is really a journey into learning about a different way of looking at the world. And maybe one of the important things here is when you learn that stones are animate in Aninishinaabemowin, not only you start looking at the world in a very, very different way, suddenly because all the assumptions that you had, all the things that you took for granted, all the facts that you have learned to recite and respect - become destabilized. And I think that's a very good thing.

Randy: Thanks, Guntram. I'm just going to insert a few little pieces of demographic information here, so that listeners know what it is we're talking about. In mainstream America - and I don't have the exact data for Canada and our First Nations colleagues there - but in the United States, for the white population as identified by the census, , about 80 to 90% of whites marry other whites. And for Black African-Americans, it's approximately the same kinds of numbers, you know, 80, 90% marry within their racial group. For indigenous people, it's about 50%.

So on the surface of it, again to go back to the introduction, it would appear as if indigeneity - being a Native or a First Nation person - is under assault of

dilution or this process of assimilation through marriage. But as you just already pointed out and we'll get deeper into this, our process of discovery that Patty is writing about and I'm writing about in my book, probably wouldn't happen the way it's happened, had it not been for a supportive partner. I know when I wrote my book, I had not have done it and it would not have come out as well as it did if I didn't have, you know, a partner in the process; I actually wanted to make her a co-author.

Patty, why don't you back up and give us a little bit on how your writing and your thinking and feeling and awakening is impacted by the person sitting next to you?

MIIN-GIIZIS / Berry Moon - *August (8)*
From *13 Moons of the Anishinaabe* by Patricia LeBon Herb
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Patty: Well, we - we met way back. What year was that?

Guntram: 1981.

Patty: 1981. And I - I lived in the Twin Cities in Minneapolis, and I didn't grow up with my mother, but with my father who was a Belgian immigrant. And at my high school, there probably were many Native Americans, but it was something that I think in those days, people were hiding. And I knew I was Indian, but I didn't know how to go about being an Indian. And so anyway - but it was always with me.

And then I went to Berkeley and I met Guntram, and I gave him my back-ground and I told him that I was, you know, Ojibway. And he thought that was so cool. And he goes, whoa, that's something to be really proud of. And I was, but - and it's through - as I got older, I started exploring more, reading more - and then actually when I was 50, after our kids were in college, I actually - because I'm part of a tribe, Sault Ste. Marie tribe of Chippewa Indians. And that's another long story that I won't get into how I got connected with them, but, I was very shy and very scared. And they were like, what took you so long to come here?! I was welcomed with open arms. There was a language table, an Indian cultural center. I received an Eagle feather at an Eagle Staff gathering. And, it was a - just a life changing experience.

Carolyn: Wow, so - this is incredible, Patty. And Randy, can you give a brief summary on how you've been re-growing your indigenous roots? It's not quite as dramatic in some ways as Patty's, but it still has had an impact on both of us.

Randy: Well in many ways to a similar progression. You know, for most of my life and most of my adult life, I was aware that we had Indian ancestry, but it was not in any way a central part of my thinking or identity. You know, I grew up in an all white suburban neighborhood. I mean, there were literally no non-whites, and almost everyone was Christian with maybe one family exception. I don't think I saw a Black person until I was ready to go off to college. So I - I grew up, I call it, you know, the American urban - suburban vanilla experience.

And then, in recent years, approximately the last decade, my indigenous heritage has - I won't say snuck up because sometimes it's intruded rather

vociferously into my life and consciousness - and just transformed my thinking and feeling and ways of engaging the world. And again, I - I don't think I would've navigated these waters the same way had Carolyn not been there to reflect with me and very often to participate in events, such as the visitations of wild creatures, our other-than-human kin, who constantly come and make their presence known to us. So that's my background.

Carolyn: So I'd be interested in hearing from Patty and Randy, about your struggles of reawakening in terms of your physical appearance. Neither of you look stereotypically quote, unquote "Native American." You're both from Woodlands tribes that have a long history of mixing and mingling. So how has this been a factor as you've worked on developing and exploring your Native American heritage and bouncing off others?

Patty: Should I go first? You know, for a while there, it - it kind of was an issue with me, but funny enough, it isn't anymore , even when I am amongst Ojibway – Odawan people, they're often light skinned like me. And the Abenaki, the local Abenaki people *[in Vermont],* I have the same coloring as many of them. And, uh, we really check each other out when we see each other! It's like, yeah, you're - you're light skinned too. And you have to remember that we're from the north lake woods region. So, people that are living in colder climates have the lighter complexion as it were. And I think that applies to Native Americans as well, some Native Americans.

And if you look all across the board, if you go from Maine all the way to Alaska, we all look different. And that's what's so beautiful about us, you know, we've learned to blend and assimilate and evolve. And I look at the whole assimilation process has been kind of a good thing for me, not necessarily a bad thing. But the thing that has always bothered me is that what my ancestors, the last 400 years, went through. And I have seen pictures of my grandfather's people and they were darker. But through time and assimilation, and then living in the more Northern hemisphere, I just feel I became a light skinned person.

Randy: Yes, I've struggled the same way. Literally, the opening sentences of my book are "Mirror mirror on the wall, am I really an Indian after all?" And I, for several years looked in the mirror, and - as I say in my book - what looks back at me looks more like my adoptive Lithuanian ancestors. I go to Lithuania and everybody thinks I'm, you know, a "real Lithuanian," even though I was adopted. So the irony is my adopted family thinks I look "right."

And, you know, my sort of blood ancestry sometimes - you know, will point at my eyes or my hair color and make not an insulting , a sort of quizzical comment about, well, you don't really exactly match what I expected.

But I - I think Patty, you and I both know, and our partners know, and this is where the confirmation and help has come from, it's - it's not what's on our face or on our skin color or hair color. It's what's in our heart. And that's been the most beautiful part of the journey - is sharing that awakening and those feelings and those sensibilities with a partner who will very often see, feel, and hear things that are so profoundly quintessentially indigenous, that they can sometimes knock us over.

And did we not have a witness to what just happened, and if we told people about it, people would say, oh, you're imagining it. Or you made that up, or you're hallucinating. It's really nice to have an objective non-indigenous person in the household looking out and say, "Yup, that rainbow landed in the same place for the third time. You didn't imagine that." So, you know, this has been a vital part of my awakening. Absolutely vital.

Carolyn: Yes. And I'd like to bring in also a concept that has come to mean a lot to me. We heard a Two-Spirit member of the Lakota Nation speak at Middlebury College, a couple of years ago. And they talked about the whole idea of rejecting the male -female binary, and being their own unique person, affirming all of their roots and their connections and their political activism and their self presentation and just - just everything. And so challenging the binaries, whatever they are, has become something that has really - I've been opening my eyes to in the last couple of years.

And one of those binaries is the indigenous slash non-indigenous binary. So there is the question of what's in your heart, what's in your sense of your heritage and your ancestors. And it's - it's all a complicated mix. I know there are places I can't go because I don't have any indigenous heritage, but there are many other connections that I can make - either be led in by Randy or find my own way, and, you know, he catches up to me. It's - it's pretty incredible.

Randy: So, Guntram, do you find yourself on the wrong side of the indigenous non-indigenous binary "other"?

Guntram: I clearly am not indigenous. I am aware of that; I am fully European. And you know, people are trying to do DNA tests and things of that

sort to figure out what it is; I think this essentialism is really misguided because it's really about, I think, a worldview and, appraising of heritage. And to me to be welcomed, that people talk to me and that I can have a respectful conversation is - is a way to enter this space of indigeneity. And that works really well. So -

Patty: Through education, which is his goal.

Carolyn: Okay. That's a great comment to close out our first segment, and it'll be a segue into Segment Two. We'll be back just a minute. Stay tuned.

Segment Two

Carolyn: Welcome back to Indigenous Perspectives, talking today with Patricia LeBon Herb and Guntram Herb about off-reservation mixed marriages. Guntram, as a geographer you've worked together with Patty on your "Borderites, Borderlands" project, which documents and highlights the challenges of Native nations - including Patty's Ojibway community - divided by the US-Canadian border. Can you tell us about that project, and how you connected your academic work with indigenous experiences?

Guntram – Yes. Thank you. So this project really started in 2010 when we spent time with Patty's tribe in Sault Ste. Marie, and we encountered the divisive effect of the border. You know, we would go to a sweat across the border; we would attend an Eagle Staff gathering the other way, coming back, and going back and forth. The question "what's your nationality?" always was an issue that rang deep for me - as being German-American, for one, this is a question I always have to engage with.

But more importantly, one of the Eagle Staff gatherings we went to started late because people - some of the members - had been stopped at the border and hassled for having Eagle parts. And we were told, well, they shouldn't have stopped us. We have the right to cross with the Jay Treaty in 1794. And I had never heard of this. And I wanted to know more about what does it mean to cross border, not just figuratively the border between being indigenous and being non-indigenous, but the border that is put up by the settler states to prevent movement back and forth. And I found that there was an extremely minute amount of scholarship on it. And -

Patty: I just want to say one thing that maybe Guntram didn't say, but - that it's a tribe that was divided by the border. So it's the Sault Ste. Marie tribe of Chippewa Indians that is divided by the border.

Guntram: So that's why we had to go back and forth. And having - having this - knowing that there was a need to understand better about what indigenous communities are going through, being divided by these artificial borders, we knew the only way to do this. I mean, I'm a - I'm a scholar. I do refereed work, etcetera, but this is not about going into archives. This was about to learn from the people themselves, because who am I as a non-indigenous person speaking potentially on behalf of them?

So our goal was to actually just go and talk to the communities, not even the word interview - I don't want to put that out there, because it was listening. And so Patty and I bought an old camper van, fixed it up and then traveled from Maine, New Brunswick, all the way to the west coast, and back, and the following summer from Maine, New Brunswick to Alaska and back. And spoke to over 30 communities, listening to them.

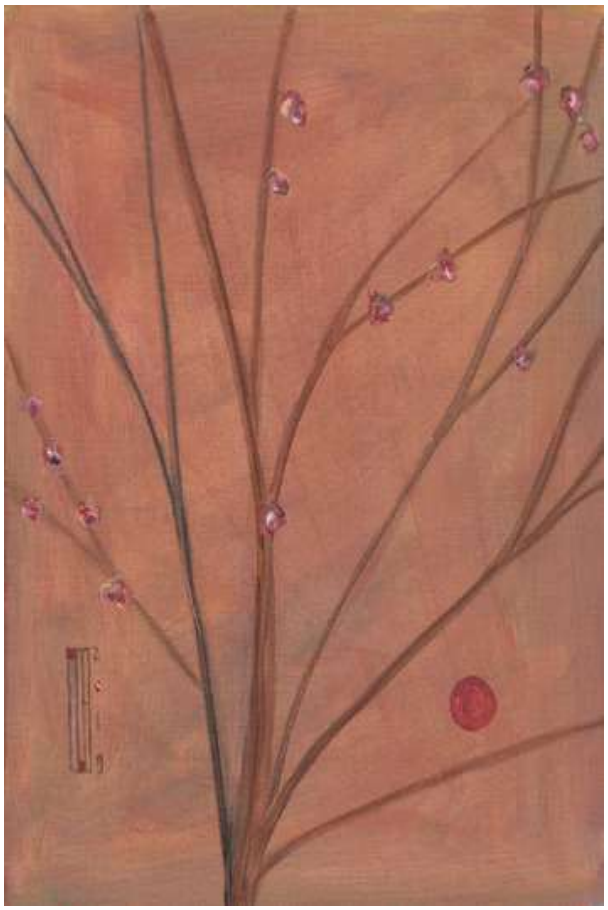
And it was an experience that that was transformative since they were all - we encountered all these different indigenous people who had different cultural protocols, who had different experiences, who had different languages. And trying to be respectful, I would learn a few words here and there and try to speak about it, knowing about cultural protocols, offering tobacco with elders, et cetera. Those were things that went really, really deep and took me away from the customary field work that you do when you go out in the field or when you go into archives. And for that, it was something that didn't just give me an understanding of the border, but it gave me an understanding of a different world view and a different approach to it.

And in this project, I wanted Patricia who was part all along, also to contribute and to make her own kind of scholarly contribution in some way. So I asked her to write a poem about it and to - to kind of encapsulate that.

Because the things that we have, we have it on our website, all the information. That was a good reason for that: once it's in a book it's out there, but you do not want this information to be out there and put it - potentially be disrespectful or contentious from some people. And on a website, I can always put a disclaimer; I can take it down. And so that was from the

beginning the reason for having a digital one *[way to present the findings of their border project]*.

I, I don't want to dominate here. , so maybe one way to give you an idea of what this project is about is that the poem that Patty at the end of our journey wrote, really encapsulates what we experienced. And it's a poem that I always read whenever I give a presentation on this as well, because it's- it's so much more concise than anything else.



AAGIBAGAA-GIIZIS/ Budding Moon - *May (5)*
From *13 Moons of the Anishinaabe* by Patricia LeBon Herb
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Randy: So Patty, let's hear it!

Patty: I just want to say like Guntram was, you know, kind of badgering me. And I said, that's not how poetry is. It has to just come to you. And this poem actually did come to me. It was - it was not even a draft. And so that was - that's what's so meaningful to this poem, that it just came to me naturally. Okay.

The Borderland

As we zig zag the
US and Canada border
from Maine to Seattle
and into Alaska

We travel through Native lands
families and friends separated
long lines of cars and trucks
on land and bridges
close communities
divided

Passports to be shown
sunglasses off
those with a DUI
cannot cross over
even as passengers
or ever again
I heard it said

Sometimes it's a long trek
other times not
Reservations and Reserves
two separate lands
on one border
or another

Veteran Elders come
to participate
at Eagle Staff gatherings
some well into their 90's

Regalia and bundles
inside the car
the border patrol
depending who you get
know better now
not to go through them

Officers with good training
have learned to respect
the ways and traditions
different from theirs

Indigenous men
women and children
come to participate
in a pow wow
a celebration
a sacred circle
on the other side

First Nations go south
Native Americans go north
First Alaskans go east
Northern First Nations go west

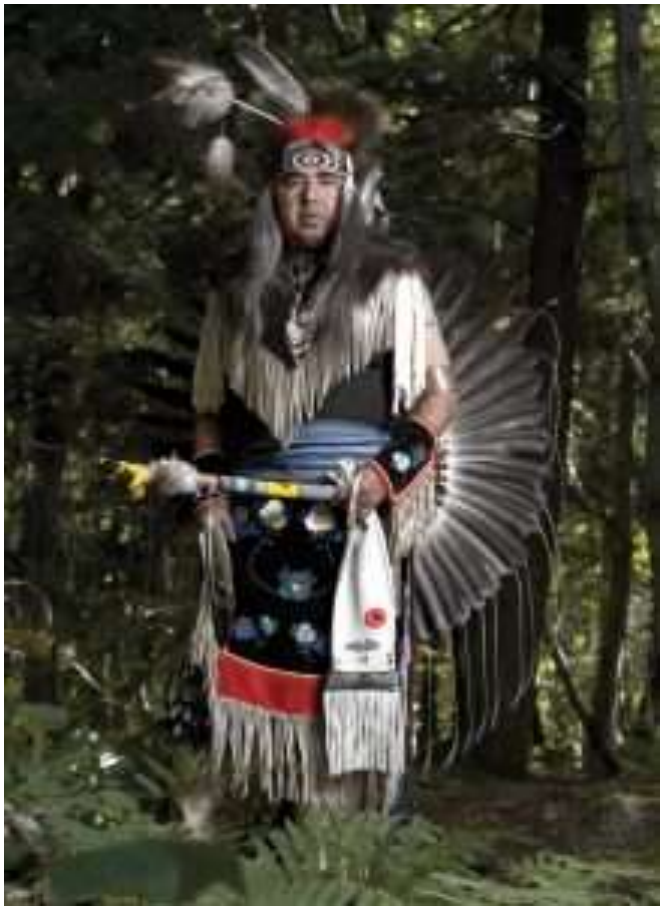
To participate and celebrate
to give thanks for each other
the earth
the land and waters
animals and trees
stories from another time

Everything done in a circle
intricately sewn regalia
headdresses, jingle dresses
made with feathers, beads
and the hide of buffalo
caribou, deer, and seal

Songs and traditions
from long ago
to say we are one
in a circle

with no borders

Carolyn: I just have to say when Randy and I - we first met Patty and Guntram when we went to Guntram's presentation at Middlebury College about this journey - blew us away. The information, the respect - and the poem was an important part of the presentation. And, it just all- we just thought it was outstanding. So we said, we have to meet these people! That's how we met.



Nimkee-Wae-Widom (Richard Lewis), Odawa-Potawatomi[1]
Used here by permission of Richard Lewis

Guntram: I wanted to add just one more thing, because I know we're running out of time. This whole project was dedicated to Richard Lewis, an Odawa Potawatomi. And he's also known as Nimkee-Wae-Widom. He was our spiritual guide. He was the one who supported this effort. And the whole

[1] https://mynorth.com/2008/04/the-awakening
The Awakening: Native Americans Share Their Culture Through Powwow Regalia
April 1, 2008 by Leslie Askwith

project is guided by *minaadendamowin*, which is respect in the Aninishinaabe language. So that's just as a final point.

Patty: And that was a fine day when we met you two, that was a wonderful afternoon at Middlebury College.

Carolyn: Well, we will be back in a minute with Segment Three.

Segment Three

Randy: Welcome back to Indigenous Perspectives. In this segment, I want each of us to have a chance to tell a brief story of a shared experience, and how sharing that experience in the context of our relationship makes it all the richer. Carolyn, why don't you talk about a very recent experience we had, that you cued to, and I almost missed.

Carolyn: Okay. Less than two weeks ago, we were at a graveside ceremony for an incredibly fine person and friend who died, sometime in his nineties, last fall. So this was the get together with the graveside ceremony, with people who had been invited. We'd never been to this place before. It was lovely, sort of country, open fields. And, you know, you're standing around before it starts. We didn't know really anybody else at the ceremony.

And then about three minutes before it was ready to start - that's when you start thinking it's time to sort of shift over, you know, to the actual gravesite - these incredible howls started up. Oh, I mean, just unbelievable. And I didn't - my first thought was that is the Coy-Wolves calling about his spirit because Coy-Wolves are a really important part of Randy's experience with connecting with messages from his kin. And I got tears in my eyes. It was just unbelievable.

And I said to Randy, "oh my God, I thought, I thought it was Coy-Wolf starting up, in honor of George" (the man's name was George Jaeger; his last name, Jaeger, means hunter.) So it turned out that other people said those were Huskies; somebody nearby had Huskies and, you know - but this was incredibly, incredibly loud. They died down just after a few minutes and then they started up just as the ceremony was ending.

We were putting the flowers on the - into the grave and so forth. The - the howls started up again. It was really unbelievable. And Randy and I were the

only ones who were having this emotional reaction and understanding the animals giving this farewell.

Randy: So it took me a day to put this together and I almost missed it, you know, and had it not been for Carolyn, you know, I would've just said, oh, Huskies. But then I realized jaeger – hunter - you know, that's what it means. Yes. You know, here's - here's wildlife honoring a hunter and a man who was - I don't usually feel comfortable with the term *[warrior]* even in indigenous culture - he was a Cold War warrior. He served in the US Army, and - as a young man, a Panzer division surrendered to him when he stumbled upon them in the woods *[in Germany 1945]*.

He became a Deputy Director of a segment of NATO. He negotiated with the Russians on arms deals. You know, he was truly the best that one can imagine a warrior being. And here are half Wolf, half Dog, beings, creatures, our other-than-human, fellow kin, howling at the top of their lungs, interrupting the minister, who unfortunately shot back at them several times, "oh, shut up". You know, I - I cringed horribly, because for me it was the most honoring part of the ceremony, you know, it was better than the minister. It was, you know, our kin honoring this man.

Patty: What a great story.

Randy: But this, this is the kind of back- and forth- ness that we have in our relationship, I won't say on a daily basis, but routine, you know, mutually discovering and helping one another to navigate the reconnections with our kin. So tell us your story.

Patty: That's beautiful, that story; thank you for sharing it.

Guntram: So for us, a story to say is the medicine wheel in our backyard. So this is a place that actually our son, who was healing, was creating with Patty and set up the site. And it's a place where we go to say prayers. And it's a place that for me, come Spring, I go to make it nice, to weed it, to put the stones back (there's different colored stones in there), to make it a nice affirmation of a respectful message to the ancestors and the Creator, that here is a space that we keep sacred, that we keep clean and beautiful. And it brings Patty and I out there, whenever there is something that's distressing - a death or - or a hardship - we go there together. We stand by the medicine wheel and

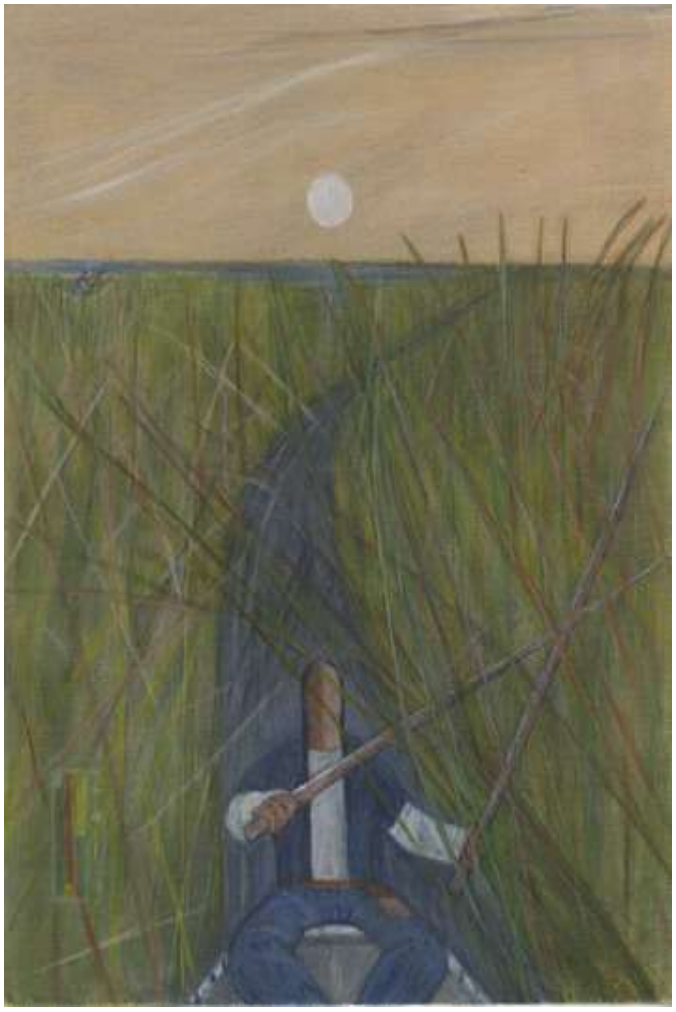
we will offer tobacco and say a prayer, “odaapina nini asemaa” (please accept our *[my]* tobacco) to ask for help. It’s a place where I think it connects us to the ancestry of Patty.

Randy: Patty, tell us - I mean, you've got this German born partner who obviously gets spiritual nourishment at your - sort of tribal heritage - medicine wheel. How did you introduce it to him? What, what did you have to tell him about it? And what should we tell readers about a medicine wheel? So they'll understand the significance of it.

Patty: Well, we actually saw a medicine wheel for the first time in Saint Ignace in Michigan, and I'm not sure that this is, you know, an Ojibwa - in Michigan and Wisconsin and Minnesota, if it's in all these places - but it was there in Saint Ignace. And, what I love about it, it's like a circle and everything's in fours. So you have the four seasons, the four states of being, which is physical, mental, spiritual, emotional; the four directions, east, west, south, and north, the four elements, water, wind, earth, and fire. And then the four sacred herbs, being Asemaa *[tobacco],* Cedar, Sage and Sweetgrass. And it's just a wonderful place to go. It's in nature; it's amongst a lot of trees.

But just quickly, I want to say that I recently learned that red is an animate color in Ojibwe. And when my father died, a Cardinal appeared and in the wintertime, so many Cardinals come, and whenever I'm on the phone, if I'm talking to my daughter the Cardinal appears. And I always think that - I think that's so beautiful that red is an animate color, because I look at it as the spirit goes to the red bird. And I hear many people have stories about Cardinals, not just indigenous people, people of all races, colors and creeds. And I just - that's - that's a beautiful thing to have acknowledged - that red is an animate color.

Randy: Thanks for sharing that. And thanks for again, documenting the - the whole premise of this program, which is that our cultural heritage is being revitalized by sharing with someone who isn't born into it. It bodes well for Native American resilience. We'll be back in a minute for the final segment.



MANOOMINIKE-GIIZIS / Wild Ricing Moon - *September (9)*
From *13 Moons of the Anishinaabe* by Patricia LeBon Herb
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Segment Four

Randy: Welcome back to the final segment of Indigenous Perspectives. We're exploring the question of mixed marriages of a non-indigenous and an indigenous person, which invariably raises the question of identity - indigenous identity - and sharing indigenous experience. I'd like to start off with Patty reading another poem, which is titled "How Much Indian Are You."

And then I'd like Carolyn and Guntram to respond, because this question isn't usually directed at non-indigenous people, but when you're a partner, in a sense the question does sort of hang out there. So Patty, why don't you read your question and then Guntram and Carolyn, why don't you respond?

Patty: Okay. Thank you. I'd love to.

How Much Indian Are You

a stone's throw across the river
twenty feathers off the hawk
one fry bread worth
twenty flute songs
a bundle of tobacco
a pint of blood pumped
from my mother's heart
according to the chart
the doctor missionary
author anthropologist
will tell us our ratio
if we are authentic or not
who is telling our story
a distant relative sold
land traded for frogskins
with a small forest of trees
to close the deal
an auntie ran off with
a French fur trapper
they moved to town
bringing us forward
then down
cohabitation regulation
assimilation eradication
papers needed to cross
a line
however you measure
I'm keeping my treasure

Carolyn: Okay. I'll give my comments, which are that to be tremendously respectful of someone else's identity involves accepting it and honoring it, but not trying to be it. But trying to follow the values and the wisdom and the sense of honesty and fair play that you can get inspired by and work from.

So I think if someone asked me the question, I would try to flip it for myself. I'd try to flip it around and say, what counts is not the fact that I'm not indigenous, but, what can I do to make these values meaningful and to act on them and to make a change in the world for the better - for obviously the

indigenous people, Randy's tribe, Randy himself, and also the larger picture of - of fairness and justice.

Randy: And Guntram, you?

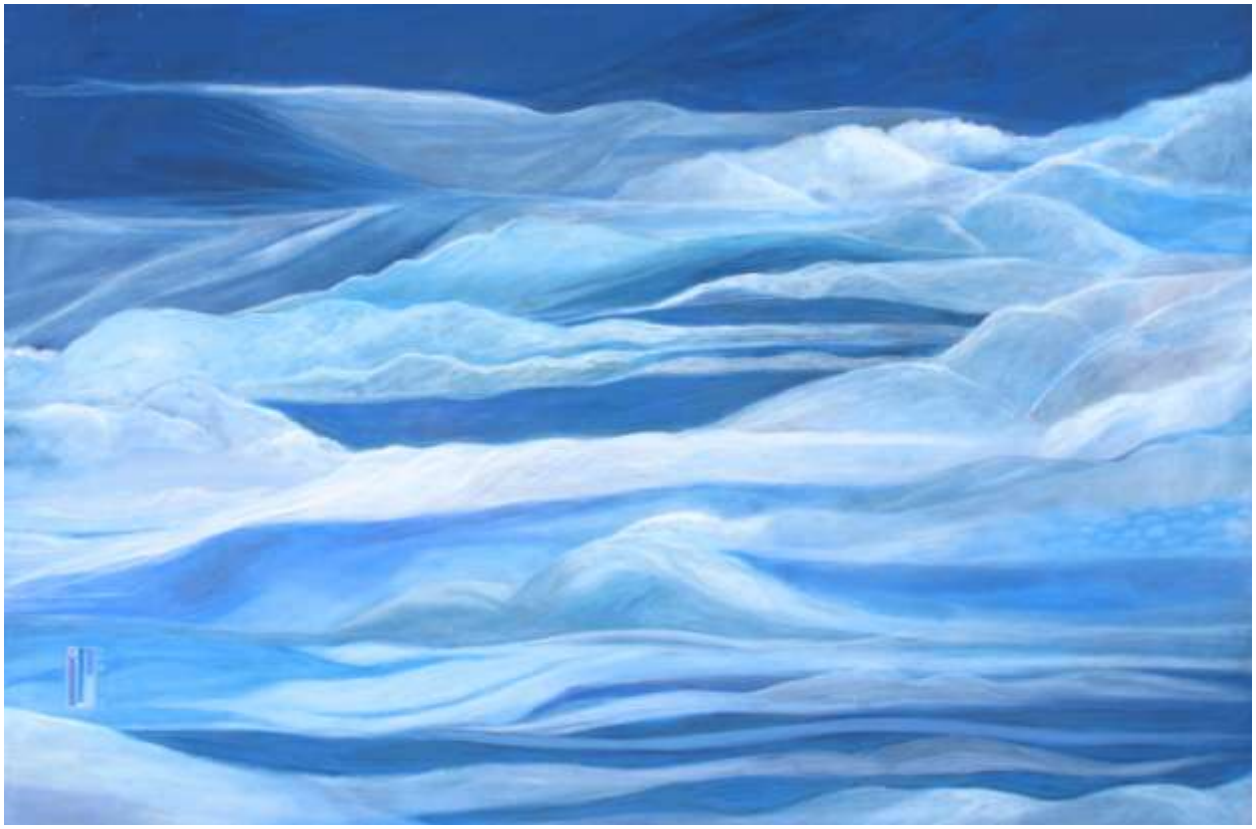
Guntram: Patty and I have been together for a long time. So if you go back to 1981, that's over 40 years. And sometimes when we're together, I - I seem to forget that we're not one, that we are actually two separate human beings. Oftentimes we share the same ideas or we - we see something the same way. And to me, the exploration of the indigenous heritage of Patty, I - it's part of my journey too, especially when you come to a place - and as a geographer, places are important.

So the medicine wheel, when we go there and we lay down tobacco, it is to the ancestors of Patty, for example, to take care of our children, and to help for that. So I'm entering the circle in - in some ways, even though I'm fully aware that I'm not indigenous, I don't want to take on that identity, but I feel I'm invited in to be able to share it, especially on behalf of my children. So it comes through this interaction of - of carrying out spiritual things.

And I must admit - I mean, I'm not a deeply religious person. I grew up a Christian, but it was not a deeply formative element, apart from the cultural element. And through the indigenous spirituality, I've actually allowed myself to open up to those visions, to those experiences, what you, Carolyn and Randy, were talking about at the funeral.

Those visions - Patty has had them. I was always extremely critical as you would expect from a scholar. And I've come around to seeing, like there is more out there, especially spending all this time with native communities along the border, on both sides of the border, and seeing how much, those spiritual elements, those connections - the Eagle following us along. We - one small story - we traveled and there was this cloud that looked exactly like an Eagle, there was the beak and everything else, and I thought, I better not say anything. , and Patty said to me, "Do you see the cloud?" And I said, "Yes, I see the cloud! And-"

Patty: It's an Eagle, the form of an Eagle!



Looking up 2 by Patricia LeBon Herb
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Guntram: Yes. I – yes, those are - that's my answer! Thank you.

Randy: I - I think we're circling back to the beginning theme of the program of how really encouraging and uplifting it is to see a culture that settlers and colonists tried to absolutely eradicate, entering the mainstream and like seeds thrown onto the earth. Maybe the earth wasn't as hospitable to the seeds as one would think. But you know, our two relationships are documentation that these ancestral ideas and insights and that culture - it's taking root.

And it's not just taking root; there's a real hunger out there in the mainstream for what we have to offer. And I think I think these mixed marriages are an opportunity to build bridges between indigenous cultures and the mainstream. And I - I see that as our, you know, our contribution, our responsibility. And I - I thank you two for being part of that, and for being part of our awakening; you've been mentors to us more than once.

Carolyn: And I'd say, I'd say also one thing I think I bring to Randy's and my partnership is since I'm not indigenous, much more mainstream, I'm attuned

to that part of our society. And there are times when I feel I'm a reality check against Randy, as you - you can't go so far so fast, if you want to communicate to the mainstream back up, make it - make it clear so I can understand it. So in terms of that kind of ripple effect, I think that works.

Randy: Thank you, Patty, and Guntram. And, Patty, you had a quote you wanted to end with?

Patty: Oh, well it's just a little - I heard this on the radio the other day. And, it was a quote by Paul Wellstone, who's the late Minnesota Senator, and I love this. It's: "We all do better when we all do better." And our ancestors before us had hardships; I believe they also experienced love and joy and happiness. It wasn't all like - you know, I - I don't want to think it was all like a sad experience, the last 400 years. And we've come far and I appreciate it, and I appreciate them. And they would want us to thrive, be well and be happy. And every day is a gift, and when, when we all do - when we do well, we all do well. And that's a wonderful last thing for me to say, because that's importantly what I want.

Randy: Migwéch. And to our listeners, I want to say again, migwéch. I hope the broadcast has given you time and space to reconnect with your roots in Mother Earth, your ancestral roots. Before your busy day distracts you from this moment, I encourage you to take a few minutes to reach out and feel the presence of living flora, fauna, and perhaps even that of your ancestors. Allow yourself to touch their presence, capture that moment and hold onto it. And also, if you will, write to me and let me know about your experience. I can be contacted through my website, at www.randykritkausky.com where you can also find transcripts and supplemental materials for all Indigenous Perspectives shows. A heartfelt migwéch – thank you – to Patty and Guntram Herb.

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Their websites:

Patricia LeBon Herb, artist and poet www.lebonherbart.com

Guntram Herb, geographer:
https://sites.middlebury.edu/borderrites/about/mission-statement/

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