Participating in Indigeneity – Inclusion and Exclusion

"Indigenous Perspectives" - Monthly Broadcast on HealthyLife.Net

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"From right here in Wantastegok"

Photo credit: Rich Holschuh, one of the guests on this show. Used by permission.

Rich selected this photo with the comment that, "It's challenging to find a way to depict 'participating in indigeneity' in the context I follow, but since it centers within being actively present-in-place and with all who are there, inclusive landscapes are what draws me in."

Segment One

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

Carolyn Schmidt: And I'm Carolyn Schmidt, the other co-host.

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.

Today's show explores two approaches to participating in indigenous culture. We'll discuss this issue with our two guests, both from Vermont – one Elnu Abenaki, the other non-indigenous .

Randy: After five hundred years of attempts by colonists to eradicate indigenous people and erase traces of indigenous culture, broad segments of the mainstream population are now intrigued by the offerings of our people.

For those of us who are indigenous, this raises several questions, and poses challenges as well as opportunities.

- How can we open the doors and inform the mainstream without having our culture and ceremonies appropriated, diluted, and commercialized?
- How can indigenous communities maintain their cultures as we are assimilated through marriage and the ever-present forces of mass culture and media?

Carolyn: Vermonters recently had an encounter with how inclusion and exclusion impact our indigenous Abenaki community. The University of Vermont invited Canadian Abenaki to a forum where they spent considerable time claiming that Vermont Abenaki aren't "real". It was a shocking display both for our four state-recognized Abenaki bands, and also for many in the mainstream. Our non-indigenous guest today, Duane Sherwood, wrote a powerful poem in response to that event; we'll hear from him later in the show.

But to start, let's look at what kinds of discussions indigenous communities have amongst themselves about who can claim to be a "real Indian" and who can connect without being an indigenous community member.

Our first guest, Rich Holschuh, is a member of the Vermont Elnu Abenaki band. Rich is the founder of the Atowi Project, defined as "an Elnu Abenaki community initiative to affirm Native relationships to the Land and its inhabitants, raise Indigenous voices, and foster inclusion with understanding, in place."

Randy: So, welcome, Rich. Let's begin by discussing Atowi and your work to promote inclusion. Why don't you tell us about that?

Rich: *Chowi*[certainly], for sure, *wliwni* [thank you], Randy and Carolyn.

I'd like to introduce myself to you first.

Ndelewizi Lissal ta ndai Wantastegok wji Sokwakik. Nwigôdam namiolan pamgisgak.[1] I am called Rich and I am from what most people know as Brattleboro, traditionally known as Wantastegok, in the southeastern corner of Vermont. And it's good to be here with you today.

So I am founder and co-director of Atowi Project.[2] Atowi is an Abenaki word that means "together, in space and time." And this word was chosen to describe what we see as the work before us. Basically, in a nutshell, we are all here together now, wherever we came from or wherever we have been, and we need to figure out how we're going to create the future. So there there's our mission; there's our marching orders. And Atowi is a nonprofit dedicated to basically raising cultural awareness with the general public and providing support and resources for the Native community here within what is now Vermont.

As I said, we are place-based. We are located in what is known as Brattleboro, traditionally Wantastegok[3], which is a traditional settlement place for the Abenaki people in the Connecticut River valley. We are under the sponsorship of Retreat Farm, which is a larger nonprofit here in town. And, myself and my co-director Melody Walker Mackin are both citizens of Elnu Abenaki. And so that is the group we are most closely allied with and with whom we work. And again, that is place based - the people in this area. But we work with the larger community throughout the state and beyond, because it's all about relationship. We're not in this alone.

That's our - that's sort of who we are, where we are and why we are.

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[1] Literal translation from the Western Abenaki language into the English language: " I am called Rich and I am [of] Wantastegok in Sokoki [Abenaki} country. I'm glad to see you today."

[2] https://www.atowi.org

[3] Abenaki place name; translates as "at the river where something is lost"

Randy: So you mentioned providing support for your own community, within your own community, and outreach beyond your community, which is exactly what the theme of the show is about. How - how do those two efforts or initiatives dovetail, and where do they necessarily become distinct?

Rich: Well, that's a really good question: what's the context here? And it's all about context - what's going on in the moment, to my mind. The history of the development of this country, along with others, is one of separation and control. And you could call that colonization, in a word. And through that colonization process on this continent - and elsewhere, because this is worldwide - certain people decide that they are more entitled than others to what's available, and they take it for themselves. And so this is through a process of othering, of separating and of diminution, marginalization. And that has left indigenous peoples, Native peoples; original peoples, wherever they are, separated. And not only from their homelands, but from each other. And put into a place where they are not in equal standing, and that is definitely the case here in the Northeast.

The Abenaki people here have been subject to all of these influences as well. And consequently here, in 2022, descendants of the original people here are not resourced, and they are separate from not only the land, but everything that it provides - relationship with everyone else that is here, all of our relations. And with people in other places. Those connections have been broken, severed in the service of colonization and taken by others for their own purposes. And that's ongoing.

So, in order to support the communities here, we need to reach out to the larger community, the majority, the dominant society you could call - and because they're holding all of the resources, we need to restore relationships there, bring understanding because most people are not aware of this dynamic, under the surface and not acknowledged.

And, we try to bridge that gap with teaching, with answering of questions, providing opportunities to learn, and then return that benefit to the indigenous communities that are here. At the same time and so - well, at the same time, I say, because these are all connected - we all need to learn from each other because we've been separated through an intentional process. So again, you don't appreciate what you're not aware of and what you don't understand. So a lot of our work is

educational outreach, but it is intended to sustain and restore relationship for the people who are here. That's the entire point.

And when I say people, I mean much more than the human beings. Because we are surrounded by all of our relations; they are all people as well. And those relationships have been broken and strained and continue to degrade. And - and we're all in this together. The people are what we think of first and foremost, because they are our own kind; we identify with them most closely. But it, it has to go way beyond that. We will not be here without all of our relatives that have brought us to this point. So it's kind of a - it goes around and around and it's all connected, but it all makes sense in the end.

Randy: You've done a marvelous job restating the question that we posed to you when we were discussing having you as a guest, which is, you know, who can belong when we're talking about inclusiveness and exclusiveness. And what you've just done is greatly expand the definition of who and what we belong to, by reminding us that for Native Americans, belonging isn't just to the band or the state or the colony, it's to something far, far, far greater. And you do that with such eloquence that it really is worth repeating over and over because it's so hard for people who aren't growing up inside of that mentality to grasp that.

So would - would you run with that idea for a moment? Because I think it lies at the heart of who I'm more and more seeing you as - not just as a spokesperson for a band, but as a spokesperson for all our relations.

Rich: Sure. That's a really big subject, but it needs to be. We tend to focus on the details and - and lose sight of the big picture. I think we need to keep that in mind. I think, as human beings in the society that we're all surrounded by - the water that we swim in - we tend to go about things the way most people do. And so it's a challenge to look beyond that. This - this whole matter of identity and who belongs and who doesn't belong, is a manifestation of that focus on only the human part. And on this question of separating things : - "this is mine; that is yours; this is not yours; leave mine alone. "

The process of appropriation, I think, is something that we have to look at and we have to examine because it is the way most people think of things. But - and so there does need to be a measure of protection around that, because otherwise it will

just continue. This taking process will just continue. However, at the heart of it, we need to recognize that this taking process is the problem in the first place. And the protecting part is the problem in the first place. We need to be sharing and we need to be connecting. That's not the way things are done, generally speaking, though.

So we have to kind of thread the needle here, and walk between what our values and our ideals are and how it actually plays out in real life. And I think that's where - where people come with differences - and, it's where many of us find ourselves these days, these arguments about "this is mine; that's not yours, and you owe me something."

I try to be here for everyone and not just the human beings. It's not – it's not a process of taking a piece of the pie back from somebody, the pieces of the pie. The problem is that somebody feels like they own the pie in the first place. And I'm - I'm trying to take that pie and put it to where - into a place where we can all recognize that. If that makes sense.

Randy: You explain it well. I've heard you talk about your process of learning language and how it's place- based and how it expands the notion of, you know, intimate kinship connections to place. And you keep coming back to this theme and you're very eloquent and very consistent.

I'm going to throw you a little bit of a curve ball, because as I hear you talk about being place based, I also realize that one of the issues that comes up very often in my discussions with people in the mainstream is: can people who aren't Native Americans be as place-based as Native Americans? Or is there something unique and special about Native Americans and their rootedness in place? Is it learned, is it something we carry in our ancestral memory? Is it something that's so embedded in language that we have to understand a different language to break out of the mindset? I know you think about this a great deal; I'm putting you on the spot. Can you elaborate a little bit on how you work through that knot of ideas?

Rich : I do think about that. It is, I think, basically the question: why are we here? And my simple answer to that is we are here to take care of each other. I think that's what we are tasked with, and that's how I try to inform my actions. I am a human being with my own frailties, but I'm learning and I'm committed to learning, as long as I'm able.

So can someone [non-indigenous] be connected to place, in the way an indigenous person is? I think we should all aspire to that. That is the proper relationship, that set of understanding, awareness and value that is created by a group of people living in a place and in relationship with all of the other people in that place, human and other than human. That is the best way to be on earth wherever you are. And we should all aspire to that.

Is that possible? Maybe. What is - it's not possible through the way that we currently do things, [when] we conduct ourselves with Western society and with those values, that's not possible, it's not going to happen. Because they are polar opposites - being in relationship or being in control, those are opposites.

Is there a place for indigenous knowledge, indigenous people and indigenous cultures in and of themselves? Definitely. They are the example. They are the model that knows how this is possible, how this can be. And can that information, that awareness, that understanding just be taken and incorporated by somebody else? No. You have to be there and you have to live it. It doesn't just come automatically in a book or through a set of lessons, or by sitting with somebody for a certain period of time.

And it needs to be recognized that it is a continuation of the process of taking, colonization of everything. And to do that is to continue to make decisions informed by different values. And so, I think the way forward - if that is the aspiration, that we all be in harmonious, helpful relationship with the place where we are, and with each other - we need to look to the people who have demonstrated that that is the way, and we need to place honor and respect there. Because that's how humans go about things. We value [some] things, we don't value [other] things. We need to recognize that we haven't done that [honoring and respecting], and we need to start doing that. And to the degree that we continue to separate ourselves from each other, we are not breaking that habit. That's how I look at that.

Randy: That's beautifully explained, more lucidly than I've heard many from our Native American communities explain.

We're going to take a break and come back and let our other guest read a poem and make some comments on his journey, encountering Native Americans and First Nations people. And then we're going to come back, Rich, and talk to you again and

reflect on Duane's poem and Duane's musings and see if we can make some more progress on this really challenging topic. Stay tuned.

Segment Two

Carolyn: Welcome back to Indigenous Perspectives. Our guest for this segment is Duane Sherwood, a retired nurse and former technical writer who lives in Winooski Vermont. Duane participates in various Abenaki cultural activities. Before moving to Vermont in 2012, he lived in Alaska and was the member of an intertribal Native American powwow drum.

Randy: And I met Duane more than 40 years ago, before he moved to Alaska, when he was a student at the State University of New York in Binghamton, and I was a graduate teaching assistant, and he was a student in the class. Our encounter lapsed for 40 years, and recent events in Vermont that we discussed previously in this program, brought us back together when Carolyn and I wrote a commentary about what had happened at an event questioning the legitimacy of Vermont's Abenaki. Duane wrote a poem, marvelous poem, which he's going to read for us now, about his reactions to that event. Duane, thanks.

Duane. Well, my pleasure, Randy. So the poem is called “Indian Enough”. And it's a bit long, but I think worth it.

Drawn to a culture not my own.
I’ve been looking for Indians all my life.
Red beard, light-colored skin, no denying
My English and Swedish ancestry.

I’m looking for Real Indians.
The ones who marveled at the tall ships
Arriving in the bay, before European speech
Had ever been heard in Indian ears.

The ones never touched by European disease,
Never hurt by alcohol, never sterilized by force,
Never sent to boarding schools or spat upon.
Real Indians — hard to find these days.

And there begins a debate that never ends,
The argument that nobody will ever win,
And that everyone will always lose:
Who are the Real Indians now?

My Menominee brother illustrates like this:
Turning to an imaginary friend, he says,
"I'm more Indian than you." Then he laughs.
When Indians fight each other, only the oppressors win.

My brother's invitation brought me to ceremony
And into the company of my Indian friends.
By their example, they taught me
What it means to be a human being:

Listen quietly, respectfully, and without judging.
Respect elders, respect warriors, respect women.
Respect those who give more to the community
Than they take. Respect the land and water.

Express thanks, in prayer, for the blessings of life.
Be open to the teachings of the natural world.
Share the food, and the work.
Let deeds, silence, and laughter do your talking.

Those are just a few of the things they taught.
A Native woman once told me,
"You're more Indian than a lot of these guys."
Indian is an adjective.

An adjective modifies a noun.
My Indian friends have modified me.
I'm still English and Swedish,
And a little more human.

Some angry Indians came to town.
Their words had only the dark fire of anger.
"You're not real Indians, you're pretendians."
Their dark fire is troubling.

Out of respect, I listen with an open heart.
I see a point of view where one could call me pretendian.
Their righteous indignation tugs at my compassion.
I take it in, and doubt myself, doubt my path, doubt it all.

For one pathetic second, I even started to doubt my friends.
I know I'm not an Indian, and have never claimed to be.
But then who is? Are my friends Indian enough?
And who gets to make the call?

Blood quantum is government paperwork.
Tribal enrollment isn't a lock.
High cheekbones and dark skin are not proof.
And everyone's been colonized.

It is not for me to judge
Who is a real Indian, and who is not.
I can only walk a path with heart.
On this matter my path is silence.

But one thing I've come to understand:
Spirit doesn't care about skin color.
Or enrollment cards, or AncestryDNA.
Like a gift, it's what's inside that counts.

Spirit will help all who try to answer the medicine questions:
Who are you? What do you desire?
My Indian friends taught me this.
I guess that's Indian enough.

Maybe she is Indian enough
Who teaches authentic traditional crafts.
Maybe he is Indian enough who sings traditional songs
And knows the meaning of the words.

And maybe those who are steeped in Indigenous knowledge,
And those who know the content of ceremony
As well as its form. And those who see all life
As a web of relationships, or listen to trees.

And those who seek the wisdom of elders, or learn the language.
And those who tend a three-sisters garden.
And those who can pray with tobacco.
And those who defend the water, land, and justice.

The Indians call it the good, red road.
Anyone who sets their face and heart
In that direction gets my respect.
My heart knows who you are.

All my relations.

Carolyn: Wow. Migwéch, Duane. That's - it's really powerful and really clear. And I'm wondering if you could elaborate on some of your references, especially to your experiences in your drumming circle in Alaska?

Duane: Sure. So I was, I had moved to Alaska in 1993 and was casting about for my new social circles - you know, brand new in town, didn't know a soul - and ran into somebody who got into a talk about drumming and how profound drumming can be. They said, "Well, Duane, I know a drumming circle and I'd be happy to introduce you. And I said, sure. So we made arrangements - get there on a Wednesday night and walk into the high school. And it turned out not to be a drumming circle like any I'd ever seen before. It was a tough looking bunch of guys sitting around a powwow drum and singing powwow songs. And the drum keeper, my Menominee brother in the poem, looked up at me and said, "Oh, well, one of those, okay, sit right here and play on the edge, try to stay on the beat. "

And you know, I had never expected anything like this, never imagined anything like this. Wasn't what I was looking for at all, but I knew I wasn't in Kansas anymore. So I went back the next week and the week after and the week after. And I was on that drum for twenty years. And had some amazing, wonderful experiences on that drum. And I was telling this story with a friend of mine, he said, "Oh Duane, you didn't talk about the miraculous part: they didn't kick you off!"

And I realized that, I guess by good fortune or good sense, I don't know which, I adopted an attitude of being an emissary from a foreign culture. And so I sat with a great deal of respect and listened - probably for this first ten of those twenty years, just listened - and they would talk about issues, talk about things I didn't under-

stand, but it wasn't my place to try to interject. And you know, that's how I got to the drum.

Segment Three

Randy: And then there's a connection to drumming in Vermont. Can you pick up the story there?

Duane: Well, the drumming in Vermont - so we got to Vermont. And Alaska is an extremely diverse state, and you get off the plane in Anchorage and you're - there's there's all this Haida art with all of its stylization, Northwest Coast styling in their art, and it's just extraordinary. And you know, the diversity of people you meet on the street, four different groups of Alaska natives, and then people coming in from other countries, very diverse place. And so we got to Vermont, which is the whitest state in the Union, I think, and looking around, you know, not seeing any evidence of Native activities.

So we went to some powwows in New Hampshire and I had run across Ethan Allen Homestead museum, became a member, and got notified of an Abenaki indigenous culture class being put on by Fred Wiseman, who is an Abenaki scholar and and has Abenaki ancestry and has done quite a bit in the state promoting Abenaki rights and so on. So I took his class; it was a week long. And during the class, he invited me to participate with his Alnộbaiwi. I say his, he would probably object to that, but you know, he is the initiator of that group. And I - I said, sure. And so, and participating with the Abenaki group, the Alnộbaiwi, ever since.

Carolyn: And can you also mention to us - you're making so many connections here - you mentioned talking with a Sun Dance leader and can you sort of explain the traditions behind that and what you got out of that whole encounter?

Duane: Sure. So my drum keeper, my Menominee brother, invited me to go to a Sun Dance ceremony. And you know, I didn't know much about it, didn't really know what it was. Just for those in the audience who may not know much about it. It's a, it's like an eight day long ceremony. There's four days of preparation where you come to the Sun Dance grounds, you build the sweat lodges, you build the Sun Dance area and you know, build the community, that's the most important thing. And there's four days of ceremony where the dancers are out in the dance arbor, facing the sun, dancing for maybe an hour at a time, going into rest, fasting during this

process. And you know, it is quite a physical ordeal and it will induce even an altered state.

And so I was invited to work as a fire keeper. And that's what I did. I've been working as a fire keeper there for about 20 years. And I know there are a lot of people there, there are people who say, oh man, non-natives, they shouldn't be going to Sun Dance ceremony. And we had some people in that camp who eventually broke away from our Sun Dance. And I was asking the Sun Dance leader, you know, "You welcomed everyone; I've seen you welcome everyone, every race, every kind of person, you've never been mean to someone, you've never turned anybody away. How do you do that?" And he kind of picked his head up and said, "I refuse to be a victim." And that was quite a lesson.

Randy: So this - this brings us back to the events in Vermont of a month ago. And the controversy here that attempted on the part of some people in the academic world to divide our own academic community and not [to] push out mainstream people, but to push out indigenous people. You brought your own unique perspective to that, and it's beautifully represented in the poem. Is there a message you'd like to leave our listeners with, since you have the ability to sympathize and empathize both from the outside and through the lens of listening to insiders?

Duane: Sure. Well, it was - it was really quite a strong, emotionally strong presentation by the Abenaki group, the Odanak, up in Canada. And - but like I said, you know, most of what they had to say was toned with anger. And you know, I can see their perspective. I can - there are some things that they had good points there. The boundary between Canada and the United States, that's artificial from a traditional Abenaki standpoint.

I can see that they're worried that their culture is being appropriated. This is a legitimate concern. I think there are people who follow Native American ways in kind of a shallow and exploitative way and they're [the Odanak] right to be concerned about that. I can't argue that. But what's missing from their presentation is the quest for justice. You can't have justice without dialogue, and the dialogue was severely lacking.

Randy: Well, I want to say migwéch. And thank you for bringing your perspective to this enormously complex question and for demonstrating wonderfully many of the best values of indigenous culture.

Carolyn: So, migwéch, Duane Sherwood. Thank you so much for appearing on this program of Indigenous Perspectives.

Segment Four

Carolyn: Welcome back to the final segment of Indigenous Perspectives, talking with our guest Rich Holschuh.

Randy: Rich, we've all heard Duane read his poem and reflect on his own lifelong journey, connecting with Native Americans, First Nations people, and trying to get comfortable and be respectful. What are - what are your thoughts when you hear his poem and hear what he has to say?

Rich: I think Duane is doing what all of us do, instinctively, which is to try to find a way forward. And he's doing it in his in own way through his own lens, his own experience. And it's going to look different for everyone. But he is being mindful about this. And I think it's important to note in his dialogue, the way that he describes his experiences there, that he started out in Alaska and he was dealing with the place that he was in, the people that he was with. And now he's in a different place. And he is now trying to grapple with that and understand where he is and who he is with again. And that is a process of growth and learning. And it's really important to recognize that and acknowledge it.

It's different here. Indigenous cultures are not monolithic; they're all different. They are specific to place. And the cultures themselves develop from those lands. The way they do things there fit those places, and that speaks to their sustainability and the fact that they are appropriate to those places. That is the entire point: to be in good relationship with those places, to do things in a good way, something that has been learned over deep time.

And one of those ways of being in place is the language of that culture. Each culture has its own language, and they are specific to place. There are understandings within the language that can only be understood in that place because that's where the words came from. The land itself speaks. And so I introduced myself to the audience at the beginning here in the language, Western Abenaki language.

Some people say that that language has been taken, that it has been appropriated. And that is how they feel about it. I approach this through my own understanding that it is the single best way to be in this land: to speak the language that comes out of this land. It is a responsibility of mine, a duty for me to learn this language in order to respond to this landscape in a good way, and with everyone else who is here, human and other than human. And this is something that everyone should know. However, again, we need to put respect and honor first where they belong. And if the indigenous people who hold this language do not have access to it themselves, that needs to be restored first and foremost. But it is not a commodity to be hoarded. Because this land will suffer.

Randy: So, Rich, on the topic of language and inclusiveness, you know, I always hearken back to one of the more astounding passages I read in the biographies of Black Elk. You know, the great Lakota medicine man, and he was made famous by this book, *Black Elk Speaks* (which may or may not have been words he spoke as much as someone putting words in his mouth to a degree).

But in his books, in the several biographies, a single idea emerges over and over, which is: he made an incredible journey during his own lifetime. As a young man, he grew up as a warrior, in a very warrior-like society in time. And he was told that "we - the Lakota - kill anyone who does not speak our language." It was a way of differentiating his tribe from the Pawnee who were, you know, the predators, the great threat at the time.

So, you know, literally he felt comfortable killing people if he didn't hear them speaking his language. At the end of his life, when he talks about being inclusive, he says that the greatest contribution of the Lakota is "making relatives" - complete reversal of where he began his journey. He's saying what we can do that's the highest human accomplishment - as you were saying at the beginning of the show - is to make everyone our relatives. And I have no doubt that he was including our non-human kin.

You know, this message has resonated to the point where the Catholic Church, of all entities, is thinking of making him [Black Elk] a saint, which is another fraught issue. But again, the point here is [that] inclusion is a journey that I think we can all be on. And what I like about what you're doing, what I see written all over your work, is that you're on that journey. You are still learning - learning this. Why don't

you comment about that? Because you're very upfront about this being a journey and that you're not at the destination yet.

Rich: Oh, no. By no means <laughs> by no means. Everything is - it's all a journey. The sense of the sense of time is the sense of motion and movement. In Abenaki language, there is no word for time, but things are thought of in "behind me" and "in front of" - that is the way things are thought of. And that's a journey; that speaks of walking.

There is a word for the ancient ones, the old ones that have, you know, we might think of them as being way, way in the past, but the word translates out as "the ones that crawl in front of us." And I think that speaks directly to that idea of journey and movement together. (I lost my train of thought here for a second. I'm sorry.)

Randy: Let's reconnect with the notion of inclusiveness being other than other humans, which I have to say when I was thinking about the show and Carolyn and I were talking about it, we were thinking of human communities and you keep reminding us, "No, no, no, it's bigger than that." Why don't we return to that theme? That's a really important theme.

Rich: Mm-hmm. I think when we separate ourselves, we put ourselves - well, we're out of relationship. I don't know how dysfunctional can you get - to separate yourself from your family, your entire family. Your mother, of course, the earth below us, she gives us everything. And then we're surrounded by family and to it – it's just, I don't know, it's a disease of separation. It's the way I look at it for humans to separate themselves from everyone else and to make themselves the most important and the most entitled. And then among those humans, you know, only certain groups of humans are the most important and the most entitled. It's doubling down on a fundamental flaw. That [avoidance of separation] - that should be informing everything we do. Rather, we're going in the opposite direction.

I don't know how else to say it. It just kind of is fundamental to me and it doesn't come natural. You're absolutely right. It doesn't come naturally, because we've been trained otherwise. John Trudell[4] speaks eloquently about that - the mind, how the

[4] John Trudell (1946-2015) was a Santee Sioux indigenous rights activist and poet. https://www.johntrudell.com/biography/

mind been trained and commodified for the services of colonization and everything else. And we need to rethink this. We do have brains as human beings. We have these big things that control us, and we need to put them to good use. Put them to good use. We're - this is our gift, I guess, as humans, these big brains. And, we're squandering it if we're not using them to their best advantage, to understand the reality of things rather than what we've been sold.

Randy: So a few final words from you as a wrap up, if you'd like to leave a message with our listeners?

Rich: Hmm. Well <laugh> a message. Yes. Love one another, get to know your relatives, go for a walk, *alosada kpiwi*[5], go into the woods, meet the family. Recognize that the person next to you is your relative. I constantly run into relations elsewhere; if you're French Canadian somewhere in your heritage, you're going to run into that constantly, my mom's side of the family. And it's just brought that home to me that we are all related and we're all connected and we're all in it together. And this is where we all need to be going. I think that's the entire point. To take, but to give back. Yes.

Carolyn: Yes. I think to close on the comment about giving back really works. Thank you very much, Rich Holshuh, for your contributions to today's program. And thanks also to our earlier guest, Duane Sherwood for his poem and his thoughts. So, Randy?

Randy: I hope this broadcast has given you time and space to reconnect with your roots in Mother Earth and with your ancestral roots as well 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 and 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 randykritkausky.com where you can also find transcripts and supplemental materials for all Indigenous Perspectives shows.

Migwéch for being a listener.

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[5] This Western Abenaki phrase means “let’s walk in the woods”.

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