Resilience:
Examples and Inspiration from our Kin
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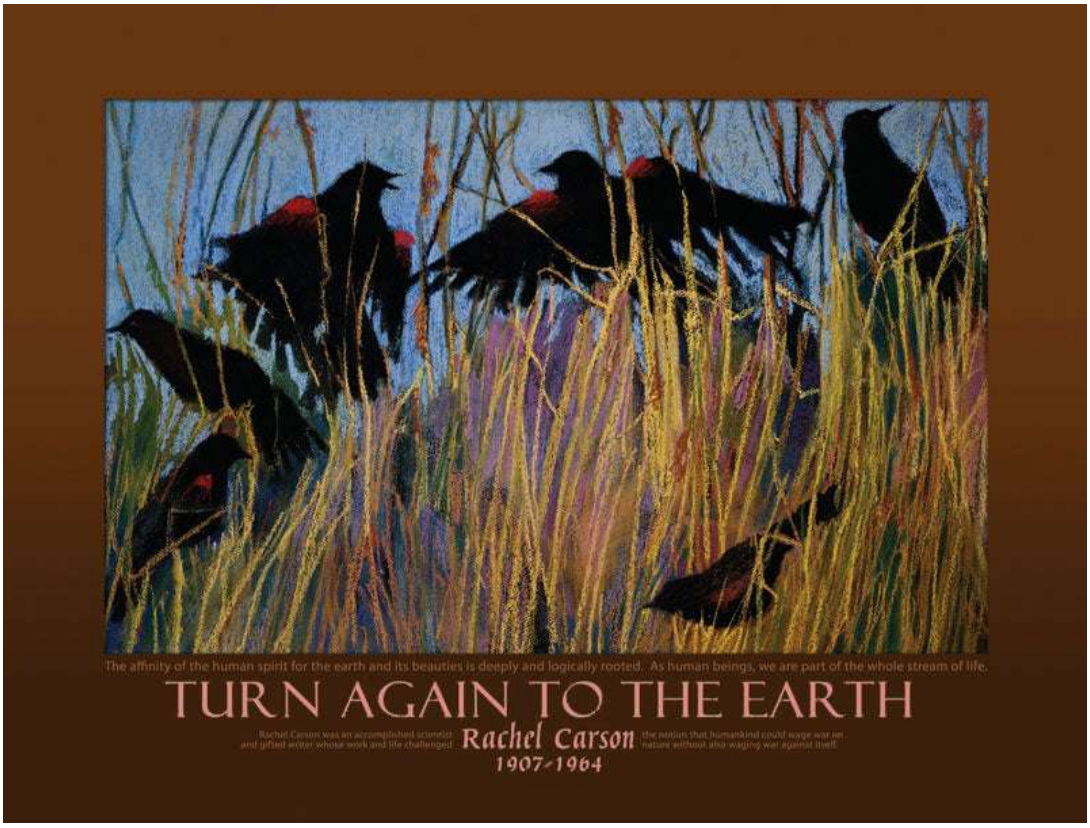

Photo credit: Syracuse Cultural Workers[1]

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 tribal member and co-host of Indigenous Perspectives.

Carolyn Schmidt: And I'm Carolyn Schmidt, the other co-host. In our land acknowledgement, we start by recognizing Vermont, where we are right now,

[1] Syracuse Cultural Workers are featured in Public Service Announcements on the Indigenous Perspectives podcasts. For more information, see www.syracuseculturalworkers.com
For this particular poster, "Turn Again to the Earth", see https://syracuseculturalworkers.com/collections/posters/products/poster-rachel-carson-turn-again-to-the-earth?variant=42380949979333

as part of N'Dakinna, the unceded traditional territory of the Abenaki people who for centuries have lived on the lands now included in present day northern New England and southeastern Canada.

Randy: And we also acknowledge that this is the unceded land of our other-than-human kin: the winged ones, the rooted ones, the four legged ones and the mountains and rivers who have been present on Turtle Island and been partners and caretakers for countless millennia. They were here before any of us two legged arrived, before the Indigenous peoples who came over the Beringian land bridge from Asia more than 15,000 years ago and way before the other two legged arrived more recently.

Carolyn: So for today's program, the theme and the title is "Resilience." We figured this was part of our lives today, and a number of thoughts and experiences we would like to share with you. So Randy's going to start with a specific thing that happened and our thoughts about it, and we'll take it from there.

Randy: So to start with an event in our immediate lives – literally, within almost reach of where we're sitting - is a Lilac Bush. It's maybe 10 years or 15 years old. And suddenly this summer, a blight hit it in the midst of a drought and it looked as if it had died. In fact, we thought that it had. And then a few weeks ago in what is now in Vermont this year, what is known as Indian Summer, a late warm spell in autumn, it went into bloom. Just – not leafage, just bloom. It seemed incredible. But in addition to enjoying the smell, the scent, of the lilacs, we asked, "What is the Lilac Bush telling us? What's the message that Lilac is sending to us?"

And very quickly I think we began to unravel that mystery and realized that the message is about resilience. The bush is saying, "I'm not dead, it's not over. I am resilient. I'm going into blossom and I'm going to be here next year and I'm going to struggle to carry on, and we will see."

But in the meantime, it's just been spiritually uplifting. We have a bouquet of Lilac blossoms on our table. We're enjoying the scent. But more than anything, we're enjoying the message of resilience.

Carolyn: And again, this was particularly appropriate because we were seeing this whole Lilac tree, which was a gift from our daughter many years ago, having this horrible dieback in the summer. And then first tiny little blossoms just on one little tip section toward the top, and then an incredible amount of efflorescent blooming, basically telling us, "Yes, I got knocked down. I got knocked for a loop by this horrible drought combined with whatever blight I got hit with. But I am going to dig deep, draw on strength from my roots, and I am going to assert myself and blossom and think about the next generations as well as myself." So we obviously got a lot of comfort and inspiration from this Lilac.

Randy: So if we're talking about the Lilac as a metaphor for resilience, this raises the question - without getting too much into the weeds - of exactly what is resilience? And what is resilience at this particular moment in our history?

Carolyn: Well, when I checked for the definition of resilience in the dictionary, I was surprised to find that it has the roots - the original definition is actually a mechanical one - it's to be able to spring back after being compressed or put under pressure. In other words, does a substance, especially like a metal or something like that, does it keep its strength, its tensile strength, and assume its original form after being compressed or squashed or whatever it happens to be?

So that has become taken as sort of a metaphor for the ability of living things to recover from damage, change or misfortune. And again, the whole root of it is springing back after being stressed by pressure.

Randy: So this is a theme, a long, long theme in Indigenous history, because like the Lilac, we've been through periods of enormous stress, of enormous dieback, drought, lack of food, and we have struggled to become resilient and to bounce back. So that's one way of connecting with it, my personal way of connecting with it.

But I think on all of our minds this year, at this particular time, this year in United States history, we're all wondering how we will be resilient as we go forward in what is going to be and is a very difficult year politically, socially, and culturally –

Carolyn: - and economically, just every which way. So I see an attempt to look at resilience and to be inspired by the world of nature and the actions of people and groups in the past is a lot of digging deep, finding what matters most to you, and then really concentrating on that. But again, these are easy to say but a little harder to do, and we really feel we need some examples.

Randy: So this theme of resilience has been on the minds of biologists and environmentalists for quite some time, more than three decades. It was raised at the great 1992 gathering in Rio de Janeiro, the first Earth Summit, where there was an agreement made on biodiversity - that one of the outcomes of this famous summit would be that all of the participating nations would work on protecting the biodiversity of the planet, which was endangered and threatened.

Fast forward, Carolyn and I attended the Committee of the Parties, number 15, in other words, the 15th gathering after the Rio Earth Summit, in Montréal

in 2022[2], where at long last the parties, the signatories of this agreement, came to conclusions about what they would do to implement the 1992 agreement. That's a long, long time to wait.

Carolyn: I'll just cut in. This agreement was driven by the importance of protecting the varieties of life here on earth, protecting biodiversity, which also means figuring out ways to protect the habitats within which we all live.

Randy: Things do progress slowly at the international level. After 30 years, in Montréal two years ago, the Committee of the Parties, the participating nation signatories, agreed that they would set an objective and have a concrete plan for protecting 30% of the biodiversity on the planet by the year 2030 - eight short years after the meeting in Montréal. And by 2050, they would all agree to protect 50% of the biodiversity on the planet by 2050.

Now, this is an international agreement. These agreements tend to be aspirational. Sometimes they don't get much beyond the aspirational announcement and all the fanfare, but it was a hopeful moment, and Carolyn and I were there, not inside the building, but outside the building in the streets with people from all over the world supporting this. Basically saying, let's figure out how to move this forward.

So here we are in Vermont, a few hundred miles south of Montréal, in 2024, and the state of Vermont has taken this very agreement and these very objectives of protecting 30% of biodiversity by 2030 and passed a state law. The state law is called - it's rather long and wordy - the Vermont Community Resiliency and Biodiversity Protection Act, or 30 by 30 bill. And the goal, again, is to protect within Vermont, a very green state already, 30% of the natural places so as to promote biodiversity. So now we've gone from the global aspirational level to the state aspirational level, but also with implementation plans and expectations of getting funding to actually begin to accomplish something.

[2] Our podcast "Land Back and Rematriation: Issues and Controversies" was inspired by our experiences at the COP 15 Biodiversity Summit in Montréal: https://www.ecologia.org/news/25.LandBack.pdf

But we're still quite a ways away from actually supporting the resiliency of many, many creatures, many living beings like our Lilac Bush who are struggling to hang on, struggling to hang in there and to recover.

So how is this impacting us in our household? We are trying to - as Indigenous advocates - work with the state to put a moral imperative behind the political mandate. We were invited along with other Indigenous stakeholders in Vermont to comment on the act and to comment on how it might be implemented.

And in a moment of great optimism, I wrote a letter to the agency implementing this in Vermont and said, "Hey, how about if Indigenous people provide moral and ethical leadership on how to get there, as opposed to go through the motions of coming up with bureaucratic plans?"

I expected that I would be ignored. Quite the opposite, my letter was greeted enthusiastically. They posted it on their website as the first important feedback from the public; they embraced it. And as the state official working on this told me, "We expect that you may help to keep us" quote, "honest."

It blew me away because a state official - someone that you might categorize as a bureaucrat - was basically saying, "We understand that things don't move forward without moral and ethical drivers." That was wonderfully shocking.

What was more shocking was another story of resilience that happened in Vermont at the same time. People across the entire globe were reading newspapers about this mountainous green little state in the northeastern United States being devastated by floods. A series of freak rainstorms impacted Vermont, which is very mountainous, flooded our towns and villages absolutely obliterated the main street in our state capital Montpelier. And a year later to the very day, another "100 year flood" hit the same town, the same area and had the same impact,

Carolyn: And it also hit some other places that had been spared before. So the message was that nobody was safe.

Randy: So a week later when people are saying, "When is this going to end?" another storm hit - exact same kind of storm a week after the anniversary flood of the first flood! So the topic of resiliency was on people's minds.

Carolyn: And working with the rivers, how to deal with these huge amounts of water - it just sort of feels like buckets being poured down from the skies. And so there's a lot more attention being paid now to working with the rivers, allowing them to flow more freely, release the wetlands, get rid of dams - a

whole lot of looking at ways that people can cooperate with the natural world to minimize this kind of severe flooding.

Randy: So those were the kinds of semi practical strategic rethinks that we were seeing featured in the newspaper right along. Next to stories about this is a very classic Vermont license plate cover "build back stronger". In other words, "Do the same thing over again. We're not going to be defeated by these rains and floods. We're tough. We can push back on and not be overcome by the forces of nature."

Well, as my state bureaucrat colleague who said "keep us honest," admitted to me after the second round of floods, he and his family had trouble getting to sleep thinking that the next one and the next one and the next one were coming. And to use the word he used, this is traumatizing. "We're suffering from post-traumatic stress syndrome. Every time there's a thunder clap and a gray cloud wondering, are we going to be flooded out again?"

And he said, "How did I get to sleep last night?" He said, "I picked up Robin Wall Kimmerer's *Braiding Sweetgrass*[3], and I found consolation and inspiration in her stories of healing with Mother Nature, and of resiliency.

That's when I realized that people at all levels, including in government, were going to start listening to an Indigenous message about how to carry on - not just to do the same old things over again, but to figure out new ways of moving forward.

So here we are, an Indigenous population in Vermont, a very small Indigenous population, being given the historic opportunity of being the ethical, moral leadership and compass on implementing a plan to get to 30% of our land preserved so as to promote biodiversity. Not just to go through the motions, not just to have a checklist and then have an announcement that we've done it, but to actually do it, to actually listen to the feedback we're getting from the natural world. It has been an astounding, encouraging, hopeful message of resiliency from the human population of not just doing the same old stuff over, but doing things in a new way with a new perspective.

Carolyn: Yes, and I'll say also with thinking about resilience, being aware it's a quality and a strength that's called forward only when you're under pressure, only when you're under threat. And this is where someone from a mainstream background like me - who's had it pretty easy in life in comparison to many other peoples and groups - where we need to look to and look for our own

[3] Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass*. Minneapolis Minnesota: Milkweed Editions,, 2013.

strength in the stories and the experiences of people who have had to develop the kind of courage, the kind of grit, the kind of determination and the kind of taking the long view so they don't give up with setbacks. It's something that I'm consciously working on learning from other people as well as from the natural world.

Randy: So what this means in concrete terms in Vermont is instead of building your house right back on the shore of the rivers and the bottom of a valley where there's going to be flooding, state and township officials are now doing things that are radical, such as buying people out of their properties, turning riversides into floodplains and relocating people. This is getting pretty serious about working with Mother Nature instead of against Mother Nature, and changing human behavior in radical forms.

That is what resiliency is about. That is what Indigenous people had to engage in for centuries when they were relocated - very often forcibly - from their homelands and lived on unfamiliar territory. They had to learn how to adapt to those new circumstances. So when people ask me, what can you tell us about resiliency in the midst of great threats of environmental catastrophe or blights like my Lilac Bush, my answer to them is: been there, done that. It's doable, it's painful, it can be costly, but it's doable. And that's what Lilac Bush was telling us a few weeks ago when it went into bloom. We can go into the depths of great trauma and we can come out the other side and figure out a way of moving forward. That's resiliency.

Carolyn: And one thing that I keep getting also is a sense that you look for allies, you look for support. You don't let yourself feel isolated, alone, cynical, depressed, giving up, hopeless. And that's an important way of trying to make connections and respond and hear messages from others as well.

Randy: And that's the theme that's going to be discussed in the next segment. Stay tuned.

Segment Two

Carolyn: Welcome back to Indigenous Perspectives, our show on Resilience. This is Segment Two, and we're going to start off with a story of another plant and what its message was to us.

Randy: We often talk on these podcasts about learning to listen to what Mother Nature and our other-than-human kin are showing or telling us. And as we keep saying, listening doesn't mean necessarily hearing, it means seeing, feeling, touching, and most importantly, connecting on a spiritual level

to sometimes silent messages that are given to us. So we started the previous segment with the story about Lilac.

This time we start with a story about Hummingbird Plant[4]. It's actually called a “firecracker plant”, sometimes a “cigar plant” because it looks like a little cigar with a bright flame at the end. It's a plant that is native to Mexico, grows in greenhouses here. And I found one when I asked the greenhouse owner, “Do you have anything that will attract hummingbirds?” And she said, “Oh, here, this is a Hummingbird Plant.” So we brought it home and we put it on the front porch.

Rufous Hummingbird Pauses from Flight[5]

And sure enough, very quickly hummingbirds found it and they were able with their long proboscises to stick it down the tubule and collect the nectar, and they would come around it over and over and over again, and they preferred it to the sugar and water in our hummingbird feeder. So we enjoyed this all summer long; many hummingbirds came, little hummingbirds came, and we began to identify the different hummingbirds. And then the cold weather approached. And then one morning the hummingbirds left and were gone.

[4] Flame Acanthus

[5] Photo credit: Menke Dave, USFWS https://pixnio.com/fauna-animals/birds/hummingbirds-pictures/rufous-hummingbird-pauses-from-flight# Creative Commons License CC0

Carolyn: I hadn't even thought about it before, but we've been watching the hummingbirds quite carefully. And they migrate to warmer climates. They go quite some distance, they migrate on their own, each one individually. They don't form a huge group or kettle like the broad-winged hawks do. But as it got colder, they moved on. And so we were feeling quite bereft.

Randy: And we were wondering, what's going to happen to Hummingbird Plant? Does it need hummingbirds to stimulate it to grow more flowers? Because after the hummingbirds left, the plant kept growing and then Carolyn and I both noticed bees, wasps, hornets swarming around the hummingbird plant.

Carolyn: Large insects, little insects. They hadn't been around when the hummingbirds were there. But the hummingbirds departed, and gradually this whole sort of flying insect group started showing up. And at first we thought, what are they doing? And then Randy's theory was that they were just frustrated, because they were circling around, they could smell the nectar, but there's no way they could reach it, and that they were just feeling frustrated and I was feeling bad because we don't want it to be frustrating them. But -

Randy: - and they're going into winter, this is Indian summer here now *[and]* we don't always have it. And here they are at the critical moments of gathering up their strength and food for the winter, wasting their time on a plant that isn't going to nourish them. So I went out and I looked at the hornets and the wasps and I noticed what they were doing. They were chewing through the tubules on the blossoms and accessing the nectar at the bottom of the tubule. After they did that, moths, flies, all kinds of insects came and gathered the nectar from the nourishing plant.

Carolyn: And the interesting thing is you couldn't see it unless you got really close up, because they didn't break the long tubules off, they just ate these little holes in them. And that was enough for the insects to reach in and get some life sustaining nectar.

Randy: So as we've been saying on the show - and trying to tell ourselves - sometimes we have to see, listen very, very carefully, get down on your hands and knees, as Robin Wall Kimmerer says in *Gathering Moss*[6], and look very closely at the small living forms. So here we are learning something from the

[6] Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Gathering Moss: A Natural and Cultural History of Mosses*. Corvallis, Oregon: Oregon State University Press, 2003.

Hummingbird Plant and the insects around it. The question again, like with the Lilac, is "What's the message?" And here was the message: working cooperatively, we can nourish one another. One group of us will open up the blossom, others will benefit.

Carolyn: Oh, and I just have to mention also their flexibility, which is an important part of resilience. They didn't - neither the hummingbirds nor the insects and wasps and bees - they didn't turn up their noses or their beaks or their proboscises because it was not a native plant. It was there. And they engaged with it.

Randy: So in a like manner, to carry this metaphor forward, going back to what we were talking about in the previous segment, working on Vermont's new biodiversity law, we have decided that we would benefit - we humans., the two-legged in Vermont - would benefit from forming alliances as the bees, wasps and moths on our Hummingbird Plant. And we have created a Coalition of Vermont Indigenous Communities and Allies to work on promoting the Vermont Biodiversity Act.

But more than just that, we've taken this new human social cooperation organization and gone to the U.S. Forest Service with a request. Our U.S. Forest Service manages huge tracks of national forest here in Vermont, and they are in the midst of making decisions about whether to selectively harvest timber from these forests.

Their plan is to cut down the mature large trees because it's very, very profitable for the timber industry. And they argue that by cutting down the big trees, it will promote the growth of more small trees and actually benefit the forest. However, as Indigenous people, our question immediately was, "Wait, you want to promote the growth of big trees? So you're cutting down the mature trees which are about to become big trees? This is promoting forest growth?!"

We are now as Indigenous people saying, "Whoa, whoa, whoa! , That sounds like a settler's exploitation of the natural environment. It isn't really benefiting the forest ecosystem, it's benefiting the timber industry."

So our little coalition of bees and wasps and hornets and Indigenous people and other than living kin, are organizing to try to protect our forest so that it may be resilient and show us - like the Hummingbird Plant and the Lilac - how it knows its own best way forward to survival in this very, very threatening environment in which we all now find ourselves.

Carolyn: And we formed this Vermont coalition of Indigenous Communities and Allies; to the best of our knowledge, it's the first time ever in the history of Vermont that the four Abenaki tribes –bands - have joined together with non-Abenaki - Randy's a Potawatomi - and with non-Indigenous people - including me, I'm one of the Allies. Saying we are going to work together guided by the Indigenous wisdom, but we're going to work together because we share a common heritage, a common future, common concerns for all of our kin. And what really triggered this was the Forest Service plans for a massive amount of logging of mature forests and old growth forests in protected land of Vermont.

Randy: And all of that is informed by our Indigenous Peoples' ability to read the messages of resiliency sent by Mother Earth and our other-than-human kin.

Carolyn: Stay tuned for Segment Three. We'll take a short break.

Segment Three

Carolyn: Welcome back to the third segment of our Indigenous Perspectives show on resilience. And Randy, pick it up with resilience in the human communities in Vermont.

Randy: So listening to this podcast, one might assume that we're a small group of people working with some bureaucrats and a state agency and the U.S. Forest Service, which is a big bureaucratic agency. But you might ask the question, how is this playing out, or is it playing out, in the general population?

And that is the even more encouraging message we bring to you in this podcast, which is that people in churches, community organizations, schools, are all desperately hungry for stories of resilience and healing.

I have constantly been asked to come and speak to a group and tell Indigenous stories of healing and resilience, tell the stories that I write about in my book - not about Hummingbird Plant, that's new - but older stories that I have experienced and Carolyn and I have shared about Mother Nature and our other-than- human kin sending us examples of how to heal together.

Now, I think the desperation – I mean, that is the actual perfect word to describe the political zeitgeist or spirit of the times at the end of 2024 in the United States - there is a desperate hunger for stories of hope. Not naive

hope disconnected from reality, but hope rooted in reality of people who have lived through it and are coming out the other side.

So we're meeting with the church groups and they are anxious; they are deeply appreciative to be engaged with Indigenous people who can give them an alternative to what is the dominant culture of a European anthropocentric view of nature as something to be dominated and exploited until it collapses and then you try to fix the problem.

Pioneer plants taking root on a lava flow[7]

So we are riding high on a tide of great interest in things Indigenous, particularly Indigenous spirituality, because people intuitively sense, as we have discussed in this podcast, that if they can learn to listen, see, feel on a spiritual as well as an observational level, the examples of healing, they too can go down this path.

Carolyn: And it seems that Randy's story of talking with the elderberry bush - every time he tells that story, you see the audience just electrified and relieved to know that there's a sort of a silly selfish way that's easy to fall into, but

7. Pioneer plants have already taken root on a lava flow from the 2007 eruption of Piton de la Fournaise. Image credit: MarySloA on Flickr (CC BY-NC-ND 2.0). https://geobites.org/pioneering-plants-tell-us-when-volcanoes-last-erupted/

there's also a really important message of a way forward. Can you tell that story again? I think it's well worth telling again.

Randy: Yes. I do not tire of telling it and I don't think people tire of hearing it. You might've heard it once before on this podcast, but here it goes. The Canadian Broadcast Corporation, which is their equivalent of public radio, public television combined, has multiple - not one - programs on Indigenous values and arts and music. And one of the journalists, an Indigenous person, interviewed Robin Wall Kimmerer on her book, *Braiding Sweetgrass*. And it was a lovely interview and she got to the end of the interview and she said, "Robin, I was so moved by your book that I went out to the garden and I sat down next to the elderberry bush and I decided I would have a conversation with it. And I started talking to it and it didn't say anything and I felt like an idiot."

Well, there was this long silence from Robin; she didn't know what to say. I can imagine what she was thinking. "Do I tell this journalist, did you expect it to talk to you in English out loud? Or maybe you should learn Elderberry?" At this point, when I tell this story, the audience just begins to laugh. But what they're really doing is they're laughing at themselves. We're all laughing at ourselves, and we need to get that distance on ourselves in order to understand how far we need to go to appreciate and thoroughly understand an Indigenous consciousness, which allows us to quote, listen to the elderberry bush.

It's kind of like listening to the Lilac. The Lilac did not tell Carolyn and me, " Look, I'm showing you an example of resilience." No, we had to take time to reflect and understand the spiritual message that the Lilac was silently delivering to us. And this is what audiences want to know. This is what people across the face of the globe right now want to know.

How can we listen to the lessons of Mother Nature? It's what the bureaucrat in the state of Vermont who's in charge of implementing the 30 by 30 biodiversity law is asking how can we learn to listen to what Mother Nature is telling us about how to get there? Because obviously what we've been doing for decades isn't working. We need something more. Not that we need to throw overboard what we've been doing, but we need to do more. And what we're trying to do is get the forest service to say, "What we've been doing hasn't been working perfectly. What can we do that is more, what can we do together?" And the message keeps coming out. Learn to listen to what Mother

Nature is giving you as feedback on what you have been doing and why much of it isn't working.

hands holding a plant[8]

Carolyn: Yes. I have a couple of points of reflection on this. One is that I feel strongly that I've learned enough humility coming about interacting with the world of nature. I don't necessarily think that the Lilac Bush was communicating to me or to us. The Lilac Bush is being a lilac bush. It is giving a message, but we have to be receiving it. Communication always has to be two ways.

And I feel also that an important way that this awareness carries over is affirming that there are more important things in life and in the natural world than getting the economic best value out of a land or a resource, whether it's timber or deer or metals, minerals, whatever. You have to keep affirming there's something more valuable. And that is hard.

Randy: It's a real challenge to the political economic structures that are out there shaping government policies. And that is where the tale here hangs. And we'll pick up that message in the final segment.

Carolyn: Stay tuned.

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[8] hands holding a plant © truthseeker08 is licensed under a CC0 (Creative Commons Zero) licensehttps://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/domesticviolenceinimmigrantcommunities/chapter/humanitarian-and-compassionate-application/

Segment Four

Carolyn: Welcome back to the last segment of our Indigenous perspective show on resilience. And we're picking up the working with the US Forest Service and concepts of resilience and learning from nature. So, Randy?

Randy: Okay, so we've been talking about the inspiration we get from the natural world and the direction, the moral direction that we get from our other than living - other than human kin.

But let's talk about the nitty gritty here, which is that getting to resiliency for ecosystems means that we must challenge the political and economic interests that lie behind current policies.

Let me get very, very specific. The U.S. Forest Service, some of you might think has a primary responsibility to protect the forest. Actually, their mission is quite clear and they're quite open about the fact that their mission isn't just to protect and enhance the wellbeing of the forest. It's to manage the forest for the timber industry, maximize board foot output, and to maintain recreational trails through the forest.

And all of these objectives collide with one another. You can't cut down massive tracts of old growth forest, as is being planned here in Vermont, and claim that it's benefiting the wellbeing of the forest. Not to mention all of the creatures who live in those mature stands of timber, who will now be deprived of their homes. Not to mention the soil that will be degraded and washed down the mountainsides at a rapid rate into our valleys and increase the flooding we're experiencing.

So how do we break this cycle? How do we actually get to resilience? How do we actually get policymakers - who for decades have served economic interests which have been far more effective articulating their needs than we Indigenous people have been articulating the needs of the forest? We are the forest guardians. The forest service is not the forest guardians, they are the forest maximizers for –

Carolyn: managers -

Randy: - managers, that's the term they use. Yes. So we need to challenge the fundamental assumptions of state and federal agencies that put economic interest and value monetizing natural resources above the wellbeing of the resources because the time has come when doing that - making living systems monetizable commodities - is coming back to bite us in the backside, to flood

us and to blight us. And that is the moment of awakening. The hard work begins now.

Carolyn: So you're also talking about changing people's consciousness and their sense of connection with the natural world on a very fundamental level. Because it's switching away from looking at the trees, the bushes, the animals, the earth, the rivers and streams as things we can control and use for our own benefit. to respecting them for themselves. That's a huge leap. And we don't have much societal support for it.

Randy: No. In fact, there's a great deal pushing back against what Indigenous people would advocate, which is the wellbeing of the overall ecosystem. Give you an example, to go back to the 30 by 30 biodiversity legislation. Vermont recently did an inventory on conserved lands and they included all farmland in Vermont because it's not developed.

On one level, there's some logic in that - it's better to have it not developed, covered with subdivisions, than it is to be paved over with streets and driveways. But is a cornfield promoting biodiversity when it's sprayed with herbicide, and butterflies and other living creatures aren't there? We're challenging that assumption. And the Ag industry is very, very much concerned because they want to get credit, including monetary gains from carbon credits for not developing the land.

But a half a step toward biodiversity is not a full step toward biodiversity and it won't get us to resiliency. So Indigenous people are having to pit our values against the values of economic interests and it's going to be an interesting and contentious, but we hope respectful debate moving forward.

So we want to leave you with a positive and hopeful message. But we don't want to leave you with a simplistic, naive message which is Indigenous people just need to wave a wand and transform the consciousness of the public or policymakers and decision makers. Or to quote my colleague who's working on biodiversity in the state agency, we can't just "keep them honest" with our utterances. We need to unite, as our coalition is doing, and we need people like our listeners to unite with other people, Indigenous and non-Indigenous wherever they live, to form a unified front to be guardians and advocates of the natural environment. That's how we will get to resiliency and move forward.

Carolyn: Okay. I'll just say that in this area and in other parts of the country, there's a movement called the Pollinator Pathway[9] and people on their own land, however small it might be, work to allow and encourage native plants to grow that will provide food for the migrating butterflies, bees and so forth. And it's gotten a lot of strength, it's getting a lot of traction. And it's the whole idea. It's this idea of your proximate moral responsibility, what you can do within your own life. And this is a powerful thought. It's not the whole solution, but to me it's part of resilience - seeing how you can spring back.

Randy: Yes. The other night when we made a presentation to a church, a woman who was very involved in this project asked if this is meaningful and important. It's very small; I think they have a half acre around their house. And I said, it's terribly important because it is instructing your neighbors, your family members and children in how to listen and engage, which is how we get to resiliency.

Carolyn: And it's also trying to spread so it becomes a true pathway. In other words, they can link and connect together. And then that has a lot of transformative possibilities as well.

Randy: So in conclusion, we hope this broadcast has given you time and space to reconnect with your roots in Mother Earth and your ancestral roots. Before your busy day distracts you from this moment, we encourage you to reach out and feel the presence of living flora and fauna, our animate kin, and perhaps even that of your ancestors and others who have walked on. Allow yourself to touch their presence, capture that moment and hold onto it.

Carolyn: And if you wish, write to Randy. Let him know about your own experiences or with any questions or suggestions you have for these shows. Randy can be reached at his email, randykritkausky@hushmail.com, or through his website, which is www.randykritkausky.com

Migwetch.

Randy: Migwetch. Thank you.

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[9] https://www.pollinator-pathway.org/ Pollinator Pathways are public and private pesticide-free corridors of native plants that provide nutrition and habitat for pollinating insects and birds.

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