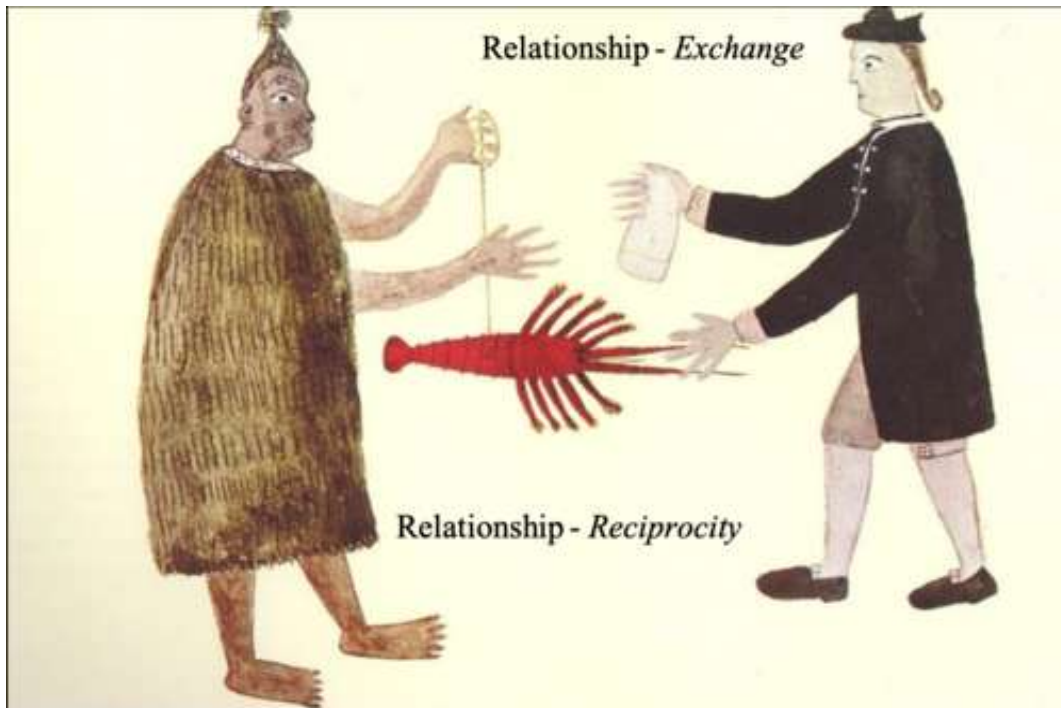


Reciprocity and Gratitude: Beyond the Words

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*A Māori man and a British man exchanging a crayfish for a piece of cloth.
Drawing by Tupaia, c. 1769 ¹*

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 we're located on lands that the Abenaki people call N'dakinna. This is the unceded traditional territory of the Abenaki, who for thousands of years have been stewards of the lands found here and across the border in Québec province in Canada.

¹British Library, Public Domain <https://www.dignifiedpacific.com/about-reciprocity>

Today's show is titled "Reciprocity and Gratitude: Beyond the Words." We're going to examine how the meaning of these two terms, reciprocity and gratitude, have changed since the European settlers of North America first celebrated a harvest festival in 1621. We will explore the differences between the cultural concepts of reciprocity and gratitude in European and colonial society on the one hand and Native American communities on the other. We'll examine why people in mainstream society have become increasingly interested in Indigenous versions of reciprocity and gratitude. And finally, we will point to practical steps that members of mainstream society can take to incorporate some of the wisdom of Indigenous culture into the ways we give thanks and reciprocate for the bounty we receive and the communities in which we live.

So, Randy, how do you see the meaning of these concepts changing over time?

Randy: Well, to begin, the very obvious change and difference is comparing the meaning of and sense of bounty and gratitude evident in a 17th century Pilgrim colony and in the surrounding Native American communities, with what many, but sadly not all of us across the United States are enjoying today. Typically, we are sitting down to a table with an overabundance of food purchased from a supermarket with minimal labor input. Most of us will consume food that we did not and cannot produce. By contrast, both the English settlers and Native Americans who celebrated a Harvest feast in 1621 produced their food with enormous effort and input of labor.

Carolyn: So the Wampanoag Indians and the Pilgrims shared a common understanding of how nature's bounty came to them and what gratitude they wanted to express?

Randy: No, actually the two peoples engaged in the same type of harvest celebration and exhibited vastly different views of how and why nature's bounty came to them and what they needed to do to ensure that such bounty continued.

For the Pilgrims, the bounty on their harvest table was a God-given right. And it was a benefit they enjoyed and that they could reap without limit because they were

uniquely spiritually endowed. God placed the resources of North America before them and those resources were there for the taking, just waiting to be developed and saved from their unexploited state and wasteful neglect. That attitude is still present in mainstream culture.

Indigenous people had an entirely different world view. The resources of the Earth, including those that Native Americans extracted through agriculture, hunting and fishing, were seen as gifts and as part of a reciprocal caring relationship that required humans to limit their taking and also required them to protect the natural world that offered up these gifts. This is where “reciprocity” appears in Indigenous culture.

Carolyn: OK, I guess you’ve made the point that in 1621 for the so-called “First Thanksgiving”, these two world views were present in the participating groups, side by side. But to what extent are those 17th century world views still shaping our own behavior?

Randy: Well, this is where the story gets a bit interesting. Let me explain that the early European colonist view from centuries ago - looking at nature as a resource of little or no value, if it's not exploited - has not gone away and has not subsided. As we discussed on our very first program ever in these podcasts, when you talked about reading an editorial from The Wall Street Journal at our family Thanksgiving celebration, this major global newspaper for 60 years has published an editorial every Thanksgiving. And part of that editorial makes it very clear that this was a , quote “desolate wilderness”, populated by wild men, savages. And that the resources that were here weren't properly utilized, and it was only the industry and investment of human energy and capital that came with the colonists that made those useless or valuable resources into something valuable. So when I asked a year ago the Wall Street Journal to stop publishing this article, I was astounded to wake up on the morning before Thanksgiving and find my email inbox full of hate mail. Because the Wall Street Journal had outed my name in the editorial before they published the 60th version [00:06:00] of their editorial, and claimed that I was trying to erase American history.

I was amazed, for example, one of the letters that were written to me was from someone who had worked in the American fertilizer industry, and he made the astounding statement that Native Americans were an evolutionary dead end because we didn't invent and use industrially made fertilizer, which is what he did for a living. Just to give you one example of how sensitive people alive today are, and how aligned they are behind the 17th century notion that those who exploit nature have a God-given right to it because they're exploiting it. And those who want to protect it and leave it alone, in a sense abandon all rights to it.

Carolyn: I've got to just interject here. You made me think of the way we use the words "developed" or "undeveloped". Undeveloped land is land in its natural state. People haven't come in with bulldozers or backhoes or chainsaws or whatever to quote unquote develop it and extract its products one way or the other for human use. So it is a little discouraging.

Randy: Exactly. You've articulated it. And in the early days of our nation's founding, legal scholars and moral philosophers both repeated the claim over and over, that Indigenous people had no right to the land because they didn't use it properly.

But to move on. As to the Indigenous worldview of nature and the practice of reciprocity and gratitude in the 17th century, those attitudes have persisted, having survived attempts at cultural erasure such as residential schools, as we discussed on another podcast. Miraculously, these values have survived, and in some ways, they are being reinvigorated today. So what we're faced with now, as in the 17th century, is the fact that we have two widely varying views of interacting with the natural world, existing side by side. And to a considerable degree, mainstream society is appropriating and transforming Indigenous values once again. This time by reducing reciprocity to a kind of gift exchange.

Carolyn: Well, as the mainstream society participant on this show, I have to say I grew up with the idea that you need to return a gift in some way, perhaps just expressing gratitude, saying thank you. Or else by giving that person a gift of similar monetary value sometime in the future. But the idea was that this is an exchange with a beginning and an ending. On the other hand, the Indigenous viewpoint of gift giving seems to be more a part of establishing and maintaining an

ongoing relationship of mutual respect. So giving, expressing gratitude, and returning the gift in some way are ongoing ways that different Indigenous communities weave their lives together. Randy, what do you think about that?

Randy: Well, I think this is a point that we're going to be exploring over and over on this program from many different perspectives. And the listener may say, "Gee, I've heard that several times." But what we're discovering as we interact with our colleagues and as we read, you know, very learned and serious examinations of reciprocity and gratitude in the various forms of media, there's a great deal of confusion about it still. So, I would like you to give an example of how this wonderful notion of gratitude has become diluted - with good intentions - in the mainstream.

Carolyn: Well, I sort of freaked out a couple days ago when I was having preparing for this show on my mind and I got in my personal email, one of those promo emails from book sellers. And it was, you know, "Timely Books about Gratitude - Special Sale" or something like that. So, okay, I took a look and I really freaked; I couldn't have made it up. I thought, was I overreacting? But I don't think so. Anyway, I'll just read a couple of the titles and then Randy, you can give your comments or whatever.

The first one featured: *"Gratitude is My Superpower, A Children's Book About Giving Thanks and Practicing Positivity."* Then *"Grateful, The Transformative Power of Giving Thanks."* Also, *"The Little Book of Gratitude - Create a Life of Happiness and Wellbeing by Giving Thanks;"* *"A Thankful Book for Kids - Giving Thanks, Helping others, Feeling Grateful;"* *"Living in Gratitude - Mastering the Art of Giving Thanks Every Day, A Month by Month Guide."*

Okay, it - it seemed to me, I'm trying not to freak this time reading it, but it seemed to me that this is just taking the idea of gratitude and saying, how can I learn to practice this so it will make me feel better? It's so incredibly selfish and inwardly self-centered. So I guess I am sort of beyond words on this.

Randy: So, we, we bring these examples up, not to discourage listeners from thinking, oh my gosh, you know, I read one of those books, or I bought one of those books, you know, am I going down the wrong path? Carolyn and I have both

struggled for quite a long time to get our arms around these concepts. And the reason is that we are also products of a mainstream culture that wants quick fixes, wants simple fixes, very often superficial fixes. So we're not trying to put gratitude and reciprocity on some kind of pedestal where only Native Americans can actually practice it, and make it inaccessible to you our listener. We're trying to contrast what is currently available and offered with what we might begin to strive for. So let me - let me just give another example, sort of in the spirit of what Carolyn is saying.

You know, our culture has a remarkable ability to take deep thoughts, spiritual traditions and philosophies, and reduce them to kind of recipes. You know, one of the great examples is corporations that are building little retreat rooms in their corporate headquarters where people work 16 hour days and they're encouraged to go and take a nap, sit by the electric powered waterfall, listen to nature sounds piped in, refresh, and get back to work. You know, these are the kinds of simplistic and shallow approaches to spiritual transformation that should be a warning sign for those of us who are trying to figure out, so how do I practice gratitude? How do I exhibit reciprocity?

Carolyn: Well, okay, that's - those are certainly sort of painful reminders to me. So, okay, I'll admit, reciprocity and gratitude are gaining traction in the growing segment of the population that's now concerned about environmental sustainability. That's where we see these words used a lot. Randy, why there - connecting people and the environment - and why now?

Randy: Well, this is really getting to the heart of the issue, I think. And the reason, I believe - and we've both worked for decades now on environmental issues - is that the environment, Mother Earth, has a way of exhibiting feedback loops, exposing us to effects of neglect, and we can't ignore them. So we're a bit, let's say, concerned and some of us almost obsessed with climate change and weather patterns and forest fires, and we're asking the question, what did we do? How can we fix it? Is it because we haven't been treating nature properly? So, I think that's the reason that this notion of shifting our mindset toward a more Indigenous perspective, which we imagine somewhat correctly is more sensitive to nurturing nature - that that will be a step toward healing the planet.

So one of the leading edges of this thinking is the work that Robin Wall Kimmerer has done, for example, in her wonderful book, *Braiding Sweetgrass*, where she discusses reciprocity and gratitude from a variety of different viewpoints. Or to get more to the point of what we're discussing here today, the article that she wrote called "What Does the Earth Ask Of Us?" <https://humansandnature.org/earth-ethic-robin-kimmerer/> We'll have a link to that in our podcast transcript for anyone who wants to see the article. It's very brief, it's wonderful. It asks the question of when you receive a gift from Mother Earth, how do you respond? How do you reciprocate? And as we're going to examine in the next segments of the show, it triggers part of our monetary economy, monetary mentality, and predisposes us to start making calculations to pay back, return the gift, and settle the account.

Carolyn: Well, my - my key memory of the very moving sections of *Braiding Sweetgrass* is the idea of you need to open yourself to be very thankful and to be consciously thankful when you - the first example is picking strawberries, and you know, you're thankful for the plant, you're conscious of it. So that's a first step, and it's a really important first step I think, that nobody can skip. But the good question is, how do we go from there? Because my feeling thankful when I pick some strawberries isn't going to make any physical difference to the soil or the air or the water quality or anything like that.

Randy: So Robin has asked the question very gently and very poetically. The problem is not with asking the question or the way Robin did it. The fact that she can phrase these very, very transformative questions in ways that are not intimidating, is to her great credit. The problem is with the ears of the people and the culture who hear it and want a simplistic, quick fix answer. And that's what I think we're going to explore in the second part.

Carolyn: Okay. So the question is, how do we dig deeper and truly understand what Native Americans mean by reciprocity and gratitude? And how can we use this as a way to act differently? So we'll pick this up in Segment Two. You're listening to Indigenous Perspectives.

Segment Two

Carolyn: Welcome back. You're listening to Indigenous Perspectives, our show on reciprocity and gratitude. We concluded the first segment of the program by noticing that reciprocity and gratitude are now increasingly identified as values in Native American culture. And that many in the mainstream now want to incorporate those notions into our thinking and behavior. So, can people who are not Indigenous borrow or appropriate these concepts, and ceremonies and practices associated with them, and sort of graft them onto existing mainstream cultural practices?

Randy: Well, the answer is they are, for good and for bad. And we'll make a distinction here in answering this between appropriating, which is just basically stealing and mechanically copying, and borrowing and finding inspiration and embedding something new within your own culture. So I think before we explore how to take well-known examples of Native reciprocity ceremonies and activities, I think we need to explore what reciprocity is, and what gratitude is. Because they have become stand-alone concepts and ideas, and we, including historians, ethnographers, anthropologists, Native Americans and advocates, talk about these two cultural values as if they just hang out there by themselves. And the fact of the matter is that these values were so deeply embedded in and part of Indigenous culture that it's hard, I would say almost impossible to understand them without putting them back in the context. Let me give you a metaphor.

Think of a Navajo Indian rug weaver. That they're at a loom, and I think many of us have seen these photographs, and the loom has threads going vertically. They're cotton threads. That's the warp thread. It's in a sense, the deep structure of the rug that's going to hold the rug in place. And what the weaver does is the weaver makes a unique, beautifully articulated pattern, weaving in colorful pieces of wool, just like every Indigenous culture has its own variations and its own beauty, each rug is different.

So what I'm saying here is that reciprocity and gratitude are structural features like the warp threads of a rug, and then they are overlaid - over-woven, if you wish - with local and regional variations. The problem is trying to pick out after the fact, one of those colorful threads, let's say, a particular unique tribal practice of reciprocity and gratitude and saying, "Oh, I'm going to do that." That doesn't work

because it's torn out of the context. It's no more Indigenous than pulling a thread out of a rug and saying, "Gee, now I've got an indigenous rug in my hand."

Carolyn: Okay, that's a - I really like that image; it really works. Although it does make the whole idea of understanding a new culture quite daunting. One thing I was thinking was how important I've had to realize is the art of listening to figure out what the other needs or wants. The "other" could be other people, or it could be our non-human kin. But as I was growing up in New York City, there's a lot of pressure on my speaking - how I could speak, explain myself, stick up for myself, advocate for myself, all this kind of thing. And I have to say, I never got much modeling or instruction on the art of listening, which keeps coming across to me as an important feature of Indigenous cultures. So I guess part of what you do is you need to listen as a first step to find out - try to understand what the others want.

Randy: Yes. And indeed, as we have discussed many times on our show, one of the great lessons, one of the great challenges of Indigenous culture, is learning how to listen like Indigenous people. And then, and only then, can we actually answer the question that Robin Wall Kimmerer asked, which is, what is Mother Earth asking of us? Because we don't give the answer; the Earth does. And very often the listening in the broadest sense of the word, we could say it really is a stand-in for being tuned in or connected with nature. And, the listening is actually seeing, sometimes it's hearing, sometimes it's feeling, sometimes it's tasting, what the environment needs to continue to thrive.

Carolyn: That was nice. Thanks.

Randy: So let - let me explain again, putting this back into the Thanksgiving context of how Native Americans did this. So let's go back to the 17th century again, you know, to the Pilgrims and the Wampanoag in what is today Massachusetts, and ask how were the Wampanoag tuned into and listening to Mother Nature and asking what she wants? And the answer is that they took time, they had ceremonial time that allowed them, actually required them to pay particular intense attention to how things were growing. So many Indigenous cultures up and down the East Coast and through the woodlands of the upper Midwest, had in August or early September, something called the Green Corn Festival, when they would actually

have a celebration. They would go out and pick green corn, look at how it's doing, celebrate its growth, ask for it to ripen and mature, and then observe what the corn needed to thrive. That's how they gathered information from year to year, by observing. They didn't read it in the, you know, "Home Journal on Growing Corn". It was observational.

Carolyn: That's so cool. So it's a - they're letting the corn talk to them in that sense, or communicate with them about how they're doing.

Randy: Exactly. And then the more familiar festival that we read about is the Indigenous harvest festival, when they would pick the mature corn and grind it, preserve it in jars. And unlike our understanding of what we think the Wampanoag and the Pilgrims did in a one day sit down dinner, which actually didn't happen quite that way, what the Wampanoag and other boreal forest residents of the northeastern United States did is they had a multi-day extensive festival that began not with feasting, but with fasting -

Carolyn: Ah.

Randy: - to clear their minds, clear their bodies. And then they put the fires out in the community. They cleared out debris, they cleared out broken pots and got rid of them. And here is the beautiful part of the corn festival. They forgot grudges between individuals, and they even forgot crimes except for murder. So their harvest festival was about healing with Mother Nature, but they linked healing Mother Nature with healing the community. So as they were establishing harmonious relationships with the natural world, they were reestablishing harmonious relationships among themselves.

Carolyn: Wow. Well, that's a really important reminder of how in the Indigenous cultures, the value of keeping the community together was so important. And you're supposed to put your individual grudges or very real wrongs behind you for the sake of keeping the community together.

Randy: And I think we've discussed this, and I think it's really important to let the listeners know that the time spent on the task really matters. Remember, it's not the quick fix in the biofeedback room, you know, at work that we're talking about

here; we're talking about spending days expressing gratitude and practicing reciprocity. So let me give you an example. In the - in the mainstream now, people will constantly ask me, is it okay for me to lay down tobacco when I go in the garden and pick something? And I'll say, well, you know, it's a little bit of an appropriation because you probably didn't grow the tobacco, and no, you can't use tobacco from a cigarette. But what you're trying to do when you do that - think - is mimic in a very superficial way what Indigenous people do.

They would lay down tobacco and they would pray, they would ask for permission before they went hunting or fishing for the life of a fellow kin. And they - they took this very seriously and they didn't do it for 30 seconds and then go and pick the berries, or pick the corn or shoot the deer. They spent an enormous amount of time trying to come into spiritual contact with these other beings, expressing their gratitude for the life or the bounty that they were about to harvest. So we need to be a little bit careful about encouraging people to run out again and do this superficial snap of the fingers version of giving gratitude and asking permission. It's not the way it works. It's not the way we learn to reconnect on a deeper level to the world around us and to the community around us.

Carolyn: So I guess you're saying - you're making the point that this has to be taken really seriously, and putting time and effort into something really is how you signal priorities. You know, as you rush through things that you're being formulaic about or you're not really - that you don't really think is important. You spend the time on the things that are most important to you. So you're saying people's time in thinking about all of this is really important?

Randy: Yes. So just to kind of wrap this notion up in a tiny little package, what we're talking about here when it comes to expressing gratitude toward Mother Nature or practicing reciprocity, is not a simple writing of a thank you note and dismissing your obligation. What we're talking about is a deep continual, 24/7, 365 moral imperative to stay connected and respectful.

Carolyn: Okay. We'll keep this going for Segment Three. You're listening to Indigenous Perspectives. Stay tuned.

Segment Three

Carolyn: Welcome back to Indigenous Perspectives. And in this segment, we're going to be further exploring the issue of reciprocity, talking about events and points raised in a Pulitzer Prize winning recent book called *Covered With Night: A Story of Murder and Indigenous Justice in Early America*.² It's by Nicole Eustace, and it's an incredibly rich book detailing a specific event and its consequences - cascading consequences - putting it in the context of the life of Europeans and Indians in Pennsylvania in 1722. That's a hundred years after the first Thanksgiving. So Randy, why don't you start us off with what you've gotten on these themes from this book?

Randy: First of all, you know, a century after the contrast that we made of different world views appearing at the quote unquote Thanksgiving table in 1621, the same conflicts and tensions, but also opportunities to bridge gaps between cultures still persist. And this story of what happened in what was going to be Pennsylvania - this was on the frontier of what was Pennsylvania at the time - the story reveals how deeply embedded reciprocity is, as we said in the previous segment, and the very fundamental structures, the warp threads, if you wish, of Indigenous society. And the book begins by making the point that both colonists and Indigenous people understood that initially. That they had equal power relationships, especially at the frontier between the two. The white settlers hadn't yet dominated the frontier. So things went relatively harmoniously at the frontier with respectful trading, because the Europeans engaged in reciprocal respectful acts with their Indigenous partners, which made the Natives feel that they could trust doing business with the colonists.

The event described in the book is when this historical relationship started to go off the rails, and it involves a simple transaction, one that was repeated many times by the parties involved, of trading furs for other items. What went wrong is that the European colonists decided that this time they would liquor up the Indians and try to - instead of offering a fair price - get an unfair price and essentially cheat them

² Nicole Eustace: *Covered With Night: A Story of Murder and Indigenous Justice in Early America*. New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, W.W. Norton & Company, 2021.

out of their furs. So there was a sense of distrust in the air for the Indigenous partner and a sense of this notion of reciprocal respect evaporating.

Carolyn: Okay, I think that's a really good point to emphasize because there were two people involved, Sawantaeny, a Seneca Indian and his backers including his wife who were present with him at the trading session. And then John Cartlidge, a wealthy trader, a Justice of the Peace, a respected man in his community in the city of Conestoga in Pennsylvania. And these people had engaged with each other before. So for whatever reason, John Cartlidge decides he's going to try to do this one on the cheap. And as Randy said, this broke the reciprocity between the two of them. They come to blows and Cartlidge kills Sawantaeny. So that's the specific event.

Randy: So instead of being what had been the case for more than a century, of trade between these two cultures, we suddenly have the European trying to engage in a “gotcha” cheap deal. And that fracturing of distrust not only resulted in a murder, it sent shock waves through the colonies.

Carolyn: Yes, and the reason that Nicole Eustace was able to put together this meticulous book with the recreations is a lot of documents were preserved because it ended up being a significant inquest, trial, involved the Governor of Pennsylvania and everything else, as the Pennsylvanians - the settlers - are trying desperately to avoid warfare with the Indigenous population. And the Indigenous people are trying to reestablish good relationships with the Europeans with whom they valued living harmoniously and making money, buying and selling various things.

Randy: So the - the overriding concept here is harmony. And to some degree I think we should be using the word “harmony” with equal balance or equal weight when we use the word “reciprocity” because for Native Americans, reciprocity was about harmony with nature. But equally importantly, it was about harmonious relations, as Carolyn just said, with all our kin, human and not. So the story unfolds and takes an unusual, surprising twist when the colonists feel that the way to bring about and restore harmonious relations is to try the person accused of murder for murder, and then execute him because it's a capital crime. And Carolyn, what happens?

Carolyn: Okay, well, the Europeans, they do a full court press to try to mollify the Indians, not just the local Pennsylvania Indians, but the fact that Sawantaeny as a Seneca is a member of the Haudenosaunee or Iroquois Confederation; the Confederation at that point *[was]* very numerically and militarily a serious threat to the British colonists. And they're *[European settlers]* trying really hard to avoid warfare. So there's this big trial, arrest the guy, take him to Philadelphia, jail him, threaten him with the death penalty. And the Europeans were not listening to the Indigenous people testifying at the trials, trying to give their point of view of what they want.

Randy: So let's remind the listener that what we said about the Corn Festival, where once a year you forgive crimes except for murder, and you forget grudges in the Indigenous community. Why? Because the ultimate mandate in an Indigenous community is to maintain emotional and social stability. And in this particular instance, what the Indigenous people are trying to do is not get revenge, to not get white man's revenge and punishment. They're trying to establish harmonious relations within their community and between the two communities.

Carolyn: Yes. And the whole thing that the Indigenous people want and the European whites keep refusing to listen to understand, is they want first an acknowledgement and emotional sympathy of the grief that the Seneca man and his family and his community are in as a result of his murder. They want to use this as a way to strengthen harmonious ties. They would like reparations, like material items, along with the apology, that work to try to create and heal, and they want to move forward together. And they keep trying to express this, and the Europeans just, just can't, just don't get it.

Randy: So to sum up this little teaser of a story that everyone really should read about - what this is, is an example in the evolution of relations in early colonial America that exposed the gap and the contrast between the notion of community and harmonious living that existed between the Europeans and the Indigenous people. And I have to say, I think for both - for you and for me - as much as we've read tales of life in Indigenous communities, this is the first time I ever feel like I've climbed inside of the mentality and the emotional structure of these people and understood it from the inside out.

Carolyn: Nicely said, Randy. And we'll be back with Segment Four of this section of Indigenous Perspectives. Stay tuned.

Segment Four

Carolyn: Welcome back to Indigenous Perspectives. Randy and I are talking on the theme of "Reciprocity and Gratitude: Beyond the Words."

Randy: In the last segment, we took you back to a historical moment in history to try to illustrate the breadth and depth of how reciprocity and gratitude were to be expressed in Indigenous society and by Indigenous people. And by extension their expectations that others would engage in a similar manner with them. So on this Thanksgiving, when we sit at the table and we offer a prayer, and then we eat, we might instead hesitate and ask if we need to take just a little more time to reflect on the gratitude we might express for the gifts hidden in broad- visibly hidden before our very eyes - that Native Americans are offering us, which is a lesson in how we might restructure our relations with one another and with Nature along principles of reciprocity. Not by engaging in minuscule little acts of symbolic reciprocity and gratitude, but by living on a daily basis in a society that is respectful, non-vengeful, and treats one another as if we wanted to restore harmony where there is damage, restore amicable relations where damage has been done. What we're talking about in this show is not just rethinking our relationship to nature. What we're talking about in this show is rethinking our relations with one another.

Carolyn: I think also - just want to mention - an important part of this to me is the idea of take a step for healing, because you want to keep building relationships and not cutting them off. So you don't just think, well, I did something wrong, or I did something hurtful, or I did damage. You think, how can you listen to and understand the concerns of the person or the non-human kin or the landscape, whatever it is? And then how can you start making efforts to resume a better relationship to bridge the gaps, to make amends, make reparations part of a healing process? And it takes both sides. It's not just a one sided thing. But someone's got to make the first step.

Randy: So we've often mentioned that across the border in Canada, they have a Truth and Reconciliation Commission and Canada is engaged in a long, long journey

of reconciliation. That involves reciprocity. Reciprocity is sometimes acknowledging that something went wrong. Reciprocity is sometimes restoration. Sometimes it is financial payments and compensation. But we're a long, long, long way *[away from that]* on this side of the border. And in much of the world in dealing with Indigenous people in truly respectful reciprocal relations and by extension we're a long, long way from dealing with Mother Earth in truly respectful reciprocal relations. Maybe that's the message we need to take away from this Thanksgiving dinner.

Carolyn: Well, to me, also, another meaning of “beyond the words” is to say that I'm feeling more and more strongly - it's not enough just to give the words I'm sorry or the words of I want to do better. It's how you follow it up with actions that are going to take something out of you. Whether it's money or time or emotional effort or whatever it happens to be, because you can't just amend, make a wrong better, by verbal apologies. You have to lose something yourself, give up something yourself to indicate how important it is. And that was a message that Sawantaeny's Indian friends and colleagues and community were trying without success to get across to the Europeans. They didn't want more damage. They didn't want revenge; they wanted healing efforts. And they wanted this tangible acknowledgement from the Europeans that the Europeans took it seriously.

Randy: So again, to repeat, as we said at the beginning, we're not trying to put reciprocity and gratitude out of the reach of those in the mainstream. And we're not talking about some kind of deep revolutionary change in American society. What we're calling for is an examination of how we might begin the journey of rethinking our relations with all of our kin, including Mother Nature.

Carolyn: Randy, very nicely said, thank you.

Randy: I want to thank listeners for tuning in. I hope you will take time and give yourself some space to reconnect with your roots in Mother Earth and with 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 and fauna, and perhaps even that of your ancestors. Allow yourself to touch their presence, capture that moment and hold onto it. And 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, including today's. And again, I say migwetch, thank you, for being a listener.

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