

Voices of Rewilding

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Randy: Greetings – Bozho - dear listeners. I greet you in the language of my Potawatomi ancestors and my tribe today. I am Randy Kritkausky, co-host of the show along with Carolyn Schmidt.

This episode of Indigenous Perspectives originates, not from my tribal homelands, but from N'dakinna, the unceded traditional territory of the Abenaki people who for thousands of years were settled and were the stewards on the lands to be found here in the state of Vermont in the northeastern United States and across the Canadian border in southern Québec province.

Carolyn: We begin the program by acknowledging where we come from, both culturally and geographically, as this program, Indigenous Perspectives, focuses on understanding our roots in Mother Earth and connections with our ancestors. Today, May 27th, we also want to acknowledge the birthday on May 27th, 1907, of Rachel Carson, the biologist and author best known for her book *Silent Spring*.

Randy: This episode of Indigenous Perspectives is about how those of us who are disconnected from nature are trying to reconnect with mother earth and why we're trying to do so.

Carolyn: Well, I need to say that about a year ago, friends started sending photos of animals like goats, deer, horses, and foxes, and in more tropical climates, elephants and peacocks walking around on city streets and highways. It looked as if the animals were happily moving in, in the Covid-19 lockdown absence of cars and trucks and no noise or pollution. There was sort of a relief. Well, the animals can move in and exist alongside us. I started seeing the term rewilding to refer to this, and that sounded really interesting.

Randy: I've also been hearing the term constantly. And when I heard it first - on the first Global Rewilding Day, this year - I suddenly asked myself, what does it really mean to people and what's really going on. And then my indigenous sensitivities kicked in. So I started digging and found papers written by conservationists and scientists. I found a lot of media reports and statements by celebrities, all of whom had a different take on this thing called rewilding.

And in a nutshell, and at the risk of over simplifying, what I found out is that for conservationists and other natural scientists, rewilding was an attempt to restore a damaged nature. And in that sense to get back to what it was before we did damage to it, and very often to get back to it, maybe even before humans were heavily present or even present at all, we'll get back to that notion later.

But for conservationists and scientists in general, the notion that they aspire to is that rewilding is establishing a dynamic ecosystem that is self sustaining. In other words, it can maintain its own internal equilibrium. It's healthy, it's vibrant for the media. Rewilding is a hot news story to put on the front page. It's a great way of getting hits on your website with yet another account of rewilding happening someplace else on the earth.

And it's all about telling success stories and it's all about feeling good. And there's no harm in that because these have been difficult times in the last year when we feel socially disconnected and disconnected from Mother Nature. And because it's become such a hot topic, a lot of celebrities have jumped on the bandwagon. And a lot of advocates of rewilding have tried to become celebrities because there are books to be written and podcasts to be done and fame to be gained by getting out in front of this phenomenon.

So that still begs the question of, so what is rewilding? And I would have to say that to boil it down to its simplest terms, it is an effort as the conservationists and scientists say, to restore damaged ecosystems to something approximating what they were before they were severely damaged and something approximating a self-sustaining ecosystem.

Carolyn: I have to admit that I'm really excited by the concept and the idea. And I especially like the idea of encouraging a lot of diversity -mixtures, varieties of animals, plants, and insects. It just seems - it seems more natural and it seems much more appealing, but can you give some examples of rewilding projects and especially how to figure out, you know, what the best ones are?

Randy: Well, it just occurred to me as you asked the question, the most famous example of rewilding in Western culture is Noah unloading the animals from the Ark after the earth was flooded, and the animals all come back and everything returns to normal, which is a little bit of a simplistic notion. Unfortunately, it's probably an approximation of some of the ideas that are out there, but to be more serious, let me give you two examples of so-called success stories of rewilding. And then I'll give two examples of real success stories.

This may be a little confusing for some listeners because what I'm calling so-called success stories are so popular that they have been barely scrutinized and they - they don't pass muster of scientific scrutiny. So the most famous, probably of all rewilding success stories is reintroducing wolves into Yellowstone national park. They were eliminated in the early 20th century, the exact date isn't known, but you know, in the first decade or so of the 20th century, the last wild wolves were killed in Yellowstone.

And if you've seen a documentary on the rewilding, you know that as a result of this, the elk population there just exploded and would [*with*] their too

numerous herds, they began to overgraze. So they, they killed the elders [*elder trees*] and they killed the willows along creeks. And they took away the shading for the creeks, which makes it hard for fish to reproduce in warm water. They deprive birds of food and nesting places. They deprive insects of a place. So if you reintroduce wolves, so the argument went, you can control the number of elk and then all of these other good things will come back. You know, the willows will grow, the birds will come back, the fish will return to the creeks. And most documentaries and hundreds of articles on rewilding Yellowstone have before and after photos, where the willows came back and everybody has declared that, you know, this is great because now the wolves are there and tourists come and take photographs.

It's actually one of the big attractions at Yellowstone. The problem is that the wolves were already returning on their own before wolves were reintroduced. And because they were introduced by humans, when they went off the reservation and to neighboring cattlemen's ranches and began to kill their cattle, it created blowback, real anger at the concept of environmental intervention and rewilding . And it also turns out that if you actually read the scientific reports that came out after those initial photographs of before and after that the wolves actually didn't sufficiently reduce the number of wolves [*Randy mis-spoke here; he meant to say that the wolves didn't sufficiently reduce the number of elk*]. What actually ended up happening is that the elk moved off premises, created other problems for farmers like taking diseases, brucellosis off from the park, and the bison continued to overgraze.

So the only thing that ultimately worked was bringing back the human beings, my people, Native Americans, who had for millennia hunted elk and bison, and kept them at a sustainable level within the park. This part of the story is very rarely mentioned. It is mentioned in the assessments of scientists decades out. But the point here I think is that we tend to look for rewilding as an instant success, got to have a big success right now it'll be dramatic, and then everything is fixed. The other example of rewilding -

Carolyn: Wait - before you do this next example, I want to follow up on a question about the Yellowstone wolves. I have read that when the wolves were introduced from Canada, as part of the rewilding program, some of the leader wolves were only there for, I don't know, a couple of weeks, and then they escaped and they headed back to Canada. So would this be a sign of our four footed kin telling us they didn't want to get moved into this new area?

Randy: Precisely. And that's a theme that we'll come back and revisit again and again, in today's program - that we don't listen to what the creatures tell us that we are forcibly relocating and rewilding. The next example is good - another example of what you just mentioned, Carolyn thanks. And that is Peregrine Falcons. They were an endangered species in much of the United States. And ornithologists have experimented with rewilding and repopulating them by introducing them into cities because they declared that skyscrapers are a lot like cliffs where peregrines breed.

So they built nesting boxes on skyscraper ledges and found out that the peregrines they reintroduced would indeed lay eggs in these nesting boxes and that the population began to increase. That sounds like a success story and much has been written about this success story. People have little cameras in their offices watching the little fledglings come out and they get names and people around the world observe them and follow it, sometimes millions of people around the world following this success story.

What is less often told is that very often those very fledglings don't fare very well. In fact, the question I asked as an indigenous person was how do the peregrines feel about being relocated into a city? And I asked that question because Chicago was the first place that I read about with peregrines being relocated. And it just so happens that that's *[in the same location as]* my tribal homeland. And we (the Potawatomi) were forced out until 1956 when we were forced to return because it was declared too expensive to maintain us on reservations. So we were put on buses and relocated to urban areas like Chicago, where it was declared that we were thriving because we set up community centers and we were getting jobs in the mainstream.

But what happened to the Native Americans? Did they really thrive, were they really happy? Well, you know, the suicide rate and the alcoholism rate would indicate otherwise. What's happening to the peregrines? The peregrines also didn't fare terribly well in the city in the long term. The single greatest cause of death for peregrines in Chicago is smashing up against those windows on the skyscrapers. And in fact, if you look on the Audubon website, you'll find out that between 700 million and 1 billion birds, that's 700 million and 1 billion per year - die, smacking up against skyscrapers on their Northern migratory routes.

Carolyn: Randy, I'm going to interrupt again. I think you made the point that some efforts, no matter how well-intentioned humans make, just don't work

for the species that they're - supposedly they're trying to help. We really - I'd really like to hear ways that rewilding is working and show us how it can be a different, - a different way to approach how people interact with our four legged wing and, and rooted kin.

Randy: Sure, sure. We will, however, return to this issue, because as is the nature of this program, one of the things that I have to do now, it's almost not a matter of choice is to express what I feel our kin are trying to tell us about their experience, not our media experience.

So let me give you an example of where rewilding works. We have friends who moved to Australia to the Outback, which has become world famous for its prolonged droughts and its forest fires. And what they did is they took up the challenge of trying to, in a sense rewild, to revegetate and restore overgrazed farmlands. And they did this by working with indigenous people who told them what kinds of plants can actually grow on the land. And by also teaching them how to hold back the rate at which water runs across this arid land.

So our friends re-introduced cattle, as well as various grasses. And I'm saying here, domestic cattle, not just some kind of predator or wild keystone species, like a wolf, and what they found is that the combination of slowing down the water and having grazing animals and the manure from the grazing animals led to an unexpectedly rapid regeneration of the grassland and that the grass held water, such that during one of the more famous recent droughts, the amount of water leaving the land they were taking care of was more than the water leaving - excuse me, was more than the water coming on to the land.

In other words, during a drought, they were creating water and holding it. And when the forest fires came, yes, their lands were damaged by fire, but not as damaged. And the plants that were growing there regenerated more quickly because they were adapted to forest fires and grassland fires, which are common in Australia.

All of this reflected indigenous knowledge that had been accumulated over thousands of years. So this shows you that rewilding can be done well and effectively, especially when it involves utilizing the knowledge of indigenous people.

Carolyn: Let me ask, how did your friends managed to encourage the indigenous people, the Aborigines in the area, to work with them?

Randy: These friends of ours come from a spiritual tradition of listening to people who have other spiritual worldviews. So the first thing they did is to get to know their neighbors and talk to them. And by their neighbors, I think I would include not just the two legged neighbors, but the birds and you know, the other species that graze because they have lessons to teach. The key here again, was observing and listening.

So the final example here, just briefly, is from Lima, Peru. Lima is also in one of the driest areas on earth. My recollection is they receive directly about one half inch of rain per year. Yes, that's one half inch of rain per year. And Lima is a very large city. So they get their water from the surrounding mountains. And that means that those reservoirs of water in the mountains are essential to the survival of the city.

So what is happening is, a nonprofit organization has been working with the ancestors of the indigenous people who live there for thousands of years and recreating and restoring the water catchment systems that these indigenous people maintained so that they could be engaged in agriculture. It's really quite simple. It turns out that there are bogs, peaty bogs up in the mountains. And one of the first things they did is stop the destruction of the peaty bogs so that they [*the bogs*] could act as sponges and hold water, and then slowly release it over the course of the rest of the year. So that downstream, particularly in Lima, the water would arrive in time to nourish the city. They also built weirs, basically small dams, on the small streams to slow down the rate of the water leaving these areas.

And this, I look at as an example of rewilding, and that may be a little bit surprising to some of the listeners, because we're not talking about bringing animals back.

We're talking about plants, but we're also talking about landscape. And for those of us who are indigenous the landscape, isn't a thing it's a living place. It's a living system. It's our kin just as are the birds and those wonderfully charismatic four legged animals, the wolves and the bison.

So what we have here are two very contrasting examples. One where indigenous people were allowed to participate in rewilding and restoring natural systems or preserving existing natural systems and those where they have not. And clearly the involvement of indigenous is critical.

I want to take one moment here to put forward a really critical notion, which is that we're talking about rewilding as restoring damaged systems. We should not lose track of the fact that the most important nature preservation work is continuing to maintain and protect those systems that are wild and have diversity. We cannot allow ourselves for a moment to substitute rewilding the damaged planet for protecting those parts of the planet that absolutely need us to protect them.

Carolyn: Yeah, I think that's a really important point to make. And I was just reading about the efforts in Latin America in particular, to make sure that indigenous peoples get clear title to the lands that they live on, and that it be legal and legally supported, and that they be able to turn down - successfully oppose - efforts to move into their land - efforts to, from outsiders, to cut down trees, to extract metals, graze cattle, all the things that are tremendously destructive, not just of the particular trees and area, but also of the entire ecosystem, which is really interconnected. And of course, that's one of the points of the indigenous worldview: to look at how everything connects and you have to be respectful of the messages coming from all the different species.

So we have a few more minutes in this segment. Randy, do you have sort of closing comments on how your ideas of rewilding have changed since you've been thinking about it?

Randy: Yes - It's been humbling. I have worked, as you know quite well, almost night and day for the last six or seven weeks, trying to get to the bottom of, you know, why rewilding works in so many places and why it doesn't work in other places. And then also to come to terms with the challenges of misapplying this notion of rewilding. And here again, I want to just deliver a, you know, a very important and emphatic message that rewilding at its best is not easy.

It is very difficult, as Suzanne Simard documents in this book that has just come out and made sensational news - *Finding the Mother Tree* - these systems are enormously complex. They evolve over centuries and in some case millennia, and you don't just snap your finger and bring back a clear cut forest. So we can't let the narratives of easy rewilding lure us into thinking that we can dig up the countryside or vast parts of our landscape to get coal, to get oil, to get timber and then quickly replant it and turn it back to what it was. It doesn't work that way. What Native Americans have taught us and

what Mother Earth is teaching us is that preserving wilderness requires reciprocity and respect and thinking in the long, long term.

Carolyn: Well, this is incredibly useful, and I'm glad to be ending this first segment on a positive note of how it really can be done. And we're going to take a break. This is Indigenous Perspectives. And we'll back in a few minutes with the second segment of our show.

Segment 2

Carolyn: Welcome back. This is Indigenous Perspectives with your hosts, Randy Kritkauskay and Carolyn Schmidt. So we're discussing rewilding - what it is and when it can work and what are its limits. So, Randy, can you start us off by discussing how we know when the rewilding efforts are working? And from your own indigenous perspective, how can our kin - the plants, the animals, the birds, the fish, the insects - communicate to us about what aspects of human activities can work for them?

Randy That's quite a bundle of intertwined questions, but let me give it a shot. First of all, I think we can figure out when rewilding efforts are working, if we have the humility to trust our eyes and our ears, and we have the patience to observe what is happening over a long period of time. As I said in the earlier segment, very often success stories are prematurely announced a year or two after some change takes place. And then everybody goes home and writes it up and puts it in their book or their promotion for more fundraising for their foundation. But they don't come back in five or ten years to find out what's going on. So the key - really key and essential ingredient here - is what scientists called good empirical science and what Native Americans would call listening [to] and observing Mother Earth. They're one in the same.

They're both grounded in observation. What I have found is that indeed the plants, the animals, the birds will give us signals, very clear signals about whether it's working for them. And if we're rewilding for them, and they're giving us signals that it's not working, we need to pay attention.

You gave a lovely example, it's somewhat humorous, of the wolves quickly being released from their cages in Yellowstone and heading north voting with their feet. You know, I can give you other examples of beavers being rewilded and immediately escaping their enclosures because they're not happy where

they were put. Certainly my ancestors tried that - when they were put on reservations, they left the reservation. So, you know, on the grand scale of big projects, we can trust scientists more than we can trust celebrities who want to be associated with short term success stories. And more than we can trust the media that wants a glitzy, sexy story about a charismatic mammal being spotted in somebody's backyard.

But let's - let's bring it down to the more mundane level of most of our listeners, because they're not engaged in these giant projects of rewilding, vast territories and nature parks. They're worried about what's going on in their neighborhood or their backyard. And Carolyn, you and I know that we've struggled with this question in our own yard and had to adjust our own perspective multiple times.

Carolyn: Well, I would like to build on your opening point about humility to give a specific example. This is a true example of turtles trying to send us messages and how one of us was slower than the other to pick up on what the message was. So a number of years ago, Randy fell in love with mosaicultures. That's when you have some sort of area of earth and you plant it and you make patterns with the different kinds of plants. So he got earth and he built up a nice mound and he bought plants, all kinds of lovely looking, different kinds of plants. And he was planting them and making it in the form of a giant face. So it was moving along quite well. And then one August, a couple of years ago, one morning he looked out in horror and he said "that turtle is vandalizing my mosaiculture!"

And a snapping turtle had come up from the pond quite some distance and was digging and getting ready to lay her eggs. So I saw the mother turtle, finding a nice place, nice sort of sandy soil high up enough, you know, the right direction from the pond. And she was using it as her instincts and her decisions and her care for her future generations was telling her to do. Randy, as the human who had created something, you were seeing the turtle as damaging your creation. So can you tell the listeners, how you figured out that it was time to change your mindset and listen to the turtle?

Randy: -Yes. So here are the confessions of the indigenous person in this household. I plead guilty. Um, I replanted the mound, um, you know, as any mainstream American, absolutely fanatically convinced that he can dominate Mother Nature. And I put up a rock barrier around the perimeter of the

mountain thinking there's no way a turtle's gonna climb up over this! Next year. I came out and guess who was parked there, laying her eggs?!

Somehow she had without a ladder found a way of getting up and around my barrier. At that moment, belatedly, slowly, I got the message the turtle was sending: "Hey, Randy, indigenous person, we live on Turtle Island. I'm a turtle! Like, I need to lay my eggs here, if you want this to keep being Turtle Island. So I, I do tell this with a bit of self-deprecating humor, but it was a really humbling episode and part of my journey of learning to listen, to, to observe and see what Mother Nature has to teach us .

Carolyn: Well, and Randy, you are to be commended for admitting that you were wrong and changing. I know it, I know. I truly know it was not easy for you to let go of that, that dream. And another example - we have time for this one before the next break - is when the owl in the tree told you not to cut it down.

Randy Yes. We decided that - we, we both decided - that we needed to cut some trees that had grown large. Since we put photovoltaics on our roof and planted the garden in the front of the house, it was creating too much shade. So we started to mark the trees. And then we noticed that one of the trees that cast the most shade was a giant maple tree, which Suzanne Simard describes in her new book, *[Finding] the Mother Tree*, it was the mother tree. And I began to have some qualms. And the day before the landscape person came with his chainsaw, we noticed an owl perched in the tree, hooting and I think telling us quite clearly, "You can't cut this tree down. This is the mother of the forest. It's also my nesting place." And once again, this was an absolutely magnificent clear message that Mother Nature was sending us about being respectful and not intervening with a too heavy hand.

Carolyn: Thank you for that. And we'll be back in a few minutes with section three.

Segment 3

Randy: Welcome back to Indigenous Perspectives. This episode is focusing on the concept of rewilding, and we're going to pick up the discussion we were just having in the previous segment about signals, signs, and messages we get from the natural world, indicating that our efforts to restore, preserve, rewild systems are actually working.

Carolyn and I were discussing the fact that very often we need to learn to listen. And we listen to the olives and we listen to the birds and the other wildlife and our front yard. But sometimes listening is about listening to the silence, and that's appropriate to this day, Rachel Carson's birthday, because she wrote the very famous book *Silent Spring*, which warned us all about the damage that could be done by DDT, when it killed birds in massive numbers in the United States. It was a real wake up call. And what she feared was that there would be a day when we would face a silent spring.

And indeed, that is what we are facing this year. Many of you have probably read newspaper articles about the 17 year cycle of cicadas, and how this year they were going to come out of the ground. And the sound was going to be magnificent, but almost deafening in some situations. Well, it hasn't quite happened in part because of what Rachel Carson warned - our overuse of insecticides in part, because of climate change in part, because we compact the soil so much that the cicadas can't get out of the earth. So to go back to the theme of the previous segment, how do we know when what we're doing is working or not working? Sometimes it's not what we see or hear. Sometimes we have to be really astute and sensitive to what we don't see and what we don't hear.

And I think that gets to the theme that we wanted to tease out in this particular segment, which is: what are the underlying cultural and spiritual values that are the foundation of indigenous abilities to work with, and in cooperation with land, animals, and other kin. Carolyn, you have some thoughts on this.

Carolyn: Well, I think the starting point is the whole idea of cooperation, and that's for people from a European and traditional United States tradition. That really goes against a lot of the messages about controlling, dominating, owning possessing. And for everyone, one grows up learning about property rights and who's in charge being in a - where you are on a hierarchy. Do you get to give the orders or do you have to obey the orders?

And I think it's a real challenge to people raised in a competitive culture to flip it around, to say, how can we cooperate with the others? instead of looking at it as a struggle for control. We have a neighbor who struggles against a lot of his lichen, his dandelions, anything that isn't in place. And he's out there with chemicals trying to eliminate these signs of nature, trying to - which is just trying to move into his property, not doing him any harm, but looking

different, looking like it's not under his control. This is troubling to us. We don't know quite how to deal with it, but we do see it as a challenge to flip it, to think of cooperation with the others. That's listening to them, trying to be attuned to what they need. It's also accepting that we're not always going to get our way. Cooperation has to go - it's a two-way street.

Randy: So, this, this brings us back to what I think a listener would naturally be asking at this point in our program, which is: What can I do in my backyard, in my park, my neighborhood, my city, that will advance the cause of making the places that humans are found a bit more hospitable and a bit less inhospitable or dangerous to our other than human kin? The answer is we can do a lot, but we have to start, as Carolyn has just reminded us, with having humble and realistic objectives.

We're not going to transform the world in our backyard, but we can transform the world in our backyard. We can plant plants like milkweed that are hospitable to butterflies that are endangered. The Monarch butterfly needs the milkweed; planting it makes a big difference. We can provide habitat for bats. There are all kinds of things we can do, and they do make a difference.

We can make our parks in cities a bit more hospitable. We can make our nature preserves more protective. We can make them a little bit less vulnerable to human predators who want to sometimes overuse them or sometimes over hunt them. And underneath all of these values is this notion of indigenous people that we are acting respectfully in partnership with our kin.

That is really the key to unlocking the formula of why it is that the world's great treasures of biodiversity still are concentrated in areas where indigenous people remain on the land, very often with legal title and rights to be stewards of that land. We need to allow these people who respect that land and our fellow kin to be the caretakers.

If you're not Native American, you're not going to become a Native American, but you can learn from those efforts of being respectful. You can learn how to listen to and observe, as I learned painfully from my episode with the turtle, to be protectors of nature. You can teach your children. And sometimes you can reach out to your neighbors who are destroying habitat and try as best you can in those awkward moments to educate them, to preserve natural habitat.

Carolyn: Well, I do think a lot is trying to really empathize with and try to view the others as our kin, our relatives. And that opens us up to wanting to get along with them. We make that effort with human relatives and we can make the effort with our nonhuman relatives, also.

We'll be back with the fourth and last segment of Indigenous Perspectives. Stay tuned.

Segment 4

Carolyn: Welcome back to Indigenous Perspectives. This segment we're continuing the discussion of rewilding, and looking at the question of what are the deep, underlying cultural and spiritual values that are so important to make anything like this really work. Randy?

Randy: This is a really difficult question. And I think it's a thread that is going to travel throughout all of the shows that we do. And it's a message that I suspect we can deliver many, many times as turtle tried to tell me many, many times on the mound before we ultimately get it. So let me, let me try to repeat what I think is a critical insight that our society needs to hear. And that is that we have grown up in a post-World War II era of fantastic engineering and economic affluence, where we believe that we can transform the world, we can have economic growth forever, that we can extend our power to the far reaches of the corner, and we're now talking about colonizing other planets. If you really listen carefully to this narrative and what we tell ourselves about ourselves, what you're hearing is a story of how humans can indeed dominate and control everything.

We're beginning to realize that there are limits to our ability to control everything that we're doing damage to the planet. We're doing damage to the fish stocks. We're doing damage to endangered species. We're doing damage to our forests by laying a too heavy hand and a too heavy foot on those resources. And to return to the book I mentioned earlier, [I] don't usually do a book review here, but it is appropriate. I really recommend looking at this new book that came out by Suzanne Simard called *Finding the Mother Tree: Discovering the Wisdom of the Forest*, because she is brutally honest with herself, um, explaining how for many decades, she was working with the forestry service, putting plantations on ground that had been clear cut because it was the most efficient thing that could be done. And it was something that could simply be done.

She constantly confronts the arrogance of foresters and companies who use huge machines to take down everything that's living. And then they propose spraying what's left with herbicides, so that it won't compete with the trees that are replanted. The notion of many foresters until recently, and probably still many today is that you can clear cut and then you can quote unquote and I use it cringingly, "rewild" what has been damaged and it will grow back. What Simard points out in incredible detail, describing the experiments she conducted over decades, is that it's not just about the trees that grow above the surface of the ground that we can see with our eyes. It's about fungal networks, fine little filaments, threadlike some of them, finer than hairs, that require the use of a microscope to be seen. These networks exist underground and connect the entire forest, not just trees that are of the same species, but birch trees and maple trees and birch trees and pine trees.

And she talks about how they nourish one another and how these systems evolved over decades. And in some cases, hundreds of years. So the message here and the message that Simard delivers so beautifully in her book, is that we need to be careful about what we damage in the first place. We don't have to clear-cut the forest to get timber. We can do it in a sustainable way, but we can't be deluded into thinking that we can destroy ancient forests and then snap our fingers and rewild them. That is a perversion of the word rewilding. We have to get away from this concept of dominating nature. And I think the really, really shocking notion here is that each of us needs to look in the mirror and ask whether or not we consider nature, and our other than human kin, even to be in the same ballpark as our human lives.

We know too well from the news that people who are threatened tend to take out their anger, frustration, and fear on the most vulnerable human species. Maybe it's time for us to wake up and ask how we are treating our other than human kin? Are they even more vulnerable? Are they even more dominated? Are they even more exploited? Are they even more harmed than those of our human kin that we have pushed to the bottom of the social ladder? That is perhaps the moment of awakening that the forest will bring back to us, and allow us to use to understand who we are as human beings.

Carolyn: So, Randy, it sounds as if you're really, really talking about the importance of each of us and also us as societies making the effort to reach out and feel more connected and more kinship with the natural world and that this kind of connection - trying to let go of a sense of needing to dominate or a

pecking order - can also apply, perhaps, we'd hope, to our view of other humans, people that are different from us in ways, you know, seemingly large or small, to feel more of a sense of kinship or trying to look for ways to cooperate? Or am I, - am I overstating it?

Randy: No, I think you're right on the money. I think that Mother Nature may be delivering a message to us about human society and who we are that extends far, far beyond what we need to learn about being caretakers of Mother Earth.

With that we have to wrap up this episode. I want to say to our viewers, thank you - Migwetch in Potawatomi - thank you for listening. I hope that this broadcast has given you time and space to reconnect with your roots and 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 ancestors allow yourself to touch their presence, capture that moment and hold onto it.

And if you might, write to me and let me know about your experience, I can be reached at randykritkausky@hushmail.com, or through my website, randykritkausky.com, where you can also find transcripts and supplemental materials for Indigenous Perspectives radio programs. And that allows you to read as well as to listen to this program. Thank you very much.

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