

Good evening, everybody.

I'm just giving you a few more minutes for people to come into the space.

Good evening, everyone.

[foreign language 00:00:48]

Hello.

I'm Brenda Macdougall.

I'm the Director of the Institute of Indigenous Research and Studies,

and I'll be moderating this evening.

Your chat function is turned off,

so if you want to ask questions, you can use the question-answer function,

and I'll be paying attention to what's being asked.

At the end of our talk this evening,

I will give some of those questions to Dr. Wilson.

For those of you who don't know me,

I'm a Métis woman, Apeetogosan, from Saskatchewan,

who has the privilege of living and working

in the homelands of the Algonquin nation.

I want to take a moment to pay my respects to the Algonquin people,

the traditional guardians of this land.

The University of Ottawa and all of its members

acknowledge and respect the longstanding relationship

that the Algonquin people have to this territory,

which remains unceded.

Collectively, we pay respect to all indigenous people in this region,

from all nations across Canada, who call Ottawa home.

We acknowledge the traditional knowledge keepers,

both young and old.

We honor their courageous leaders: past, present, and future.

That was the University of Ottawa's affirmation statement,

and it's very deliberately not aligned acknowledgment.

When we wrote the affirmation,

we wanted to speak to the idea of relationships,

the notion of being in relationship to the Algonquin nation,

as well as all of the other indigenous people,

who, like myself, find themselves living in this territory.

But we also want to acknowledge the special relationship

that the Algonquin themselves have to their homeland.

It's in this spirit of relationship and building relationships

that I want to thank you all for coming this evening,

to listening to our esteemed guest, keynote speaker,

a Nêhiyaw Cree scholar from the Opaskwayak Cree Nation,

Dr. Shawn Wilson.

Dr. Wilson's presence this evening

marks the second annual Charles R. Bronfman Lecture

under the auspices of the Institute of Indigenous Research and Studies;

although, of course, this event has a much longer history.

The Bronfman Lecture began 27 years ago and has evolved from its beginnings

as a yearly keynote address given via the Institute of Canadian Studies

to a space for indigenous scholars, researchers, knowledge keepers,

and intellectuals to speak about their work, their traditions,

and their culturally-specific knowledge and experiences.

Since the inception of the Bronfman Lecture,

we have had four indigenous speakers, and Shawn will be our fifth.

Last year's event was with Charles Coocoo.

He was the first ever hosted specifically

by the Institute of Indigenous Research and Studies.

We are honored to keep

the Bronfman Annual Lecture alive in this way,

and are very much excited to have Dr. Wilson with us here this evening.

I've personally been drawn to Shawn's work since his 2008 publication:

Researcher Is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods,

a seminal work for anyone interested in how to conduct and engage in research

with indigenous peoples.

My own scholarship has been centered on the ideas of wahkohtowin,
the Cree word for relationship, for family,
and more specifically for framing relationships as a worldview.
As a result, Research Is Ceremony has resonated quite profoundly with me.
Shawn spoke poignantly about how research from an indigenous perspective
is about building relationships,
and that "Research by and for indigenous peoples
is a ceremony that brings relationships together."
Moreover, I appreciate deeply how he used words
like epistemology, methodology, ontology, and axiology
to drive home the point that we, as indigenous peoples,
have intellectual and philosophical traditions
that define how and why we do things differently;
that is, we think differently.
It also meant a lot to me to find a cousin, a N hiyaw cousin,
who spoke so eloquently about such things.
While I've only now met Shawn a few times,
I feel like our work exists in relationship
because they emerge from similar cultural and intellectual traditions.
I want to thank him deeply
for putting his work out into the world for us all.

He hasn't stopped with this book.

Shawn is the author of over 40 publications

focused on ideas about indigenous knowledge production,

as well as the impacts of racism and colonization

on the health and wellbeing of our communities.

His work speaks across many disciplines,

including education, social work, health sciences, politics, philosophy;

and, therefore, is a true reflection

of the interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary nature

of indigenous research and studies.

Shawn is doing double duty tonight.

He is our Bronfman speaker,

but he is also a keynote speaker for the Building Connections Conference,

a series of remote online conference events

that is being launched by tonight's presentation.

I want to ask my colleague and professor emeritus, Dr. Tim Stanley,

to say a few words about the Conference as one of the lead organizers.

Thank you, Brenda.

The project [foreign language 00:06:12]

Building Connections: Mobilizing Indigenous Histories for Social Change

is a series of online presentations and workshops

that explore two key issues.

First, it examines promising practices

to support the efforts of indigenous communities

to collect, preserve, and mobilize their oral and written histories.

Second, it seeks to advance the efforts

of both indigenous and settler K-12 schools

and post-secondary institutions

to incorporate these histories into their history education programs

without recolonizing indigenous peoples and their meanings.

This series is supported by funding

from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada,

the Faculties of Education and of Arts,

as well as the Institute of Indigenous Research and Studies

at the University of Ottawa.

This series is organized in collaboration

with the [foreign language 00:07:13] project.

History in Canada: First Peoples' Perspectives,

initiated by the Cégep de l'Outaouais,

and the Kitigan Zibi Anishinabeg First Nation Cultural Education Center.

This latter project has been developed with the support of the Keyano Institute,

the Avataq Cultural Institute,

the University of Ottawa's Canada Research Chair
in Indigenous Intellectual Traditions and Self-Determination,
Productions Manitou Incorporated,
and the Council of the Atikamekw Nation,
and the Museu da Pessoa
or the Museum of the People in São Paulo, Brazil.

Future sessions in the Building Connection series
include a keynote by Dr. Karen Worcman of the Museu da Pessoa,
on the right to social memory and her work
in enabling marginalized communities to take control
over the narratives of their past;
as well as a presentation called Yarning About Yarning
by Dr. Stuart Barlo,
the Dean of the Gnibi College of Indigenous Australian Peoples
at Southern Cross University, Australia;
as well as a panel of indigenous research chairs
discussing historical memory and the teaching of the past.

Other sessions, starting in the winter, will feature presentations
by indigenous communities and educational institutions
on the work that they have been doing
to take control over their histories and to teach about their past;

as well as workshops on how to develop curriculum
for K-12 schools and post-secondary institutions
that respectfully and productively engage with these histories.

We expect to have
the publicity and registration information for the fall series
out by the end of next week.

But for now, please mark the following dates in your calendars:

November 10, November 24, and December 8.

Each of these days will feature two presentations:

one at 3:00 PM, and one at 7:00 PM.

These are Eastern Standard Time.

These sessions will be in English or French,
with simultaneous translation into the other language.

Our hope is that these presentations
will help to strengthen the cultural resurgence
that is taking place in many indigenous communities today.

At the same time,
they will help to identify respectful and collaborative strategies
for promoting broader understanding.

I am absolutely delighted that Dr. Shawn Wilson
has accepted to introduce us to this work tonight

with his keynote and Bronfman Lecture.

I now have the honor to call upon the Dean of the Faculty of Arts,

Dr. Kevin Key, who is a distinguished historian

and history educator in his own right to introduce our speaker for this evening.

Dr. Key.

Thank you, Dr. Stanley.

[foreign language 00:10:13] Charles R. Bronfman.

This evening, we have the great pleasure of welcoming Dr. Shawn Wilson

who will give a talk entitled

Building Relationships with Indigenous Knowledge.

Before we begin, I'd like to pay respect to the Algonquin Anishinaabeg people

who are the traditional guardians of this land.

We acknowledge their long-standing relationship with this territory,

which remains unceded.

[foreign language 00:10:44]

[foreign language 00:11:03]

Dr. Shawn Wilson is from the Opaskwayak Cree Nation,

in Northern Manitoba,

but currently lives on Bundjalung land on the East Coast of Australia.

He is an associate professor in Indigenous Studies

at the University of British Columbia, Okanagan,

as well as adjunct faculty at Gnibi College of Indigenous Australian Peoples
at Southern Cross University in Australia,
and Østfold University College in Fredrikstad, Norway.

In tonight's presentation, Dr. Wilson will discuss how we can use
a principled approach to developing healthier relationships
and how to apply these principles when working with indigenous knowledge.

His talk will revolve around the concept
that whatever our roles within Canadian society,
better engagement and collaboration with indigenous peoples is essential.

We say [foreign language 00:12:05] to Dr. Wilson,
for sharing his important insight
so that it can benefit the university community and the public.

These exchanges are important steps
towards the decolonization of education and of the university.

This conference is not only a celebration of first people's knowledge,
but also represents the role

that the Institute of Indigenous Research and Studies,
and the Faculty of Arts will play in ensuring that indigenous peoples
and their knowledge and perspectives
will continue to be at the forefront of public debate.

Welcome.

Enjoy the lecture.

[foreign language 00:12:45]

All right.

After the whole year of being on Zoom,

I still have to, every once in a while, remind myself to turn off the mute button.

I'm going to share PowerPoint slides with you as we go along,

and hopefully, someone will let me know if they're coming through okay.

Looks good.

It's perfect.

-All right. -Thanks, Shawn.

What I'm going to talk about today

kind of asks you to suspend your judgment for a while

and also accept that there are different points in view on things.

I started off with a few pictures here that are looking at Canada from far away.

One's looking at it from Norway over the Arctic Ocean,

and the other one is looking at it from Northern Australia,

looking towards Canada across the Pacific Ocean.

I think that we can all recognize

that everyone around the world is going to have a different view of Canada,

and everyone's going to have a different view of the lands that they're working on,

and working with.

I am currently on Bundjalung territory.

I wanted to start off first by acknowledging the Bundjalung people

and the Bundjalung country itself,

and thank the land for providing me with such a great place to live,

and thank the elders for inviting me to live here.

Bundjalung country is right there where the little arrow is pointing,

and you're all in Ottawa, somewhere down there.

I just wanted to put this map on here a different way

because it's probably not the way you're used to looking at a map,

but I think people, especially in the global south,

are used to their ideas and their knowledge being decentered.

When you think of Ottawa as being off on the periphery like that,

it makes you think a little bit.

Everyone's going to have a different view of the world,

everyone is going to have a different view of where the center of their world is.

Obviously, for me, the center of my world is in Asquith,

which is next to that over there on the grand scale of things

not far from Ottawa.

I wanted to start off also by introducing myself a little bit differently,

and I think, hopefully, that as we go through this, you'll realize why.

For me, basically who I am is all the relationships

and the different roles that I hold.

Those are my three sons.

That's a big part of who I am in this world as father to those boys

who look a little bit different now,

but I take my role as a father very seriously,

also my role as a community psychologist.

I work with communities, trying to make whole communities better places to live.

Some of the other roles I'm in as a husband, as a son, an uncle,

a cousin, a great-great-great-grandfather, although those ones haven't been born yet.

Great-great-great-grandson.

I'm a teacher and scholar, and that's also a lot of what I do,

but I think that probably the area of training that I've had and draw

a lot of my ideas from is being a ceremony helper

and a leader in different ceremonies following our traditional religion.

Once again, I am from Opaskwayak Cree Nation,

which is the name of the land,

but it's also the name of us as people of Opaskwayak.

Obviously, an older picture of my boys.

That's a little bit what they look like now.

I just thought I'd bring that in because that's an unusual picture of my boys.

That one where they're all smiling.

More often, they're more like that.

That's what [inaudible 00:17:01], teenagers.

We'll sympathize, I'm sure.

All right.

Hopefully, you've just got a black screen there now.

I wanted to do a bit of a visioning exercise with you all

because I think it's incredibly hard to talk about some of these ideas

without having a picture in your brain of what we're talking about.

I was going to do a bit of a visioning exercise.

Those of you that are visually impaired will have a lot easier time in doing this

than people that are fully sighted.

So you've got an advantage on us here.

I would ask everyone to please close their eyes for a minute.

That's why I've got a black screen there.

If you could just close your eyes.

I'll keep talking for a little while because it's going to take a little while

for your eyes to actually go black.

If you've been looking at your computer screen,

you're going to have after images of your computer screen.

If you're in a bright room, you'll realize also that,

actually, you can see quite a bit of light through your eyelids.

If you wouldn't mind, maybe even just put your hands over the top of your eyes.

Don't press on your eyeballs.

Otherwise, you'll get a bunch of ghost images on your eyes.

But put your hands over your eyes.

It should make it a lot darker.

All right.

I'm just filling in time at the moment, until your field of vision

should be getting darker and darker and darker

as less and less of the residual images are left and they fade away.

All right.

Now, hopefully, you've got a pretty dark field of vision there.

I would like you to imagine way off in the distance,

although it's hard to judge distance in the pitch black.

Way off in the distance, imagine a single tiny spark of light illuminates itself.

So small that you can just barely see it off in the distance.

Now, next thing, I want you to make another little spark of light.

Then between those two sparks of light,

I want you to send a little spider web of a string between the two dots.

You should have two little tiny points of light that are really far away,

really faint, with a little string between them.

Now, I would like you to add another point of light.

From that point of light,

send a string off to each of those two points.

You should have a triangle with three tiny little points of light

with strings between them.

Now, add another point of light somewhere in there.

From that point, send off a string to each of the other three.

Now, you've got four points of light, each with a string going to the others.

Add another point, so that fifth point of light is sending a string

Strings up to the all the other four at a six.

And then that one, sending strings up all the five.

Try and see if you can add maybe three at once, adding three more points.

And each time you add a point of light from each point of light,

send a string out to every other point that's there.

Maybe add three or four more points of light,

sending strings out to each of the other ones.

It should be starting to get kind of a little bit crowded.

Maybe you have to, in your imagination,

Zoom out a little bit, add some more points around the outsides.

Send out all the strings to all the other points of light.

Maybe try and add like ten points of light all at once.

And send out strings from all those points

to each of the ones that you've already got.

And add another 10.

And send out all those more strings.

And add another 10.

Send out more, all those more strings.

Now maybe try and see if you can add

like a 100 points of light all through there all at once.

Some of them are going to be behind the ones that are there.

Some of them are going to have to be in front.

But each of those points all sends out a string to everywhere else.

So hopefully now, you're kind of feel the vision is starting to get

kind of cluttered and full of all these little strings.

Maybe add another point of light send another one.

Just pay attention and sort of backed off a little bit.

Maybe one and another one, another one and another one,

maybe speed up again and add another hundred and another hundred.

You may have to zoom out again to add more around the periphery.

Some are adding in behind the others, some are adding in front.

Maybe try and add a whole thousand points of light all at once.

So now, your field of vision is probably entirely taken up

by all these little strings.

The points of light themselves don't really matter anymore
because you can't really notice them amongst all the different strings.

Each point of light will have
a million little strings heading off of all the other points of light.

Add another hundred, another thousand.

Your whole field of vision probably now is taken up by all the little strings.

So I want you to just kind of slowly open your eyes,
and maybe overlay that vision.

Keep that vision in your mind as you open up your eyes
of all of those little strings,
and overlay that on top of what you can see in front of you.

And I think that that's the best way
that I can go about describing an indigenous ontology,
is to say that everything that you see around you,
everything that you see in front of you
is made up of all of those little strings.

It's the strings between everything,
that are the relationships between those things that actually create our reality
and create everything that is, that is our cosmos.

Our view of the very nature of reality is everything is relationships.

Everything is all those little strings.

It's kind of like wave theory.

It's all about the wave, not about the particle.

So don't worry about all the little thoughts.

Those of you that are physicists or chemists will realize

that when you look at a molecule or you look at an atom,

the actual solid matter in an atom is minuscule compared to the massive cloud.

It is the field of electrons around it.

So it's actually the space

that is between things is much greater than the thing itself.

And I think that is the way, if we view indigenous reality in that way,

then we can start to understand everything else that we talk about.

When we talk about indigenous ways of looking at the world,

it's all about the space between things.

That's reflecting a lot of different things.

So this is a picture of the constellation, the Dark Emu.

It's different way of looking at constellations also than Western ways,

because the constellation isn't the stars,

the constellation is the darkness between the stars.

So it's all about the space between things.

So that is the most important part that I wanted to talk about today

is that space between things and how things relate to each other.

That's what indigenous ontology is, that everything is related.

Everything that we are, everything the Universe is made of

is those relationships between things rather than the things themselves.

Things themselves are important,

but those things themselves

are made up of a bazillion other relationships themselves.

So that's what I want to talk about with indigenous knowledge is

knowledge is also in relationships itself.

So knowledge lives in a living context.

So knowledge is in a relationship with the land.

It's also in a relationship with us as humans and the community.

But you'll notice that there's a distinction here, actually,

between this view of knowledge because knowledge is relational.

You notice that there isn't individual people in there, is it?

Well, I mean, there is in picture.

We hold it in relationships as individuals, but we don't own it.

So we are in a relationship with knowledge

and we are in a relationship with knowledge as a community of people

or as a society or a culture of people rather than individuals.

But this is an important concept,

how knowledge is something that is in this relationship.

It comes from the land and in relationship with the land,

it also is in relationship with our communities.

Sorry, I have to look at different screens all the time.

You see that's a little bit different than decontextual knowledge.

So a lot of Western knowledge is kind of tends to be decontextualized.

So it's like, yes, in that sense,

we can have individual knowledge, and then knowledge gets passed around

through or built by an individual doing research.

That research informs our systems and institutions

and it informs our ways of education,

and that's how it gets back to individuals.

But it kind of becomes decontextualized

because you can see it's no longer looking at a system of a community system

or it's delinked from the land than the land it should be coming from.

When you start to look at different kinds of knowledge,

it's also about when you realize that everything that is,

is about relationships.

Then you start to think about, well,

how do I go about engaging in these relationships?

That's why we're talking about research.

And actually knowledge itself should be done in a principled way,

because everything that is, that it's about...

Well, knowledge is about building a relationship with an idea

that knowledge, remember,

lives in that living context with the land and the community.

So you have to sort of start to think

about how do you go about engaging with knowledge?

How do you go about engaging with the land?

How do you go about engaging with other people?

How do you go about engaging with the environment,

with animals, plants, everything that is around you

to get that knowledge still within its living context?

And I think that's when you get the really good knowledge

and I would sort of say that's when you become wise or have wisdom

is when you get that stuff that's in the center

of the Venn diagram there where it's,

yes, it's gained through engaging with the living context.

And knowledge is still actively engaged in that living context as well.

And you're collaborating with it and working with it together.

You're not trying to separate it out.

You're bringing everything together.

That's when you, I think, can start to get wisdom.

When you start to think about knowledge, well, everything that is in the universe

is about relationships, then you have to start to think,

well, what kind of relationships do I want to be in?

So I'm hoping, if you're a nice person,

you're going to want to be in relationships that are equitable,

relationships that are respectful,

and relationships that are reciprocal and also responsible.

So when you form these relationships, you become responsible for them

and you become responsible for using them in a good way.

So that's where I think living knowledge,

if it's still contextualized and you're engaging with it, becomes really useful.

But you also then once you enter into a relationship with that knowledge,

you also enter into a whole bunch of extra sets

of responsibilities for how you use it.

You are using it in a good way, you're using it in a respectful way

that you're using it in a way that's going to benefit the land.

It's going to benefit communities,

and it's going to benefit knowledge itself.

That's the living context that knowledge emerges from.

Now, I think another thing to recognize

when you start to think about everything that is

is in relationships

so that living context

is all the relationships that everything is.

You can't take things out of its context.

Are you removing them from those relationships?

If you start to think about the relational aspect of it,

then you start to also recognize that, "Oh, yes.

Well, if I'm in a relationship,

I am in a relationship with something else.

That thing is also choosing to be in a relationship with me."

It takes on a whole different set of assumptions in

about what has agency and what is sentience.

I think that if you talk to any indigenous people,

they'll talk about the land being alive, or a rock can have sentience,

or all these different things and how we are engaged

with a live, living universe.

I would extend that to say

that knowledge itself also has that sentience

because we have imbued it with life through engaging in relationship with it.

A big part of what we then need to do when we start to think about how we go

about engaging in relationship with knowledge, and the land,

and the communities is what kind of relationship is

what kind of relationship we want to be in?

I think that when we start to think about that,

it's important to recognize

that each of those things should have its sovereignty as well.

You're not going to try and own other people

if you're entering in a relationship with them.

You shouldn't be, I hope.

But you also shouldn't be doing that when you entering into a relationship

with the land

or entering into a relationship with knowledge.

Each of those things should maintain its own sovereignty as well.

I guess part of sovereignty is having agency.

Knowledge itself, indigenous knowledge has agency.

Now, this is probably the hardest concept for most people to grasp

if they haven't grown up

just knowing this innately to begin with.

Its incredibly hard to teach anyone

because it's something that you have to live.

Once you live it for a long time, then you recognize it.

It's it makes sense.

But when you start to think about

if you're in a strong, healthy relationship,

you recognize the agency of the other person in that relationship.

You are saying, "Yes,

I recognize that you as a sentient being, you have the right to control

your own relationships, your own mind, your own way of being in the world.

I think we all recognize that with, well, hopefully, we all recognize that way

of being in a relationship with other people.

But I think that it's important.

Because we can recognize that way of being in a relationship with people,

if we put those same principles of how we want to behave with other people

into how we behave with knowledge itself,

it really changes the way we start to think about things like doing research

and how we start to think about what we're doing with knowledge.

I always encourage people to answer more, how do you say that?

Answer more wise.

No, that's not great either.

I can't remember how to say it.

But when you put human characteristics on something...

I would say put human characteristics on knowledge,

it actually makes it a lot easier to think about how you're engaging

with knowledge if you think of it as a person.

So think of it as another person that you're in a relationship with,

then it's going to be

you're going to engage with it a whole lot differently.

I think once you start to do that, it also changes the way

that you view things about knowledge because you can recognize that,

say, I'm in a special relationship with my wife,

that doesn't claim that I own her

or that doesn't claim that that's a relationship that...

Because I'm in that spousal relationship

doesn't mean that she's not also a daughter,

doesn't mean that she's not also a mother.

We have one relationship,

but she has 50,000 other different relationships herself.

I think once you start to recognize that,

that there's multiple different layers of relationship there.

I think that also happens

when you're in your relationship with knowledge.

There are a lot of different layers of relationship

that we can have with knowledge.

There's a lot of different multiple layers and levels of knowledge

that get contained in a story.

You've probably all had this happen to you.

Well, hopefully you've had this happen to you

or you've been talking with an elder and they tell you a story,

and it's like, "Oh, yeah, that's a cool story."

You have that layer of information that comes through.

It's like it's a story for entertainment, right?

Once you get a little bit more information

or you're a little bit more engaged a little bit deeper with that story,

it's not just entertainment.

You can recognize, "Actually, that story also has a moral to the story."

There's another layer of knowledge in that story.

It may be that two months, or two years, or two decades down the road,

you might think back in that story and say,

"Oh, that's what that story meant."

Because another experience happens in your life

that story puts a whole different context on story

that allows you to see a whole other layer that may have been hidden

under the surface of the story that now applies

and now you can figure out how it works in your life.

Stories can have multiple, 20 different layers to them

depending on how you look at the story.

I would say that's also how knowledge itself is expressing its agency

in its relationship with you is choosing when to reveal itself.

Sometimes that knowledge will reveal itself to you right away.

If you're ready to receive the knowledge, it will come to you really quickly.

Sometimes that knowledge is just going to sit in the back of your brain

until you're ready to hear it.

Then it will become available to you as usable knowledge.

I think it's up to us to build our relationships

with indigenous knowledge, but also except that sometimes

knowledge is not going to reveal itself to us right away.

I think it can choose not to reveal itself.

Sometimes it's going to choose to protect itself.

It's like, "You're not worthy of that story."

You can listen to it for entertainment value,

but you're not going to get the deeper meaning out of it.

I think that once we start viewing knowledge itself as having agency,

it really also changes the way that we go about behaving

and the way that we can do research,

the way that we actually engage with the world around us.

Now, hopefully that makes sense, because if it doesn't address this,

it's going to be hard to figure out.

If you think of knowledge itself as having agency,

then you start to think about it as being also it's alive, right?

As Indigenous people, we've always had this relationship with knowledge,

just like every culture does, right?

We've always had our own science.

Now all science is, is a system behind how you engage with knowledge.

Western science has a system

for engaging with knowledge that works this way.

Indigenous science has a different system of how we engage with knowledge.

It is based on all these principles that we're talking about.

We have our own science.

We have our own ways of engaging with knowledge.

I think that's a big difference

between Western science and indigenous science

is that we view knowledge as being an active participant in our science,

whereas Western science views it as not actively participating.

Therefore, it's something you can own.

When you start to think of knowledge as being alive,

and it's not something that you can own,

it's something you enter into a relationship with,

and it has a whole different way of engaging with it.

Knowledge is also because it's alive, it's also changing.

and it's also growing as we grow.

We have really ancient traditional knowledge,

but we also have ways of thinking about the world.

These pictures are with my dad with his dog team when he was younger.

Then another picture is my dad

with his granddaughter teaching her how to run dogs.

Yes, we have that traditional knowledge

that has been passed down for generations and generations,

but we also have a ways of engaging with knowledge

that we can then say, "All right, yes,

how will one apply this in a contemporary setting?

I think that this way of engaging with knowledge really teaches us

how to be better human beings and live within our environment today.

It teaches us things like how to learn from the land.

I remember I was talking about knowledge being in a relationship with land,

and us as people,

we can enter into that relationship and we can learn from the land.

I think that's probably the only way we're going to,

as humans, survive the massive changes that we've made to our climate

is to learn better how to listen to the land

and to re-enter into that relationship with land

in a more respectful manner and learn from it.

There's been a lot of different stuff

that's been written and spoken about indigenous knowledge and it's...

One of the things that I'm always really impressed with

is how it changes, and how it's grown, and how we've been able to use it

over the millennia.

Indigenous knowledge is really saying things and understanding things

like, for Cree people, the North Star is the Going Home Star.

It's part of our story of how we find our way back to our home territory

when we've had to retreat from the ice ages.

There's stories that also start along a timeline of four ice ages ago.

When you're thinking of a timeline of four ice ages ago,

that's like 60,000 years,

which is really that there are stories that take place here in Australia

that started trace back 80,000 years.

We have stored those stories in a lot of different ways,

but recognizes that land is alive and that knowledge itself is alive

has allowed us to use this knowledge in a lot of different ways.

You would think, well, how is that possible?

How is it possible to find your way back to your exact homeland

after retreating from a glacier and being away from your homeland

for a couple of thousand years and then going back to it?

How is that even possible?

How is it possible that we know

that Pasifika people know how to navigate their way across the Pacific Ocean

and find a tiny little island that may be 2,000 kilometers away?

If you're off by the slightest bit in your navigation,

you're going to be lost at sea forever.

There's traditional knowledge in there,

but it's also a way of looking at knowledge, a way of learning things,

and that knowledge really is a way of engaging with our environment

that we can adapt and we can use today and we can use it to...

Better human beings, I guess. Yeah, I guess that's the main thing.

We've been learning how to listen to the land and built this relationship

with knowledge on the land for 60,000, 100,000 years.

It's not something that's brand new.

indigenous what we'll talk about when we talk about indigenist research.

It's research that's defining and articulating

our relationship with knowledge.

It's building relationships with knowledge itself.

I would say that this is different than Indigenous studies.

Whereas a lot of Indigenous studies

is building Western knowledge of Indigenous people

or Western knowledge of indigenous issues.

It's a different thing and different kettle of fish

when you start to say, "Well, yeah."

But really what we want to do is not build knowledge of our issues

from a Western point of view.

We want to understand the issues that are facing our communities

from our own point of view and from our own understanding

of knowledge using our own knowledge systems.

Using our systems creates a science.

That's what indigenous science is. It's using our systems.

Again, this is what our systems

are built around indigenous research paradigms,

are built around the concept of relationality.

I already covered that a little bit.

The whole idea that everything that is is in relationships.

Even then, our way of thinking about things

is going to be a relational way of thinking about things.

You think about things by building relationships with them.

But we also then have the concept of relational accountability.

Once you build a relationship, you can become accountable to it.

Again, if you humanize this, it's like when you have a kid,

when you have a child, then you become accountable for that child as well.

Any time you build a relationship with someone,

you also become accountable for it.

Again, I think I've gone over this quite a bit,

but the whole concept that— Oh, that went too far—

that relationships are our reality.

Actually, maybe I'll back up to that one because it's important...

If I can back up.

I think it's really interesting when you start to think about

the way our different languages work even

as that woman Nôhkom means grandmother,

but actually there's no word for grandmother.

It means my grandmother.

You would call her Kôhkom which means your grandmother

because you can't be a grandmother without being a grandmother to something

to someone.

You have to name that relationship in that way.

Those are my kids.

When they're younger,
they call her Chapán
but she also calls them Chapán,
so Chapán is the name for the great grandchild relationship,
which is incredibly important for most Indigenous communities
when we talk about seven generations.

Most indigenous communities talked about
thinking about seven generations and we talk about seven generations
into the past and seven generations into the future.

There's a reason for that
is that because most of us, these days not as common,
but it should be quite common for most of us to have had
or have an understanding of three relationships behind us
and three generations behind us
and three generations in front of us, with us in the middle,
it's like we're in the center of a seven generations
so we should probably
if we were in healthy communities, healthy relationships,
living healthy lifestyles,
we should know who our great grandparents are.
We should have met them.

We should know who our great grandchildren are

because we will meet them when we get older.

To me, that seven generations thing has a really

practical human side to it in that

we have an understanding or at least the ability

to have that understanding of what it's like

to be a great grandparent or a great grandchild.

Thinking about relationships are our reality.

Then you think about, well,

and then knowledge is all about relationships.

Then it starts to get you to think about, well, then how does knowledge grow?

Where does knowledge come from?

I'll play this little video, but there's no sound on it.

Hopefully, you can just watch it as it goes through.

Now, this animation was made by Lisa Roberts,

who is part of the Living Data Network.

Now, she started working with scientists

that were really getting concerned about climate change

and trying to figure out why the heck aren't people doing

anything more about climate change?

Part of their understanding was because people don't understand

climate science.

She is working with different scientists and artists to try and get people

to understand the science behind climate change because

most scientists are incredibly bad at explaining ideas.

If we can maybe use artists to explain ideas instead of scientists,

then we get a lot better concept of how ideas work.

That was Lisa's description or animation that describes how knowledge grows.

Knowledge isn't something that's static. Knowledge grows and it spreads out.

I remember, when we were talking about all those strings at the beginning,

it spreads out and grows.

I can have an idea and it's going to spread out and send out

all these strings to all these other people

and all these other concepts and ideas.

That in turn will set up a whole another ripple of ideas and concepts,

which is going to set up a whole another ripple.

When you have an idea, it's not just something that's individual,

it's something that knowledge itself can grow and expand

and take off from there.

I guess that's why I wanted to talk also a little bit about research

and how research works.

It's really all you're doing when you're doing research

is entering into a relationship with an idea

and then start bringing that growth thing with an idea.

I thought I could explain it a little bit better

when Brenda was talking about research is ceremony.

That's one thing I actually didn't talk about in the book

is why research is a ceremony

so I could have unpacked that a lot better.

I'll tell you some of these things now.

You have to start with that concept and that understanding

that the reality is relationships.

If you don't understand that, then the rest of it doesn't make sense.

Everything that is, reality itself, is built up of relationships.

This elder here is Emil Wolfgramm, who is a Pacific elder,

he's actually Tongan, but grew up with modern people in New Zealand

and lives in Hawaii.

I would say he's a transpacific elder.

He was explaining to me the concept of Mana,

how if reality is relationships,

the space between any two things in that relationship is sacred space.

Whenever you do something to deliberately enter into that space

between things in a relationship, that's Mana, that's entering into sacred space.

That is why research is a ceremony, because what you're deliberately trying to do is enter into that sacred space between and build a closer relationship with an idea.

Ceremonies are designed to intentionally enter into that sacred space.

I think we quite often enter into that sacred space accidentally,

and so you can get, like, an aha moment when it's...

But I think that part of that system,

remember we are talking about systems and knowledge,

we can do things in a more systematic way

so that we intentionally enter that sacred space.

Ceremony enters that sacred space between things in a relationship,

and it makes that relationship stronger.

Builds a closer relationship with that thing.

That's really all research then is.

It's a ceremony for building a closer relationship with an idea.

I'd say it's a ceremony for building a closer relationship with knowledge.

Generally, it's going to be knowledge about a specific topic,

but it could be with knowledge itself, if you're being a philosopher.

There's lots of different ways of doing that.

That's a whole other three hours of talking is how you go about

entering into that ceremony.

But for now, let's just say that when we think back,
to that little triangle I made near the beginning around
there's a relationship between knowledge, land, and people and communities.

Part of it is also recognizing that the role that the land
or country itself plays with indigenous knowledge.

I think that the land itself is like, remember how I was saying,
just because I'm in a relationship with my wife,
that relationship doesn't stop her from being in other relationships.

I recognize that this is one sacred relationship, but also recognize
that she has a sacred relationship with our children.

Just like I have a sacred relationship with our children.

It's like recognizing that relationship.

That's how I also started to see
the relationship between knowledge and land and people.

I think the land itself can hold a role in or does hold a role
in shaping and storing, holding, and sharing indigenous knowledge.

The land itself can heal us.

It can hurt us, but it also plays a role in helping us to learn.

I was thinking it's really interesting when you start to think about
some of the really long stories that we have,
even just thinking about this yourself,

if you are probably, like my age or older, I don't know if you can see this

where you are,

but you probably remember when you were a kid,

when you went on summer holidays, it used to be a big production number

where you travelled somewhere, like those of you that went up

to the lakes for the summer,

you probably then had a ritual where you stopped at the same place

as each time for lunch or whatever, and it became a whole ordeal.

You had your stories from, "Oh, yeah, I remember when we stopped at this place

for lunch this time," and you have your little family legends

that build up around your trip to and back from cabin country,

or you have that trip that you made back to the reserve every year.

If you're going back to visit your parents on reserve or your grandparents,

it becomes part of a cycle and it creates a story that the stories are tied

to specific spots on the land.

Now, if you extend that to think about, well, yeah, that story is built up

over my lifetime.

What happens when you build up stories that are connected to the land

over tens of thousands of years?

The land itself starts to store those stories.

My family has been travelling

from the Forks of the Saskatchewan and Pascal River to our fish camp

would have been on the Clearwater Lake for thousands and thousands of years.

Obviously, we built up a whole system

of knowledge that was tied to that travel between those different spots.

When you look at Australia,

there have been people travelling on this land for 80,000 years.

They've built up stories that are connected to different spots

on the land that have 80,000 years' worth of history.

That's how they store a lot of knowledge is through walking the land.

But it's hard to then, well,

sometimes then you got to remember those stories.

You've got to walk the land itself.

But that's I think probably also

how we have a lot of our star knowledge story

is just a reflection of what's on the ground.

Instead of walking on land,

we could walk through constellations to give us that same knowledge.

That's an aside, but I think that part of it,

what I want to say is that relationship between the land and indigenous knowledge

really teaches us how to behave and it teaches us how we should be acting.

There's different laws that are associated with how we act

and engage with the land.

In Cree, there's concepts of [foreign language 00:56:21],

which are the closest thing...

What I should perhaps start by saying, I don't speak Cree myself fluently at all.

This is from working with my dad and how to figure out these concepts,

the concepts of natural law and sacred law,

and that's what a lot of the stories of the land are.

That teach us the natural law and teach us

the sacred law of how we should behave ourselves.

Sometimes there's personal stories that teach us natural law.

I did this and this happened.

You learn from that and you learn from the mistakes

or you learn from your success.

There's also sacred stories that teach us

more of that sacred law of how do we need to behave in a more sacred manner.

I'm thinking the natural law equivalent would be that, don't stand up in a canoe.

The natural law consequence of that is someone's going to fall in the water.

The sacred law is don't disrespect water or act respectfully towards water.

The consequences of breaking the sacred law are a lot different

than the consequences of breaking natural laws,

like you'll fall in the water.

The consequences of breaking sacred law are a lot more long-standing and they can affect your family for seven generations in either direction.

If you disrespect water,

you're going to start having droughts, you're going to start having floods,

you're going to start having people in your family drown.

Breaking sacred law has a lot more serious consequences than breaking natural law.

I think it's interesting also when you start to think about those things

and it's thinking of them in a contemporary setting, it's like,

well, what's our natural law and sacred law and how does that apply then

to what we have as the rules for behaviour online and internet protocols?

How is that going to apply to,

can we put those protocols for behaviour into point to point protocols

for how computers talk with each other and how we go about digitizing things?

It starts to just think about

different ways of applying these things, in the modern context.

But recognizing why we have those rules and how we share those rules is important

if we want to think about how we're going to apply them then in modern context.

Again, it's really thinking about, well, how should we behave?

Because if everything is in relationship,

then how we behave in relationship is going to affect reality itself.

That is the sacred law is going to be around that.

Natural law and sacred law are around behaviour.

If we behave ourselves properly, we're going to get good information
when we behave ourselves properly in our interactions with knowledge.

If we misbehave, then we're going to get knowledge or disrespectful,
we're going to suffer the serious consequences of that.

I think that global climate change is a really good example
of disrespecting knowledge.

It's going to have a really big impact on the next seven generations of humans.

A lot of what we do as humans is...

A lot of what causes us stress as humans is induced by ourselves.

It's like we are the ones that brought it upon ourselves.

The land that really is teaching us
not to rush around and push ourselves to our limits.

Land probably doesn't really care what we do.

Because it's going to go on without us.

Whether we're here or not, the land is going to go on.

What it does care about is if we behave ourselves properly.

If we're walking in the right direction,
then the land actually will probably heal itself.

I don't think that we have the ability to heal the land.

I think it's very...

Humanocentric to think that we as humans,

can heal the land.

All we can do is heal our own behavior

and then the land will look after itself, I think.

We have to recognize also, we've done a lot to fuck up the land.

We need to start thinking about acting in a more principled way.

What are some principles?

What are some rules for behavior?

Now, when I talk about rules of behavior,

it's not talking about rules in a Westernist sense of,

"Thou shalt do this, and thou shalt not do that."

That's when I talk about principles of behavior.

Again, everything is in a living context, right?

If I say, "You have to do this, or you have to do that."

You could say, "But my context is different.

What about if I'm over here and I can't do that?

Or what if I'm over there and I'm supposed to do this?"

That's why I think you behave in a principled way.

Then it's up to you to use your own common sense,

and to use your...

Read the space that you're in, read the land that you're in

to figure out how to apply these principles in that specific context.

Three principles around how to behave ourselves

are based on [inaudible 01:01:54] Weiwen.

That is practicing love in action.

If you go about and engage with the world, engage with knowledge,

engage in your relationships in a loving way,

that is where you will find the most truth.

You demonstrate love in action by being caring.

You care about things, you're not apathetic.

You actually care about things.

Things you become impassioned about.

And if you care about other things, it forces you to share.

Because when you care about some things,

then things like inequality and inequity, they disturb you.

So you will do your best to build up equity through sharing.

It's also about being compassionate.

That compassion applies to your relationships with the land,

and how you treat the land, but it also applies

in your compassionate with yourselves, and compassionate with other people.

I think that that is where truth lies.

That's a different view of research in where your reliability and validity,

research aren't necessarily...

They have external reliability. It's relational validity.

Relational reliability is based on,

"Am I acting in a caring manner, and sharing, and being compassionate?"

Putting those values towards indigenous knowledge itself

will give you the truth.

Also being compassionate with yourself is laughing every once in a while.

You don't take yourself too seriously.

I don't take myself too seriously.

Feel free to say, "Oh, you're full of shit."

That's okay.

Yeah, sometimes I am full of shit.

It's part of what we're learning as we go along.

Learning how to engage in these relationships.

If we're all serious all the time in our relationships,

it gets pretty boring.

If you ever go to ceremonies about you,

you'll realize how much joking around there is,

and how much they're making fun of each other.

Actually, the best jokes are when you're not making

fun of someone else, but making fun of yourself, I think.

That's part of that being compassionate, and being truthful with yourself.

I think that's really how we go about engaging with indigenous knowledge.

It's through following those principles.

Now, there's a lot of other principles that meant

how you show those principles is being respectful, and reciprocal,

and responsible, and all those things.

For me, as a free person, it comes down to those concepts.

Then you can apply those concepts anywhere.

It doesn't matter if you're on a subway in Hong Kong,

or floating down the Saskatchewan River.

I try to be a loving person.

I guess this is where it comes back to the personal, right?

When you think of indigenous knowledge as having built up relationships

with indigenous people over thousands of years,

it's up to me, myself, to think about how I, myself, am going to act.

How am I going to apply this?

I guess, where my story begins...

If I see myself as part of a long continuation

of thousands of generations of people,

I'm part of that long continuing story, that tapestry.

But my own story, my own thread of the story

begins and ends with how I, myself act.

Part of that is, "How do I separate myself and untangle myself

from the stories that had gathered from all the elders?"

Elders have told me a lot of different stories.

I would say that that doesn't give me the ability to speak

on behalf of that knowledge.

But it allows me to speak from that knowledge.

That's a big distinction there.

It's like, "Yes, that is informed way I am as a person.

It doesn't give me the right to own that knowledge,

but what it does, is to inform me.

So it's informed how I act as a person.

That changes my story as I go forward.

The story is really my actions.

It doesn't matter where I am in the world then in how I'm going to act.

I just put this picture in there because it was really...

I was taking a picture of those totem poles,

it wasn't until afterwards...

That's so [inaudible 01:06:52] totem poles,

it wasn't until afterwards that I realized

that there was a big crane in the background.

Yes, our traditional knowledge, our traditional ways of doing things,

it's not all about the past.

It's about how we engage going forward.

It's about our own story, and how we engage going forward from here.

We are part of the modern world.

When you start to engage with other indigenous people,

don't view them as only this history.

I mean, we are a part of that history.

That history informs who we are today, but we are here.

We're in the contemporary world.

Probably indigenous person working up in that crane at that time at the airport.

It's also that history has informed us, but it's also who we are.

I always say,

"Just because I eat Chinese food doesn't make me Chinese.

Or just because I listen to rap music doesn't make me African American.

I am who I am,

because of the core philosophies and the core beliefs that I hold

as a person inside of myself that shape how I engage with the world."

It's how I engage with the world around me that makes me

who I am as indigenous person.

I recognize my place in the world.

I recognize my relationships with the land.

I recognize my relationships with knowledge.

I don't have to be in a [inaudible 01:08:17]-free nation

to be a [inaudible 01:08:19]-free person.

I don't have to be on my traditional homeland to do that.

But it does shape how I engage with the land here in [inaudible 01:08:28] country.

It shapes how I engage with knowledge.

Each of us, as indigenous people, have our own traditions.

We have our own knowledge systems.

It's the systems behind it that make it a science

that we carry everywhere we go.

It doesn't matter where you are, you still carry it.

That is really working with knowledge, than it really...

It's not a story until it's told.

Knowledge itself doesn't...

Who cares?

It's not useful until you actually learn something.

And you haven't really actually learned

something when you learn how to use it in a good way.

Remember it comes back to that how you behave.

So how I act.

How I act as a person in telling that story

is an important part of the story itself.

That's how the knowledge carries forward.

And that's how we, as indigenous people, survive.

We've got a lot of different ways of documenting and storing that knowledge.

Whether it's in tattoos, or whether it's in the stars,

or whether it's... A lot of different ways.

We have a lot of different ways of telling our stories, whether it's through art,

whether it's through mind knots.

We've got a lot of different ways of telling our stories

and transmitting that knowledge to the next generation.

Doesn't necessarily need to be in writing.

It doesn't necessarily need to be a book or an article.

Knowledge becomes useful when you can start to use it

and change people's lives.

That's why I would say that, if your research doesn't change you

as a person, doesn't change who you are and how you engage with the world,

then you haven't done it right.

That's how we need to start thinking

about how we engage with indigenous knowledge,

how we engage with indigenous people in general.

Other indigenous people is start to think about our own behaviors.

Even when you're telling a story about the plot line or the conclusions.

But where are you going to take the story next?

It's not this story that came up to here.

That story's an intricate connection between

the people, the land and knowledge and where they are going from here,

but recognizing people's sovereignty to take that where they want to go next.

Start to think about where your own story goes next.

That's it for me.

Maybe we will turn it over to...

If I could figure out how to stop share screen,

to the question and answer.

Thank you for all of that, Sean. It was beautiful.

I am touched by the generosity of all of the thoughts and ideas you shared.

I'm going to be carrying, in particular, this last statement that you have that

if your research doesn't change you, then you haven't done it right.

I'm going to spend some time thinking about that

and thinking about how I'm going to actually talk to students

about what that idea might mean because we're always about knowledge production,

but as opposed to sitting with it

and thinking how it's actually transformed you as a person.

There are a couple of questions

in the chat, and I'm going to pose the first one.

The first question here.

There is no name attached to it,

but the question itself is how do we understand

the relationship between indigenous science and Western science?

The questioner feels that somehow

they must coexist or complement one another.

Can they? I suppose.

I would say that Western science is a subset of indigenous science.

It's slightly problematic and I think that Western science

is like an indigenous science from a specific area

that went viral or turned cancerous, and it's grown out of control.

But Western science definitely is incredibly useful

for a lot of different things.

What it's not good for, is seeing the big picture.

Western science is really good at honing in on individual things

and looking at the small picture

and how two different things are really related with each other,

or three different things, or four different things

are related with each other

and building up ways of measuring

how strongly those things are related with each other.

What Indigenous science is better at is saying, those things are related.

Western science excludes everything else that goes around those relationships.

We're saying, yes, those things are important.

We got to see the bigger picture and how are those three things also related
to everything else in the cosmos around them?

Yes, they definitely work together.

They're not mutually exclusive at all. They're just sort of different focuses.

We have different ontologies, obviously, that guide it
in guiding what is actually worth doing research on.

But the methods can be interchangeable.

Actually, that's a really interesting way of thinking about it
because people often see these in opposition or binary in such a way
that they can't actually work together.

I like that different way of conceptualizing it.

It's like what's near and what's far,
what's in focus, what's a little bit further away.

Yeah and they're just different systems.

It's almost like saying, which religion do you choose is better?

At some point you got to just take things on faith and you work from there.

You can't say which ontology and which view of the world

is better than another or which one is more right.

It's purely philosophical, but that philosophy guides how you act.

If you have an ontology that's more positivistic,

you're going to act in a different way

than if you have an ontology that's relevantistic.

But it's still reality.

It's still there, whether it doesn't care how we think about it.

A second question that we have,

and please everybody, if you have questions,

please put it in the question and answer and I'll read them out for you.

The second question is to what degree,

if any, are these beliefs appropriate to be enacted by nonindigenous people?

More specifically, settlers cannot speak from Indigenous Knowledge.

But is it appropriate perhaps to say

that we can try and live Indigenous values

if indeed we are?

Definitely.

Actually, that's why I probably have changed a lot of language that I use,

although I'm not very careful about how I use it.

But the language that I try to use

and call it Indigenist Knowledge and Indigenist philosophy

because it doesn't belong to Indigenous people

as a racial group or whatever.

It's just like this is our culture, and this is

the way that we have been taught to think.

But most elders will say, well, but if everyone thought this way,

the world would be a better place.

It's open for everyone.

I always say it's draw the analogy.

It's even though I'm a man,

I try to live according to the ideals of feminism as well

in those ideals of treating people not equally, equitably.

But that doesn't claim that I have the lived experience or knowledge

of what it feels like to walk through the world as a woman.

You can claim to be an indigenist

and say, yes, I believe in this philosophy

and yes, I'm going to try and follow the ideals behind this philosophy

and try and live that way myself,

but without claiming to have the knowledge of what it feels like

to walk through the world as an Indigenous person.

It's like I can experience childbirth

by being there at the birth of my children,

but I have no idea what it feels like to be a woman and give birth to a child

so I've got a different experience of it.

Yes, definitely you can try and follow these ideals.

That's why we say you can claim to be an Indigenist

without claiming to have

the same experience or the same knowledge, lived, felt, experience of it.

A number of people are thanking you for the teachings.

Lisa Taylor, in particular, Magwitch for the teachings.

I'm sitting with the sacredness of spaces within relations,

and I'm wondering if there are relations

or knowledge that is sacred and how can we name that?

Well, it's all sacred, but there's different layers of sacredness.

Sometimes those stories,

you get the surface level story that's entertaining.

Sometimes there's a moral to it.

Sometimes there's a specific teaching for you.

Sometimes this is a sacred story that teaches all humans how to behave.

Some of those sacred stories are only for specific people to know.

I'm trying to think of an example.

Different people have different...

Well, not all people have this,

but some indigenous cultures have layers of knowledge that are only eligible to people once they have reached certain levels of initiation.

Part of doing that initiation is proving that you are worthy of having this knowledge.

But there is certain knowledge, that not everyone should have, because if you haven't proved that you're worthy of holding that knowledge, you shouldn't have it.

There's one of the elders that I worked with used to carry around this crystal, that he said he could use it to help to diagnose people that were having problems.

He said it was like an X-ray.

He said, but you have to be really careful with it if you don't know how to use it properly because it was uranium.

If you don't know how to use that properly, you could die from radiation poisoning.

But because he had built up a relationship with the knowledge of how to use that properly, it was okay for him to use that knowledge.

But if I would try to pick up that crystal and use it,

I would probably die from radiation poisoning.

That's a very concrete example of that.

But I think that applies, also, in different areas.

Some knowledge is specific to specific land and specific time.

There are some stories that can only be told at certain times of the year,

in certain locations

and we need to respect that because remember, it said that

in relationships always,

you have to look at the context around it.

Some contexts are more sacred and available only to people that

are ready to be there.

Other things are less sacred

that anyone can enter into that relationship.

The next two questions play off each other

each other a little bit

and feed into what you're just talking about there.

One of them is so it's clear that while you say

that you're not a language speaker, you know the language at least enough

to start thinking through some of these ideas.

How does Indigenous language shape knowledge, but also

how do you sit with the truth then of that within the research that you do?

Maybe they're not related at all.

No, they're related.

To me, that's a big part of what happened at residential schools

was at one level, it was genocide,

but a level that was just as insidious was epistemicide.

It was a real attempt.

They were pretty effective at killing off kids physically,

but they were even more effective at killing off a way of thinking

about the world.

Really what it did was

stop people from understanding our philosophy,

stop people from understanding our pedagogy,

like how we treat kids, how we learn.

It was incredibly effective at that.

Part of doing that was separating us from our language.

Our language is developed in relationship with our land.

Each language has a specific tie to the land

that allows people to build that relationship.

Again, I can't help but bring it back to personal communication,

interpersonal relationships.

If you've been with your partner for a long time,

you have these little cold words that you use with each other,
and you have slang that you use that anyone from outside the family
wouldn't know what the hell you're talking about.

I think different Indigenous communities
have built up this language in relationship with their own land,
but it's hard for anyone else to understand unless they come
and live on that land
and then they start to speak the language,
then they can pick up that knowledge.

But it loses a lot in translation.

I recognize that a lot of the knowledge I have is like a pale imitation
of what it would be if I knew my own language better.

Yes, and that definitely impedes me from knowing more.

But what it does do sometimes is it allows me to go
into other communities that don't speak
so we can use English as
a common meeting point, even though English
definitely has its own philosophy and system behind it that doesn't work
with a lot of Indigenous concepts.

Sometimes you have to spend an hour talking about a word
and say, "Okay. I understand that."

But then it's like you understand it.

Then you think, "Well, why doesn't English have a word for that?"

But we can't have these common discussions sometimes

through speaking in English, or French, or whatever

that we wouldn't be able to have if we didn't.

Great.

That's the pale imitation, I think.

Great. I think what you're pointing to is how it's all part

of that web of relationships.

When you take language away, it changes something.

When you take children away, it changes something.

Every little piece that you pull

out of the puzzle takes it in a different direction.

It is genocidal, it's epistemic side, it's all of those things.

It comes back to this conception

that it takes away our land at the same time,

which to stay on that theme.

Just a couple of more questions,

and then I think we'll probably wrap for the night.

But Brian Ray asks,

land and an individual's relationship to land is quite central

to the conceptualization of knowledge and knowledge production

that you've been talking about.

But many indigenous people and settlers live in highly urbanized societies,

and they may have weak relationships to land that is natural.

How does this lived reality influence research and knowledge production?

The land is still there. It doesn't matter where you live.

That's what I was trying to also get at the end.

I'm still indigenous if I'm in Hong Kong or I'm still indigenous if I'm in Sydney.

We have changed the land and changed the shape of the land

in a lot of different places, but it doesn't change the land itself.

You could still be in a relationship with the land even if you're in the city.

If I touch this desk in front of me, it's made out of wood,

and I know what wood is,

and I know that that is connected to trees.

I have a specific relationship with this desk in front of me,

and I can build a relationship with my understanding of the trees

through how we have shaped them in our built environment.

But just because it's a built environment

doesn't change the fact that it's still an environment.

We create a relationship with the environment around you.

Even if it is a built environment, it still builds a relationship with you.

Sometimes you'll recognize that your built environments
are incredibly unhealthy,
but then once you start to realize that,
then you use that knowledge to change your built environment.

Yes, I recognize we need to have more opening windows here
so we can get fresh air.

I would say that's indigenous knowledge.

Yeah, I think that's really important
because so many of us live in urban spaces.

You start to feel like, "Okay, I don't have my language,

I don't live on the land,

somehow I'm less than as an Indigenous person"

when it's all part of what our world is.

I'm in Algonquin territory tonight.

I try to think about what those relationships mean.

You're in Australia thinking about what those relationships mean.

This is a bit more specific of a question.

Do you think that indigenous knowledge can transform Western healthcare
to make it culturally safe for indigenous people?

Yes.

Perfect.

It happens when you answer close ended question.

Yeah.

I do the same thing.

That means to elaborate.

Definitely.

I think when you start to think about everything is about relationships,

people's relationships and people's historical relationships

with the healthcare system in Canada has been pretty fucked up.

Excuse my bad language, but when

the healthcare system was complicit

in a lot of pretty crappy human experimentation

on Indigenous people for sterilization of Indigenous women,

when you hear stories like here in Australia, for example,

up until '68, I think it was,

and in Canada, it would have been the same.

Aboriginal women weren't allowed to be in the same room as White women

when they were giving birth.

Any traumatic birth that required intervention...

Indigenous women would give birth on the steps or the brand

outside the hospital.

But if it required intervention, they would take them into the morgue.

A lot of Indigenous children were born in the morgue
because they couldn't take them into the operating tiers
because there may be White people there.

Having stories like that,
and that's people I know today,
like they're elders, but they're not that old.

They're in their 60s, 70s have those stories from their childhood.

Obviously, that speaks to a pretty screwed up relationship
that they have had with the healthcare system.

Hearing those stories,
of course, then when you go into this hospital now and it's...

I always compare how our fight or flight response kicks in.

It's like if you were out
walking around through the bush around Ottawa there
500 years ago, when you heard something rustling behind you in the bushes,
99 times out of 100, it's going to be the wind.

But that one time in 100, it might be a bear
that's going to attack you.

Your body has been trained to react to that.

You can ignore the 99 times that it's a wind,
but if you ignore it all the time,

you're going to get killed because the bear is going to kill you.

Your body has built to react to that thing.

If you think about fatness, you say,

"Well, my interactions with the healthcare system

are 99% of the time people are fine.

Most of the people that I engage with in the health system are fine.

Any system, whether it's the police, or the justice system,

or education system, most of the people there are fine.

But it's that one person that's there

that is that you know if you ignore them, people will kill you.

99% of the time when I engage with the police,

yeah, they're perfectly great.

But that one time, if you meet that one racist cop,

it has life consequences that it will kill you.

You have to always be on guard.

If that person is making a noise there and you hear that blowing in wind,

you have to react because you don't know if it's going to kill you or not.

Of course, people are going to be hypersensitive when they're in situations

where they're dealing with health systems,

when that health system has killed people in your family before.

Even if the person that you're dealing with right now in front of you,

they're not racist,

but you have to be constantly on your guard.

That takes a toll on your health as well, right?

You're constantly on guard.

It keeps falling on your health.

Absolutely.

It's 8:30, but maybe to end up on a slightly lighter note

than the shittiness of healthcare, one of our last questions was

do you have additional material that you would suggest for people

in terms of reading so that they can dig deeper

into the kinds of ideas that you're talking about?

Who's your favorite?

If you want to learn more about Aboriginal Australian philosophy,

I think my favorite book

by Aboriginal Australian author at the moment is Sand Talk:

How Indigenous Thinking Can Change the World by Tyson Yunkaporta.

It came up year before last.

If you want to learn more about how research can be used

to engage and improve the relationships between Indigenous people and Canadians,

you could read Research and Reconciliation,

which came out 2019 as well.

Great. Thank you so much.

What I'm seeing in the question and answers

is a lot of people really thanking you,

feeling like their hearts are open, their minds have expanded

and feeling really positive about this experience.

I would like to thank you from everybody here

at the University of Ottawa for graciously giving up your morning

in Australia.

I didn't mention that at the beginning,

but Sean is in Australia, and it's early morning there,

so while we're ending our day,

he's just beginning, and [foreign language 01:32:12].

It meant a lot to have you here.

Thanks.

Thanks for [inaudible 01:32:20], and hopefully [inaudible 01:32:22].

Not at all.

It was fun for me, even though I was talking most of the time.

You can't be an academic

if you don't enjoy the sound of your own voice.

Absolutely.

Absolutely.

All right. Thanks.

Take care.

Bye-bye.