Webinar 2: Navigating Indigenous Land-Based Education During a Global Pandemic
Video Transcription

Participants:	Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg), Glen Coulthard (Yellowknives Dene), Alex Wilson (Opaskwayak Cree)
Abbreviations:	LS = Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, GC = Glen Coulthard, AW = Alex Wilson

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(0:31) LS: My name is Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, I'm from the Bobcat Clan of the Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg nation and I am a member of Alderville First Nation. I'm in Nogojiwanong, or Peterborough today. I'm a writer and a musician and an academic, and I've been engaged in land-immersive education for twenty years. The last seven years I've been an instructor at Dechinta and I'm also a member of the Board at Dechinta.

(1:06) GC: My name is Glen Coulthard, I'm a member of the Yellowknife Dene First Nation. I'm a professor at the University of British Columbia in the critical Indigenous Studies program, and I've been with Dechinta for the last ten years.

(1:24) AW: Hi folks, I'm Alex Wilson, from the Opaskwayak Cree Nation, which is located in Northern Manitoba, or surrounded by Norther Manitoba. We're in Treaty 5 territory and I'm a professor at the University of Saskatchewan in the Department of Educational Foundations and also the director of the Aboriginal Education Research Centre there. We have a master's land-based program in Indigenous land-based knowledge, so we've been working on that and then also working with different communities who are doing land-based ed from K-12 as well.

(2:05) Question: **What Does Land-Based Education Mean to You?**

(2:11) GC: I've been engaged in land-based and community-based education in the North for about ten years now. I think what drew me to it was, first of all, some concerns I had with the way in which Western education institutions are detached, not only detached from Indigenous communities and concerns, but also replicate some of the violence that we have seen. So when I think of land-based education, it first came through an understanding that in order to break the relationship between the violences of colonialism and the Western educational system, which worked in concert over a couple of centuries, or a century at least, to dispossess Indigenous peoples of their lands and to contribute in essentially a genocide against Indigenous people, that we had to break that relationship. One of the ways that I hope to break that relationship was by taking a land-based community-based approach to dismantle those systems. And if any sort of decolonizing education is going

to be worth the paper that its written on, it has to reconnect to and centre land as a pedagogical foundation for that.

(3:52) LS: I guess for me I think about it in terms of Nishnaabeg life and I think that this kind of land-immersive or land-inherent education for me is about building the next generation of knowledge holders and elders. I think that it's a very very old, very ancient way of relating to each other and of sharing knowledge and of sharing experiences, and it provides an opportunity to gain an understanding of the knowledge, the practices and the skills that provide the politics, and the ethics, and the practices that bring forth Nishnaabeg life. So, I see this kind of education as being normal and as being about creating and living in Nishnaabeg worlds.

(4:58) AW: I agree with that too, and I think I would add that it is a continuity of energy that bring us into the wider universe. It's what we've been doing since the beginning of time. One thing about land-based education…sometimes we don't say *Indigenous* land-based education, but I think in the context of our conversation between the four of us, it is implicit that we are talking about Indigenous land-based education. I'm thinking about the story that I often tell on the drive from Saskatoon to Opaskwayak, there's this gravel road called the Tote Road, and lately they've been logging that road. They've been clear-cutting the boreal forest in that region, so [the change] is really drastic and dramatic and evident. A couple of winters ago, I have this photo, and there's a pile of old growth boreal forest that's been cut and the pile of logs is almost a kilometer long. Think about all of that knowledge that was cut in the logs. It's the first time that this forest has been cut, think of those logs as elders, and then think of the next generation of trees coming up. Who is going to teach the next generation of trees to be trees, if all that knowledge is gone, and the trees are gone? So, this kind of parallels with what's happened in many ways to us as people, as Indigenous people, there's this severing of knowledge and the intentional severing of knowledge through different policies and practices. Who's going to teach the next generation of our people to be in relationship in different relational ways, and accountable ways, to the land (and the land includes sky and water). To me, land-based education is about reconnecting or maintaining or ensuring that the connection between one generation continues to the next generation. So, we're fortunate in that we have not been clear cut, although we have experienced genocide, and we have experienced the severing of land-based knowledge, which can be called epistemicide. To me, land-based knowledge is kind of the undoing of epistemicide and epistemic violence that has happened. As well as the violence that has happened on our bodies. So, there's an element of knowledge of generations and sharing with generations, but also a mobilization and protecting the land as well. That's my understanding of it. And I would say that it is very contextual, so all of us will have a different understanding of it depending on where we come from.

(8:35) Question: **Why is Land-Based Education Important to You Personally on the Lands Where You Live and Work?**

(8:40) LS: Well, I think that…I'm sort of working right now in the Dene context, and I'm working in an Anishinaabe context, and those two contexts are quite different. So, it's very difficult in the Williams Treaty area to have access to land and access to water. You can't actually go out and engage in any land-based practices without being confronted with dispossession and colonialism in a very sort of real way that's a solid barrier. A lot of us are living in cities, even in our territories, and so, the challenges to…It feels like a real act of resistance to be engaged in any kind of land-based practices, whether that's fishing or hunting or medicine gathering for ceremony or ricing or sugar bushing, and it actually puts a target on your back with racism and white supremacy. It's also inherently risky because of the white supremacy in Canada. I think another big part of it, like Alex was saying, is that the closer you are to the land the more you realize the land is struggling and the land is contaminated, and the land is struggling under the impacts of global warming and industrialization and contamination and encroachment. It becomes difficult because we often don't have these amazing beautiful pristine places to go to feel renewed, they are more conflicted than that. There's an aspect of grieving and aspect of sadness and there's an aspect of…kind of refusing [the colonialism] that has got us into this place in the first place. And I think that's why to me, land-based education is extremely important right now…because I'm thinking of the pandemic and some of the challenges that we faced with having reserves closed and crown land closed and having provincial and national parks closed, so basically the wilderness is closed, and then having our elders being very very careful because they're in high-risk groups and so….they're quarantined. But the land is still also there, and the land is still teaching…and my ancestors have lived through five, six, seven pandemics. They socially distanced for a decade in the middle of the 1600s, being alone with your immediate family in isolation was the practice that we did every winter. And so watching my daughter, who spent a lot of time in land-based education, cope with the pandemic, it's so similar to…she goes back to her toolbox from being at Dechinta. What do we do when it rains for 10 days and we can't get out, well she gets out the box of strout and beads and canvas and she starts doing inside crafts. What do we do when everyone's getting sick of each other and things are getting a little snip-snappy in the house, we go for a really long walk [laughter]. It's interesting to see her apply a lot of the skills that we have at Dechinta in terms of governing the community to the situation we are in with the pandemic, and that's not something that I thought of before, that those skills that we are teaching in terms of governance and managing emotions, in terms of solving conflict, in terms of working really hard with what you have and fixing problems with what you have. I think about last semester when it was raining and

raining and raining, and the elders made massive tarp shelters for everyone just based on what we had on the island. And I think that kind of communal relationality, and that politics of getting along together in a community with what you have is a critical part of land-based education that you can't get anywhere else right now.

(13:23) AW: Yeah, I'm thinking about that too. Relating this back to the pandemic, for a while there, we were just sitting and looking out the window for days on end, but for me it made me realize how much is out there. I saw so many interesting things just outside my window, like…a few weeks ago a bobcat, or sorry a lynx and a fox went by together, and I watched them walk across the lake and they were obviously together, because the lynx kept getting ahead and would look back and wait for the fox [being like] 'hurry up'! They trotted across and something must of scared them and they went, and the fox was really yelping on the way back, but the yelp was like the Fox was in heat, so there was this little coupling going on, not sure exactly what was happening. It made me think of like….is this stuff always there and we just don't notice it, and now we just have this kind of luxurious moment to sit and look out this window every day for hours and hours [laughter]. It just reminded me that yes, everything is always there, and we have to slow down our practices to even notice, and to notice the changes in the land that Leanne was speaking about. Like in our territory, we have been impacted by Manitoba Hydro on one side of our Saskatchewan Delta and by SaskPower on the other side. So, there's two major dams that go between…And then the Husky Oil spill also impacted the river system, and the run-off from big commercial farms, the phosphates get into the river from the fertilizers and that impacts the river systems. And then the American Limited Corporation has really damaged the area by making thousands of little channels and so-called micro-dams, and they're still doing that, and have been doing that for decades and decades. So, I think that land-based education is important right now, because people are noticing in ways they haven't noticed before, or maybe they have always noticed, but maybe in the past, maybe a couple of decades for sure, but our way of noticing and reacting to the observation has kind of changed because it's more about doing work you have to do, or our everyday busy lives, and so the pandemic has kind of allowed for us to slow down, and I don't know if that also meant that animals have noticed we've slowed down, so they're coming in more to change the ranges for the territories that they have been pushed out of…Like are there more animals now really? That's what people are saying, but is it just that we're giving them more space? So, land-based is to me important because it allows for that relationship to be nourished again, and it's allowing us to notice things, like minute changes in the environment, and big changes as well. And because our area, like other regions, is highly restricted now, people aren't supposed to be going out and tracking, like maybe one or two people, or a family unit, so some people are doing that, but others that have been able to…who more depend on wild

food, have not been able to do that as much. So, people are really sharing and learning how to share food and knowledge in a different way, and it's not always through online, it's happening through word of mouth too, and through meetups. Like people have been doing this ninja thing, where they drop off wine and snacks on people's doorsteps, but what has been happening a lot in our community is people will drop off food, and this link to food sovereignty has been important as well. The destruction is just so evident and… If the next generation doesn't have any kind of real love and relationship with the land, then how will they care about it? So, I think it's important to put the brakes on…And go back to the very important values about what a relationship is, and what it means when our relationships need nurturing.

(19:12) GC: So, to place my own kind of life or what I do as an educator in context, I think land-based education became really important to me in a very personal way of trying to rebuild myself. I've grown up on Sahtu territory as a kid, which meant I had a lot of access to the land when I was a little one. And then especially in the summers we would spend a significant amount of time on the land with my brothers and sister and mom with our family. So it was a pretty immersive context, it was just part of one's life. I wouldn't say I learned a lot [chuckle], but I was comfortable being in that environment. And then getting closer to high school we moved to Kelowna, which is a really violent place in terms of native and non-native relationships, and as a teenage in that context I kind of purposefully retreated from that part of myself to the point where I became no longer comfortable in my own skin. So, when I started becoming more active politically in my late teens and early twenties I started re-engaging with that, and re-acknowledging that aspect of who I was. And I especially did so when I started going back to school. But what I was learning about Dene history and politics and ethics and centrality of the land in terms of our understandings of freedom and well-being, I felt it was…there was something missing in terms of that approach to understanding the issues that we were facing, but also the ways in which we were developing a form of political critique. Whether it's dispossession, capitalism, racism, gender violence… I felt that I could not learn that stuff from books and there was something missing in terms of who I was, but also my understanding of that…And that's when I started to realize that in order to understand these issues, I had to rebuild myself by rebuilding my relationship with land and community. So, I purposefully kind of [started] my own both intellectual, educational, but also personal sort of reconstructing of myself after the kind of experience I had as a teenager living in an urban context in the south, and I felt the need that it was really important that I start re-engaging in these practices and these relationships. And it was only after doing that, that I came to see how important this was to education. Like by this time I was well set off to be a teacher of some sort, professor, whatever you want to call it, and it seemed to me that you couldn't understand these issues that the Dene were

facing…I couldn't understand my own…the impact this had on me; colonialism or violence, or whatever…without understanding the kind of perspectives that were disclosed to me through reengaging with community on the land. So, land-based education for me came explicitly through this personal history and the reconnection I worked really hard to establish even though struggling with notions of shame or even initially being reintroduced to the land and being scared of it. I don't think I could have come to who I am as an instructor/teacher who's in the business of education, or even who I am as a scholar, without going through the rebuilding process, and particularly rebuilding the relationship to land.

(23:40) AW: What you were saying there just reminded me of my own childhood and how you know… we don't really talk about land when you're a kid, you're just playing outside…And how important that is and how understanding like, you know our early beginnings as researchers for those of us that are research nerds, but you know…understanding how to play, and how far you can walk into the water before you get a [unknown word] and how you can play on the ice before it breaks, and then making rafts, like little things that our families have done for forever, and just the importance of the playful aspect of it as well. So, I guess the normalization of our relationship with land, I think for myself as well, leaving or going away for university was kind of a reminder to coming back…after university meant a re-acquaintance with the land. And what does play look like as adults? That's something I always think about too, and I ask students, how can we re-ignite that playful aspect of our relationships with land. So, there isn't that fear. Because I think a lot of people, and kids even, are really afraid. For example, we have community gardens and kids are afraid to put their hands in the dirt even, and so they don't know where the food comes from, or anything like that. So that fear-based stuff is so pervasive in society. And I think a lot of video games they're about hiding and you know, protecting yourself because you're afraid, so you just reminded me again that…that kind of playfulness is important to help keep people away from their fears and to increase comfort level. And land literacy I guess is what we could call it.

(26:15) LS: I like the idea of playfulness and the joy that Indigenous people get from being on the land because I think when you take Dene students out on the land for six weeks in a community of people who don't know each other, there can be a lot of fear and apprehension and a lot of shame, and those knowledge holders, those elders, work really quickly and really hard I think to build relationships of trust, and they do that through humor, and they make people stay by demonstrating not in a performative way, but in a hardworking way how much knowledge they have of the land, and how safe we actually are wherever we are because of their knowledge and skill. And I think that's part of land-based education, it's really beautiful to witness, when you witness people kind of separating themselves from fear and anxiety and shame, and then looking at their aunties or uncles or elders they

are meeting for the first time in awe, in terms of the kind of the skill and knowledge base that these experts have. And just watching that transformation is really amazing. You get that from immersive situations where you're on the land separated enough from the rest of the world for a long enough time to develop those relationships of trust and have the time to develop a skill set as well.

(28:10) Question **How Have You Seen Land-Based Education Change?**

(28:20) AW: Yeah, like growing up land-based education was not a formal title, it was just what you did. Everything you did basically. And then when you enter formal school and land becomes something "out there" right. It's not part of it. So, in our community, around thirty years ago I guess, they started our own development of our school system, there was this kind of opportunity to now go back to realizing and making it a priority this connection of land. The first thing they did in terms of formalizing land-based education was pairing elders with kids, so they would have an elder go out with a trapper, and that was really important for a number of reasons, but at that time, building a trusting relationship but also learning from them from a kind of mentorship role. And then there's this period where land-based education became a punishment almost. And so, when kids didn't fit the mainstream educational model, you know they were skipping school and seen as "at-risk", they were sent away to the school in Winnipeg that included field trips. It was seen as a big punishment, so you didn't want to be one of those bad students. And then it became like, localized as students who did not fit the mainstream model for a number of reasons, it could be cognitive or physical, and then there was this kind of "special program" where they would do land-based... It was not necessarily a punishment, but it was an opportunity to learn that was not part of mainstream systems. So, today I think, well what I've seen change, is that land-based education is becoming an almost "catch-phrase" because it's become so popular in the last four or five years, and now every school seems to be doing land-based education. But there's such a range of understanding of what it is, and it's really important to have these conversations about what it means to you, or what it means to your community, or for your region. Because for some people, it just means doing activities outside, and that can be very problematic because we know, some of the activities really just align with colonial patriarchal models and it is not really changing anything, it's not about land protection or understanding the history, or even any Indigenous knowledge and then for others, it's culture camps, for others it's forest schooling, or outdoor schools. And then for others, it's like taking mainstream curriculum and then just trying to figure out ways to do it outside. So, there's such a vast range…I think we've gone that whole trajectory of different ways that land-based education is understood

(32:27) LS: I think that for me, when I look back twenty years ago, land-based education was something I think Anishinaabe people associated with white people, with the outdoor schools and outdoor bound, and field trips, and scouts, and I was motivated to get into this field I guess because of elders and knowledge holders and their absolute concern that as they were dying, they were not being replaced. So, the massive amounts of knowledge and practice that were being lost was an absolute concern, and they were driving this idea of getting elders and youth out on the land, centering Anishinaabe knowledge holders and knowledge, having the critique because they were already doing the critique whenever they would tell stories or talk about residential schools, or being run off of their trap lines, or being confronted by clear cuts, so that was already a part of Anishinaabe education. Then bringing in things like language and ceremony and culture, I think what we were trying to do was something very, very different. We were trying to build an Anishinaabe world, we were interested in rebellion and revolution and figuring out a different way other than heteropatriarchy, colonialism, and capitalism as living. And that's what was driving it. And it was coming from very ancient ways, this was the way these folks were raised before they were stolen away to residential schools. I think you know, I was thinking about that last night in terms of the anti-Black racism that we are seeing in Canada and all over the US, and the mobilization and idea of abolition and defunding police, and building societies where you don't have the problems that necessitate that kind of surveillance and kind of policing violence, and these folks were born into that. So, I always go back to that because that motivation was very intimate and very personal, it was also really collective. It was a lot of heart in that move towards education, it made sense. It was moving towards building a different world.

(35: 25) GC: Yeah, I think that what I've seen change over the last ten years, mostly has to do with…there's this certain amount of legitimacy that I think has been afforded to what we are calling "land-based education" in institutions in the post-secondary realm. So, when we were first trying to advocate for this land-informing critical thought and perspective, and practices it fell on deaf ears. People often wouldn't listen, and it was still thought of as having a classroom outside, or derogatory assumptions that that's not education, it's just work and labour, or crafts. So we really had to battle this understanding that what you are learning from community, and what you are learning from these practices in relation to land and water, actually could inform oneself intellectually and provide a critical framework for better understanding not only your history and the situation we find ourselves in as Indigenous communities, but also heaven forbid an alternative to the structures that are keeping us down and keeping us away from our land and what it has to teach us. But it's also like the more recognition, and I'm not saying it's…We still deal with the other forms of understanding land as just work, and land-education as more just kind of developing certain technical skills over time. But the more it has been recognized as a source of criticality and knowledge

that might inform our critiques of the present and our aspirations for the future, the more that it's been attempted to be institutionalized in the ways that take the edge off of those perspectives. So, you see land-based education now almost synonymous with pushes towards reconciliation, higher education, and you rarely hear land-based education in the way that Alex had framed it, and the way I think of it, as teaching people the importance of land defense for instance. And then of course, when you're embedded in these colonial institutions, you have a semi-autonomous relationship to it, it becomes hard to fight back in terms of the ways in which that recognition shapes what you're doing on the land in terms of education, and now all of a sudden, for legal or other reasons, you are being demanded to come up with some evaluation structure against which you have to grade students in certain ways in order to make what you are doing legible to those inflexible sorts of Western and colonial institutions. And I think that's one of the issues we are either pushing back on or trying to figure out how to best embody what we are doing and what the community is offering in terms of its knowledge. Yet, also understanding that we are also…I feel the institutions we are building are attempting to rebuild economies in radically sustainable sorts of ways. We're paying elders, we are able to pay elders rightfully for the knowledge that they are sharing with us, and willing to share with us. We are providing otherwise very precarious workers with an income that allows them to spend time on the land instead of having to seasonally work in mines or other less desirable forms of community. And in this way, the land-based education that we are trying to support is also supporting a broader economy that isn't beholden to and dependent on the extraction practices and industry that is destroying the very foundation of that relationship to land. And if that means we have to partner with universities on a hopefully semi-autonomous way, in order to provide like a less precarious form of program delivery, than we are going to have to just deal with those ways in which it can serve to co-opt us into providing programming that is counter to the purpose that we got into the business to begin with, which was a critical pedagogical practice that couldn't form our politics against capitalism, against heteropatriarchy, to better understand colonialism and to dream of different worlds and futures.

(41:24) Question: **What Challenges Does Covid-19 Post to Indigenous Land-Based Education Programs? Is it Possible to Switch to 'Land-Engaged' Education Instead?**

(46:16) AW: Well I think, speaking about the masters we have, it came from a request from the community from Elders and other people because they realized that the graduate programming that was out there wasn't really helping our communities that much. I mean it was, it was turning out a lot of principles and vice principals and teachers, but there was a really important or you know…valid concern that was raised that it often just replicates the system, and that's what we've been talking about why land-based education is so

important. So, they said, we need something where our teachers can have the opportunity to go deeper with the knowledge around Indigenous knowledge. A lot of the stuff that would be done in the mainstream admin or graduate programming around Indigenous education is just kind of surface level. And our elders and knowledge keepers were saying you know, you can't really engage on a deeper level, like a philosophical level around some of our concepts and…understandings of relationships that exist in the language unless the land is part of it. So that was kind of the impetus that allowed us to start the land-based masters at USask. And so, in some ways…We kind of ignored the mainstream institution, but in other ways, it's just so frustrating sometimes because there are so many rules and regulations that were created for a system that really wants to decimate and destruct land. The challenges have been as simple as being able to pay an elder cash rather than having to have them wait for months and months for you know…an invoice to be processed, and then they get a cheque, and do they have a bank, all of those things. To having to fill out excessive safety forms and regulations. And I understand the concern around safety, but you know, to me, working in a lab with 20 chemicals that can potentially blow up a building, you know makes more of a risk than going outside and working with the land, but it's not seen that way. So, you start to see these hierarchy of values really magnified when we're doing land-based work when we are doing it within the institution. I think that people have done really great in kind of finding ways to undo the system by attacking it in different ways to make it weak. So, it's an ongoing frustration for sure.

(45:14) LS: I think that in thinking this through I have two primary concerns and the first are our elders and knowledge holders. Supporting them through this time and our ability to sort of funnel resources into the community to support that bush economy and to support community members getting out on the land. And then our students. Because I think in both Alex's program and the Dechinta program, we have really really amazing Indigenous students who have the ability to affect profound change in their communities… And I think that we can't abandon them at this time…When I think of the term, I worry about the term land-engaged….So I think that that term has to be temporary and it has to be a stop-gap to get us through the pandemic and it can't replace land immersive, land-based, land-inherent education in Anishinaabe education or in Dene education because I think it would be attractive to institutions to have land-engaged –It's much, much easier from their colonial perspective and from an institutional perspective to deliver land-engaged education because you don't need to pay the knowledge holders, you don't need to have camps out on the land, you can do it on zoom and in the classroom. But it also falls apart, what if you had math engaged education instead of math, like you're just talking about it instead of doing it. So, I think this idea that… that Indigenous people after everything that we've been forced to give up are now forced to give up land as well. We had to abandon our language, and if we teach in English, we

have to abandon our knowledge holders because the university can't figure out how to pay them. We have to abandon our knowledge systems because they don't conform to Western knowledge, and now we have to abandon this as well, that's not okay in the long-term. Now having said that because we have to have a commitment to our students and our commitment to our knowledge holders, what are the ways that we can…I go back to what Alex was talking about, having that one-on-one mentorship, but that requires institutions to be paying those teachers, and then having facilitators like myself where students can come in and check-in and talk about what their learning in these one-on-one mentorships in their own communities, which can be physically distanced. So that's one thing that might work. And it works a lot better for students that have already had some taste of land-based education or already have relationships set up in their communities because the base of land-based education is relationships, it's relational, and you cannot develop the kinds of relationships of trust that Alex and I were talking about on Zoom and email if you've never met those Elders before. So, I think we have to really honest about the risks and what can and cannot be done. You can't do land-based education on Zoom. You miss everything that's important and everything that's meaningful. Are there ways of getting students out on the land with knowledge holders that can be facilitated through Zoom and through online work as a stopgap and as a temporary measure during the pandemic, that's certainly worth exploring with both of those groups of people (chuckle). But we really have to fight against institutions getting on this band-waggon of 'if they did it in 2020 then we don't need to go to Alex's community anymore, we don't need to give the $1000 towards supporting your land-based programs'. So, we need to make sure we don't lose the ground we already made.

(49:23) GC: Yeah, I think I share a very similar position. It's not a replacement but if this demand is made on us in order to get through this emergency than we ought to take that seriously and think through these issues. One of my concerns is…One of the ways in which the Dene were driven off the land was by making a life on the land no longer economically sustainable. So, it was the emergence of capitalism in the area, which changed the political economy of the price of furs and the harvesting and what you could gain from harvesting, and then people had to start going to work in mines and oil rigs, and stuff like that. To the point where they couldn't be on the land, being on the land was ironically too expensive to sustain oneself. So being on the land now is a very costly endeavour and what we are doing as an organization has to be…had to have the resources to redistribute resources into community, so people can learn on the land by providing them with salaries and the money that they need to be able to do that kind of stuff. So, my concern is that if we demonstrate some significant, or what is perceived as "success", in transferring some of this education online than it gives people…it gives institutions and government reasons to claw back on expending those very important resources that would get us out into

communities and on the land and paying elders what they should be paid, and paying land users and harvesters, so my concern is that if we actually do this too well, or what is perceived to be too well, than we are shooting ourselves in the foot by providing incentive to not fund these critically important programs. And then my second point is like, this was the exact reason why I got into…or kind of started to understand that immersive sort of need to engage in land-based practices because they provide a framework for understanding the world and possible futures that is irreplaceable. Like you might be able to somewhat approximate it, in something like a book or in these contexts, but you are not going to understand it in the way that it kind of radically transforms your body and your identity and your subjectivity to use like…fancy words in ways that give you a clear understanding of what needs to be done. What are the objects and issues of concerns? And what might we do to build something that is alternative to that? All of that is missed if it's online. Like a Zoom meeting is even less of a…it has less of a critical impact on how we understand the world than reading does. And I just worry if it's…if this is kind of seen as an alternative to what we are doing on the land than various powers that be, especially in post-economic crisis that we're entering into…well not post-economic crisis but into the economic crisis that we are clearly already in, they'll start cutting the absolutely fundamental resources that we need to be able to provide this truly decolonizing education. I really worry about it.

(53:47) AW: Yeah, I agree. You know, like, we are all expected to just move our courses online and then I was like, how the hell am I going to do that. How do you move online? There's a lot of webinars popping up right now on land-based education online, and my worry with that too, is this commodification of it now. And the appropriation of it as well. Now it's going to be reduced to soundbites almost. And so, like you said, even reading as you're establishing a relationship with the text and all these other people that you are citing, and I don't know how that's done through video and we know people, students and others will just kind of…move through things. You know…They watch short thirty-second clips and that's it. Again, there really is no opportunity for the same kind of deep level knowledge. So, what's missing maybe is the spiritual component. Maybe that's something you know…How do you convey that? I did really love that term land-engaged but now Leanne you've pointed out some really important things to think about. I liked land-engaged because it's action-focused. My immediate image around land-engagement is being engaged with land. But then as you were talking, well that's like engagement you have to have consent, and how do you have consent if you are not actually in relation with the land. So, that's the first thing right. You can't be engaged to something without the other entity agreeing to it. So, I guess that would go back to spirituality as well. What are the things that we do to take care of one another as land-based educators? Like the three of us have known each other…I've never met Glen in person, but I feel really close to him. And

I've spent time with Leanne over the years. Like that kind of building of our own relationships allows us to have this conversation. And we have our own relationships with our communities, our elders, and the lands…the different lands we live and operate and work and…And so, that's like completely removed if you just stream videos. And then it becomes a product right, or a deliverable, and that's kind of how grants work, and universities as well. So, it links back to assessment. So how we're going to do assessment now? Like the university would like to see certain outputs, but again, how do you describe a spiritual kind of connection and understanding and relationship and the responsibilities that go along with that, that takes time…So those are some concerns and thoughts. I really liked…Like one of the courses I'm doing this summer is Queering Indigenous Land Based Education. And that course we've really been trying to think of ways to Queer in terms of undoing, turning upside down. Kalaniopua Young is a Hawaiian Scholar and I've been talking to her about wueering, she uses the term queering…She says, 'queering is transforming poison into medicine', so I like that transformative element to it. So, thinking about ways that we can queer this whole process. Any ideas people have are welcome.

(58:10) LS: I have wanted to pick up Alex on some of the risks in terms of cultural appropriation and commodification of Indigenous knowledge in these contexts. It reminds me of some of the conversations we are having in the late 1980s and early 1990s around documenting traditional ecological knowledge and separating that knowledge from the knowledge holders and therefore separating it from the ethical systems through which sharing is governed, separating it from spirituality, separating it from the land, separating it from the knowledge, and then that focus on the data component. I remember others saying that by the time you get this document, or the thirty-second video of them harvesting medicine, you are just getting the data. You are not getting the breadth and depth of knowledge. We have so many historically and contemporarily so much experience with having those medicines stolen and appropriated…that technology stolen and appropriated…And so it's also a worry of mine of having this now…so ubiquitous - everybody has an iPhone. Everybody can film their elder and get it online. And it's creating this sort of body of knowledge that contains a lot of misinformation and contains a lot of information that can be re-appropriated and used against Indigenous peoples. And we're not having that kind of critical conversation, which I think we will be having in the classroom. I know when we do land-based education, constantly we are talking about consent, constantly we are talking about individual self-determination and we are talking about who's knowledge it is, how do you get to share it, practices and protocols. And so I think it's a big worry. I think that I've learned the most about Queering land-based education from the land itself because the land doesn't conform to heteropatriarchy very well. And so, it's been in these land-based situations where I've seen people not upholding the traditional sort of

gender roles that they might uphold in the city or in the town, or that starts to fall apart when you are watching animals out your window engaging in not heterosexual relationships when you're seeing how consent and how diversity and how that respect for individual self-determination and a rea;;u profound respect for diversity work together in a community…that's where I feel like…And the language too. When you start to be able to talk with fluent speakers about how the word for Earth is just Aki, it's not actually Mother Earth, it's not actually gendered. That's when I learn the most about that from the land. So, I think again, the land is sort of the foundation of that learning. It makes me sad that we're…we have to have these conversations right now. I felt like…a year ago I would have been surprised that…(laughter) To look in the future and see me on Zoom with my mentors and teachers and colleagues trying to say in articulate terms that you can't do land-based education without the land (laughter).

(1:02) AW: In summary (laughter)

(1:09:41) GC: Yeah, and even to like…It's like when you put it like that it just seems ridiculous (laughter). Some of the stuff I was thinking though, is that if we are being forced to do this, like Leanne says as just simply stop-gap… I think some of the resources that we've re-directed to do this kind of work should really be driven by what the community wants. So, we've been talking to [community member] and some of the important language documentation that they want done, so hopefully whatever comes out of this we'll still be of use to the communities that we serve and have obligations towards. I still have that anxiety over it.

(1:03:10) Question: **How do we Move Forward Amidst These Risks? What Can we do to Support the Indigenous Students and Communities that we are Connected to During This Time?**

(1:03:18) AW: I'm thinking now… like I have my syllabus from last year and I was just going to get them to kind of do…do it on their own, in their own little unit, and then some of the students decided on their own that they wanted to…because part of this summer was going on a trip on the Saskatchewan River so they would see some of the…just the way it's been impacted by the dam, but also another part of the territory that they haven't been on. So, they're going to do a canoe trip in their region in Northern Alberta…And then they are going to take the readings and divide up the assignments, and I mean that works but now I'm thinking maybe a better way to frame the course would be to have them ask their community Elders or people in the community what their most pressing needs are. And then they can develop something around that for more of a project based. Now I'm just thinking through what's going to have the most impact or maybe it just shouldn't be that… maybe it should be about recognizing COVID as the situation and that they just have to do something different this time, because you know, a

lot of them are still in restricted travel areas. You know they're trying to do their child's schooling, and there's no daycare, so there's that whole element as well. Now I'm just thinking like…what Leanne was saying at the end, we shouldn't be doing land-based by video. This is why they choose land-based programming. I don't know.

(1:05:39) LS: I actually think that's a really good approach to figure out what communities and knowledge holders and students need right now and use that as the basis to drive it, because I think if we think about this as a temporary situation, we don't have to…if we can't deliver land-based education, there's still other things we can do to make life easier and better and provide hope for communities and students and for knowledge holders, and so maybe…there are things we can do online that are not land-based education but are related…like storytelling, like language learning, and like the politics of colonialism, and that's sort of…that sort of community care work that I think is super important as well. I think that our conversations with knowledge holders and students…figuring out where we can have the most impact given that our resources and situation are so thin.

(1:06:52) GC: Well like I said, as long as I've been part of this organization doing land-based education in the kind of context that we do…it's been 100% about giving back to the community or making it relevant to the community. Even the post-secondary aspect of it, it came through community consultations about the barriers that Indigenous folks in the North face when they want to pursue post-secondary education. It's about making sure that we can employ elders in ways that they feel their knowledge is respected and that gets them living a life out on the land that would otherwise be very difficult to sustain. So, I think in the interim, if this is something we have to do, then what we are doing still needs to abide by that aspect of giving back to the community. I've talked to elders and old timer leaders who are like, well let's get this history down through dialogue or social distance interviews, like a lot of these people are asking of…And I know that Kelsey and other Dechinta folks have talked to [community member] about how this awkward sort of moment we are in, we might be able to justify more resources going into language, like language revitalization projects…And then, thrive through this shitty moment until we can be back in forming our learning communities on the land again.

(1:09:02) AW: Some of the smaller things that I've been trying to do with my students, like kind of physical science things…I've found Max Liboiron's work very enlightening and helpful. Her Baby Legs project in particular. I did this with my grand-nephew, it's a way to detect plastics in the water and so things like that the students have really enjoyed doing, but it's easy to do with making your own equipment, so monitoring pollutants and plastics…You make a little catchment system that you can still be on the boat or a canoe, and it catches micro-plastics…because apparently there's micro-plastics in

every single water way in Canada…And then the other thing is this micro-travel, which is entering in to some kind of relationship land, but it could be a small handful of land like a little square meter spot and just recording that and then the observations around the moon too have been helpful for students, and I've used that as an activity in all of my classes because I find most people in general, don't have an understanding or think about how the moon and the earth and the sun and beyond that greater universe interact and impact us. So, starting with those Moon observations have been really helpful to get people to start making those connections and understanding of relationships in a wider kind of scale and also helps understanding like the queering of the binary that we put on nature. So those are just a few of the nuts and bolts kind of things I've been doing.

(1:11:22) LS: I've done that Moon Journaling too with students that I got from you, and it's been really amazing. And then I've also extended it to doing a Sun Rise and Sun Set one. And I think those are really easy ways…And then also constellations too of getting students to connect to the land and urban environments. And just record their reflections of that transformation.

(1:11:59) AW: What do you do for the sun rise and sun set? Just have them observe and reflect?

(1:12:09) LS: Observe and reflect and then record the time, so at different times of the year it changes. So not recording the phases of the moon but the time.

(1:12:25) AW: So, one thing I was thinking of having them do was that, but have them place a rock down, like to place a rock in the middle because those are how those celestial circles are made. And my dad was talking to me about this…And to have them put one down. They could do one every day or every few days. One for sunrise and one for sunset maybe. And then have a pin in the middle. And then I think that will help them understand…Well the cycles, but also how superficial the Medicine Wheel stuff is, so they get a, better understanding of really what that meant. And then they can maybe start aligning some of those rocks…Maybe a constellation or one of two stars in a constellation…I was thinking about trying that this year.

(1:23:10) LS: I've also done it because our Anishinaabe people used to mark the Solstice by having a stick and then when the stick cast the shadow and it lines up, when the Sun is right over head…Our word for that is "the sun has stopped," so you can do that right up to the Solstice in June. And then you can do that in December as well, so that's a cool thing too. And I think doing research around pandemics is something that people can do online, people can do in the archives, people can do in their families. The amount of pandemic knowledge that my mom and grandmother had, that I didn't know about until we got ourselves into this situation was amazing. I think there's a lot

of oral history that can bring students into closer relationship with their ancestors and to the land.