Webinar 3: Academic Perspectives on Indigenous Ethics and Online Land-Based Education During COVID-19

Video Transcription

Participants: Noelani Goodyear-Ka'ōpua (Kanaka Maoli), Heidi Stark (Turtle Mountain Ojibwe), Lianne Charlie (Tagé Cho Hudän), Jeff Corntassel (Cherokee), Alex Wilson (Opaskwayak Cree), Glen Coulthard (Yellowknife Dene)

Moderator: Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg)

Abbreviations: NG = Noelani Goodyear-Ka'ōpua, HS = Heidi Stark, LC = Lianne Charlie, JC = Jeff Corntassel, AW = Alex Wilson, GC = Glen Coulthard, LS = Leanne Betasamosake Simpson

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(0:32) LS: Awesome, [introduction in Indigenous language], thank you guys for zooming in and hanging out with us and spending this time together. We invited you here today because in your own ways you all have direct experience participating, leading, and organizing Indigenous land-based learning programs and interfacing with post-secondary institutions. As we are all now painfully aware, we are in the situation of a global pandemic and governments, institutions, and funders, in response to this new reality, are pushing us to move our programming online. This presents a series of challenges for Dechinta and for Indigenous peoples in terms of our knowledge, our responsibility to our elders and knowledge holders, and our responsibilities to Indigenous students, and to the alternative economies that our programs support. So, we did an initial webinar with myself, Glen Coulthard, and Alex Wilson. Alex Wilson's land-based master's program has already started online, so she had to make the switch immediately. At Dechinta we cancelled most of our summer programming, which was supposed to be a 3-week canoe trip down the Dehcho river that was accredited. And we are working to try and do sort of mixed delivery for the fall. We had an initial conversation between the three of us and then last Friday Kelsey and I had a webinar with all of our community partners and Indigenous alumni from the North to talk about some of the challenges that they were having in terms of land-based learning and this push towards going online. They spoke really eloquently about the lack of internet access in the North, the lack of computers, iPads, and iPhones in the North. They talked about how upset elders and knowledge holders are right now, remembering all of the impacts of the 1928 pandemic on their communities. And they talked about how important the kind of land-immersive programming is where they go out on the land for a long period of time with elders and have a chance to experience, often for the first time, what Dene life and what a Dene bush community looks like. So, for this webinar, we wanted to focus on ethics and we wanted to focus on a group of folks who are interacting with institutions, with universities, to see if we can come up with some solutions, and I guess some interim solutions so that our programs and our knowledge holders and our students are protected. I think

one of the big worries in the back of everybody's head is if we move this all to Zoom, then funders and Universities will say 'great, that's a really cheap way for us to deliver this programming'. So yeah, that is why we brought you here. I thought we could just start by just giving brief introductions to ourselves. I am happy to lightly moderate this, so if people can kind of volunteer to speak to the question of Indigenous ethics, land-based learning, and going online, and then kind of play off of each other that is great, so a kind of organic discussion can happen. But if that doesn't happen, I will jolt in with the questions. So Noelani can we start with you in terms of introductions?

(4:40) NG: Aloha, [introduction in Indigenous language], my name is Noelani I live on the Island of O'ahu. I work at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa in political science. In relation to the conversation today, um, one of the programs that we run at UH Mānoa is about a five-year old program now for undergraduate students that is specifically targeted for Native Hawai'ian and Pacific Islander students. It is called [name of program], we try to really build relationships between the students and the community organizations who are doing land based and ocean-based work that is about feeding communities and revitalizing Hawaiian land-based practices. So that has been a challenge that I can reflect on a little bit with you here, um, and then I also wanted to just note and also ask permission for my partner, he is a high school teacher at a Hawaiian culture-based charter school that is secondary, he teaches, the picture that you are seeing right here (points to backdrop), he leads a project that restores taro farming in that area. He is here, we've both been talking a lot about what this shift to online and Covid social-distancing means in our communities and for Hawaiian education. And so, if it is okay for him to listen in and maybe even pop into the discussion, I just wanted to ask that. So, anyway, that's me [thank you in Indigenous language] for having me, I really appreciate the opportunity to be talking with such brilliant colleagues and friends.

(6:50) LS: Miigwech. Uh, Jeff.

(6:56) JC: [Introduction in Indigenous language]. It is good to be here; I am happy to be here today. My name is Jeff Corntassel, my Cherokee name is [Indigenous name], I'm from Cherokee nation and I dance at the Etchota grounds. I'm coming to you today from the unceded Lekwungen, Whyomilth, and W̱SÁNEĆ territories. I think a lot of my work really has been with Noelani back in the day, doing field courses with the University of Victoria and the University of Hawai'i Mānoa in Indigenous politics. More recently, it's been developing field courses through Indigenous studies and land-based courses and then also doing land-based practices and even mentorship with sage and circle at the University of Victoria. So, I am honoured to be here.

(8:14) LS: Lianne?

(8:19) LC: Hello, my name is Lianne Charlie. I am Wolf Clan of the Tagé Cho Hudän Big River people and I am from South Central Yukon. I am also an instructor at Yukon University in the Indigenous governance degree program and a PhD Student… uh no… candidate, almost done [laughs], in the Indigenous politics program at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. And yeah, I am really honoured to be part of this conversation, at the very least just to witness and listen. We are still developing the land-based components of our degree, we haven't even started a conversation about what that's going to look like possibly in the winter for students. So, I'm really curious to see where this conversation goes. Also, I've been a guest faculty member at Dechinta, so I'm prepared I guess to speak to that. I can't even imagine what that could look like online, so looking forward to seeing where this conversation goes.

(9:35) LS: Heidi?

(9:37) HS: [*Introduction in Indigenous language]. I am Heidi Stark, I'm an associate professor at the University of Victoria, and I'm also the director for the Centre for Indigenous Research and Community Led Engagement, where we had a chance a couple years ago to bring folks together, Leanne and Glen were a part of that as well, to talk about research ethics without thinking about it in terms of COVID impacts, so it's great to revisit the topic today. I also have had the opportunity to teach land-based law camps with John Borrows, primarily out of his community in Cape Croker but have also taught some law camps with Valarie Waboose in Walpole Island. So, I'm happy to kind of share any insights from those experiences and have had a chance to teach just once for Dechinta and participate once in the IGOV University of Hawai'i exchange. So, thanks for having me here, I'm looking forward to the conversation.

(10:55) LS: Awesome, Alex?

(11:03) AW: Hi everyone, I'm Alex Wilson from the Opaskwayak Cree Nation. I'm at home and that's the Clear Water lake behind me, it's part of our traditional territory. In Cree the word is [Indigneous word], which actually means white fish. And I am really glad to see some of you, not in person, but kind of live. I know Heidi you're over at the Jackman Humanities Institute, and I was there last year, and others of course I've read some of your works so it's exciting to be a part of this. So, we have a master's in Indigenous land-based education at the University of Saskatchewan. This is the tenth year, the cohort that is graduating this year will become the 90th students that will be going through it. So, they are all teachers or administrators in First Nations or doing some kind of land-based education in their schools that they are at. And they are from all over. So, we've had quite a few from

Hawai'i and this year we've got [names], and then all across the land really. So, um, this Covid has really impacted us because this is their last two courses. So, one of them is queering Indigenous land-based ed, and then the other one was their capstone, and we had planned a canoe trip down the Saskatchewan river, in the delta especially, which is also in our territory here. So, we've been trying to talk to others to see what's possible in terms of, you know, I'm doing this remotely in a way that they're still going to gain something out of it rather than just doing readings and that kind of thing. So, I'm excited to hear what the rest of you have to say.

(13:01) LS: Thanks Alex. Glen? You're on mute…

(13:50) GC: (Laughs) Still haven't gotten use to this Zoom life. Hi everybody, I'm Glen, obviously I know all of you, I'm glad that you've joined us here for this conversation. I am of the Yellowknife Dene First Nation. I am a professor at the University of British Columbia in the critical Indigenous studies program as well as the departments of Political Science and Geography. I have also been working with Dechinta in a land-based educational context for ten years now. And I am just glad that everybody has kind of… we'll put our minds together to think through some of the issues that this present context has put us in in order to keep doing the important type of community-based learning that we all do in a way that holds up the ethics and politics of our communities. So, I'm looking forward to the conversation, mahsi.

(15:36) LS: Glen can you just start us off by talking about some of the ethical issues that you've been thinking through in terms of Dechinta and how we are operating through COVID, and then if you make it super interesting other people will want to speak next.

(15:56) GC: Well, I'll try and make it…[laughs]… well its urgent. So even if it's not super interesting we've been placed in a situation of urgency. So as Leanne had mentioned in the introduction, like most Indigenous communities, the North has been faced almost, it seems like, in decade cycles with pandemic-like cycles of either influenza, or originally smallpox, and now Covid, H1N1, which kind of brings back this history of invasion and intrusion and colonial dispossession. So, the North really takes this seriously and one of the things that they've clamped down on is travel within the North but also making sure that everything that is taking place adheres to the most, kind of, up-to-date facts-based health protocols. So as educators in the North who work in a land-based, very intimate community context, it puts us in a tricky situation because we have to be able to continue delivering this decolonial sort of programming, redistributing resources from our organization back into the community so they can feed their families, they can feed the community, they can keep those traditions alive in this context, but we're also having to adhere to this push in terms of safety regulations that is

wanting us to be able to offer this type of education in a virtual online context. So, in the conversations that we've had collectively as a group, we all recognize that that's impossible. The type of education, the type of learning, the ethics and politics of what we do, being deeply engaged with community, being in consultation with community in terms of what we deliver, how we deliver it, where we deliver, what's being taught, who is teaching, all requires very careful face-to-face sort of relationships. And our concern is that without a public or government sort of context that doesn't understand that it would be very easy to see this transition to something that could be done for significantly cheaper in an online context. So, we are forced to kind of navigate this push to do this work safely out of unfortunate circumstances but also really make very certain that what we're doing cannot be replaced by this type of learning. The other thing that we really want to take seriously from my perspective is the type of community work and the land-based work that we're doing really kind of has a history in the kind of political economy and political struggles that the Dene nation for autonomy and self-determination and a reclamation of our lands. So, one of the initial proposals that were kind of floated around in the 1970's when we were thinking about these issues, and then into the 1980's, was using our institutions that we built as a means of redistributing resources into communities so it would make that on-the-land mode of life sustainable again. Because once capitalism had seeped into the North, Dene men and women and young folks had to start giving up some of their life on the land that they would prefer to live in order to integrate themselves into the emerging wage economy. And what Dechinta is doing is trying to make sure that we can support that work on the land by redistributing economic resources from other places into the hands of elders and land users and artists and instructors. So, we really need to be able to keep doing that, and this is what we keep referring to as the stop-gap, this is the demands that we are meeting in order to keep operating so that we can keep doing land-based education, but we want to think collectively with you on how to do that which still stresses the urgency of face-to-face on the land learning, where this venue is not sufficient to replace that [gestures at Zoom screen]. Just in terms of some of the stuff we've been doing, like in most contexts in Canada and the US, we've been adhering to the public health office in terms of how we go about operating our work. The folks home-based in Yellowknife have been putting together bush kits to provide to community members so it gets them out of harm's way and safely on the land. People have been working for the most part, like Leanne and I and others, from where were held up in the South. That's why I'm calling from Musqueam territory right now in Vancouver. And we've been redistributing resources again into the community so our staff and instructors can get out onto the land and harvest meat and other stuff to redistribute back into the community, and to educate on a smaller scale. So, we have folks taking out nephews and nieces and their kids and kind of documenting the knowledge that they're transmitting

across those generations and through those families to show how significant this is, even in a crisis situation.

(21:29) LS: Heidi can you maybe talk about some of the concerns, ethical concerns, that you might have in taking the things that happen, and the learning that happens directly between students and elders and knowledge holders and ceremonial leaders on the land, and bringing that online?

(21:47) HS: I mean, so far what I've heard at least with regards to the law camps that we were providing is that we're just not doing them. So, one kind of ethical concern I have is about the kind of gap its producing, like in that context its predominantly first year law students right before they like actually start law school, and for some it's their second or third year, but it's a kind of crucial moment of intervention in which we can do some work to try and shape how they think about what law is before being so deeply entrenched within a kind of Canadian legal training. And so it's, you know, a bit alarming that despite the work that many have done to make sure this is an ongoing thing every year for upward of 50 or so students, that that won't be taking place. For many of them I do think it has long-lasting impacts for how they think about their role as lawyers, judges, legal practitioners, both in how they engage with broader Canadian society as well as with Indigenous peoples and Indigenous communities. And I think when we look to what's going on in the middle of this global pandemic with awareness around anti-blackness and black lives matter, police brutality against Indigenous peoples, that kind of intervention is all the more important. So, kind of one ethical concern I have is about the kind of absence that will occur in many contexts when we are not able to respond fast enough to make shifts, to provide some kind of filler in this kind of moment. I know for, I would think for a lot of elders, and knowledge holders, and practitioners, there is also this deep concern around a kind of rupture of relationships that's happening with so much social distancing. And even within families it can be difficult, especially when you have people with compromised immune systems and elderly members of the community you are trying to protect. I think it's producing more concern around how to properly engage in ways that create still protections and therefore again producing contexts in which people just aren't. In a number of our community's, ceremonies are not happening because there really is no way for us to do some of those ceremonies in ways that would meet contemporary health guidelines, and yet those are ceremonies that largely occur to produce healing and are a deep medical necessity for a number of people. And I think right now a lot of the communities have paused what normally happens in June in the hopes that they'll be able to carry forward some of that work in late July and August, but if we find another wave comes forward and that's an unavailable option, I think communities are going to be getting more and more concerned about how to address the kind of mental, physical, and

spiritual health needs of communities and community members if we don't find ways to both restore some of those day-to-day everyday relationships as well as find ways to carry out the sort of necessary healing practices for our communities.

(25:47) JC: Maybe I'll jump in. Yeah, I appreciated all those points Heidi and Glen, and I was thinking as UVic suspended face-to-face student meetings and classes, I was in the middle of a land-based course and we were doing restoration work at SṈIDȻEŁ, which is the Place of the Blue Grouse, and so that restoration work stopped. And so, there is no way we could envision doing restoration work where you need people, knowledge holders, you need other people to guide you through that, but also there is a group setting there that you need not only for safety but also because we're kind of out in the woods, even in Victoria were still a little bit, almost semi-urban. And also a need to pull the right things, pull the right invasive species, and to plant the right way. So, in that sense, we run the ethical risk of superficial or superficiality in our engagements if we shift to an online format where we can talk in more general terms about some of the work that needs to be done, we can talk about ceremony, our grounds in Oklahoma… they are still going ahead with some of our ceremonies and they said that they meet a social distancing requirement, but I'm not going to be able to go for ceremony, for example. So not everyone is going to be able to engage, and in that sense, you know I'm not going to have that ability to take in medicine for the year and things like that. So, I think a lot of people are experiencing these same things, when their health is compromised and they are making [these] decisions, or decisions in some cases are made for them. The other thing I was going to mention was, in a sense a, lack of accountability. Especially, I can envision courses that encourage individuals to go out on the land and give them kind of basic guidelines and say: 'hey here are ten flowers' or 'here are ten plants or things to look for and take pictures of'. But, it's without the adjoining protocol, without that kind of mentorship that's more directed, that's more guiding. And in that sense, I would worry about how that work is undertaken, especially in a more individualized format versus a more collective or group format. So, those are just some things that came to mind. Especially as the term was abruptly ended for us and I was in the middle of a land-based course and it was very disjointed after that. A lot of the projects weren't able to be fulfilled, and I think the people that were leading us and guiding us in this project were a bit frustrated, because at that point the work had to stop and it was vital restoration work that has to get done.

(29:13) NG: I can take a turn. Maybe I should say a little bit about the different sort of context here. As you know, Hawai'i is under US occupation and right now the facts about medical guidance related to COVID doesn't really matter in the US. So, it's been an interesting kind of mix of things that are going on here. We had the immediate shutdown like you all, and like so many

Indigenous nations I think that experience with pandemics and the loss of population in the past, as well as the deep reverence and value of elders and Kupuna has made it such that a lot of folks really just were very compliant with stay-at-home orders. The other big thing, though, was that tourism was shut down, so it was very early on that the cases that were coming in were because of travel and tourism, and so once tourism shut down, although it's had a huge economic impact here on the islands…the curve went very flat and so we've had very little incidents of spreading. A side benefit of tourists not being here is, you know, we have up to ten million tourists a year which is about 8 times larger than the population, so so many of our, you know, beaches and mountain trails… like there are just a ton of things where were seeing nobody there and the way that that allows other life to flourish. So, there is benefit I think to that for us. In terms of education though, you know, as you all were saying there was an immediate shift to online for both the university as well as all the public schools. My kids go to Hawaiian language immersion schools and our experience was that the online just didn't work for them at all. For my students, I wasn't teaching a land-based course for this semester, but I noticed that among my students particularly the native Hawaiian and other groups that are underrepresented within the University experienced more anxiety about having to go fully online. And access was an issue for some for sure, but more important than access was the mental health and anxiety component of it. The program that I mentioned earlier, I was still helping to administer it this year but [name] is actually leading it, and one of the things… they just concluded, so they were together from January through June… I mean that program requires typically going out on the land, working with a lot of community organizations, and that shut down as of spring break. What she found though was that the students were absolutely insistent that they needed to keep meeting in some way, even if it was only online, because of that mental health and anxiety aspect of it. They really needed a support system and being able to have that community, even in a stop-gap way like you mentioned, was important for them. The other big thing that happened here in Hawaii at that time was, you know, we were still in the middle of a fight around protecting Mauna Kea and the Pu'uhonua, the Place of Refuge that had been sustained since July basically had to shut down and go home and in large part because the Kupuna, the elders, were such a big part of holding that line and nobody wanted to endanger their health. And they had many discussions about whether they should stay or if some people should stay and others go home, but, eventually it was decided that that should shut down. So that's had a big dampering sort of impact on our communities too because the momentum and the way that that movement inspired people who had never been inspired before to get educated and involved in Hawaiian cultural revitalization and ceremony and all those things were really starting to… you know the momentum was really building and all of a sudden it's kind of had to go quiet for a while. But then now, right now, I mean what's interesting I think is that the Black Lives Matter uprisings of

this moment have really blown that back open and that this here in Hawaii in the last couple of weeks that's what's brought people out again… so I don't know where I go with that exactly. But I liked… I just also wanted to mention… I really liked Jeff's idea about using the opportunity for people to connect with the land that they are on, wherever that it, and the rhythms of that place. One of the concerns for our practitioners is how sharing that online could potentially be misused in terms of state surveillance or accessibility to visitors or other folks, so being really careful about what kind of information about the natural resources that exist and where they are… that they not be so widely shared. So that's one concern. And then like Heidi was talking about the need for ceremony, the real need for ceremony, I think that something that…. as I mentioned with Mauna Kea, was huge because there was [Indigenous ceremony] held every day, three times a day, as part of that struggle and that really brought, to many Kanakas lives who hadn't experienced ceremony in that kind of ways before, how powerful and healing ceremony could be and unifying and all these things and so again that has also gone pretty silent. So, just wanting to echo that… that need for ways to find space for ceremony.

(36:47) LC: This has been really helpful to hear, I'm currently not teaching and haven't taught this year and haven't had to teach… didn't teach through the pandemic at all. I was very much close to home and my world got very very small, I'm sure like a lot of you have experienced. So, just thinking about some of these concerns, pressures, and urgencies that Dechinta is facing, I'm gonna come at it I think from a slightly different approach, cause I'm trying to imagine, having just been at Dechinta last fall, what took place there and then think a little bit about these technologies that we have at our disposal, or some of us have at our disposal and some of us don't, and imagining how those things even come together. And one thing that, you mentioned this at the beginning Leanne about sort of the intimacies of camp and camp life, the closeness that I think is a big part of what makes the Dechinta experience so transformative and that you are spending such intimate time with people… intergenerational from kids all the way to elders. And people are having an emotional and spiritual experience alongside their academic experience, and what Dechinta provides is this emotional and spiritual infrastructure to support people to go through what is a very emotional learning experience. And imagining… like right now I'm alone in my house, sitting in my kitchen, I can't see my neighbours from here I can't see anybody I haven't heard anybody walking by or anything, and to imagine interacting with my students through this medium or with other participants, and learning what you learn in Dechinta course work, and then switching off and being here alone…some people are going to be facing some pretty intense and heavy material. I think that disconnect alone, the ethics of leaving students or participants alone on their learning journey, especially as it's been shaped so intentionally by Dechinta, I think is unethical. I also think that that intimacy can't really be replicated online…

you could support folks to go and connect with the places that they are physically in alone and sort of try and curate that for them and have them come back and share online… but that connection through people you get in camp you wouldn't get through this medium. And I think that also speaks to the physicality of what you learn at Dechinta, how you use your body, what you learn with your body, by doing things… watching other people do things you learn physical skills. Yeah, these things could be explored on your own as well but that experiential component, the witnessing, the listening… you have to do those things when you're at camp if you want to be warm, be fed, you're having a very physical experience too. So, the ethics of removing that component from the Dechinta programming, from a land-based experience, I think it's inappropriate to work so hard to try and recreate that here or online or alone. Yeah, those are the thoughts that kind of came to my mind first.

(41:26) AW: Thanks for that. Yeah, I've been thinking a lot about that spiritual aspect, and then as I was listening… thinking about some of the things that I've been seeing online right now of people sharing kind of their land-based whatever they're doing, but it's just becoming kind of an inventory of land-based activities without that spiritual component. So, people are learning how to do recipes almost, like creating these books or inventories of all these tasks they can do outside… how to skin an animal, how to fish and all that, which are important but its missing that kind of spiritual connection to taking a life and how to take care of that. And then I was also thinking, well, then when you think about the ceremonial aspect maybe this is a time where we can actually listen and learn from queer people because we've been excluded from ceremony for a long time, and have to find ways, creative ways, and sustaining ways to understand what ceremony actually means. So, it doesn't have to necessarily be in a huge kind of formalized gathering or even any kind of formalized gathering… so just thinking of things that some of my friends do or have tried to do over the years, that maybe I should talk to… maybe others can talk about that as well… what are some of the things that have sustained you spiritually. And then I was also thinking about the notion of kinship and natural law and all that and how can you learn that without breathing… being out there breathing it. And then I was thinking about the critique that some people have about land-based education as the way we have it structured ourselves, myself included, is you know we do a lot of travel to other territories, it's part of the work that we do, so this notion of micro-travel can be really important right now and understanding not just the context and the land where you are but like even going to a more minute level…like last year we had our students just kind of be in relation with a little tiny square piece of dirt and understanding and observing everything that's in that. So, some of the things I've been thinking about as people have been talking… for our group of students this summer, some of the ways we're addressing this so far is by… there's a small group of six out of the twenty that are doing their own canoe trip in the territory

where they are working and living. And not all of them are from that territory so they're crossing different ancestral homelands so part of what they're doing is they're approaching each of the host nations that are on that river system to get permission, and that's taking a long time because obviously they can't go there but they have to find someone through a relational way whose connected to somebody who can give the permission. So that's been a lesson as well, that we should be doing this all the time and sometimes we don't. And then the other issue really that I've been worried about lately is the safety. Just the safety of them out on the land… not that I have more knowledge about safety than them but just kind of a different role when you're responsible for them. So, figuring out how they're gonna attend to the different needs of the group. But I think one of the ways that they've dealt with that is by… they self-organized around who was going to go on that small trip, which kind of mitigated some of the potential safety concerns from students that may not necessarily be comfortable or as safe on that trip. So, those are just a few things I've been thinking about as we've been talking.

(46:24) LS: Miigwech Alex. I was thinking when you were talking about that spiritual and ceremonial component, and Heidi as well, how we can't have those big formalized gatherings right now, but how in a Nishnaabeg culture there is sort of almost an order where you were spending a lot of time on the land just with your family, less formalized, less performative, put tobacco out in the morning at sunrise… little things like that that our Elders still do and that our Elders have always done. And I think that the queer community has also practiced those because they're not formalized and because they're not performative and because of that exclusion. So, a couple of younger people actually from the North have reached out and asked over the phone how to smudge or are there things they can be doing through the pandemic with whatever they have and whatever the situation, and is it okay to be doing that, like almost asking permission… is it okay for me to put some tobacco in a fire in my backyard even though I don't really know what I'm doing. And so that's been kind of a cool opportunity I think that I've been able to connect with just individual students over that. I was also thinking about how, particularly at Dechinta because it's such an intense and immersive land-based program that, I was thinking of this Lianne when you were talking, that almost like 90% of what I think students learn is not anything from Glen and I or the readings, it's about how to live without the internet, how to solve conflict with the people that they're trapped on this tiny island with for six weeks, about how to manage their emotions, about… there's always some point in the semester where one or two students will be like 'the Elders are not teaching me anything…what's wrong with you guys' and it's because they don't know how to… I mean the Elders are getting up an hour before dawn and working and if you're working alongside them the stories are just flowing out of them. But if you're sleeping in 'til 9:30 and then dragging your ass to class you missed all that. So, sort of teaching…

and then also just teaching that witnessing, like, watch what the elders are doing, watch how hard they're working, watch how they handle conflict, watch how they handle joy, watch how they're managing the energy of the whole camp so everyone doesn't spiral downwards into a pit of despair and freeze to death. All of that stuff, which I think is so vital to life learning, and so vital to Indigenous learning, is stuff that we just can't do without that immersive environment. I like, actually, the idea that we just can't do this right now. We'll have to figure out other things that we can do because there just isn't a way of ethically doing that. But then I also hear that gap that that creates… and that's also an ethical concern.

(49:54) GC: Yeah I think just kind of, when Lianne Charlie was speaking and saying how it's difficult to do this ethically, or perhaps that online can't cope with, or even more firmly might be a non-ethical way to do this type of work, it got me thinking… because for the last ten or so years and thinking through these issues as an academic theoretically…I've come to learn the kind of ethics of my community, and I think it probably extends to more Indigenous communities, is grounded in practice. It is grounded in that relationship you have to sustain with land overtime through that practical engagement with it, from learning from it, and that gives you the kind of normative frameworks for evaluating what's right and wrong, what is better, what is morally abhorrent… all these things are through that practical relationship that you establish with others and the land overtime. So, in a kind of meta-sense, since this is the academic webinar, I don't think that you can technically learn an Indigenous ethics from doing it like this, because it requires those relationships being cultivated and renewed overtime with both the land itself but also the others in your community who you're learning together with. So, when I was originally thinking about ethics and this kind of medium, I was thinking about more issues of commodification like… the commodification of knowledge or the gutting out of the substance, whether it's spiritual or whatever, like the gutting out of that knowledge by putting it online, or ethical considerations in terms of where is 'the data' stored and all this sort of stuff when we're talking on Zoom, or what sort of recompense are we giving back to the community in terms of compensation that were giving back to the community in terms of what they're sharing with us. This is such an easy venue to kind of like 'oh, we'll just talk to you for a bit' that absolves the 'we're not gonna give you the 300 or 500 whatever dollars it is that we would normally have on a daily basis so you can put food on your table. So, I was thinking of it quite shallowly until this conversation because you can't actually derive our Dene ethics from this context. It is antithetical to the production of that… of our ethical framework… when it's done in this abstract commodified sort of context. These aren't actual relationships, they are approximating it in a certain way, but this is not an ethical relationship I don't think, or a relationship that derives substantive ethical insight into the world from an Indigenous context. So yeah, I think this has been very helpful for me to

think through some of the issues at a deeper more substantive level than just what we're doing with the information, how are we giving back to the community… those concerns are important but there is something deeper at play here.

(54:08) NG: I don't know what the requirements are there around, you know, how much people can gather, but I've been thinking a lot about how we can gather in very small groups. From the beginning, you know, if its less than ten, or people within your family or household its fine. And in many ways I feel like this is actually forcing us to think about how… trying to fit the kind of work that we do on the land or in Indigenous education into the 'school' setting and the demands of how many students and in what schedules and what not just don't make it possible. But it actually is possible for us right now if we didn't have to go to school or work online, to do the kind of education where we have small groups of a dozen or so people at the fish pond or wherever you are. So, I don't know, I mean even with the non-profit industrial complex a lot of the non-profit groups that I know, the folks who run them are still maintaining that kuleana, that relationship to… they have to continue to be on the land but they can't gather the same kind of large groups that you can count the numbers in order to provide that to funders to say 'okay this is how we're impacting our community.' So… it's really pushing us I think to… and it can be an opportunity to think about how to move beyond schools and wage labour and non-profit funding. So yeah, that's just kind of… I'm curious about whether that's also possible for you all or are there different kinds of barriers to gathering people in very small groups on the land that you're experiencing.

(56:37) AW: Over here in our territory in our nation, I think it depends from nation to nation, like we have a really strict policy and other nations have roadblocks set up so people can't go in or out even… and then, even within our territory, we also have a strict curfew and so that's restricted families going hunting and stuff. But the town, which is in our territory, doesn't have the same restrictions… so they're going out fishing like this is just a big holiday and, you know, a few weeks ago… actually a month ago, they found like twelve moose that were just massacred for no reason, and so there's a lot of this kind of thing happening to without our hunters and trappers and fisher people being out there that normally kind of monitor who is doing what.

(57:38) JC: Yeah, I was thinking about what y'all were saying and when you said Leanne that getting up before dawn and visiting with the elders and having that different experience, and then even Noe talking about how we're often trying to fit land-based courses into university schedules. For me, a lot of it is about different senses of time, and how time is impacted… Cherokee's have this notion of [Indigenous word] which means peace, but it also in a deeper sense means living according to a pace of nature, and so to what degree can you have a pace of nature on a Zoom call? And I have yet to

figure that out but in a sense a land-based class even, in the course of a semester, is already being regulated for the time… the natural flow of things, how things could take place, and then that seems to get further confined when we put it into an online space of, you know, an hour and a half where we're visiting with each other in very isolated, as Lianne pointed out, in very isolated ways. So yeah, I was just thinking about time and even safety, you know of the point that Alex made about safety and how that really violates, you know in some ways, when I'm telling students to go out individually that violates a sense of ᏅᎵᏍᏉ (sgadugi) or that sense of community or comradery, right I'm telling them to go out on their own…with very little guidance and very little accountability as I mentioned earlier. So yeah, it's a tough thing to navigate even in the best of circumstances and thinking about how it becomes a challenge to our, I guess our ways of expressing ourselves fully.

(59:41) HS: One of the things that has come up for me in this conversation has been, and I'm still reflecting on some of the kind of early words shared by Alex, is that I find that this also could provide a great opportunity… and maybe this is some of the conversation you guys are having with community and knowledge holders and practitioners… but it could be such a great opportunity for us to be engaged in dialogue around, like, why certain protocols take the form they do and can expose some of the exclusionary aspects of those as not being as quote-on-quote steeped in tradition as we might think, or as we often talk about in community. But I wonder how those conversations unfold when you can't actually engage with people in the same kind of relational way because of these COVID restrictions, you know cause one of the things that I keep thinking of when thinking of Anishnaabe protocols and practices is how we reach out and ask for particular guidance when you can't physically give tobacco to another person. And just that different elders and knowledge holders have different kind of responses to that, where some might be comfortable with you putting out that tobacco and it's doing that work, and others need it to be like physically in their hand for that to happen. But as Alex was talking it made me think about how a lot of different practices and protocols we engage in, we do with a certain kind of just habit without giving lots of thought to the form it takes. That might also be deeply engrained with all kinds of other restrictive and exclusionary aspects that might be able to be a bit better exposed through re-thinking why we do things in a particular way in these kind of moments but, again, I'm not sure how we have those kinds of conversations in a kind of productive and healthy way when its virtual and how to even get knowledge holders to be able to feel like they can comfortably engage in that over this kind of context.

(1:02:07) LS: I mean, I think one of the experiences that I will always remember is when I was teaching in Alex's territory, and you welcomed the students with a pipe ceremony. And that was the first time outside of my own ceremonial

family where I had seen queerness completely normalized and it was… and I was watching some of the other Nishnabeeg and Cree students having that same experience, and it's just um… it's something that… had I watched that or a version of that online or in a video, I think that I would have taken the knowledge but I wouldn't have taken… I wouldn't have the same memory. I have such a vivid, joyful, beautiful memory of that day that I'll always sort of carry with me. So yeah, I feel like those relationships are pretty important, but at the same time, in sort of looking towards opportunities for students in communities where they have those relationships already set up, then this sort of hybrid model makes sense because they can go and work with a knowledge holder and be mentored over a period of time and kind of have, as Lianne said, these sort of Zoom check-ins. But I particularly worry about the students who don't have those connections, and that we'd be using a program like Alex's program, or a program like Dechinta, or the land-based law camps to make those initial connections, and then kind of carry that through their lives. That particular group of students I think is really hard to reach in this sort of mode of education. So, does anyone have anything else? Any other burning topics they would like to discuss around Indigenous ethics and land-based learning? Questions for each other?

(1:04:06) JC: Maybe I'll throw something out. It was a conversation with Vince Diaz from Guam and it was a conversation that… he was talking about the climate crisis right and how it's impacted a lot of people from his community to even go back or experience the water, experience the land in certain ways because of global warming, because of the shifts to the land or the shifts to the water, and so we had this long discussion about virtual reality and he's been exploring that and in a sense, talking about ways that people who are exiled from their land for various reasons, political or otherwise, or are unable to actually experience the land for various reasons due to climate due to other forms of injustice, talking about how virtual reality for him might be a way through that conversation. And we had this long discussion about, you know, could you have a basket weaving teaching through virtual reality where you join up through various locations. I don't think the technology is there now but anyways I just throw that out there as I was a bit taken back but I was also kind of intrigued by that possibility, and what are the ethics around that especially when you are not able to experience the land as you know or as you once knew it and you don't have that access that would be available to other people.

(1:05:54) AW: I was at the University of Minnesota last year at the school of architecture they had this week where they were building Indigenous ideas and then looking at ways to further those. And one of the projects there was a Micronesian voyager canoe and they did have a virtual reality, kind of you know goggle thing, and I didn't do it I just wasn't comfortable, I didn't feel like it was my place but the person that was leading that helped them

develop it. So I think people are using that technology and I didn't hear too much of a discussion about the ethics because I wasn't part of that group I was doing another one, so I think people have the technology now… so that will be something you know, because it was so appealing, especially to the youth, that they were almost more interested in trying that part then looking at the architecture and understanding how that canoe was put together and learning from the Elders about that.

(1:07:38) LS: So just as a way of wrapping up, because I'm just being a little bit aware of the time here. Are their things that you wish that you had from your institutions in order to support navigating this kind of teaching through the pandemic? What do you need? What do you need to be effective teachers during COVID-19?

(1:08:06) NG: I'll just throw out one thing… so at UH, although the president primarily for economic reasons announced that our University would be fully face-to-face again, then when we actually went through the logistics of how that would that work under social distancing, you know six-feet apart kind of requirements, it turns out that most of it has to be hybrid and online. But some of us have been trying to push for tents for outdoor spaces and it's amazing to me how much more willing our university administration is to put into much more expensive tech gadgetry inside the classrooms so that, for example, a professor could lecture in a classroom to a small group of students and that lecture could be then streamed to the rest of the class who is somewhere online, but is not willing to spend the money on renting or purchasing tents so that we can meet outside since it's so much safer to be outside. So that's just one thing that I would say has been really frustrating… that there's this insistence that it's either face-to-face in a classroom or online in some way, and it's been very difficult to talk to the administration about how being outside is actually a great way to be learning.

(1:09:49) GC: Yeah just to follow up on that because I think the North is kind of in the same situation as Hawai'i is that… what they've noticed is once they clamped down on some of the travel the curve entirely flattened there was only originally five cases and then once the travel into the territory from outsiders stopped those cases resolved themselves and they haven't had any since. But things have changed so fast over the last few months it's just been a whirlwind where now, like, initially there's all these demands on our organization to meet certain health standards… it might even be switching now to the point where we're making a strong case that we can carry out programming in a safer way than youth in schools or whatever, as long as we can get some logistics squared up. But it's been very frustrating talking to two of our major partners, one is the Southern institutions like UBC and the others are the levels of government, and they don't seem to be… they want to roll out a uniform cookie cutter approach to these issues across time

and space where one is irrelevant for the types of risk management or…safety protocols you want to put in place. So, I've been arguing with UBC about programming in the North West Territories in and around Yellowknife, but they just want to put the same policies in place for somewhere like Vancouver onto any sort of programming up North. So, if I were to ask something from some of the Southern institutions it's take the lead from the places in which programming is being offered. The other thing I want some sort of guarantee on, and this is something that really concerns me about this online format, whether it's in the classroom or in a land-based context, is capitalism and state austerity measures are gonna come back with a fucking vengeance after this, and its small programming like Indigenous studies, land-based programming, that I think… wherein some political contexts maybe might have weathered their way through the previous… like 2008 [unintelligible word] and stuff like that, especially in Canada when reconciliation was all the rage. I feel that were all gonna be exempt from that in this next round because we've never actually seen this before. So, I worry for… I would like some guaranteed political commitment from universities or from the funding agencies that we depend on in order to offer this education that they're not gonna hack us out of existence or else say 'well you showed that you can do it online so why don't we just spend less money and offer you money for this type of programming instead of the stuff on the land and informed by community and in community'.

(1:13:27) JC: Yeah I was just gonna say that in terms of that earlier question, Leanne, what do we need… and its usually resources as Glen was saying this is the danger of this becoming the new normal or at a reduced rate is always there. But for me it would be interesting to think about almost a coalition or confederacy of land-based teachers and having ways that we can support each other but also in a sense be some of the trainers around questions of cultural safety, because university profs are being encouraged to do land-based education and I think in very superficial ways but also in very reckless ways. So I think, and especially on someone else's territory, I think there needs to be some consideration around what does cultural safety look like and ways that we can center Indigenous ways of knowing in that discussion. Whether it be a loose coalition or confederacy or whatever we want to call it, I don't like the word network so I always avoid that but I think having those and obviously more resources, so there is actually an investment in the community not just paying honoraria… that the relationship is much deeper so we can buy equipment that's needed, so that we can buy soil… you know Cheryle Bryce is doing community garden stuff right now and running around getting soil to different families so that they can grow stuff, so we can get those basics that are needed and its beyond just a pedagogical moment with certain knowledge holders so that it continues on, so it's not us always asking for more, that we're funded with the community needs in mind.

(1:15:39) AW: Yeah, I agree on that one too. Land-based is becoming such a fad over here. I know even in our college and universities like all of a sudden everyone is doing land-based, but really are they? What exactly are they doing? Like our undergrad program has a required course now on pedagogies of place and some of the people… like its required for all the [something] teachers, which is great, but some of the people teaching it really have no connection to Indigenous communities, and then they just end up emailing the Indigenous faculty saying 'can you do this or that' or 'how do I infuse indigenous knowledge' you know, like you can just email to ask that. So that's, I guess, another ethical element to that is… not vetting, I don't want to use that term either but just like, who is doing land-based, who is doing Indigenous land-based, and the distinction between that and outdoor ed and place-based ed and critical environmental education and all those kind of programs that are out there. And I was looking at some of the research that was funded at UofS and a lot of it has 'land-based' in the title and it's like… I know that it's not, like some of them are sponsored by Cameco so… how can you do land-based education sponsored by a Uranium mining company? So, another ethical kind of issue. But one of my colleagues said the other day at our faculty meeting, she said to me 'well you sure are lucky you found a way to never have to go to the university.' So, she was saying it in an underhanded way, meaning that I've like tricked the system somehow, like, well sorry I didn't cause COVID but yeah… education doesn't have to be in buildings, why does it? But there's this kind of, you know, this snickering about land-based… like we're not legit or something. So I think having a coalition or whatever of land-based educators would be a good idea as long as it's not too formalized and people feel left out or whatever, there's a way to keep it loosely organized I guess so we can support one another, and then maybe that would help with kind of emotional support during COVID because as educators we're hearing all our students stories too and then we have all our families and all that so it's like we have that added layer of accountability now with all the issues that our students are having too during this time.

(1:18:51) HS: Yeah I was gonna say kind of something similar to Lianne and Alex around, like, to me one of the things I think land-based educational programs have done so well is address, what to me, are two of the biggest issues facing so many of us students and teachers alike is… what to do about our families and what to do about emotional and mental well-being and at least, I found in my limited experience with Dechinta, those were things that were thought about constantly and many policies and practices put in place to address that on an ongoing basis that to me feels really absent from the conversations, other than like, my university has said you can make a request to have your teaching load kind of shifted, where you still have to do all the work you just have to do some of it later which I think isn't going to actually help anybody through this, but I personally have found it incredibly challenging to get anything done and I think a lot of that is because of the mode. As

someone who brought my child out to law camps with me it was very easy to teach and engage with people and do all that work in a land-based kind of way that I find has been completely unsustainable through online forums, and so I find that this kind of move to online forums is just creating kind of deeper divisions and separation from both emotional and mental wellbeing and kind of family holistic care that I think are also just really amplified in this moment. So that's, you know, I don't know what I would expect the university to do other than I think this is a real moment where they could actually turn to land-based programs to start thinking through how they might be able to support students, staff, and faculty better. They have to continue to respond to the pandemic through the summer and fall and however long this goes on because that's the one place I think the university, well there's many, but that's one place I think the universities are failing kind of greatly at.

(1:21:021) LS: I think that's a really good point around the holistic family nature of land-based education and our program and I think that's why we have so many women applying to our program because we provide that childcare. And I was just thinking of how much Luca, Lianne's child, illuminated and taught us and taught the students and how much they were… they connected with Luca as well. And that's another part that gets lost in Zoom. I think this gang of Indigenous land-based educators is a really great thing and it would be great to apply to a SSHRC connections grant to all get together on the land when this over and invite our other colleagues who are doing this kind of work, that would be really great. It's so uplifting just to see all of your faces, even on Zoom, and I'm so appreciative that you were able to take this time and spend with us and I do really hear the frustration in your voice Lianne and Noelani's voice and Glen as well in terms of how much you've had to advocate at your institutions to be able to do land-based education, and Alex as well, in the first place and then have them be able to pivot around the pandemic and move to a completely different mode of learning so so quickly, when it's so difficult to even get a tent. So that really is illuminating the politics of colonialism in all of this.