Webinar 1: Navigating Land-Based Education and Pandemics in the North
Video Transcription

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Abbreviations: KT = Kristen Tanche, JB = Josh Baricello, RD = Robby Dick, CG = Christina Gray, SA = Siku Allooloo, LS = Leanne Betasamosake Simpson

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(0:34) LS: We've invited all of you here today because in your own ways, you have direct experience participating in, reading, and organizing Indigenous land-based learning programs in Northern communities. As you all know, we are in this situation of a global pandemic and so governments and funders and institutions in response to this new reality…are pushing education to move online. This obviously presents a series of challenges to Indigenous people in terms of our knowledge systems and our ethics, and our responsibilities to our elders and knowledge holders, the bush economy and to Northern Indigenous students. One of the beautiful things about the Indigenous response to the pandemic for me, came from Dene National Chief Norman Yakeleya when he encouraged the Dene to go back to the land during the pandemic in the national media. He said, "the blood of the Dene is in the land, the land loves the Dene people and we in turn love the land. Our values as Dene, the sharing has come back, and it is still alive with fish and caribou. What helped our communities heal from the 1920 flu epidemic was reconnecting with the land." This struck me because what the national chief was saying was opposite to what mainstream educational institutions were saying in the south. He wasn't telling us to move onto Zoom, he was telling his people that the safest place to be was the land. And that's why we wanted to give some space to some northern Indigenous brilliance today to discuss that. So, I think to begin I'm going to ask each of you to introduce yourselves in whatever way you are comfortable, and maybe just talk a little bit about what you've learned from the land. So, Christina can we start with you?

(2:54) CG: Yeah, I was like, please don't start with me [laughs]. I don't know why I feel so out of my depth with all of you guys. I live in Prince Rupert and this is part of the traditional territories of the Tsimshian people. So, on my mom's side of the family I am Tsimshian, and it's matriarchal, a matrilineal community and legal system. I really follow my mom's legal system. My dad was Dene and he was born in Yellowknife and a member of Łutselk'e and spent most of his life in Vancouver. That's where I was born and raised, I was born in the hospital in downtown Vancouver and spent most of my

life in East Vancouver with my mom. Since the pandemic started, I feel like it really shook a lot of communities all over the world and I like to refer to it as a time of global suffering because I think the pandemic goes beyond like what's happening…internally, like inside of the body, but externally as well. So, I've spent a lot of time inside actually since the pandemic happened, whereas before I was spending a lot of time outside, and I think that has resulted in a lot of suffering from spending so much time inside. And so I think, in thinking about being on the land and connecting with the land, I think that it's very important, but I was also more fearful of…having other people feel fearful of me and being in there space, because of the moisture and droplets being spoken a lot about in the media, and I didn't want anyone else to be fearful of my presence also, but I also moved part way in the pandemic from Victoria, where I was living, to Prince Rupert. Since coming to Prince Rupert, I've spent a lot more time outside on the land with my cousins and family, just fishing off the side of the dock and that's been very healing. And I don't think that it's as accessible in cities, or it's more frowned upon. There's a lot more people around, so it's a lot harder to get outside on the land. And I think there's big differences between being in the North where there's a lot less people and a lot more land in comparison to being in the South, where there's a lot less land and a lot more people. So, I think those are also important considerations. So, I don't really have much more to say, so Josh would you like to go next?

(6:43) JB: Yeah sure thing Christina. So, my name is Josh Baricello, hello. And in speaking of feeling out of depth, I think I am the only non-Indigenous person here, so I am feeling that a bit too. I'm [Indigenous name] which is how Kaska Dena people call White Settlers living in their territory. I live in Robby's community, Tu Łidlini or Ross River, and I work closely with the Elders Council there and have for a long time, most of my adult life. And I work with youth and do various land-based education programs there. I'm really lucky to be there and to spend a lot of time on the land with Dene brilliance. And I think in talking about the pandemic, it's been scary in Ross for sure, and in all of the North. I think there's some kind of fear of if and when it will come into the communities, the impacts of that, especially with a community like Tu Łidlini where people are so social and visiting is such a core part of the culture. There's such a support network that needs physical connection. There's so many elders that are living with families and with younger people in houses that have multiple families together, so there's that fear but I think what we've seen since the pandemics really taking off in Tu Łidlini, I've seen a lot of families go back to the land like Leanne was saying about Norman Yakeleya's message. I've seen a lot of families on the land more than the usual, and it's also been spring, so it's been a beautiful time of the year to be out there. There's a lot going on, and for myself, I feel very lucky that I've been on the land more than normal because some of the other work obligations have sort of slowed down a little bit. It's just

becoming a bit more normalized for people to maybe come into town less often, and to spend longer periods of time in their cabins with their families, in the bush, so that's been sort of a blessing as well. I'm excited and honoured to be talking amongst you today.

(9:34) LS: Mahsi Josh, Siku could you go next?

(9:39) SA: Hello my friends. It's so nice to be with you in this conversation. I was born and raised in Yellowknife. My dad is from Mittimatalik from Northern Nunavut, off an island. And my mom was from Haiti and was Taíno and a mix of European and African and Taíno heritage, so part of all those different lineages. I am also part of the Dené Sųłine family from Fort Fitzgerald and Fort Smith, Northwest Territories. And I was part of the…I'm losing my words. In the Pilot Program with Dechinta, that was my first real experience with land-based education. It really changed my whole understanding of the importance of being connected to the land because I was a university student at the time, going to school in Victoria, and becoming pretty radicalized with Indigenous education, learning about decolonization and the super heavy colonial legacy that is still ongoing, and all the recent efforts of Indigenous peoples and Black peoples and people of colour lead in different parts of the world, in different times, to fight against that. It was really impacting my understanding of space. I really identify with what you were saying Christina about being in a city and urban setting, and being worried about…at the time I wasn't worried about a pandemic, but I was worried about colonialism and this impact on me, and people like me, and feeling more and more threatened and more and more also like…aware that my existence is also a threat. I felt quite vulnerable and I was really happy that Dechinta was starting to create this whole organization and this education program because it was an opportunity for me to leave the institution and go back home to the territory I was born and raised on, and to reset the values that I was raised with as a little girl. Elementary programs they had culture days, so we would be able to spend like a day out at a camp, or a day on the land with elders, and they would take us on bush walks and teach us about medicines. All the kinds of things that a lot of the Dechinta Bush team lead in the Sambaa K'e area today. And those things, I always remembered those things, and they've had, they've informed the way that I looked at the land. Spending time out on the land with my family, having that being the normalized experience, I think has a lot to do with the reason why the land for me is a place of comfort and healing and grounding. I think that what I've learned in my time as a student at Dechinta was that there's been so much that we've inherited through so many generations now of colonialism that has impacted our ways of relating, and that the land can be a super transformative place, a really potent beautiful place to restore those connections, and that those connections really nourish you as a human being. They undo a lot of the damage, and so I don't want to jump too far ahead in this conversation. But it's been on my

mind for like the last ten years about why the land is so important in an education setting, but as a facilitator and coordinator of programs, I've also been in the position to hold the space for students and my intention in that role is to always try to create a setting for Dene students to come and learn, not learn, but experience what it's like to live in a Dene setting. Like…in a Dene community based on relationships and values that are important, that those are the things that guide the ways that everybody is there and does…does everything that we do together. There's a lot of intangibles that come with that but they end up being the most important things, the things that are not identifiable by Western colonial society or value systems. They're things like, interconnection and reciprocity and consent, and care and relationship, and all these things that are skills that we need to live as human beings in functional relationships with each other. Those are all the residual things that have been taken away from us systematically. So, to me, being on the land, we're always told that things are relational. When people say, "all my relations", it is an acknowledgement that we exist in these relationships and I think that's, to me, the most important teaching that I'm always, always having reaffirmed when I'm on the land, or in settings with a group of people on the land, that everything is relational and that relationality is so deeply important. Thanks.

(17:16) LS: Miigwetch, Robby?

(17:22) RD: Yup, good afternoon. My name's Robby Dick and I live in Tu Łidlini, Ross River. Yeah so thanks for having me. I'm so glad to see you guys. For me, relationship to the land is vital for everyone. For everyone that has that relationship, that connection to the land, for me, that's where I found my sanctuary out there. Currently, I'm in leadership and it's pretty stressful [laughs], not gonna lie. When I feel bogged down, I go for a drive or something, I find a place that I feel comfort in. Where I feel comfort now is being out on the land. This past spring, we've spent an extensive amount of time on the land because of the pandemic. Yeah it was really…it's true, Dene people…have that relationship with the land. I guess with this pandemic it's been pretty tough, a lot of our members here were pretty apprehensive when the first case was found in Whitehorse. A lot of people were on edge. It was pretty stressful. This pandemic and the challenges have been pretty tough on all First Nations. The reason why I'm saying that is because we lost a few members of our own this past spring. Dene people, we come together, and we want to share and show compassion when someone passes away, and we can't even do that because of the pandemic and all these regulations and guidelines that you have to follow. And people being on edge too. Yeah, it's been pretty challenging with the pandemic and all…but I also think too like just touching on what you guys were saying about education on the land, it's very, it's important you know? For the kids coming behind us, for the next generation. As for myself, I was first immersed into it with this pilot program we had in 2015 out at Dechinta. I

got to meet Kristen and a few others there. It was a good time and that's when I finally realized that these programs are important for our communities and for land-based education. I went to Dechinta in 2017 and I got to meet Chief Louis(?) and a few others. You know I learned a lot from people that have that knowledge, that Indigenous knowledge, worldview …like hide tanning for example, it's a lot of work and it's beautiful too…just to see you work on moose hide from beginning to finish, you just feel that gratitude, like after you've done it. You feel accomplished. You feel Dene. It makes you feel real good. I remember coming back from Dechinta in 2017 and I was really proud. That's a kind of inspiration that these land-based programs bring to communities such as Ross River, and abroad I think. But anyways, thank you for having me, and I look forward to having more discussions. Mahsi.

(21:11) LS: Mahsi Robby. Kristen?

(21:18) KT: Hey everyone. I'm Kristen Tanche [Introduction in Dene]. My name is Kristen Tanche, I live in Fort Simpson, [indistinguishable] North West Territories. My mom is Cathy Tanche and my dad is Gunner Paulson(?). I'm part of Łíídlı̨ı̨ Kų́ę́ First Nations, and I am part of the Dehcho First Nations, and I also work for Dehcho First Nations right now. A little bit about who I am, and I guess my relationship to on-the-land-programming is that, for the past maybe two and a half years I've been working in on-the-land programming, coordinating, and leading it at the regional level for my First Nation. And then, my first experience was through Dechinta taking their program, I think it was a couple years after you actually Siku that I was in the program. I took the program three times, and then one summer I got so involved with Dechinta, I not only worked for them, I was on their board, then I took the program. So, I was highly involved with Dechinta and super passionate about on the land programming. What I've learned from the land I think is who I am as a person. Coming from a mixed background, my father's Icelandic, he's Canadian, a typical kind of mixture of everything in Canada, and my mother is Łíídlı̨ı̨ Kų́ę́ First Nations and Dehcho Dene, and part Tłı̨chǫ actually. So, I grew up in a mixed background. I grew up a lot in Saskatchewan. I grew up in Fort Simpson. I grew up in the Tłı̨chǫ nation and it's pretty confusing, I think, growing up as a person of mixed ancestry, not really in your homeland, not with your mother and her people, trying to figure out and navigate who you are. And it was on the land where I think I really learned that, who I am as a person is Dene, and I am Dehcho Dene, and that connection was really major teachings of just being with Indigenous people, and the types of things that invite more being on the land with other people too. To me, being Dene doesn't mean that I could hunt a moose, or doesn't mean that I can bead or sew…who I am as a Dene person is how I feel, and I think that's what really I've learned from being on the land. My first time being on my homeland extensively was through the Dechinta program when we communed from Providence to Fort Good

Hope, we spent a month on the riverbanks of the Dehcho, and it was there that I started to feel that connection with my people's land. And so, it really defines who I am. And I've been so blessed through my employment to work with a lot of elders and cultural knowledge holders, and to be able to learn more from them, and learn my language and cultural practices, so it's been a really amazing journey, and it hasn't stopped. Recently, I went on the land and setup our first tarp shelter, I was super proud. I kept thinking there's a couple of elders in our region, one of them calls it Tarpology – Jonas Antoine(?), from the Low River and I kept saying to my husband, what would Jonas do? And there's this other knowledge holder, his name is Chiki (?). I kept thinking in my head, what would Chiki do? How would they set up this tarp? So, I felt super proud of our tarp skills. So yeah, and in regard to the pandemic, it's been really crazy…The North West Territories is a really confusing place to be right now. They lift restrictions, they in-place them, they lift them, but at the beginning, I think it was really scary. I lost a lot of my family members in a pandemic way back in the day. So, my grandparent was the only survivor of this pandemic, him and two of his siblings, and his father, all of them perished in that pandemic. And so, I was telling my mom at the beginning of it, the last time there was a huge pandemic like this we lost more than half of our family members. I think for a lot of our elders and the people that lived through that it's really re-living trauma, and really re-living huge loss. We haven't gotten to that point in our communities, or in the Northwest Territories, but that fear is there. It has been scary, and I think it brings back a lot of memories for a lot of people. Robby was talking about not being able to gather, and I think that's another really kind of traumatic thing that probably people are experiencing that back in the day, we were told as Dene people that we could not gather, that you could not have a drum dance, or you could not have hand games or even be with ten people of your own people. We are such a social people so having a government system [control us] again for our own safety, and I understand that this is a pandemic, but I also understand how tough it can be, and how tough it is for Dene people, and how it brings back memories. But we're all still here, and we're all staying safe in the Dehcho region, and summer is here, and people have been going on the land like crazy, so Mahsi Cho.

(26:59) LS: Mahsi Kristen. So that was a really beautiful way of starting everybody, thank you. What I heard was that it's a tough time in your communities right now, that there's a lot of fear, that there's been a lot of stress, that people are reliving the pandemic from 1928, people are probably being reminded of other times in our history when we weren't allowed to gather and be on the land. And then also, I heard a lot of you talking about how important the land is in terms of sanctuary, I think is what Robby said, in terms of healing, in terms of teaching us who we are as Indigenous people, and in terms of connecting us to our ancestors, connecting us to our people and to our homelands and to our language.

(28:01) Heading: **Discussing the Challenges of Teaching Indigenous Land-Based Education During the Pandemic**

(28:29) KT: Yes, so Dehcho First Nations and Dechinta were planning to join forces for our annual Yundaa Gogha Canoe excursion, it would have been our third one in a row where we canoe and bring younger people, like youth and young adults, to the annual Dehcho assembly. We had planned to start it in June, and when the pandemic hit in March, I think we gave it like a few weeks and realized that this might not be safe. First off, we don't know if there's going to be a vaccine, there's just all these big questions, and then the Dehcho Assembly was cancelled also, and this is like a huge piece. At the end of our canoe trips we always bring our youth in – it's like a way to engage them to in our annual leadership processes. Every year, all over people come together with this forum with the Chiefs, with council members, with community members, with Dehcho First Nations, and make some really important decisions for the region…every year. It's also a time when everybody comes together for a social gathering, some people have drum dances, there's talent shows, there's feasts, so it's a huge part of the program. And we really had to make that decision to cancel it because it brought together people from the entire region and there's more risk with that. They've since changed the rules but it's kind of a bit too late, so it was a heartbreaking decision but one that had to be made for the safety of our people, and for the safety of staff and participants to make sure everyone was going to be safe and that we wouldn't compromise anyone. And you can't teach people those things online. You definitely cannot teach someone how to canoe via Zoom. You need to be engaged. You need to be on the land. As part of the program, a lot of the youth get to revisit or visit for the first time the territory where their family members have lived for their whole lives. And so, you can't do that online. They need to be there. It's part of walking in your ancestor's…trails essentially, it's paddling the water that your ancestor's paddle. It's those connections that you cannot feel and cannot share online or in any other way than by being there and being immersed on the land. So yup.

(31:18) LS: Yup, it was a difficult decision, but it was the right decision. So, Robby I wanted to ask you, because last summer I spent time in your territory and at Dechinta, and I learned a lot about Dene ethics, protocols, practices, and laws, not by attending a Zoom webinar or by reading, but by watching how your elders lived and how they conducted themselves, and how they took care of the community, and what they did when they harvested animals… how they were in the world…So can you talk a little bit about that embodiment of Dene laws and what that means for Dene youth living out on the land and how that becomes challenging with online learning?

(32:28) RD: Yeah, I can touch on that. So here in Ross, there's not really a way of translating a Dene law, it compromises of respect and it's all based on respect and reciprocity, and our connection to the land…When you harvest moose or caribou, as a person, it can be a woman or a man…your first moose or caribou, it's by respect and you give away your first big kill…that's your introduction into the practices that we practiced throughout history. When I first got my moose, I knew as a young Dene I kind of knew…I heard stories of how you give away your first kill. When I was a kid, I remember I was like four or five, I was out on a camping trip with my parents, and I was by the river and there was a grayling that was swimming around, and it jumped out of the water in front of me. I grabbed that grayling and brought it to my dad, and my dad was like, yeah you got your first fish, he said… now I got to cut your hat now…so he grabbed it and cut my favourite hat. It was a Batman hat I think [laughter]. I was so mad. I was a kid and I didn't understand. As I got older, I had time to think on those things, and I'm still learning, but…It's all based on respect and how you show that respect to the land when you're out on the land. You offer tobacco or you just pray. You always pray when you go out…when you tell someone where you're going. I just thought of that. As a young Dene person, we include those practices into the curriculum you know, when we have these land-based programs. You learn out there. As a kid too, I was always…I didn't view it as school. It was more that you learned just by watching. Like how they cut up caribou or moose. They show respect. I always think of my grandpa and how he's pretty good at what he does. He's always giving and sharing and that's part of Dene practices. You always share what you have. You be respectful. Elders always say, just have respect for the land. Pick up after yourself and share what you have. Be good to one another…I don't have anything to add to that, but Mahsi.

(36:12) JB: I think too it's like, it's sort of like you both alluded that there's…to me, it's impossible to write it all down or to…like we've been working with the elder's council for the past while…there's been a number of times where we've tried to document like a code of ethics in some way that…for different projects. For example, for this hunting permitting system that the elders are putting into place, advocating that visitors who come to their territory are respectful of their ethics of that territory, the Dene ethics of that territory. It's been…I think it's impossible to capture that on paper or to capture that on a zoom call. It's almost like similar to what Leanne was saying about just watching and experiencing how people conduct themselves. That's to me what the challenges would be…We cannot predict what's going to happen, but there's…in spending enough time with elders and knowledge holders you can watch and observe with how they react and how they speak about different things and how they deal with the variables that are constantly changing, how they deal with maybe a conflicted camp, or how they deal with the weather that's changing, and umm…you know harvesting something like a fish for example, all the different ethical

practices associated with that I think don't lend themselves to being written down, or being sort of taught without the water, and without the fish, and without the elements that are part of it.

(38:14) Heading: **Discussing the Ethical Risks of Online Land-Based Education and Posting Traditional Knowledge on the Internet**

(38:27) LS: And Josh I know we had a conversation the other day in terms of your own research about some of the risks, or some of the worries that you had in terms of bringing Indigenous words, Indigenous concepts, Indigenous knowledge, and making it widely accessible to people through the internet, or through thesis writing or through books. So I'm wondering if you could talk about, what would you worry about, what are some of the potential risks of posting a video with an elder harvesting medicine, or discussing a story, what are some of the things that you might worry about ethically in terms of taking that kind of access away from the knowledge holder?

(39:16) JB: Well for one, just being who we are, there's a different set of ethics around sharing and anything than there would be for a Dene person from there, so that's an added layer of complexity. But also, I think universally like in spending a lot of time with elders, if you are talking about something like harvesting a plant, there's a few concerns that have been brought up many times by the elders in Ross. One has just been the fact that there's companies that can exploit that knowledge and turn these plants into pharmaceutical or into pill form and sell them. So just normal capitalism exploiting. There's also the fact that a lot of that relationship with the plant can't be, definitely can't be taught in a book, so while I think that's a good start maybe, it's so much different than touching the spruce tree for example and being with somebody that's got a deep long-lasting relationship to that spruce tree on the land together. The…kind of like what I was saying before, I guess the ethical practices around that just necessarily need to have that relationship I think…and then the fact that if you are sharing something, you don't know who is going to take it up always. Like with Dene knowledge, with the knowledge of the Tu Łidlini Dene, most things are considered communally…like a communal responsibility to govern how that knowledge is interpreted. And so, like what I was saying to you Leanne, in my thesis it's challenging because even though I've had many conversations with folks who say that this is good to… you know that's a good story and that needs to be part of that story you want to tell, and that there are benefits in telling that story too, it still always feels a little complicated because there's so many people who you cannot talk to, even people who are gone, or people who are not dead. So that communal kind of…rights or however you want to word it, that communal right to the knowledge is…are just so different from how the European dominant culture teaches us to view knowledge, and so putting anything online or available to the public has some tremendous implications, maybe around how people are going to hear

it and what they might do with it without maybe the embedded sort of accountability that's a part of being in place with people all the time with knowledge holders.

(42:22) LS: Christian do you have anything that you would like to add to that?

(42:29) CG: Yeah, that's really interesting. That's something that I think a lot about, I didn't mention this when I did my introduction but I'm also a lawyer. I've been a lawyer for about five years now, and I'm now a practicing lawyer in British Columbia and I try to think about all the different ways that laws can be interpreted or that arguments…like how you can form an argument, and how it can be interpreted from the other side, or how it could be interpreted in future decisions, like you don't want to create bad precedents basically. And it's kind of similar as a researcher as well because I'm doing my masters in law right now, and I'll start my doctoral studies in January, and I try to think about how like my research… when I'm going to be working with people and interviewing people…I think also, I think about people's own autonomy and when they share knowledge, why they share it, and so for my master's thesis, for example, I'm looking at secondary sourced knowledge. Like I went to the archives and I read a lot of books and looked at who's sharing knowledge at the time. Like for example, there were a lot of interviewers that were happening around 1900 to 1915, and I think it's also really important to give that…like give credence basically to the people who are sharing those stories at that time because I think about…like I don't have grandmothers on both sides of my family, so there's a whole generation that was just completely lost and I think we also talked about trauma and this discussion, and just a lot of trauma in our…like in a few generations as a result of colonization, and I try to think about the people who are sharing knowledge at that time, and they wanted to share that knowledge, they wanted to share that knowledge to ensure that there was some continuity in being able to pass it on. But then I also think about the harms as well. In what we call Indigenous knowledge or traditional knowledge, or Indigenous law as well, so the unforeseen harms I think…or unforeseen consequences of sharing that knowledge which could result in harms. I think it just involves a thoughtful and methodical approach in sharing that…I'm not sure if that just goes to methodological issues, or ethical considerations of that knowledge sharing, and I think when we do it over Zoom like …it's so impersonal and not real…like you guys are sitting on my table right now [laughter] and there's like seven little squares, and it would be really different in comparison to like, if you guys were over at my house and having tea, and we can't do that right now. We're all in very different parts of the country, but it would be really cool if we could do that, but it's just not possible. So I think it's like the plus side and down side of the pandemic is that we're able to have these conversations that we normally wouldn't have perhaps…like I talk way more now with people over Zoom looking at a wall and a screen than I did pre-pandemic. It was just a lot

easier to come and go as I pleased. So, I know I kind of threw a lot out there, but yeah I just think there's so many other considerations with how knowledge is shared, and the platform, and the unforeseeable consequences of sharing that knowledge, that I think a lot of care and consideration to the process is really important.

(47:40) LS: Thank you Christina, that was really…you brought up some really excellent points about how we need to think through what we're sharing and what we're asking our elders and knowledge holders to do carefully because I think you also brought up some good points in terms of isolation, particularly for our students that are in cities, or that are in the south, or they're away from their territories, and don't have access to the land, don't have access to their language, and now can't travel back. So, it's one of the reasons why we wanted to have this conversation with you guys, is to try to talk that out and think that through and see if there's ways that we can continue to connect with our students and take care of our knowledge holders while still, in an ethical way as Robby said, in a responsible way, as an interim plan until we can have this conservation…fishing with you on the dock Christina, or on the river, on the Dehcho River with Kristen, or in the sugar bush with me, or in Robby's territory…because I think if we were on the land together we would be having a different conversation. Siku, you talked a lot about things that the land taught you that are not easy to sort of quantify in their evaluation, like some land-based practices like hunting, fishing, trapping, and moose hide tanning, those have a very tangible thing at the end. I have a very holey moose hide [laughter] that's not very well tanned. Or some fish that are not very dry. There's a whole bunch of other things that you learn about in camp life like consent, and how to solve problems and respect, and responsibility. Could you talk a little bit about that Dene communal life that you get when you're in a longer-term land immersive program?

(49:05) Heading: Teaching Dene Communal Life Through Land-Based Programming and the Limitations of Online Platforms

(50:13) SA: Yeah totally, that to me…those are the things that land the most deeply for me, on a personal level, and in terms of my thinking about what I want to try and create in a world for our communities. There was something that [name of person] said to me when we were actually working on her moose hide, and we were talking - I was mostly talking – and I was saying how the Dene values are so important for young people to be learning and taking up, and she was saying, but what does it mean to be Dene? And I said, it's the values, and she said no, it's the being. And it kind of…it really stopped me and…I had to think more deeply about what she meant and kind of expand my understanding. And that's ultimately what, Kristen, what you were saying about what the land has taught you about who you are. And also, [unclear word] elder that we worked with last summer in Robby's territory,

he kept saying, more and more in his life he's come to understand that being Dene is a code of ethics, and it's a way of being, and that to me is the most important part about what Dechinta does and the communal life that we strive to create, is that setting for students and teachers and the whole team and the whole community to live within a code of ethics that is rooted in that land and that knowledge system, that value system, that life affirming way of being. There's…I also see it with Justina and how she loves that Kids U, and how important it is, it's astounding to spend time learning like, just witnessing what those kids are learning with their time with Christina, and Justina and the other elders there. She's taking what I grew up seeing as the Dene laws, which were on the poster and the wall, or in a classroom, or in offices, and they seem flat in that when they're posted on a wall, and Justina brings those to life. She's teaching the kids about what it is to practice those laws with each other and the land. It's a whole other thing entirely. I know in Western education the ways of learning are normalized with a separation between the student and the teachers, and there's…you're not supposed to really develop close relationships interpersonally, those are not really supposed to exist beyond the life of that 1.5 hour slot that you have three times a week, or whatever, for one semester. There's no real longevity, or accountability, and also just with scheduling this made up way of organizing time that Western society has, is so removed from the actual land, the weather, the gifts that kind of present themselves, and that when you're in a setting on the land and you have to stop because somebody brought a caribou and that caribou needs to be respected and prioritized and like the teachings that are there come first, and everything else comes later…or we can be planning for something like an excursion or whatever and we're humbled as human beings to know that we can't dictate the weather, and [if we] do not pay attention to what the land is saying and what the weather is doing, then our safety is impacted. As human beings I think it's more important and more realistic to understand the world that way, and our relationship to the world, and I worry about technology a lot. I'm always worried about technology when it comes to trying to develop young people…The ways that I'm seeing people in generations younger than me relate to technologies is really concerning because I've witnessed the association with all of the kinds of traumas and anxieties through those spaces, like social media and technology…even just when you're not in a cell range, having something like…constantly…having something up and being aware of your own image all the time is the reflection you're focused on versus being able to focus on your relationship to the people around you and to other generations of people around you, and to other life forms… it's really extremely important that Indigenous ways of learning that…that we maintain those ways of learning. The ways are just as important, and often they can be more important in certain ways than what you're actually learning…like those skills. Skill development can happen at any time, but learning the things that come before, like learning by watching as an important developmental thing that you teach young people, or that young

people learn by watching, and then they learn by doing. And then they learn by doing by having those in-person relationships with somebody that has patience and is trustworthy and is caring, and supportive. That is so extremely important for young people to have in that vulnerable time of getting skills and knowledge, and those relationships are the things that are going to build them as a person. When you experience care and consideration, and love and connection, you walk in a world a different way. You don't feel so isolated and like everything is on you, and what you know and don't know…you're not isolated in that kind of an experience. You have a whole bunch more coping skills, and I think that's…those are things that continually come up in the settings of Dechinta programming because all of the…those just comes up as human beings, we're so much more human when we're there and we're forced to be more real about what we are struggling with, or….I always think it's kind of like a temperature check, or…yeah something like that where it's like, here's where the state of the work needs to happen and Indigenous resurgence and working it, supporting it, these are all the sites where those human kind of things come up. I hope that makes sense.

(59:37) Heading: How do we share Dene Knowledge in a Responsible Way Online and How do we Teach Young People This Knowledge During Covid-19.

(59:49) LS: That was beautiful. Thank you Siku. Kristen can you tell us, or talk a little bit more about how the ethics of sharing Dene knowledge, what are some of the risks and how do we behave in a responsible way, and how do we facilitate sort of young people learning that knowledge in the time of a pandemic? How do we support those knowledge holders?

(1:00:22) KT: Well Leanne, I was hoping you'd ask me this question [laughter]. As people were talking, I was like, hey we just did a video series and put it online, and it's all about Dehcho culture, they're really amazing videos. So, Dehcho First Nations sometime ago decided to make a video series of elders and cultural knowledge holders, and a few youth, doing some on the land activities, and did the video series and focused around a week of being together on the Katł'o'deeche First Nations territory. We did a video on Dene laws. We did a video on Dene laws and stories, camp setup. We did a video on plant wisdom, and spruce trees, to really share our language and share our culture, and… As people were talking, I was thinking about… how did we do that ethically because I'm super proud of it, the nation's super proud of it, our elders are super proud of it. I think what the difference is, is that, it was done by us, we decided, we asked elders, like what do you want to share, remember this is going to be online, everybody from everywhere is going to be able to see this. We didn't share like, our favourite berry spots for sure, we didn't share any of our traditional land knowledge and our places of importance, definitely did not share berry spots on those videos. But we shared knowledge that people could, everybody could really

learn from, and I think really appreciate that…like our own people too… 'cause we're living in an era where everybody is online, and everybody is going through Facebook, and going on Youtube, and why not use that to I guess, help promote our language. It's a huge importance in our region and all over, and all the Indigenous areas and communities, to really keep the language strong, keep those teachings strong, and so we did it through video and eventually they'll come out in booklets so people can use them as resources to learn our language. We were really thinking about our own people, but I think that other people are going to benefit from our work also by viewing them. Tlicho also came out with a video series too at the same time, and they have…they're following their elders and stuff. I can't speak to it 'cause it's not one of my projects, and I'm not Tlicho, but amazing videos that they did too, and they came out the same time as ours, so I think…I really thought about this one…It really depends like, we're not…we can make a video about canoeing in [name of place] but you still have to experience it. We can make videos about spruce trees, but you still have to go out there and touch the spruce tree, and smell the spruce trees, so I think videos and making things online can be really great if it's done in a really appropriate way, by people, for the people, and on the people's terms showing what they want to be shared. But there's always risks. There's always risks with cultural appropriation, access to our knowledge, but the knowledge holders have the power of sharing that knowledge and they know, they know if they want to share with people beyond the people in their community, and for their self. It depends on the situation and it depends what's being taught. It can be done, not fully done. I would never be like, we're not doing a canoe trip, we're just going to do everything online but like… here's some Dene laws and value stories that you're aunties and uncles and your grandparents made, and they want to ensure all generations after them have access to these beautiful and amazing teachings, so here they are in our language

(1:04:18) LS: Mahsi, that sounds so awesome and so powerful, and so I think that's really really key. It has to be by the people, for the people, on their terms, and with their informed, continual, and enthusiastic consent. It sounds like those videos might really inspire youth to want to go out on the river, to ask questions, and to get more involved in this kind of education. I'm just a little, I'm aware of the time 'cause you guys have been very generous with your time and knowledge. Robby is there things that, was your community being interested in doing a video project like that, on your own terms, are there things you need at the community level that you're not getting kind of kinds of support that would help people continue to connect, help youth to connect to the land during the time of the pandemic?

(1:05:24) RD: Well, yeah, we could sure use the support and you know. We could definitely use the support, you know Josh could possibly help with that too, we have some capacity here. Yeah, we're more than willing to sit down with

our elders and document language, or anything that's going to be vital for our next generation of kids, that would be awesome. Yeah.

(1:05:57) LS: But not as a replacement for the land, but as sort of a temporary measure until they can get back out there and be in the same space on the land together. Did any of you have any final comments that you'd like to add, or anything that we haven't covered?

(1:06:08) Heading: Final Thoughts and Concerns

(1:06:23) SA: The only other thing is that I've been thinking about access to internet and computers too in the north as another huge kind of consideration.

(1:06:41) LS: Sure, so there's an assumption in all of this that southern institutions are making, and that is that there is high speed, quality internet that everybody has access to it, and that everybody has computers and Facebooks…or not Facebooks [laughter], I sound like I'm a hundred-and-fifty, ipads and computers. That's often not the case, so maybe can you speak to that Siku? You also told me your really lovely story last night about you trying to get your Dene dad to facetime you [laughter].

(1:07:16) SA: Yeah, so my Dene dad is 71 years old and has like…had a huge impact in the world, and in the north, and is a really well respected elder. He just learned how to Zoom very recently working with ICHR, and he told me that…one of the younger researchers there spent 2.5 hours on the phone calling him from Yellowknife to his home in Fort Prince Gerald, walking him through how to do a Zoom call, and that…that 2.5 hours, he was really grateful that she was so patient [laughter], and yeah that's just not something that…like there's a whole new consideration especially for elders of all nations but especially for our elders. Yeah, just not everybody has computers and access to technology. It's not as accessible for us in…especially for the more remote communities you go to. Internet is so expensive. There are…it's really limited and…It's also only really in urban, more urban spaces in the communities, so it would be, I think, very challenging to try and organize like a Zoom call or something like that, with somebody…taking place on the land which has no Wi-Fi access [laughter]. So, there just would be really practical things that would need to be attended to in order to even make that possible for a lot of people.

(1:09:36) LS: And this organization sent your dad an iPad, right?

(1:09:40) SA: Yeah, they sent it. I don't know if it was an iPad or a laptop, but they sent him something and they had to walk him all the way through it.

(1:09:51) LS: Kristen?

(1:09:52) KT: Yeah, I completely agree. Since the pandemic, for example, I've had to work from home and I'm continuously running out of internet. There's me in the house, my niece, my family comes over, my husband's working from home, it's a problem. They didn't even increase the internet usage, and so even to envision like how would you even move things like on-the-land teachings online, it's really difficult in the north because of the access to internet and computers, like hearing Siku. One way that we try and be mindful of that in our [Indigenous name] video and booklet project was to have USB sticks. Again, you need access to computers, but we're also going to be printing like DVDs, so people can, most people have DVDs, and then the booklets too, to try and make sure we are really encompassing the different types of learning and being aware. We are really trying to be cognizant that not everybody has access to the internet, nor do they…they might not know how to use the services, but it's definitely a challenge that…a challenge to think about and something to always be mindful about.

(1:11:11) LS: Christina?

(1:11:14) CG: Thanks. So, I was looking for the raise the hand thing, but I couldn't find it. I was thinking about one of the questions that you had poised…or that Kelsey had poised just before, which is, what is the land teaching us now? I guess around the beginning of social distancing, or like at the beginning of the quarantine, like…I began to see a lot of stories on the internet about, or new stories on the internet about how…like wildlife or animals were returning to cities or like, mountain goats were like returning to, I think it was like North Vancouver, and like last week in the news we saw a whale had returned to the St. Lawrence, and like, whales were going into the Burrard Inlet in Vancouver. There's just so many stories like that, that I'm seeing across Canada at least. There are quite a few oral histories that I've read, and I won't talk about one in particular, but basically in these oral histories what happens is, when animals aren't respected, they decide collectively that they're not going to give up their life for, like for the purpose of food, and one of them…For Tsimshian people…involves the mountain goat and…it really like…I think…I was really reminded of the importance of these oral histories at that time when…when I began to see those stories come out, and just how far removed we are from…as a people, as all human people, not just us in particular, but I think there's a lot of harm that happens to animals that's the result of just people in general like coming into these spaces. Like with more cities and natural resource extraction, and now there's less people going out to do these activities or there's less people outside, and so there's less of a threat of harm on animals, and so I just wanted to touch upon that in thinking about what the land is teaching us right now, and I think it's a really good lesson on how to respect animals and respect the land, who our animals are on the land and so yeah, I just wanted to share that.