

Art and Wellness Speaker Series
16 October 2020 Transcript
Agnes Etherington Art Centre

So before we begin, I wish to acknowledge that Queen's University and the Agnes Etherington Art Centre are situated on traditional Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee territory. To acknowledge this territory is to recognize its longer history when predating the establishment of the earliest European colonies. It is also to acknowledge this territory significance for the Indigenous peoples who lived and continue to live upon it. People whose practices and spirituality were tied to the land and continue to develop in relationship to the territory and its other inhabitants today. The Kingston Indigenous community continues to reflect the area's Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee routes and there's also a significant Métis community and there are First Peoples from other nations across Turtle Island present here today. This beautiful land, the trees, the three waterways nearby, the animals and birds are an inspiration and a solace during these difficult times. And we are grateful and privileged to be able to live, work, play, create and heal in our communities on this land. I urge you all to spend some time researching and reflecting on the land, you are coming from and to consider your own positionality on this land and how you can contribute to the work of decolonizing your institutions and your minds. Thank you, and I would like to introduce JP Longboat who is one of our speakers today. JP. Oh, you're muted here.

I just wanted to. Yeah, begin to welcome all the folks who wanted to to come and be here in this in this gathering today, this circle. We want to acknowledge the spirits of the ancestors that are here. You mentioned the animals and the land in this dish with one spoon territory. We call it. We as, as was mentioned, we're here on the ancestral territory of the Haudenosaunee folks, the Anishinaabe, the Mississaugas, and the Huron-Wendat. So welcome. And it's going to be wonderful, together with you and and council.

Thank you. JP. So, welcome everyone to the Art and Wellness Speaker Series. We are thrilled today to have two special guests and before I introduce them I'll just let you know how the speaker series will work. We will have an Introduction of our first speaker. Elaine Kicknosway and Elaine will speak with us for about 45 minutes and then we'll have another introduction of JP Longboat and he will then speak to us for about 45 minutes and then we'll have around a half an hour 30 minute question and Answer. So we do encourage you while you're listening to the speakers, please think about some questions you might have for them and put them in the Q&A box. And we will pose those questions at the end, we're really looking forward to that dialogue with you. Even though we can't see you we know you're there and we really appreciate you being here with us. So I'd like to introduce Elaine Kicknosway is Wolf Clan originally from northern Saskatchewan and a member of Peter Ballantyne Cree Nation. She is a survivor of the 60's scoop era and returned home in the mid 1990s back to her community. She is a singer, women's traditional dancer, participant in ceremonies and ongoing ongoing learner. Elaine supports and helps with drumming circles, ceremonies, talking circles discussion related to intergenerational impacts of residential schools and how child welfare has impacted the family today. She has been within ceremony life since returning home in her 20s and she has been a blanket exercise facilitator and trainer for the past seven years. She's the co-founder of the National Survivors of Child Welfare and we wish to welcome you, Elaine.

[Talking in Cree] Miigwetch JP for that beautiful acknowledgement of the treaty conversations of peace and friendship and also the ongoing conversations of where academia are still learning and not wellness, not wellness to come in what they say a good mind and our relations that we continue to strive in good ways with one another. And so when I when I speak I I speak of trauma spaces. Unfortunately. And so when I'm speaking of the traditional Indigenous way of life I have to remind people of the impact of colonization within our way of life and re-alignment back to the peaceful of peace and friendship, even within our communities, our sense of self, our sense of how do we guide ourselves within a traditional element of who am I and where am I going. So when I when I do these talks I remind people, it's not going to give you a right or a or a or how to, to do ceremony life. I only speak from my own my own perspective. I don't give permission for people to do what I do. I took many years learning under my uncle Raymond Ballentyne, the late Raymond Ballentyne, he's my direct uncle and also the many teachers Perry Francoise and the different relations that I carry and it's hard work. It's hard work to lead what they say a traditional life when you see this life before us happening right now. So I want to extend my, my my relational peace and friendship to from the, all the way from BC, all the way to the east coast, all the way up to Nunavut, all the way down to the turtle's tail in Florida and that in itself is Turtle Island. And we're, we're so related to each other. We're so related. And sometimes when when I'm talking about this lifestyle and witnessing historic history living history happening right now. We have to take acknowledgement of what is happening within our territories within this traditional life. Our traditional way of life, our traditional Indigenous way of life. And there's songs being sung right now there's a lot of prayers happening. There's a lot of rites of passage and today's rite of passage is land defending. Our rite of passage is water defending. Our rite of passage is asking help from the sky beings to make sure that everything above there is is okay. Everything in the Earth with that traditional way of life in our daily walk. And those songs that are sung, songs of of we'll get through this, songs of rite of passage, songs of the rites of our passage, in the rites of our passing and not taking an ego place from that. And not assuming in a privileged way because I can. And sometimes when I'm speaking I don't, I don't mean to offend. But this is the way it was brought to me in in ways of let's talk the truth because if we're truth walkers, then how do we break it down. [Talking in Cree]. So my English name is Elaine. All of me, all of my body, all of my water, all of everything with where I come from, comes from a very small community called Pelican. All my relations are up in northern Saskatchewan, but our relations have traveled. And sometimes they were forced on us when we traveled. We traveled because the residential school, traveled because of the Indian hospitals, traveled because of the sanatoriums, traveled because of the displacement and the script from the Métis, traveled because of child welfare and 60's scoop. And that that purposeful travel to eliminate to do to disseminate even all our food so we wouldn't have any. Any understanding what's happening in the East Coast, the destruction of the peoples' lobster. And we really have to take this these conversations into larger places and bring it in that place of platform. Our songs are really strong, our prayers are strong and our way of life is really strong. And we need to come in what they say that level place. Because everything that came in. When we came from the Earth. From our water. And the people that prayed for us to have a good day were to be raised well, or to know the knowledge of the people. So when I was being created my first dance and my first defending of the Earth was in my mother's womb. And she said, I kicked her sometimes, you know, in relations to the door just opened. In relations to taking her breath away. And that also happened when I carry my son, he would kick me and I'd say, oh, you took my breath away. But he was defending.

He was land defending. Land defending his his his his his Earth. But also his water. And that's where we get those early teaching say. And if they're not passed to us, then we don't know. And the songs that were to hear in our, in our, in our womb like we sing those songs, sometimes in those sacred spots called those longhouses, those wigwams, those sweat lodges, those Sundances, those places of prayer that were outlawed in Canada.

We were outlawed to practice our place of prayer and place of song, place of language, place of raising our children place, these different places. So when we're realigning that place back to this Earth of how do we do this traditional way of life. It comes from a voice. It comes from breath. It comes from, how do I make my land so that it stays stable in this unsuitability. Or the places of where it's been unstable and places of childhood. [Talking in Cree] which means I'm Wolf Clan. Wolves are loyal. We're loyal lot, we're loyal to the pack. We can be lone or we can follow the path. We can be the leader. We can be the followers or we can be the helpers or we can be the initiators. And for me, I, I, because of my early experiences and child welfare. And they said, I lost my voice and I lost my talk. In child welfare, I lost my talk. English is not my first language. I'm a Cree speaker. So in my heart and in my body, and in my mind, and in my thought process I still think Cree but in today's voice I can only speak English because of the places of where they would grab us when we were children. So I lost my talk. And that's that physical memory of how did I regain my talk. A lot of it was through community. A lot of it was through therapy. A lot of it was through ceremony and a lot of it was going to others that had had the different rites of passage of coming back home. So I went into those places that needed the rites of passage rites of passage of of even first song. My first song as as our little ones sing it comes when they're born their first cry. But in our world, it's their first song. And the continuum of those songs and the person that responds to the songs. Oh we are hungry. Okay. Oh, you need to be held. Okay. And we're singing as these infants. We have to remind ourselves of the different what they say interloper that's been passed down from the different institutes that took those songs. So now in that realignment we're teaching more and you know people look down upon this thing called electricity. Oh, you're not supposed to learn songs on YouTube. You're not supposed to. You're not supposed to. But if that's the only place you can find it and see yourself sometimes that's why social media is so popular because they hear something that they that a person feels that they belong, but there's still an emotional and physical disconnect. And

we have to remind ourselves in that disconnect we've disconnected from many places, including our Two-Spirit, including our trans, including those that are questioning or whatever they call that place of who am I. And it's not for an outside influence to tell them who they are. Ultimately we tell each other this is who I am. This is where I'm from. This is how maybe I survived and I know song and my life has helped me survive. Song from in childhood. Song from getting out of foster care system, Songs from when I grew into the adoptive home that was non Indigenous they knew nothing about a Cree girl. Songs that I grew into as an 80s kid. Songs that you know the classics from the 80s that got me through. Songs from coming back into the community and joining drum groups and coming back into ceremony and songs that got me into sobriety, or what they say a harm reduction. Songs that continue to bring the gifts of the Four Directions to me. Songs even helped me realign the words of my language back so when I'm singing I'm taking on the understanding of the roles and responsibility within that life cycle. I was supposed to always sing in my infancy. I was supposed to have teachers that would love me unconditionally. So I sing that back to me. I sing that back to understanding as a toddler that I stumbled

and I fell. There's songs for making mistakes. There's songs in joy of even getting up. There's songs of when you return the belly button, the umbilical cord, there's songs to that. There's rites of passage. And sometimes for us as parents were like, but I don't know that. So, in community we have to recognize that sometimes it's been passed. Right now in the in the harvest I'm trying to eat as much corn, beans and squash right now. Partly because of the interrelations. I have with the corn, beans and squash caregivers.

So I had my how many corn. I had my squash. For my lunch and I've had it and there's this craving that comes with the seasons of what am I supposed to eat seasonally and sing those songs to those plants and the garden and the harvest and give thanks for even for those seeds. And also come into place that says, I'm not taking advantage. And I'm not abusing or advantaging in on a vulnerable place. And understand the daily effects of privilege. I have a privilege to live in a house. I have a privilege of working hard to make it consistent for me. And be in the place of being asked. But I know that the person that I speak to, or the people that I speak to could do it just as well. Or maybe even better. So I really try not to have too much of an ego space. I know a little but I don't know a lot and when places of privilege or even of places of how can I go there and how do I find out, we have to acknowledge it sometimes places of privilege are through these different institutes so, you know, and just holding that it's not a guilt one. It's not a shame one. It's just holding it and understanding that what is shared. If it's recorded to share it out further so that our people can see us so that we're not what they say the lone person in the room or the lone speaker in the room, there should be more of us. And those are the places of understanding, you know, on the front lines land defending, whether it be the moose moratorium or or in through the waters that dead BC region or the uranium. Or tar sands. Even not to place of privilege of really understanding the effects and finding the experts and I'm not an expert on songs. I just like to sing. I just like to sing our songs because that realigns me back into all of my being. I was sharing earlier the scarf I wear it's kind of glittery, it reminds me of my my late grandma. And she she wore scarves, like that. So in that place of privilege, it's it's saying I'm going to find that so that I can bring it home to me and I have the capabilities and and avenue even to internet that's consistent and drink my drink my tea. Of my running water. And the human rate of having a safe environment called my home with. Not too many people in my home, other than my, my husband and my child. And know that I'm not in an overcrowded home. And the songs that we sing. Here the songs that we sing in our home. And how we take it out. So we seem to our babies, we sing to the toddlers, we sing at powwows, we sing and every morning we sing to ourselves every morning I'm woken up by this beautiful sun that sings every day of his life. There's never a morning where he didn't sing it. And the generations of when it stopped. Do you remember the moment that you as a person stopped singing? Do you remember? I remember I was in foster care. I stopped growing, I stopped talking and I stopped singing and only when I was about three and a half, almost four the adopted mother of the last home that I was placed in she heard this song. Just a simple song, she said. And it just sounded like I am home, I am home. And that joy and that reassurance that that child was singing and that was my song. I am home. I am home. Just in that little four year old singing sense of self of I'm home. So my my adopted parents at that time shared she knew that it would be hard, but it was going to be okay. She didn't know fully what that meant to adopt a Cree child that was neglected and abused. She was only there for after the storm. And a lot of the daily conversation within community is after the storm. What we've lived through. And how we're regaining that life cycle of responsibility and being in that place of honesty, even for our youth and being beside

them remembering our youth. I shared I was an 80s youth, I was a punk rocker. I was, you know, half shaved head. I had a lot of earrings. Now I just wear one but those different things of the different eras. Listening to Aerosmith, Led Zeppelin. Those are the songs of the day, but I was supposed to also learn rites of passage. The berry fast songs. The first kill or the and those are the hunting songs. The passages to get to the hunt and the water, take me back to the water to remind me of my responsibility and we have a wonderful youth advocate, her name's Autumn Peltier. And she started young, she was just a child to say who speaks for the water and that's all of our original conversation. We are all from water and we're all to advocate for water, not in a privileged place but in an authentic place. And then becoming that adult, you know, or what they call adulting. And those songs that come even from trying new things. For myself as a young adult I was getting off the street because I had been homeless. I was also struggling with addictions. So there's a total different environment of what songs are around you to the songs that you were meant to have songs to teach you about the gardening, teach you about the going on the land, teach you about the picking, have enough to pick for more of the people that will come in your lives and even have the medicines around you. And then the time will come with making a choice of what relations that you will have to have a what a partner or not. And what's been presented to you. And so what was presented to me earlier was some violence. So I was in violent relationships. And the stillness and the quietness that came with that and walking on eggshells. To the environment I am today of speaking up and in that place of what I did to get through that and who helped me and those specialized helpers that brought me back and did those ceremonies to say you belong. Sing that song. I am home. I am home. You've always done home. All this, this land called your body, your sovereign land is home. And that place of. When I become a parent preparing even when I'm when I'm becoming a parent. And when I became a parent I was a later age, what they say a later pregnancy. And at the age of 36 I had a lot of different helpers and supporters and different places of singing and pray for me so that the baby would stay within this life so that he could physically come to walk on this Earth. And there's prayers and grief all through that time. And having the love of grandparents and communities and kind of giving my time to be able to rest, to develop the songs that we're going to be sung and sing to the womb, always sing and have him around or have them around that ceremonials life.

So I'd go to the drum. I wouldn't go into too many places and understanding that not you that we can't always go to those places because we're carrying life. And it's their responsibility to the families and communities to help take care of you. But also, you do the work too, you know, do the best you can. And coming into that era or ageism of grandparents. So now I'm a step grandparent, step grandparent to some pretty cool kids. Like pretty really wild kids and singing them their songs and but them singing their songs to me and then bringing that that nation to nation conversation because my grandchildren, our grandchildren are going to walk. And that inter relation of knowing we have many places of how we continue to bring our voice, our language, our songs and our traditional rites of passage in our life cycle responsibilities to one another. And we do that in in that knowing that we've been asked to be here in a prayer. We've been asked to be here in a thought and an action and and develop and grow into this is who I am. I think I was always a singer. I like singing. I really like singing. I don't do it a lot, but when I do it, when I do it with my son or by myself I just sit in prayer and that those places have helped me get through this. I sing through my anxiety. I sing through my, my, my, there's COVID songs, now right, help

me get through this. Help me, help me understand that we we had protection songs we had songs that would help one another and lend a hand. Because that's that placing that seed forward. In our relation and so in our minnow ponds, when our way of life, our walking way of life with that good mind comes that place of we're all doing our part as best as we can. And sometimes it's hard. So we have those grief songs, we have those alone songs, we have those songs of independence, songs of merging back for two to one another, songs of first dance. Songs of rites of passage. Songs of even becoming a grandparent. It's new role. Songs of becoming a parent. Songs of within a relationship, their songs their songs of understanding that with the songs comes different objects of comfort, whether it be a blanket, a pillow a scarf. Earrings that adornment. The place of adornment. Because that brings a sense of comfort, a sense of adornment, which means I'm we're all walking gems. That's the way I look at it, because the sky life is full of vision. And word to help carry the vision forward within songs and communication. And have really difficult discussions and sometimes if I'm not the ones that have the discussion because I get too frustrated I know that there's others that will carry it forward. We have really good speakers. So for this season I'm I'm eating a lot of apples and beets, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, all the things of the corn, beans and squash and the lettuce, not just like green lettuce, but all the the coloured lettuces, the potatoes and and the like. I the neighbourhood found out that I like tomatoes. So they're bringing me all these like cherry tomatoes, like every day I get fresh cherry tomatoes from my neighbours' gardens gardens and nuts, where you're eating the Earth. You're eating the sun, you're eating the water and that, to me, because people separate this thing called culture. And if I lost my culture because of the 60's scoop. I can't eat it back enough. I can't wear enough beadwork enough. I can't wear enough scarves enough but I am enough. I've always been enough. And so are you. You've always been enough in the songs that you know today, to the songs that you're going to grow into, to the action, the movement, the growth. The speaking up. The I'm not sure if this is a good idea. When I was approached to speak here. I wasn't sure it was a good idea because I, I always go to that place. I don't know if I know enough. But I knew that I wouldn't be the only one in the room. When they said JP would be here I was like, Okay, I've worked with him before. Okay, let's go. We're okay. So it's really going into that place of anxiousness because a lot of times when I was growing up, I was the only one in the room with all of a sudden needing to know the whole part of the oppression and the and the education. But I know I'm not alone. There's a lot of you, and I hope you're all speaking up for those things that are happening in your territory, within your community, within the nationhood within your territory and being what they say in person of action. There seems to be always be this word of ally, but actually you have to put it into action. Everyone needs to put something into action in a good way to be of that balance because the Wampum was there and we weren't to change the way of life. We were continue to be on the water, and we would pass and acknowledge each other in our walk of life, and there was a respect there. There was a respect of I honour you. And I give thanks for that. So I've been talking maybe half an hour. Is that all I need to talk now.

Hi Elaine. Thank you so much.

You're welcome. Um,

Do you have any anything else you may want to say you've, you could talk for maybe five more five or 10 more minutes if you'd like, but if you just let us know.

I always ask, you know, like where people are saying, you know, tell us about Indigenous 101 or the place of what are, what are we supposed to know I always say, grab a piece of paper. A blank piece of paper.

Put 1492 on there. So that was like first contact. Mm hmm. If you knew that the school is closed in 1996 then you put that there. And then 2020. And then you start filling in. Everybody start filling in. What do they know about Indigenous content. And then if you're surprised or why the page is, almost all empty, ask yourself why? So that's that conversation of of understanding even and privilege. It's really important to know the whole space of who you are occupying or spending time with. Because my walk might be totally different from your walk. My walk called the 60's scoop is totally different from Inuit relocation, from my grandfather's walk from being a scripted Métis man, to my grandmother's walk under the Indian Act, to being raised in residential school. My walk is different from my mother, who was raised in the Indian hospitals and sanatoriums. My walk is totally different from her walk because I'm raising my child. But I work with many places of CAS and the intergenerational effects. And my walk is totally going to be different than my son's walk from when he becomes a parent being it took to 2003 to actually legally, have my child at home. Right, because the schools closed in 1996. Legally, we weren't allowed to raise our children till 1996. So we have to go in there. We have to help those conversations of what was your walk like and why didn't you know about these different things. Even the Royal Commission on Aboriginal people in 1996 or the Oka Crisis, which was actually a war. The Oka war. And then the formal formal apology in 2008. Do you know what word by word? Do you know how they got their new did it? And then the Truth and Reconciliation Commission to the missing and murdered. You know, so I always encourage people 1492, 1990 or 1996 to 2020. But then put put another line. What else is going to happen. And what is your action in that responsibility. That's what I always do. And I tell this from my son. All the way up to these high end government workers to Queen's University. I think everybody should know this. And I don't mean to offend. When I say these words, but I know that I'm still a tourist within many nations. I'm still I'm still learning and it's okay to not feel ashamed of that. I love it every community. I go to if I could go to every community and not act on my privilege of saying, teach me. But just be authentically be, and offer a little that I do know, and bring those gifts everywhere I go, I carry different gifts with me so that in case I run into somebody or something and I offer tobacco as an offering and give them a gift. Thank you for teaching me because I didn't know that. And I thank my son, so, so much. I thank, I thank my my my partner, my husband, you know, because when we came together I said, I'm going to do everything different because what I've been taught isn't working for me. 22 years later, it's working. I still speak up by I'm independent I'm with him. And we're growing into what's going to happen next. And now we look at what will he do next in his daily conversation of education. Because education to some in our community and our family is not a good thing because of the elements of how education assimilated us. So we have to hold that too within the education system. I know at different times that was there but today's education we're going to continue to build a relationship with you so that you feel safe to be involved. So I do work with education. And now he wants to go to university, so I'll have to hold that in my heart, say I know we've got we've given you a safe world. We told you this, that this world is safe. So go fly. But come home. Well, always have lots of food, lots of songs, lots of celebration. But when you come when you fly you come home because you're, you're always part of my, my heart, my body because you were, you were my body. And that's what I think that we have every day. So, I think that's it for me. But I know there's questions and

answers for later. So I thank you very much. I am I'm just feeling kind of humbled to be here and offer the little that I do know, and I wish you all a good day. Miigwetch. [Talking in Cree]

Thank you so much Elaine. We're also very humbled to spend this time with you and to hear your story and I'm so inspired by your sharing about song and how song has been so important to you. And I think that's such an important question is asking when when has someone lost their song. It reminds me, my family we're all very creative and there's lots of music in our home. And I remember my daughter coming home from school. I think she was maybe in grade grade two. And she said, Mommy, I was humming in class because she was, that's how she was learning. She was humming as she was doing her class and her teacher scolded her for that and told her to stop humming. And so that really hit home and I i can imagine that that situation happens all the time, and in all sorts of situations throughout history. It really came home, it felt like such an invasion of her natural way of being and my fear was that she would stop singing and stop humming forever. But she knows now just that in schools she's not allowed to hum and children aren't allowed to speak up, they have to listen and you talked about this education system and what sort of teaching is that when we're not allowed, allowing children to express their song. Yeah. So I really feel that and so many of the things you shared.

I'll give you a little just add on. I don't want to go into JP's time too much. Is it okay if I add that on? Absolutely, please do.

When when Theland, my son was in kindergarten. Best, best kindergarten teacher ever. Like I, that was my first experience and she knew she she kind of had this intuition that you know, I really wasn't sure about the schooling for him but you know I want him to know like school right and I want him to feel proud of his school and she was so kind like she'd like I see him, and then he does this, like, kind of like a tap dance. And I'm like, oh, that probably is happy dance like you can't just sing out there and and because our children today are living in two worlds right and but they're they're they're gradually growing, growing into the two worlds, because that's the world that they've been born into. You know, when I was born, I was born into either going to residential school, Indian hospitals, Day School or child welfare. That is the era I was born into. And he's born into being lawful. Oh, and I was outlawed. I was outlawed. He was born into being lawful, lawfully raised at home, lawfully being able to raise and decide what school he wants to go to, lawfully be able to sing all his songs and dance and conduct his ceremonies, lawfully. So that's the other. And then we've got this huge place of of connection through these different platforms. So I think it's I keep on saying this huge wave is coming. It's not just this not just them this pandemic, this huge wave of knowledge. Because they've been raised and we're raising them with this knowledge and kind of scraping away all the all the stuff of the buffering of it, they're they're they're they're seeing the full the full knowledge and speaking to the speakers. And I think that this wave and everybody has to get ready. I even have to get ready. So we have to get ready. Be prepared because they're going to take leadership. They're going to take tenures, they're going to be professors, they're going to not just be students and that's okay because we've raised them that way. To take their place of their rights and responsibility and their leadership. Miigwetch everybody. [Talking in Cree]

Miigwetch.

Thank you so much again, Elaine. I'm looking forward to our Q&A and please make some questions for both Elaine and JP in the Q&A box. I have so much to think about after your talk here Elaine. Thank you. Introducing JP Longboat. JP is a Storyteller, a Multi-disciplinary Artist and he is Mohawk, Turtle Clan

from Six Nations of the Grand River, Southern Ontario. JP has a Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree through combined Education at the University of Michigan and the Ontario College of Art and Design. He has extensive professional training and practice in traditional and contemporary forms of visual art and live performance. We welcome you, JP.

Hello. Thank you. Thank you very much. I'm just doing just a little smudge just to ground myself after that. That, that, that to me is a very deep. And truthful narrative that we were just that you know that Elaine just shared with us. So a lot of times it gets emotional in different ways. So so we looked at those plants, you know, for that grounding and that and that healing and and so I just wanted to start just with that. Everything, almost everything, is going to weave right together with what I'm going to present this this afternoon. And also out of this Elaine, I think we should talk about a future project on the wolf. I've got something cooking so I'm going to I'm going to contact you after this. So part of what I would love for this this event as well is is also an opportunity to network. I'm doing different things in my, in my practice, different ways that could be an opportunity to reach out and make more contact. Once we once we finish this. And then in the in the coming days. So I just want to keep that open as well. I created a bit of a script. This is not the usual way I present. I'm also one where from a storytellers point of view

you know, you actually want to physically be in that circle and you want to, you want to feel feel the room feel the space be in that be in that energy. So I've got a bit of a script I going to kind of refer to that throughout the throughout the talk, the presentation I have and we we have an opportunity to actually do an action as as as Elaine, you know, put forth in a number of different ways. So I'm a dancer. I'm a performer. Ceremony and ritual are very important to me in my, in my creative process and in my cultural process as well. So, Elaine also mentioned a couple of times this rites of passage or initiation. So we've built in an exercise. To perhaps engage in that and make a make an action or or create or imagine an action. So that's a bit of a rites of passage. And one of the things that this is sort of going to draw from just from from ease of process would be the the the calls to action from the TRC, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission calls to action and 94 calls to action. So I think there's a link somewhere, I would say I would suggest maybe pull those up. Have those in reference and, you know, just look at those as I'm as I'm speaking. And as we will start the process in a little bit. But as I'm speaking, you know, this is it will flow over the the 45 minutes that we have. So and and I'll guide you through. So, um, where to begin here. So first of all, I just want to thank you I want to thank the local people, the traditional title holders to the land, the ancestors for, you know, opening the space from each present. It's an honour it's really an honour to be able to ask being being asked to be able to speak at at this in this forum. I also wanted to thank the organizers of the event as you know they're the reasons why why we're here today, I want to honour their vision and the work they did to bring us all together and for their spirit of inclusion. This in itself is a is an act of reconciliation and relationship building so I I completely honour that. One of the things that Haudenosaunee people will do is to is to begin by honouring all of creation with our thanksgiving address in the language, it means the words that come before all else. So we speak these words of thanksgiving and what it is, it's all the words have been spoken all the words of acknowledgement of all of our relations. So from from from the underworld. You know, all the way up through creation to the to the Milky Way and the cosmos. So, in that, you know, we're including the waters, the fish, the medicines, the green plants, the trees, the winds. the moon and the celestial and in the end we asked if we are all of one mind in that thanksgiving. So we can

acknowledge that we are all of one peaceful mind as we share this dialogue today and I do hope it will be a dialogue I know we're going to get to some questions questions and answers. So I'm really also looking forward to that part of the the afternoon. We're going to go to many places today. I do I do work in many different ways, many different levels in my, in my, in my creativity and in my work. So there's a lot of my mind right now, these days, there's a lot there. So I tried to organize some things but let's begin. When we come together it is our way to connect our minds and our hearts. The elders, one of my very strong teachings in my life is the Elders would tell us that this that the longest journey is from the head to the heart. So we're just going to take a moment to come together and we're going to, we're going to form our circle our council our space to share today. So let's first let's make that journey to connect our minds to our hearts in this place, and we're going to take a moment to stand up right wherever you are. Just stand up. Just Plant your feet. Let's take this moment to breathe. Plant your feet upon the land. In the place you are right now. Let your roots go down deep deep into this land. Into this creation that gives you all of the sustenance that you need to live. Take a moment to breathe. Let those roots reach down. Where you are now on Turtle Island is the homeland of someone at some point in our, in our Indigenous history. Do you know who that might be? Okay. Alright, so now we're going to, let's just move into this little. Thank you.

Let's just move into that this little if you call it rites of passage or initiation so I took some some inspiration from some stories and they're stories about folks in our communities people that have performed deeds of courage and significance and many times that actually honours they the committee would community would honour that with a new name. They would acknowledge that deed with a new name amongst the people so in this first part of the process. We're going to take our rooting exercise and we're going to acknowledge where we are in the land. The place the territory. Just take a moment to think about the history of that place. The place you are think about the history that you know Elaine mentioned that now, I want you to place your own history or layer your own history into that. So what we're gonna do is we're going to just in our, in our, in our minds. We're just going to take a moment to separate from this old story. So much of what Elaine shared this morning. Talks about that old story. Let's make a departure from these old ways of thinking these old ways of doing things. And let's begin to create and draft a new story for ourselves. For yourselves. Now just turn inward for a moment and consider and then write a few lines. About something you have begun, or would like to begin an action that would prove this to yourself. Okay, an action that would prove to yourself. A worthy effort in transforming this old story. And gaining new knowledge. New understanding. And in turn, the possibilities to create a new story. A new narrative going forward. And becoming a transformed citizen of Turtle Island. Now we're just going to take a moment with that you can reference the the TRC calls to action if you'd like. Yeah, just take a few moments with that. So consider and write a few lines, a few sentences. About something you have begun or something you would like to begin an action that would prove to yourself a worthy effort in transforming the old story. So that's the beginning of the process. Just sit with that and let it unfold as we move through the rest of the the afternoon here and we'll work with it as we go through. I wanted to thank Elaine as well for the basically call the action to call to action to to educate yourself on the true, the the history of of Canada. I think that is is is really, really important and very, very much a part of this process of reconciliation. So if I wish to I guess I could introduce myself as number 2500139101. So that's my Indian status number Indian in Canada is a concept that was created by the Canadian government out of a collection of legislation referred to

collective collectively as the Indian Act, which creates a bureaucratic bureaucratic category called Indian that can then effectively whereby they can effectively then manage the problem. It begins by everyone being given a number a band name. And perhaps a territorial reservation. My band is Lower Cayuga. I guess my family number would be 1391 which it exemplifies this this this act of colonization. It's interesting because when they registered our families as at least this is how it is from the Haudenosaunee point of view, where, where I guess, the family runs through the woman, okay, not the man. So in this in this act of giving and registering us they made it paternal and so my father is Cayuga and my mother is Mohawk. So it wasn't we had to actually do an action to retrace this. It's just an it's just a concrete example of the systemic cultural disruption and you know, basically purposeful assimilation, so that's that's the start with that. So today I was posted a question how do how do the arts facilitate cultural wellness. So I'm so I'm so honoured to be able to talk about my own process in this because my own process as an as an artist as a creator has completely facilitated facilitated a transformation for me. I'm honoured to share thoughts on what the journey has been culturally, artistically because I have been also so blessed in my training and by those who have mentored me and who have offered an opportunity for me as an artist to actually be trained and to and to work within a cultural perspective. Okay. This has really been this artistic journey really has been a journey to truly understand the questions I think we are all grappling with as Indigenous people today as we awake from the colonization process and the genocide of residential school. How do we deal with the issues arising from our lands from from ourselves being dispossessed from our lands lands appropriated how our people have been dispossessed the disenfranchisement from our place on the land, in our territories and enfranchisement into Canadian policy and the Indian act. Our languages repressed, our spiritual practices outlawed and our children taken away from our families. This this systematically it continues today. Its said that in Canada the threat to Indigenous languages is the highest amongst all developed nations. That was an interesting piece of information that that I came by that I thought was quite quite quite telling. In the residential school. Okay, my, my grandfather went to residential school as well as my a lot of my older aunties, uncles, my mother was the second youngest of of 10 so what she did she didn't specifically go but she did go to day school. In residential school for speaking your native language, they put needles into their tongues. Or oftentimes their hands were held over hot flame. So, you know, these are just some of these are some of the realities that I continue to learn about I'm finally, really getting to some of the stories of my grandfather in residential school and so part of my artistic process helps me to process those things in a very deep way. But it's not just a system that needs to be changed and go in going forward. We have to change the way we think and the way we imagine there's some different images coming up, which I love because in our in this old artwork. You see that relationship to me, you know, through the images. This is we've chosen a number of eastern woodland pieces primarily that you know that represent our relation to the place here and often in the eastern woodland artistic been working motif since so its very floral, floral where the woodland with an area. What you'll see also with some of this some of these pieces is that there's a, an adaptation of of materials as well. I think we see later on we see some some quill work and some fibre embroidery and you know the beads were another piece of technology that came that were, you know, were adapted to it and and use for for self expression. And now looking at the opportunities for example, that I've had over the last three years of my of my career. And you know I we find ourselves in

this in this in the midst of reconciliation, a number of years into reconciliation and it's interesting because that has been sort of really left to everyone's own homes' interpretation of that and and you know what, what is the process of reconciliation? What does that mean, and how do we do that? So I think in my work. And we'll talk about that a little bit as well that I think that I've been trying to find that process. And I know that the question is being asked, particularly on some grassroots levels in the in the community. So there's, you know, there's there's some action on that front. And that's very, very encouraging. I think also in terms of the objectives of our of our people in our, in our, in our cultural ways is that is that it's been the same, same, since the earliest times right up into today and that that is that is providing you know as Elaine said is giving the strength or providing and how do we give the strength to our future, future generations of our, you know, our First Nations youth and our young people. Yeah, it's another beautiful, that floral, so even raised you know even based beadwork as well came into it. They brought that art form to even if you know a third dimension. Yeah. Okay. You know this this using that incredible material that is that is birch bark. This, you know, this just a, you know, incredible design. So it's a classic design. Again use of various fibres, roots. Many of these these types of containers are waterproof, of course, I think they were even used for cooking. Yeah. One of the, you know, being in here living here in Algonquin territory and coming into relation to the territory and the river and and then from there into the canoe was, was the that element of the birch, the birch tree and of course, the, the making and design of these of these water vessels is, you know, just incredible ingenuity, but also the process of harvesting the material is also that first part of the art form. Year this is the, I think this is the embroidery. This is the piece that uses various fibres with natural dyes. And if you look at the edging the edging it looks like sweetgrass to me. So sweetgrass is one of the four sacred medicines: tobacco, sage, sweetgrass and tobacco tobacco. Yeah, see that so. Beautiful. Okay. This is more of an ash. More of an ash basket. This one has a lid on it. This is a beautiful, beautiful shape or form going to have sweetgrass on the edges of that that wasn't so nice because it's a lid that that fits right over it, right snugly. You know that whole process of pounding the ash tree to get those to get that right thickness of a splint that they're using. Often, they're going to use natural dyes as well. So beautiful. So it's a very personal issue when we, when we realize what colonization is in real terms. In our in our understanding of ourselves, in our attitudes towards ourselves, in our emotional and psychological positioning, in relation to secular society, as well as each other. And I loved and was really grateful Elaine when when you you know made that interrelational gesture, that that that that connectivity that I read it over here. Yeah you extended relational greetings. That was so beautiful. You know, we also we always talk about all of our relations. So I honour that. And I thank you for that. So, and we need to talk about it in terms of in personal terms in order to fully appreciate what kind of solutions that are going to be effective in really making transform transformational change in our communities as opposed to surface changes that address other people's priorities. Transformation is a very big theme in my work. So this is why exploring our own personal journey, investigating our personal narrative, exploring ourselves through self expression and through reclaiming our performance histories, our creative process. It's so important and essential right now. I'm going to use that quote from Louis Riel said that he said that my people will sleep for 100 years and it would be the artists who wake them. I thought about this for a long time. I heard this many, many years ago when I first started theatre. And because there's no words for art in our languages I think to me I think what he was saying or what he was referring to is that it's our it's our it's our creativity as Indigenous people, our ability to

imagine and reimagine ourselves in a self determined way that will that will bring us back. So that's how I've been in relation to that statement, ever since. Someone sent me a really cool TED Talk by Wade Davis. I'm doing some work on the Kitchissippi and the Gatineau river and there's a gentleman who's who's showing me around, he's actually part of the I think it's the Canadian Geological Society. And he's a wealth of knowledge and what he sent me this link. So Wade Davis says Indigenous cultures and we spoke and as as Elaine was saying as well. It's referring to ways of life, our branches of the human imagination that go back that go back to time immemorial. To me, this really resonates to me as an artist and a [term in another language] because our creation stories, my creation stories, place me here, place me right here on Turtle Island. Okay. It's very places, very land. And I always remember how we use that term from time immemorial. And so it was really interesting to hear that same language, that same narrative within this TED talk, and how that how that sparked my my resonance with it. So if you got if anyone if you want to talk about, you know, Bering Strait theories. Later on we could we could do that too, if you want to just email me you can. So as an Indigenous artist I've chosen to work within a process and be inspired by the fullness of my own cultural narrative. Okay. By our language by our history by our teachings by our ceremonies. So for me as an artist I've made that the foundation of my of my artistic practice and that's a choice of course. I've been really fortunate to have the opportunity to train with Indigenous within Indigenous methodology and performance culture, which has been probably the greatest gift in terms of my training. Not so much in my, in my early years with my formal education my Bachelor of Fine Arts degree from from the University of Michigan that was basically a fine arts, you know, degree. I was focusing on and working with I was focusing on working with graphic Design and photography but I was able to to do it all. I did a lot of printmaking and did a lot of metal work. I did ceramics and and carving sculpture as well. So I was able to be able to move into those and dive into those areas while trying to do the same thing with design. I came out of, I came out of university also took a couple of summers and went to the the Ontario College of Art and Design and turn on tune in focus a little bit more in photography there. And that was really quite wonderful. And I came out of that and started working in Toronto, as a graphic designer in the corporate area and in just even within a few years, a couple years it didn't feel right. And I remember even some of the some of the feelings inside in terms of working with these large corporate companies and and using my creativity to to fear to further their their goals. So it didn't, it didn't, it didn't resonate quite quickly. So I moved home. I went back home and I started just doing my own my own visual visual art at that time. A lot of it had to do with sculpture and carving. And realize that the the visual artwork that was coming had a narrative behind it had a had a story there and and that really made me very curious. And then had the opportunity they were bringing back the the it's called CIT the Centre for Indigenous theatre today, they call it that, then it was called the Native Theatre School and I was doing some storytelling and got the chance to start training at the Native Theatre School and I jumped right in. I really loved many of the concepts that that they had talked about. And one of the first things they introduced to us was that we have we have ancestral memory and hardwiring that we could we could we can bring that into what we're exploring in our stories and our are telling our stories and that really fascinated me and and it still does. And as I continued into my, into my theatre work it was always primarily for me always do the physical body. Very, you know, very rooted that in that from an athletics background. And just quite organically and naturally went there probably to bounce or probably at the same time as you know, working with that emotional landscape through theatre was very deep working, you know, we're

working into I don't know if I was really conscious about it at the time, but working into this, into this trauma into this colonization. Of the body of mine, you know all of this, all of this, this this history in my body. And it really did feed that the emotionality of the of the theatre work for sure. But I knew it was taking me somewhere. Because I wanted to get to that place of memory. Can I actually remember, can it can we actually how far can we go into that into into into maybe some kind of a a real real experience of that memory and then that took me into more and more deeper work with my body and then I was able to actually make a jump right into into starting to do dance and that was again a gift. In that there was a so the started in 1996 was the first Aboriginal dance training program at the Centre for the Arts and just a couple years prior to that. There was an sort of a nationwide series of discussions which talked about from from an Indigenous from these Indigenous circles, that talked about what, what are the art forms that that are they're not being very supportive very much and and in the mid 90s, it was, it was dance for sure. Theatre was having a resurgence, visual arts was there but but but dance was was really suffering. So so that was one of the first programs that Banff came up with and all based on Indigenous methodology, all based on bringing in and gathering those incredible traditions of of dance, movement song story. And we trained hard and move deeper into I think for me the kind of the alchemy of being able to work with these these stories. And and I mean we have such an incredible vault of stories, of of narrative and the narrative. I see storytelling storytelling it's just a part of the whole whole narrative in there in the fullness of that oral tradition, its history, its, its teachings, it's you know, it's all of that. Can we go back and go back. That's, that's, that's where I'm starting to work on the land, a little bit more so. So did the training at Banff and then went to Vancouver and started dancing with two contemporary companies, again learning a lot moving into deep very, very physical very, very, very deep but performances performance content. Each each series of that of working with these full length dance pieces. Really was quite transformational. This work here. This work is based on again, a collaborative a circle of artists. We're now a collective called Circadian Indigena. We're from all over Turtle Island. We're dancers in theatres and filmmakers and we're now starting to layer our live performances to reflect the layering of our stories, mental, physical, spiritual. This this piece is called greed. And we all bring that traditional teaching of those those traditional teachings of balance and harmony with with creation and where we are on the land and in the land. And part of that part of the one of the foundational teachings of that harmony is to take only what you need. And make sure there's, there's, there's some left for the others. So even that basic value of that and that and that that comes through different stories from different nations. These collaborators are Blackfoot. Byron Chief-Moon is Blackfoot. Olivia is a mix of Anishinaabe and I think she was talking about part of Potawatomi. And of the Anishinaabe nominations come in there as well. So we have Damien. He's from the Okanagan. We have Tia, she's actually she's Maori and her son is now becoming involved in this involved in the group, the collective. So basing the work on our stories. In this set of stories from the Blackfoot tradition. A being by the name they called him [term in another language], [term in another language] came to help people and to help rebalance and to help them rebalance and find that harmony again. And so that's what this this piece basically was about so within a contemporary context, no telling these stories and embodying these stories. You know, as we as we reimagine ourselves going forward. You can go. Let's go to the next one we doing for time. We have about five to seven minutes left. So let's look at look, at these series of images. When I started really creating work here and really working as an artist here. In in Ottawa and in Algonquin territory I spent a good year taking taking the appropriate process of of

meeting and introducing myself to the Algonquin folks. To the hereditary leadership, to those in leadership. And to come to know their history. To educate myself in in in you know, how are they, how they are in their territory and I continue to learn, its so amazing. So that quite quickly led me to the water system and the Kitchissippi which is in this photograph here Kitchissippi, the Ottawa River, which goes from flows from Montreal and in the area of my people Mohawk [term in another language] all the way across to lake Nipissing and back into the Great Lakes from there. So much history. Just so much so much culture around the river and tributaries as well as the Gatineau river coming in. So starting to understand where I am in their land and their history. That quickly brought me to the canoe.

The the, the art. The artistic expression of what that is. And from there, started working with and started working upon the territory. I was on the land the landscape that I was on. That's where we created this festival and then call it a festival called the Canoe Stories Festival and we were a part of the opening of the Indigenous theatre division at the National Arts Centre where they did a welcoming of the canoes. And even in that process of reaching out to make sure that the Algonquin host nation people were fully represented in that opening it I came to understand that there were 11 11 Algonquin nations that are spread across the territory and that was really quite wonderful to come to an understanding of that. And then, you know, and then beginning to meet some of those people. So that was quite beautiful. So the Canoe Stories Festival, then, is a series of actions performances. Expressions that you use the canoe as a platform as a as a starting place where, then, all coach all of culture, then flows, all way of life flows. And that pretty much then extends to everything. So it's just a beautiful metaphor and so the Canoe Stories Festival happened a year ago or a 2019 2019 in September. This year was a canoe that was created. It was called, it's called a reconciliation canoe and it was created with the students. The Native Students Association at the University of Ottawa and it was completed in 2017 and it had sat at the university at the University of Ottawa since since it had been created and it had never touched the water. So this was the process of this festival called Canoe Stories Festival to start to find those stories and we were able to bring Marcel he's in the photo there he's he's he's at the canoe preparing it. These are some of the students that came for that event there with the, you know, lined up there, looking at the canoe and his helpers behind there was a sacred fire. And performances as well. But he was able to basically birth that canoe and put that that canoe into the water. And one of the, I guess the I'll tell you in terms of one of the things that I wanted to include the to make sure that we wanted to include for that were canoe songs and unfortunately, we were, we were able to find that. And that's another I guess that's that, to me, that's the next step and maybe the next part of the next festivals to actually find and begin to sing those songs again. Let's continue on. Yeah, so there. There he is. There's Marcel it floats. It's a beautiful, beautiful, canoe. And we also had a contemporary or she's a contemporary dancer Olivia Davies from again from this territory originally, lives in Vancouver do a piece of work that she had always wanted to actually dance in the river, and we were able to facilitate that as well. Yes, quite quite stunning. Let's go to the next one here. There's another one. Yes. Okay. This is Nipissing. Aanmitaagzi, Big Medicine Studio. Big Medicine Studio they do a festival called Ice Follies, and also every second year in January, February, and do performances. This is a lodge that they built to sort of anchor and centre the performance. We did some shadow work actually off the off the sides of that as well to tell story. If you can see behind the lodge there, there's an ice crack, which I think is quite special they said it was quite special for that year and that began the whole just the whole material of what we started to explore story wise. You know everything from the stories of of that that's that's in they're, you know,

you know their story bags about about, you know, coming up from from the earth and coming through those layers. So the ice, the layers of the ice in that in that opening was was quite metaphorical quite beautiful. And actually, as dancers we actually did come up out of the ice crack up out into the space and then into the into the place. We started this, it was a performance that I think in Studio, we thought may would maybe it would last around 30 minutes. I think we ended up almost 50 minutes as we really as we really worked with the journey. Let's go to the next photo of that. There we go. Okay, there's a series of images. So we want to play on on some of the imagery of the of that is, is native to that area, which is the petroglyphs as well. And then you see different angles of the of the of the playing space. This is some costume work that we that we all did a Big, Big Medicine Studio does all kinds of different things and we all created this sort of well we you know we had fun with it. We tried to make these very interesting costumes and regalia. And then the third photo is actually that's right, that's directly after the performance. So that gives you some of the some of the idea of what it looked like. So, telling those stories singing those songs on the land. Reinhabiting. Reimagining ourselves in these places is is is is central to my work. Can we do questions and answers. Dialogue.

Hi there.

Hi.

Thank you so much. JP and We'll move into some Q&A but definitely. We have people saying thank you, hearts being shared. Thank you so much. Elaine. Thank you so much. Thank you Elaine for sharing your stories. And we have a question here from Janice. She is saying thank you so much and Jenny P here says, Thank you kindly JP. From Janice. She says, thank you so much for rich opportunity to learn from you both. I've been fortunate to have taken part in many Indigenous learning experiences in my career, I still have a lot to learn. I often bring First Nations, Métis or Inuit Elders into my classroom to share with my students. When I would like to teach about something such as the use of talking sticks I never know if I can do this by giving the Indigenous background and its meaning. I do not want to be appropriated appropriating culture. How do I know if I can share without offending anyone? And I think it's important, it's a great question because what you were mentioning too Elaine and JP is these are, these can be difficult conversations and sometimes people are shy and nervous and scared to ask questions, so that they don't feel that they're saying the wrong thing. So thank you for opening that up. Janice who would like to answer.

I always remind people like Google, what is cultural appropriation and Google. Just like JP was talking about the calls to action interrelated with how you deliver it. And a lot of that is a personal space of of giving it space. I always just like you had shared at the beginning of who have what they call this land acknowledgement and being authentic about it right and making sure that you you you're going to by action, lead the way. So, like we have this natural law. So a natural law I am to understand as as the youngest sibling, I'm the baby and I am to fall on my older sister and by natural law of shows me this walk of life. So I take that also with what also JP was sharing of understanding the roles and responsibilities to territory. Who are the people? Who are the knowledge carriers? But also ask that permission. So not putting a education down sometimes education takes it without knowing the process or the protocol. And I've done that with with other places. And that seems to be an ongoing question, what part can I take part of? And what part should I take a step back. If it's not you culture, and this means not to offend anyone, then you need to search the people that follow through with that cultural

practice. And and I always say, make sure they're police record checked, make sure they already work in the community and they're not these what we call pop up people. Pop up ones that could cause harm. So, um, I always ask them like are you working with? Who have you worked with? Can I go talk with them? And if they work with and if they say a name like JP Longboat, guess who I'm going to be contacting? JP how did this person workout? You know, and that's that community conversation of all eyes including your eyes should be also helping us to make sure that practice of cultural safety and sustainability continues. It's all cultural appropriation comes up in that conversation too a lot. See, I changed my earrings.

Love it. Yeah, thank you so much, you this is such a rich amount of knowledge that you're sharing so I think there's a lot of people who are just so hungry for for learning and so another question here is similar from Michelle. She asks, Elaine, how does a privileged white woman learn from native teachers? And so often I am refused. I understand the fear, but how can I learn if no one is willing to teach "whities" that's what she says "whities" but.

It's what do you want from it? What do you want? Because you can't practice the actual doing a ceremony. What do you want from it? It's to learn about elements of the corn, beans and squash go to JP's house. He's got a garden. But those are the other places like what do you want because we're not a pan, we're not a bucket. It's really deciding what do you want. But that's that ego place, ask yourself, what will you do with it? Like seriously, what will you do with it? Because you're not a gatekeeper. You're not the door keeper. You're not the knowledge carrier. It's really understanding. Sometimes you have to take a seat. And there's lots of places. There's these open spaces, like in Ottawa, we have them, but in other spaces and healing lodges there, there's the largest just go listen to the teaching. Just go listen to the teaching if that's what you need. And a lot of times, it would be a lot of non Indigenous at me was teaching, but he also taught me this doesn't give you permission. What I talked about is mine. So nowadays I just automatically to this, this isn't giving you any permission. But it's also really important that it's understanding when to take a seat and just listen. And how you carry it forward is up to you. But if it's abused that's that advantage, taking on vulnerable and that's that place of you hold yourself accountable. And that's that place where all all eyes are watching and that's like all over social media these days. All eyes are watching, you know. And I think that's that place of it's your responsibility to when you see non Indigenous practicing. Where did you learn that? Did you get permission? Can I go talk to them? And they can't be all people like in this region. They say a certain name. Oh, so and so gave me permission. Well, I'll go talk to his family cause I actually know his family, I'm related with his family. So I'm going to call them. Do you mind if I text them right now and they're like why? And that's not challenging. It's not lateral violence. It's not putting them down and its saying, tell me more about you. You know. Cause I'll give you mine, my uncle's, I'll give you my Auntie's, I'll give you my cousins and it's validating each other because everything ceremony needs to be valid. I kind of went off with that question.

Again though this is important, teaching for us. Thank you. Would you be interested JP in speaking about the difference between reconciliation and conciliation and that that difference?

Reconciliation and conciliation.

You know was there, was there ever conciliation and can we reconcile?

Well I for me so reconciliation I think there's a larger process of that, you know. Highly but even within our own nations, we have we have our own process of reconciliation that we have to undergo with as

well, I think those are quite different. You know, even down to to me personally, I have to define what that is for me reconciliation. What, what does that look like for me? To me, that brings me to one of my my big projects right now, which is basically creating sovereign creative space with all of the cultural resources that are there for reclamation. For cultural reclamation. So for me, I've been defining for myself or what is that, what can I do or how do I, what is reconciliation mean for me. And to me, that's what it means for me at this point in time is creating sovereign space for us to do our work in a cultural way. Does that answer your question? I don't know if I answered your question.

I think so. Yeah. The sovereign space that piece of is so important now and and and spoken about so much in the TRC that sovereignty. Another question we have is, so, how should people thank all the jewels Indigenous individuals in these sharing experiences? What is, what is the protocol? What is a good way of sharing gratitude? Maybe Elaine, could you answer that?

Am I on? Okay.

Oh, now you're now you're on mute.

Okay, sorry.

Oh, now it's muted.

Can you hear me?

Now I can. Okay.

I would always say, find out what services are.

Oh, why does it keep going. Sorry. Not hearing you again. Okay, now

Violence against women. Youth

Sorry, it keeps cutting out to Elaine.

Okay, okay.

Maybe

A lot a lot a lot through donations and advocacy and speaking up and raising awareness in all your different platforms. If you see something within the indigenous community, you need to take the also the education to be the educated one. And advocate to to to places of of of reaching out directly to the band offices. How can I help? How can I raise awareness? Right now and make Mi'kmaq territories, they're throwing out the the Treaties information. You know, the Royal Proclamation like find find that space out so so that you you align it to. How does it fit with you right now. I reached out to my friends within that region. How can I help? I know that that's probably being asked a lot of you and I don't want to do a pan and want to make an authentic. How do I really help? Same with my friends on the, on the, on the West Coast. How can I help? And they just said raise awareness but be authentic about it. Don't just be in this week we're talking about being the ongoing conversation. JP, do you have some suggestions, too?

I really like that. I think that's fantastic. I mean, I go back to go back to the very first some of the first things that were said in terms of, you know, please, please educate yourself, you know, please. You know, you talked about the Royal Proclamation. You know, he talked about these sort of these documents and these things that there's a lot in there. There's a lot in those and it takes a while to to, you know, to, to educate yourself, but please do. I heard an Elder, a while back a number of years ago, talk about that this is a complex these are complex issues. They're not easy issues. This is a complex relationship but don't let the complexity stop you. Don't let that weigh you down or stop you. You know, one day at a time. Maybe one piece at a time and that always really stuck with me. You know, it is a

complex it is a complex relationship, but you know, you know, begin as you say, where you can. How can I help?

Yeah, and as an afternote. Don't fatigue us. Um, we get fatigued. It's really the responsibility, back to the people that live as guests on this land. I'm a guest in this territory. I follow my cousin's husband's lead because he is from this territory. I make sure I know the leadership. And that's that place of no policy and procedure within whatever organization takes precedent, you need to remember you are a guest. And I always hear my biological mom when I when I'd leave her and I'd go, Okay, I'm going back to the big city and she's like do your best my girl. And that's it. That's all she would say to me, and then she gave me a kiss and a hug and off I go in the big city. So I, I always have that in my head. Do your best. Okay, we'll do our best.

Yeah, I think now, especially now with Black Lives Matter and just all the changes on the planet right now the voices are so strong and it's it's just reminding people to listen to, to learn and to understand more deeply.

And go to authentic like go to authentic spaces. Like really go to authentic places don't don't just go into the higher journalism spaces. Go to the grassroots written what you need to know, what you need to learn, what is the objective of this. You know, it's all been thrown out from BC, all the way east coast, all the way to know what all the way down to our southern friends, you know, everything is explained already. So it's really being empathetic to the compassion of our fatigue. But there's that like I said, there's a huge wave of the ones that have been raised this way. And they're like, right out there. They're on the front lines there they're out at the moose moratorium there and on the east coast, they're at the front lines. They're getting arrested. Make bail money for them. Any GoFundMe that out there in the land contribute to it raise awareness. Share it. Even share the places of authentic arts that are out there, raise awareness of the cultural appropriation, that is happening. Don't buy it. Call it out. And that's that place of, I don't know if I can, I'm feeling uncomfortable about that. But call it out. Figure out in your dialogue, how you will stand with us better. Because it's already been written.

Mm hmm. And again, bringing it back to the place of art and wellness. We have just five more minutes. Is there is, if I was to ask you to encapsulate just a couple of words about what art and wellness is again, what would you say, what would you bring back to us from your talk? Where does art and wellness for you live?

Well, for me it's a it's a blessing in that it's allowed me to to transform. To transform out of out of to transform into into being, you know, positive to be able to contribute to you know, to live that that good mind and that good life, you know. Anishinaabe people call it [term in another language], the good life. You know, to to being able to meet our teachings in our original, original teachings in our original instructions as well. think for me, I, I would love to get further into the language, but that means I would have to make some changes you and just in terms of my life to be able to do that so you know that's maybe probably the next step. You know, I, as, as you know, as we go further into it. You know, there's always the next thing for sure. To me, the, the ability to be able to express and the artistic practices been completely transformational for me.

Thank you so much. I, I see that as well. Art is so transformational for people. I think because it speaks to our, our soul, it speaks to our deeper selves really speaks truth in my mind, and in my soul. Elaine, would you like to share that sort of short encapsulation before we sign off.

You have to remember we're not outlawed people. It's always been our way of life. And we're singing our songs. We're doing our ceremonies. We're doing our practice. And we will continue to rise. Because a wave is coming. So you have to prepare. And it's nothing to be scared about. It's our children and our grandchildren. We love them. So go with love.

Thank you. That's so beautiful. I feel that too, with my, my child as well. She's a strong being. She is an artist, and she using the arts and children are using the arts to communicate what is important with each other.

Yeah. So I also said to the one for the how to be an ally that was written by the people in Montreal. So I did someone asking, what does that mean, and there's different articles that are out there. So I just sent that quickly to you while we were on here.

Oh, fantastic thank you.

Miigwetch everybody

Take care JP, nice to see you. Say hi, to your mom.

Will do.

Give her a squish for me.

And if anyone wants to learn more about you and your work JP, I know you've talked about connecting through this platform. How can people find out more about what you do?

Well www.circadiaindigena.com so that's the website. Yeah, you can get ahold of me there. But yeah, you know, if you think about the Canoe Stories Festival. If there's, you know, something that you know, any kind of ideas or things that may spark something in that. Yeah, up to, because that's coming up again. We're going to try to do one in a year's time so September 2021.

Yeah, it's great to know. Thank you.

Yeah. It's not wouldn't just be here. It's what we're doing is we're trying to actually expand it across at least Ontario at this point and situate activities on those waterways.

So anyone anywhere near Ottawa, Kingston, and in between.

Anywhere between any of the Great Lakes. There's of course there's lots going on back in Grand River territory, so the Grand River as well and and the hold of indeed. There's, you know, we're, we're so obviously we have such a history here and we want to reconnect with that we want to tell the story of that in a proper way. You know, as we coexist here on Turtle Island, and we want to rebuild that relationship that relationality and I think that one of the wonderful ways to do that is to come together and come together on the land and in these places.

Beautiful. And Elaine. Do you have a way to find out more about the work that you do.

No everything's pretty quiet. Sorry. You guys know my email, that's about it. I don't I don't do a lot of things on electricity alone, unless I'm texting somebody so I'm just doing the work. I mean, I'm full spectrum Indigenous doula, I'm helper. Um, I guess a speaker now, you know like different different things and and helper helper comes in so many places of, how can I help? So thank you for that. But I don't, I don't have a webby thing.

Someone who wants to find out more will find you, I'm sure.

Yeah, that's normally how that works.

Yeah, it's the way it works, and so I wanted to also thank the, the Community Foundation of Kingston, who gave us the grant so that we could have this talk today and thank you so much to JP and to Elaine

for sharing your wisdom and knowledge and your passions for arts and community, and I wish you the best day today and I look forward to seeing you again. Thank you so much.

[speaking in Cree] Miigwetch.

Miigwetch.

Thank you everyone for joining us.

We look forward to seeing you next week.