

(MP3) Indaba-Indigenous way of being, knowing, healing

Sat, Feb 25, 2023 4:18PM • 1:29:44

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

people, spaces, community, indigenous, land, amy, ways, decolonize, ceremony, important, create, aboriginal, trauma, work, reclaiming, queer, stories, called, experiences, systems

SPEAKERS

Chris Sonn (Host), Ramy Barhouche (Host), Karen Jackson (KJ), Puleng Segalo, Amy Smoke, Bangishimo

Chris 00:00

Good morning, everyone. It's really great to be here. I'm Christopher Sonn, we come together to create this podcast that's got its focus on Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and healing. It's fairly broad sort of topics are hopefully a really free ranging conversation that we can have. I'm on the land of Boonwurrung, way southeast in Melbourne and I'd like to just pay my respects to elder's past, present and emerging. And also, remember that we've got we sold on contesting recognition in Australia and tomorrow with what a what I call now invasion day. So hopefully, there'll be some, some more action towards shifting in the direction of sovereignty and recognition for indigenous First Nations people in the Australian context.

Ramy 00:54

Hey all I'm Ramy, and I'm going to be co-hosting this episode with Chris. I'm a PhD student in community psychology. And I'm looking forward to listen to your stories.

Chris Q1: 01:06

So we've invited people from from the different communities to share stories about day to day challenges and experiences of doing community engaged work. So I'm going to invite I think it's KJ. Now to say a little bit about who she is, the places where she is, and a little bit about herself and the work that she does.

KJ A1 01:28

Okay, thanks, Chris. Thanks for the introduction. And thanks. I'm really happy to be here. I am, my name is Karen Jackson. A lot of people call me KJ. I'm a Yorta Yorta, Dja Dja Wurrung woman and I'm currently sitting on the land of the Wurundjeri, Woiwurrung people. Although two years ago, I would have said that I was on contested land, and it still is contested in the way that the Woiwurrung people have been excluded from making their own self-determining decisions with the range of orbit on on what traditional boundaries are on this colony in Australia

here. And so I've been working at Victoria University for a very long time, which is in the western suburbs of Melbourne, which is like a poor area of Victoria in Australia. And my work is involved around engaging the local Aboriginal community in the in this region, to engage them in Aboriginal programs, but also to sort of work with them around creating culturally safe spaces together. In terms of relationships to land, we, I guess I know a lot about the cultural heritage of the traditional owners in this country. Because I used to work in that role. But I, one of my deepest memories of my relationship to land was the day the High Court of Australia turned over our Yorta Yorta Native Title claim, because they were relying on the evidence of a white man's book. And that just tore my heart out. And the only way I could come through that experience was to go home, up along the Great Mighty Murray River, and walk on country and sit with my elders, and sit with my ancestors. Yeah, so that's a bit of a bit of my story about who I am, and a little bit of what I do in this place.

Chris 03:38

Thanks. We won't come back to native title in down the down the track. Puleng ?

Puleng A1 03:45

Thank you. My name is Puleng Segalo, and I come to you tonight from South Africa. I was born and grew up in South Africa in a small town in one of the provinces. That is called the free states. I think one of the ways to introduce and ground myself in my relationship with the land and community is through my names. So as I said, my name is Puleng. Puleng in this areas where I come from is regarded as the rain queen, or the mother of rain. So Puleng meaning rain. So growing up in my community, I understood rain, as representing life, rain as renewal, rain as connection. In my culture, when a new born child comes into the world they're kept away from the rain until it is time to officially introduce them to the rain. It's called Ngwana o behellwa Puleng. So this is when the child is introduced or connected with the rain. The child would be stripped naked and held with two hands outside in the Rain, so that the raindrops can run all over its body. This ritual is deemed important because rain is a symbol of life. So this is what I believe I carry with my name. And I speak about, well, my name this way, because with our history with colonialism, with apartheid, African names were stripped away from us. When you go to school, you have to leave your name behind. And so by leaving my name behind, I leave everything that I've just said to you right now behind, which was forced. So, me insisting on explaining what my name is, is also me reasserting who I am and the significance of my name. I am of the Batshweneng people. So my totem is Motshweneng, which means I'm of the Monkey people. And again, the Totems connect us with one another. But they also remind us of our responsibility to the land and the environment. As a Mosthweneng, I am one with the Monkey family. I'm tasked with respecting and honoring the Monkey family, I am to contribute towards the protection of the forest for the survival of the Monkeys. So when we're thinking about totems, again totems cut across tribes, and through them, we are reminded of our interconnectedness and interdependence. I can come out to [name of a place], and find people of

the Monkey clan, for example. And I know immediately that we are connected from the earth together in that way. So while I may be of the Botswana people, I know that I'm connected with others also around in the globe. So that is who I am.

And then, just briefly, in terms of the work that I do, my work is about the journey between the past and the present. I'm interested in historical trauma, and I belong to a people, a generation, a community, still very much wounded. And so, my work centers around engaging, understanding, grappling with the trauma that many of us continue to still live with in our community. And I also look specifically again, at gendered trauma. And with my work, I consciously challenge psychology -I'm from psychology- I challenge psychology, in the ways in which it looks at trauma as this individual experience as this thing that is separated from social experience. And so, I knew that when we look at trauma that we, we miss so much, we miss the historical, we miss the social, we miss the political and so I look at trauma as a social experience in that regard. Also highlight how we sometimes cannot speak the trauma that we experience or that we have experience and so it becomes very important to look at other ways in which we can express our trauma, and that's how I then draw from visual methodologies which I think I'll still speak about later on. So I use, I use visual methodology to engage and work together and collaboratively with my community to make sense and give meaning to our experiences of the past and the present. Thank you.

Chris 08:37

Thank you Puleng. Yeah, some neat threads in there already to set us up along with what KJ said. Bangishimo ?

Bangishimo A1 08:46

Thank you. [Presentation in Anishinaabemowin: Boozhoo Aanii Bangishimo nindizhinikaaz Couchiching nindonjibaa makwa doodem niizh manidoowag]

Yeah, my name is Bangishimo. And, which means the sun is setting. And that is a name that was given to me by an elder at a young age, and yeah, I have gone by many names during this journey through life. And yeah, and I'm currently using Bangishimo and I use they/them pronouns. And I'm from the Anishinabek people, which are throughout the so called province of Ontario in Canada here and I identify as an indigeequeer person, Two-Spirit person. Yeah, and I have lived in many places throughout my lifetime in so called Canada. I've lived in the prairies and in northern Ontario and I've been residing down here in southwestern Ontario for over 15 years. On this territory along the Holderman track, and I am, I wear many hats. Amy and I have been doing a lot of work together for a number of years. I have been active with the Idle No More movement, which recently celebrated its 10 year anniversary. I feel like that was my moment where I found my voice. I've always been the person who shows up at rallies, and demonstrations holding the sign. But I feel like it was the Idle no more movement that really

encouraged me to pick up community organizing at the time and, you know, do the work that needs to be done, bringing the community together, creating space for voices to be heard, passing that mic to the next generation, right, which is so important. So that's the work that I've been doing. Community organizing, grassroots work, advocating for space, for better services, for support on campus in the community. And it's been a beautiful, yet challenging, last 10 years, here in so called Kitchener Waterloo. And I've recently become a photographer in the last 10 years as well, too. I'm currently the Indigenous -- first Indigenous artists in residence for the City of Kitchener. So I'm working on a year long portrait exhibit, placing Indigenous peoples in future tense narratives when we're often talked about in past tense, trauma tense. And then I'm also currently one of the co-founders of Land Back Camp, O:se Kenhionhata:tie, which I know I'm saying wrong, Amy can say it much better than I can. And that is a space that Amy and I created for the indigenous queer community here in this territory, back in 2020. And we are now in 2023. And we recently just had our first gathering of the year with our members. And so we're still going strong, Amy and I spend a lot of work, our time doing advocacy work with the region with the cities, demanding change, demanding space, demanding better services, demanding that our voices be heard, that we'd be brought to the table, right. Yeah, so that's just a little a little bit about myself. So Miigwech, thank you.

Chris 12:12

Thank you Bangishimo. Yeah, we can see some really interesting, amazing threads already across the three Introductions. Amy?

Amy A1 12:25

Yeah, thank you.

[Introduction in Kanien'kéha : Shé:kon sewakwékon, Amy Smoke iónkiáts, Kanienkeha'ka ni'i, wakenon:wa.]

Hello everyone, my name is Amy Smoke, I am Kanienkeha'ka (Mohawk), I am 2 spirit LGBTQ.

So, my name is Amy smoke and I am Mohawk Nation, Turtle Clan. I'm from the Six Nations of the Grand River. And I am also a Two-Spirit indigequeer person, my pronouns are they-them. And I'm also a parent. And a community organizer, one of the cofounders of O:se Kenhionhata:tie which means actually, it's actually the name for the Grande River here in so called Kitchener Waterloo. And we used to refer to it as the place where willows are. So Willow River. And we named Land Back camp after the major waterway running through our territory. And I'm also a sessional instructor at the University of Waterloo. And last semester, I taught community organizing, and this semester, I teach indigenous perspectives in social work. So I teach in the Bachelor of Social Work program. And yeah, Bangishimo and I have been doing so much work in the community. We met at a university space, so we began to create spaces for indigenous folks, start removing some barriers and obstacles for youth to thrive in these colonial states and institutions, and started Land Back camp which brought out all of the indigenous queer

youth, trans, non binary youth who clearly did not have space to be on the land here and so called Kitchener Waterloo. So yeah, and that has led to a lot of community work regarding municipal and regional relations and communications and how we're moving forward. We've brought forward a number of initiatives on the land, removing some colonial statues, renaming some colonial spaces, and then how that looks when dealing with those inter government structures. Here in so called Kitchener. I was not born on my reserve, but I am only 45 minutes away, so very connected to these lands, and we are on the Halderman tract, I am Haudenosaunee. So I'm not far from where my mom grew up, but I am very much an urban, First Nations person. And parent. Yes, so I do apologize if my child comes barreling through the door at 3:30 when they walk home from school. [laughs]

Chris Q2 14:40

Thank you, Amy. Well, thanks, everyone, for those wonderful introductions. So I guess you've already touched on some of the sorts of things that you do and maybe even some of the sorts of challenges, so I'm just going to ask people maybe to, to contextualize, to maybe speak about some of the sorts of challenges that the communities and I think it can be fairly broad, I think but mostly in terms of the work that you do. What are some of the key challenges that you see communities facing at the moment and the ones that you're working with? KJ?

KJ A2 15:13

I guess I was thinking, particularly well, I'm gonna be speaking at the end. But everybody, I guess, around the historical trauma of Aboriginal people in the colony of Australia, and the ways in which, after invasion, we were seen, we were dehumanized and dispossessed and dispersed. And that legacy of what happened to Aboriginal people on our country is still apparent in the ways communities try to engage with each other, and engage with each other. So the missions and reserves were really concentration camps, we're given dog tags, you know, you couldn't leave the mission or reserve unless you had your permit. My great grandfather got beaten to a pulp on one of those missions. And the manager said, he'll be fine, you can't take him to the hospital, he can't get sort of help. And so there was a whole research project and on that in Victoria, and that's the current mission, which is in Healesville, on Coranderrk mission, on the land of Wurundjeri, but a lot of people from all over Victoria got shifted into those spaces. And it created a lot of tension and turmoil for people trying to gather with each other when normally they wouldn't gather with each other. And that's another part of the historical trauma that got embedded into our psyche and the way that we interacted with each other, which led to a lot of lateral violence in Aboriginal communities with other people. And a lot of that sort of undoing of all of that history is part of the work that I tried to do to decolonize the spaces for Aboriginal people in the West of Melbourne, and the west of Melbourne. So I, when I first got involved in Aboriginal affairs, it was in what we call Aboriginal Fitzroy, which is an inner city suburb of Melbourne. And lots of big organizations set up in that space. So the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service, the sport and recreation organization, the hostels, for men and women, Aboriginal legal

service, our education spaces. But of course, you know, as things move, and people get a bit more political, the government sort of steps in and starts pushing things around, and we push back. And so the ways that government actually tried to stop organizations from being so political was to sort of create all these rules and regulations about funding and how they operated in spaces, which actually moved the organization's out of Fitzroy, as it became gentrifying as well. But people in the western suburbs on Melbourne that I work with, a lot of those people are what I call historical people. So they're not on their traditional country, they've moved into that place out of necessity, that someone's removed from Interstate, most of them are not from close by, and that they're not so, one of them is the land, we're one there, which is part of the Kulin nation. And so there's a whole different dynamic then and in the ways that those people understand what it means to be colonized. Some of them like to sit quietly in their spaces and just maintain who they are without being engaged in that community organizing type of work. And others sort of joined in, when I sort of came along and said, well, we need to have a proper safe space for Aboriginal people to enjoy and to learn from each other. And so a lot of people have had their voice in that space. And I think that's been one of the really big things that I've been able to do in western Melbourne is give people voice, while also learning to sit back myself and enable them to learn what it is that they can do. And then also reclaim cultural heritage and reclaim cultural practice, and understand that, that they are good human beings, and they're not dysfunctional, bad people that, you know, everybody says that black people are. Yeah, so, and that's a really tricky space. And we're sort of waiting our way through all of that to make people feel safe and enabled them to be engaged with each other, to be kind to each other, to be blessed in a black space, and to understand what that means for them and their families. And then to grow the programs and services that they want to see not not the programs that they want, that government thinks that we should have, you know, we've got these all these things around closing the gap, which is meant to help everything about black fellas, but all it is is giving money to white governments to sort of maintain control over our resources, over our cultural practice and over our non Indigenous knowledges.

Yeah, so those those sorts of things are really important. But the other thing that we do is a number of, bits of work. around understanding trauma and trying to heal trauma. So we started out early days, engaging with young families who had young kids to help them track their family trees. And as we were doing that work, their stories were coming out around their trauma being actually stolen by the authorities out of schools, because their parents had gotten in trouble. We also have a number of prisons in the West, where a lot of women end up because they can't pay their fines or their children have been taken out of child protection. And so, um, a lot of our work now is around like women's healing. And so we're doing cultural practice and healing practices with those women, to hear their stories, for them to feel safe to tell their stories. And some of the stories just to blow your mind, you sort of go, Oh, my God. And it's really hard to comprehend why it is that the people who impose on top of those people why they can't see and fully hear and properly listen to those stories. That's one of the big projects we're currently doing now. And hoping just sort of take those stories and change policy and practice within the child protection

system within the prisons, and in the ways that Aboriginal families are treated in Victoria. So I guess I've covered a whole set of things in that thing, but um, that sort of experiences that I've had enough seen colonization in the work that I've done, and I'm doing.

Chris 21:35

Thanks, KJ, I guess there's, I mean, there's a whole series of things that you've outlined there, but I think the past and the present, and I guess the persistence of one of the, I guess it's all these structures, policies that continue to displace or deny. And I think the other concept that you introduced them, I'm not too sure how far it travels is the idea of lateral violence that we that we might want to talk about, and see whether that resonates with people in other places, and if it is in the, in the language, but also, I guess, lateral violence, not just as a sort of violence within, in between, with some similar networks, but the fact that it is also a product of settler colonialism and needs to be understood in that sort of in that sort of space. Puleng, I don't, do you want to say a little bit about the sorts of challenges ? But feel free also to respond to, or connect with whatever the other speakers say, and how that might resonate with your context. And that goes for each one of us. Yeah.

Puleng A2 22:35

Yeah. I think as I was trying to think about how I can join in, I think, as I was listening to KJ, there's... I resonate with a lot of the things that you're talking about. And I think maybe because of the work around trauma, but also in looking at how the work that we're doing, embedded in the community aims to look at how we can create spaces collectively with our communities where we can be able to speak about our experiences, about our challenges, and how to make meaning of some of the injustices that is continuously perpetrated on people's lives. So as they navigate life every day, so I think I'm still thinking about that. But also then just bringing it to my context in South Africa, and how I've been reflecting about the work that I do, and also just reflecting on how we do community psychology in particular. South Africa, you know, has this long history of colonization, like all our countries in this space right now. And it was followed by a ruthless system of apartheid. And I think more than anything for ASEAN, South Africa that really cemented the dehumanization of people and their experiences. So the oppression, subjugation, discrimination, all of these are entrenched in these systems and the system of apartheid, and the many unjust laws were legalized. So it was normal and okay, to treat people unjustly because, you know, it was the law, the law was saying it, that that is okay. And bringing it closer to psychology. Psychology carries a very complex history. I call it a dark past of this discipline, because it's directly implicated in these systems. It's directly implicated into how some of these laws became, yes stemmed. And it was justified that people are unequal in the way that the system said it was. And it was through that and from that, that then all this subhuman treatment then came into being. So my experience is that of this black child growing up in a segregated society, where my community and others like mine were constantly under siege. And this past, this history feeds into the kinds of challenges and experiences that people

continue to have even today. For many people surviving these spaces was a miracle. I grew up in a township here. And as many scholars have spoken about this, that townships are spaces of social death, so people in there they live, they exist every day. But these spaces were meant to be, you know, out there in the periphery and spaces of obscurity, where we could be ignored, where even if we disappeared, the state would not care. So, this system was just in such a way that people were always in a state of restlessness. And so, that's where the historical trauma comes in, because we're talking our grandparents, our parents, and us growing up with that, remnants of that, with our parents still carrying that in their bodies, right. So, by being part of these communities, and having the challenges that were almost man made, if you will, it becomes important for us. Therefore, when we think about the work that we're doing, it needs to move beyond the theories that we that we apply, it needs to move, beyond just drawing from works that were done by other people in some colonial spaces, and saying that this is what we need to use to understand our people, in our own context. And that's why it's important for us to take a step back, to be embedded in our communities to work with and alongside our communities, to be humble enough to learn from our communities. And with the projects that I've been working with, it's been with that in mind with that aim to say how do we heal together? And that healing can only happen if we understand what people are going through, when we don't impose labels on people's lives. Just quickly before I finish, one student once said to me during the foster removals in the cape here in South Africa. His grandfather was one of those people who were forcefully removed. And so he shared this reflection that my grandfather stood on the side of the road, and watched helplessly as the government brought down his house, right? He saw brick by brick falling to the ground, he cried silently. And from that day, he was never the same. Something in him died that day, he started drinking to numb the pain, right? He was alive, but much of him was gone. And for me, I think this is what one can think about when we're talking about this idea of social death. Right? So it is these wounds and histories that should be given space in how we do our work, how we engage with, with what it means to do community work that heals, community work that restores, and community work that liberates. So with that, the woman collective that I work with in one of our communities, these are some of the things that we tried to put across with our embroideries, doing work that challenges the system, doing work that we can put forward and have community dialogues and doing work that allows for people to remember and reflect from their own vantage point and from their own perspective, to also be able to challenge some of the policies that the government has put in place, about people but without their participation, or even they're concerns about things that actually affect their lives in many different ways. Yeah, I think I'll stop there.

Chris 29:20

Thanks Puleng. So you've also taken us into some of the sorts of responses already, but I'm just gonna go to see if Bangishimo wants to wants to respond, or Amy, I think we don't have to go in this particular order. But when you're ready, you can just jump in. And so just to talk about some

of the local challenges, but also maybe if you want to respond to or reflect on what the previous person has said.

Bangishimo A2 29:41

Yeah, thank you.

I really enjoy being able to share space, especially virtual space like this with so many amazing folks and hearing the work that you're doing in your home territories, your home lands. Yeah. So thank you very much for inviting us today.

When I was around I think around 11, or 13 years old, my mother had sat me down one day. And I've told the story a number of times where she had felt, I was at an age where I would come to understand what it meant, what the residential school system meant. And she started to tell me the story of how her and her siblings, she comes from a large family, eight brothers and two sisters, and how they had all attended, been a part of the residential school system. She wanted me to like understand the history, not only of like, the country, the colonial history, but also like the impact that that had on her, and our family and our community. And that has been a lot of the foundation of the work that I do today. And as I grew older, coming to understand that my father was also a 60 scoop survivor, as well, too. So now coming, as I grew up coming to understand that, what I meant to have two parents that were displaced, that were disconnected from their communities, from their culture, having their language stolen, having their identity stolen from them, you know, and then having to come understand that the impact that that had on me, growing up as a young person, as a young, queer person, right? And living in these worlds where I was told, being a part of the church, that indigenous peoples, our beliefs were wrong, that queer people and that our lifestyles are wrong, right? And coming to think, how these messages in my head that everything I was, all my identities were wrong, right. And now, years, many years later, you know, using that, turning that around, learning to empower myself with that, and helping that to empower others. Because at the time, there was no services, there was no support systems in a small town. You know, in the 80s, you didn't talk about being gay being queer, let alone dealing with racism, and a little tiny white town being bullied every day for being an indigenous person. Right? So, that has been like a lot of the foundation of the work that we do today. I do, today, with creating spaces for the indigenous community, bringing those bringing our people together in a safe space, right? For the indigenous queer community. Because there are so very, very few services anywhere in the province here. It's just within the last 10 years that we are now starting to reclaim our voices, reclaim space, organize you know, see us at the front lines, you see us grabbing the mic, you see us leading these marches, leading these rallies, you know, you see us taking the lead in so many spaces. And it's great. It's great, right? And now we see the young people that Amy and I work with now taking up to the mic, right? And it's really about that mentorship piece. And it's great to be able to sit back now and watch these young people that we've been working with for years, taking the lead, and now they are becoming these people to look up to, from younger people right now. They're inspiring other people. And that's

beautiful. Right? That's a beautiful thing to be a part of, because now they are becoming leaders right? In these communities, which is so important, right?

So yeah, so the challenges that we'd like, you know, those are the challenges that we face, you know, the constant racism, the lateral violence, which was mentioned earlier, the pushback that we received from the region, the cities, the community, you know, we just, we see so many other, it's hard not to get frustrated, when we see so many other groups and organizations, quotation, "flourishing" with their spaces. And yet here we are, the only indigenous queer group in the region that does not have a place to call our own. And Amy and I are constantly struggling year after year, to try to find a place for us on the land. We don't have land then what do we have? Right? Yeah, yeah. So those are just a few of the many challenges that we face on a daily with the work that we do.

Amy A2 34:23

I can add, you know, a little bit onto that, you know, in my experience as an urban indigenous person to trying to create spaces. And I keep reflecting back on that the trauma part. I know that and you know, you can see it in look at Bangishimo's profile pic. In the indigenous futureisms that we're trying to turn around, right. I don't want to trot out my trauma anymore for white people, for white organizations, for institutions, corporations, all of those things, right? They've made it porn. It is trauma porn for their consumption. So that I when we go to spaces that are created, like the Waterloo Regional Police Services Board meetings, to share the experiences that we faced at Landback camp in the middle of their city, in the middle of the downtown park. And everyone wants to like, and I'm like, so there's been a lot of racial violence, there's a lot of gendered violence. And then someone was like, "Can you give us examples?" Like, but I don't want to, like, you should just believe me, right? I don't want to have to do all of those things to prove to you anymore. And we're not about that anymore. Like, we also need to create spaces. And like Bangishimo was saying, there are many indigenous organizations that are creating spaces for healing. I'm not necessarily one of those people that want funding from the police so that we can all learn together. That's lovely for some people, and people should create those spaces. That's not necessarily the space that I need to be in right now. We're in a very right, the Truth and Reconciliation part we're jumping over. Everyone wants to reconcile, like, I'm still healing, from the truth parts that we're uncovering. So I think creating different spaces is, is very much needed, right? If that's where you feel, you're going to do the best good, the greatest good for your people then do those things, right, because we still need people in all those spaces. I don't want to run for city council. But I still need people in those spaces, right? So it's determining where we fit, where we're going to make the greatest good in those spaces. And like that funding piece too, which is also sort of part of that lateral violence is some organizations can't align themselves with groups that don't want to work with the region. They don't want to educate, settler education really is not our job right now. So maybe we're overlooked and the more friendly indigenous organization who wants to invite everybody to their sweat lodges and stuff. That's who they want to align themselves with. So, we're sort of one of those those groups

that's like, trying to bust through those doors and say, "Hey, like, just let us do our thing. We don't want to teach you all the time." And that creates a little bit of a lateral violence as well. Also, because I don't know if people right, remember that. Some of the most transformational work are done by black, indigenous, racialized and queer for trans folks. Right. So, some of that groundbreaking work is done by the people who are, are, are at their most vulnerable in their own communities. Right, that that missionary work really did its thing with the homophobia, the queerphobia in our communities. So it's difficult to be, you know, we want to like break down all the doors, we want to disrupt burn down colonial structures, but maybe we're, maybe we're doing too transformational work. It makes people uncomfortable. To to want to say, "Yeah, you know, what, we're on stolen land. Maybe we should give it back?" That's that's the next question, right? So yeah, you know, we fight with other organizations constantly. And those pitch projects and funding, pit me against other racialized groups and oppressed groups to fight for money. And then I'm required to fill out all the forms and then report it all back, like, just let me do my thing, let us do our thing. So that's a lot to add to it. But I'm really like, again, like Bangishimo said, so grateful to hear about the stories that and the similar work that we're doing on our own lands.

Chris Q3 38:26

Thanks for all of that. So, I mean, I wonder if you want to continue, maybe because I think part of the next, the next question really is, I mean, what other sorts of ways in which people are responding to these challenges? So you, you have already talked a little bit about the importance of creating spaces, advocacy, organizing, and so on. I think Puleng the words that you've also introduced, I guess, around around social death. So there's a lot a lot of ways in which the systems and structures are into producing social death. And so my part of the question then really is about, I mean, what are the sorts of ways in which community and their partners are producing conditions for flourishing, the opposite, I don't know what the opposite of social death is, but it could be, it could be thriving. So I just wondered if people people could maybe reflect a little bit on what are the sorts of things that are doing, what is the language that's being created as part of the alternative, the alternatives, so whether it's futurism, digital futurism, Afrofuturism, and so forth. Part of what I'm hearing, too, is that so much of what remains problematic, sits within the various systems and logic that we still have to work within, in order to get access to resources, to get recognition, to get space where people can develop. So it's just an opportunity, I guess, now to maybe maybe start naming or talking a little bit about what is the discourses that that that's being created and what does that look like in your respective areas? I think you've touched on some of it, but maybe Amy do you want to have a go at it and work out way back the other way?

Amy A3 40:05

Yeah, right. Um, you know, in our community. There's, it's, it's quite, it's a pretty white demographic. But we're finding the strength in the numbers of the people that are doing grassroots advocacy work. We're finding other ways to fund ourselves. We're finding other ways to build capacity within ourselves. Bangishimo and I have hosted two community dinners now.

feasts, picnics, barbecues, for people doing frontline grassroots work to continue to build each other up and, and feed off of our own capacities, right? In our own little group, when I can't pick something up, someone else's got a car, right? We do those things, you give what you can, and other people take up that work. We also look very much to allies, to supporters, to do the work. It's not often well received when I keep showing up to council meetings. Because I'm visibly indigenous, it's much more well received sometimes when a bunch of white people show up to say the same things. But using their more palatable face possibly. So taking up that work alongside black indigenous racialized people, is where I've seen really that thriving and, um, community organizing grassroots work. We found a lot of really great groups, Ground Up Waterloo Region reallocate right, they're looking to reallocate funds from policing and stuff to community upstream initiatives. Those are the types of people we're aligning ourselves with, because we're seeing the same goals, right, the black liberation, indigenous sovereignty, human rights for everybody, despite gender and all those things put on us. So yeah, I'm really loving in our community anyways, the way allies and supporters are taking up the work for us. Takes a lot of emotional labor off of us.

Chris 41:55

Thanks, thanks. Bangishimo, did you want to add to that? I think Amy, thank you for that. I think that sort of the work, the work of allies, the the emotional labor, I think they also some, some really important terms that we can come back to at some point.

Bangishimo A3 42:11

Yeah. And over, like the last 10 years, Reclamation has been has been a way that people have been responding to, you know, these challenges. Colonialism, challenging reclamation, right. During the height of like, the, Idle no more movement back in to, was it June 2013-2014, we started reclaiming space in shopping malls, in public spaces, in intersections on highways and parks. Right, and we started demanding that change happen, that we start discussing like that these bills that were being passed here in Canada, were not only impacting the lives of indigenous peoples, but all peoples living here, right. And then it became like this international movement. And then we, we learned that we could start utilizing the power of social media to get our message across globally, through Twitter, through you know, all these social media platforms. The hashtag, Idle no more started, was like trending number one for a while there. We started to organize virtually right and using all these platforms to get the message across to this larger audience. And now we have like the land back movement, and people are now using that as a response right by reclaiming land, reclaiming space without permission, we don't need permission, right? It is our people's lands. So we can, we can set up camp, we can wherever we want. And there's so, we are just one space of many spaces happening across Turtle Island. There's the tiny house warriors. What are some other ones Amy? There was a language camp happening

Amy: Wet'su'weten

Bangishimo: Land back lane happening in six nations. The moose moratorium...

Amy A3 44:08

Moose moratorium, the fisheries luxury lobster industry that were putting up camps. Yeah.

Bangishimo A3 44:15

There was a youth, another camp that set up outside Toronto. So yeah, so there's been like numerous camps and people are realizing that yeah, we can actually create space for our own communities, our own indigenous family community members, right here, like wherever we want, right? And they're using that as a way to empower to reclaim, and creating the spaces so that we can come together to learn language, be in ceremony with one another have feasts, celebrate the solstice, just be with one another in ceremony, which is so important, right? So we are like one of one of many, many spaces that have done this. And we've done what we can to support these other spaces as well, supporting one another. Yeah, Reclamation, I would say is like the number One for me. And it's been great when we hear about a new camp, setting up taking place. And you know, and we're just, it's just gonna keep happening, right? We're, this is just the beginning. This is just the beginning of indigenous peoples starting to reclaim what is ours. Right? I look forward to seeing this happening globally now where people just, you know, just take it up, take it back. Take it back without permission.

Chris 45:27

I think. Yeah, that's, that's amazing. I think that reclamation is so important. I think. I mean, I think some of the strategies that you, that you mentioned Amy, and maybe stuff that we don't even think about, I mean, having community goodness coming together. And I think the words that you also use Bangishimo around being with one one another in ceremony, I guess. So these, these relational elements to the commonality or the community making, from the ground up without, without seeking permission to give us space, I think, sort of really important, and it's almost even everyday sort of strategies for actors, not just it's not just creating community, being in community, with people. Puleng, did you want to talk a little bit? I know that you've introduced a whole series of things already. But if you can, can maybe come to reflect maybe on on some of that visual methodologies? Because I think part of part of the navigation that you've done, and others too, is about is about this discipline with this dark history, but then also, how do you harness or work with such a discipline to be different or to work or to do things differently? So maybe you could, I mean, I guess it's, it's that it's those two spaces that you're navigating?

Puleng A3 46:54

Yeah, Chris, I think, of course, as I'm listening to everybody, you know, so many issues come up. And I think, because there's, there's so much that resonates right, what Bangishimo was

talking about in terms of the land back movement, reclaiming of the land, I mean, it resonates so closely with me, being here in South Africa, where that's an ongoing conversation and a struggle around the issue of land back where, the majority of the land of the fertile land in the country is still very much in the hands of the minority, right. So most of the African or black people still don't have access to land. It's an ongoing struggle. And I think, a movement as well, in some ways but there hasn't obviously been much of a shift in in the way that we would have liked it to be. But I think it's an ongoing one. And I'm pretty excited to hear Bangishimo about what you guys are doing on your side of the world. And I think that there are possibilities for lessons to be learned from one another. Because I think there's just so many parallels in terms of our struggles that are ongoing, that have been there for a very long time, that are ongoing. And I think with the kind of work that we're doing, it's our attempt to try and undo and disturb that which has been normalized, which should not be normal. That we continue to live with this trauma, but also not allow the trauma to define who we are, which is what you said, Amy, which I like very much, that even as we are grappling with the issue of trauma and the trauma that we experienced, that we still have that it should not then be minimized to define us as a people, because I think, within our communities, we're way more than that we we love, we laugh. There are many things that we do that, form part of how we make meaning of the world and exist in the spaces that were meant for us to die in. But we continue to find ways to actually live and thrive against all odds, if you will. Right. So now in December, I believe I believe in stories and the power of stories where people have stories, and that's how we learn through the stories. So I tend to tell stories quite a bit.

So just a quick reflection on a recent ceremony that we had in my family. And it wasn't just my family but with other families as well. So around December time, we have many of our young girls, but also young boys going to the initiation school right, which is a rite of passage from being a boy or a girl towards manhood. So one of their feuds went to the initiation School this past December. And as his guardian, I was an integral part of the process, and in through the many phases of the process, right, because being having a family member as part of that process, then I got to be intricately involved in everything. So I came to realize how much was taken away from us by colonization, and how we now in this moment are forced to, in some ways to improvise, in the ways in which we conduct our rituals, when we think about the spaces and the processes and what needs to be done. Because of the disturbance of colonization. We continue with, with our rituals, with our ceremonies, but in some ways, yeah, there are these moments where we need to improvise. But I realized also that even with these hurdles, and inconveniences, the need to hold on to the traditions and understanding the importance of these processes, means that we find ways to navigate these systems that, and I'm using this as an example, but also as a, something that shows our resilience, and also the refusal to lose who we are, so that we are swallowed by a system that wants to erase us and our history and where we come from, and therefore erase our ancestors as well. And not just the erasure, but also to distort that history. And when we refuse to let go of our rituals, when we refuse to shift from our ways of being, then, you know, we frustrate the system, obviously. And I think that's why then racism

continues to just, you know, pushing us down and pushing us down. And so on the last day, when the young men were emerging from the hills, when they it's now time to go home, because they're there for a couple of weeks. To go through all the different teachings, there's this last ritual that they do, which we are allowed to witness. And this involves standing and facing the direction where the sun will rise. We stand and await as this, as the sun starts to show itself, right. And, and when it starts coming up with that seeing the light the young men through their sticks towards the sun. And then after doing that, they run after these things. So they run towards the sun, the throwing of the stick gets repeated when the young men also arrive at home, where they, before they are allowed to walk back into the house, because the person that left the house to go away is not the same person that comes in. And so they come back new people, they come back as men, they come back as these members of society that are meant to contribute to our community in its' upliftment in its' building. So for me holding on to such traditions is critical for us as a people to not forget who we are. And through these processes, there's a lot of celebration, there is the slaughtering of the animal, which again, connects us to the ancestors that, as we are celebrating as we are here, as we are welcoming and moving into the different phase of being for the young men, that also we acknowledge the pain in the wounds, but at the same time we celebrate. So the process of healing for me, as I was reflecting on this, takes form or takes place in many different ways and in many different forms. So part of my work is to think about how we engage in process, loss and trauma and suffering, but at the same time is how do we rebuild ourselves, make ourselves and you to move forward as a society to rebuild, as we think about those that are still yet to come. We speak about those that came before those who are here, but also those that are still yet to come. So what does what we do now mean for them? What kind of work can we do now to ensure that the intergenerational trauma does not continue? And I think through our projects, through the work that we're doing, part of the aim is to try and do that. So, as we work with these embroideries, with the project that we're doing, the idea is to say "This is what we went through, this is what we experienced. And we survived that. And this is where we are today." So we continue to experience injustices because we're living in a system that does not see those who are not white as fully human. And so with our work, we constantly teach our children, we engage with our communities, to remind ourselves, but but to also with each other work towards -how can I put it- towards doing work that that reaffirms, if you will, I don't want to use that word, but our humanity as a people, so yeah, I think I think I'll stop there. I'll stop there. Thanks, Chris.

Chris 55:57

Thanks. Thanks. Thanks for language, we'll go on to KJ in a second but, thanks for sharing those stories, then, I think the importance of ritual, I think the creation of spaces. And I think the concept around healing and the multiple levels, forms that it can take, but healing healing is future making is sort of a really important sort of element of this work. And I think it also links to futurism, Amy talked about, I mean, what is it that we want to do in the in the future? And what are the resources that we need to retrieve and reclaim that is, is part and central to that

process? KJ, did you want to say a little bit about I guess the original question was about some of the sorts of things that people are doing, and maybe you can hone on in on some examples in the way that Puleng has done?

KJ A3 56:54

Yeah, I was, I've been really energized by the conversations we've been having, and sort of going, Oh, my God, we've been doing that a lot! And there's so many similarities, and so many systems that are just so bad for us as black people. But I guess in a way, I have a couple of stories. And I really liked what Puleng said about refusal to be erased, and to improvise. And I guess there's, there's sort of two settings that I've sort of float in and out of, well, I don't float back to purposely go into these two settings. And one is the small community in the west of Melbourne, which is still finding its way. And it's, it's trying to work out what its ceremonies and gatherings actually mean, and how that enables them to understand their own identity and be comfortable in their own identity. And so that sort of things like a group that's called the Aboriginal Wellness Foundation, and they do, which is deep listening, and Aboriginal movements that will date and help people connect to country and the elements of country, some in this line. And they have dance groups, which teach the little little kids and they growing to be teenagers. And then the teenagers teach the musical little kids that are supposed to entertain and grow into adults. And, you know, they grow into be the community organizers, and they help organize, and set up organizations that do these sorts of things. So that work is is a lot about improvising and reclaiming ceremonial practice and cultural heritage in ways that are a little bit different to the other space, which I'll talk about in a minute. But what it also does is one of the recent projects we just did was research around addressing Aboriginal disadvantaged in the west of Melbourne. And through that work, we we spoke to the three sort of new little baby organizations that are setting up around why it's important to be incorporated. Why is important to have voices, why is important together? And what does that mean about where they were going to go in and futures? And and what was important about that. And so it was really interesting to sort of, you know, earlier, we spoke about how sometimes there was a bit of lateral violence between who's got what and who hasn't got what, who's missing out in that space. So as a, as an emerging sort of community we're sort of have made a decision to collaborate with each other and sort of go, "Well, you've got the funding for that program. We haven't got that funding. We're going to send our mobile over to engage with us." So there's, there's sort of like black allies like that on the ground allies in a different way. And we've got a brand new center that took us six years to build, oh my god, but we did that in consultation with the traditional owners. So that notion of not having our own land but engaging with our local councils. And so that, when you were talking about Amy about going to council meetings, like our council where we build our will design center has been so supportive, and this just blows my mind. When I speak to other people in Victoria and they go "Our council doesn't even know we exist", you know, it's so there's all those differences in the ways that different systems work and operate for with and or against black fellas on the ground. So, but the other thing is that we sort of do at that

center is, so we'll do a ceremony for winter solstice, we'll do a ceremony for summer solstice, and we go is what might be Christmas. And you might do that over there. But we're doing this other thing. You know, we're not, we're not going by the seasons of, of what you say. So what we'll do is we're going by the eight seasons that traditional owners walk through, and we're going to plant a garden that represents those seasons. So they're the sorts of ceremonies and gatherings that we're trying to grow in that space, and to make people feel comfortable and get engaged into it and learn those things. Because a lot of them don't know those sorts of things. We also push back in that space with our counsel who's supportive, when they sort of come to our doors and go, well, we need you to do this now. Because you know, we've helped you build these buildings so you owe us. So no, just step back over there, we're not ready to have that conversation. When we're ready to have that conversation, we'll let you know. And we'll invite you into our space, even though you helped build it. Anyway. So that's, that's sort of part of that thing.

I guess the other thing that sort of jumped out at me when Amy and Bangishimo were talking was around the the younger groups that have set themselves up based on the Black Power movements of Victoria, from the 60s and 70s. And so there's this younger group of all sorts of gendered people and different tribal nations coming together, and they call themselves war. So they're the warriors against resistance. But they're strong, they just blow my mind every time they organize something, right. So they're doing the same thing about reclaiming public spaces. Yeah, tomorrow, invasion day, they organize the invasion protest marches. And they start at the Aboriginal Health Service, which is sort of in the outskirts of Melbourne, which is the capital, Victoria, and they started at the Aboriginal Health Service, because that was the place where the Black Power movement started. And so, we start there with a lot of fire, we have, we have music, put our T shirts on, we get our banners and all – oh they had a banner making day yesterday with mobs of people turned up to do their banners, and, you know, put out all the really political slogan and that sort of stuff. So I love little kids were there and begins with it, adults. And so we'll do that march through the streets tomorrow, and a whole set of allies will join us. So there'll be all these allies in the in the market, and we'll stop at Parliament House, and we'll tell them how bad they are. Tell them how bad they've been, you know, doing their work, how their policies and programs just don't work. And people get up there. And we have an old truck that goes around with a microphone and a big speakers on it, that sort of stuff. And we have dance troops that then dance in the same thing, then we move down into the middle of the city, stop again, do some dance, a lot of fire, it spins the police out but we love doing it. And then we go down to Flinders Street Station, which is one of the main places where everybody comes into the city to go to work, they get off on the trains and trams and, and there's cars and traffic. And we sit there, and we sit there, and we sit there, and the truck turns up and people get on the stage again, trying to try and talk again. And, and it was a one time. And I just love it. It gives me so much energy and it gives so much power to young kids, but also adults. And it's another way of you know, pushing back on the bullshit that we have to live in our lives. And those sorts of things. There was one time when we had a number of Aboriginal deaths in custody over here. And so we the warm up, arrange for a protest, did the same path down there. But when they got

to the that main intersection near the train and tram station, all the cars, they put up a cage, and they sat in the cage for a week and disrupted the whole city and said you have to stop killing our youth. You have to, you have to raise the age of you know putting youth in prison, you have to stop picking up Aboriginal and black people for being drunk. You have to, you know, change the public drunkenness legislation, all that sort of stuff. So for me, those people are the ones who are pushing back, and decolonizing spaces and yelling out about our sovereignty and you know, just being radical people and you know. All the old white pupils go ‘‘Omg, what is all this?’’. And we just go ‘‘Yeah, you people are just amazing, keep going, keep going.’’

Yeah, so that's, that's sort of the two bits of mine. Well, two bits of parts of all of my different spaces that I'm getting to, but and I love both of them because they're both on different journeys and and the powerful radical young ones. I just love them to death. And I keep going, you have to come to uni, you have to come do this stuff and and they go, ‘‘Yeah, but you'll let the uni systems try and change me and take away all this sort of stuff’’, I go like ‘‘no, no, no come into our Aboriginal units, it won't be the same. Come and you know, fire up our community in this space.’’

Yeah, so there's all that sort of stuff that that goes on over here. And you know, there's lots of other slogans, just the sort of things that you hold on to that, you know, get you through those days, when you're just being downtrodden. And people aren't listening to you. And they just telling you, you're worthless, the slogans that you have, and the strength that you get from being in that community that's growing itself slowly and being this other community that's protesting and yelling, telling you to fuck off, you know, they're the things that keeps me going there and things. As well as doing these things. I would just love having these conversations, it would be great to do some more of these. Thanks.

Chris Q4 1:06:04

Thanks, KJ. I wonder, I think we've we've sort of had responses and people provided some examples of projects or programs that they working on. Bangishimo and Amy, were there specific sorts of projects that you wanted to reflect on as well, KJ brought a couple of things in terms of the work that we're doing, but also just more broadly around, I think the activities of this young group of indigenous activists showing up, showing us the way. I'm really trying to now think about that last part in our in our title, which, which is the the idea of healing, of healing. And just to get a sense of how people are thinking about what that, what that means, in your context and what shaped that take in the projects or programs that you are part of, or that you lead, or that you sit along with alongside?

Amy A4 1:06:58

Yeah, wow. So much to think about. And for us. I'm still processing what everyone was saying before, you know, and bringing some of that my feedback in this question, some of the things we've been doing in our very contemporary urban space, right. We're also very diverse, right, I'm Haudenosaunee, Bangishimo is Anishinaabe, we have Mi'kmaq, we have Cree. We have Metis

folks, so many different people. And I'm reflecting sort of a bit on the ways contemporary folks conduct ceremony, and then how different that looks. Like I love Puleng's story of that ceremony of throwing the stick. And I'm curious as to how that might have looked so long ago, has that changed? Does it look different today? Is that something that's changed at all? Because I'm really reflecting on sort of that, for us that hiccup in colonization and the loss of teachings. And what contemporary ceremony looks like for us today, I am all about right, like those traditional teachings in our nations that are so important. And so beautiful, and so valuable, and how it looks like today, and especially in a queer space where we lost a lot of Two-Spirit knowledge. So, even when I'm we're trying to do like Moon honorings, instead of like the full moon ceremony where everyone's supposed to wear their skirt. And it's for women. Right now we're doing like Moon honorings, I'm, we're trying to sort of like in my brain, I'm trying to deconstruct the traditional teaching that I have, about women and water and all of those things. And make it okay to come out in a trans space, make it safe and okay, and that language is still be okay, because we're all affected by water, right? We're all affected by water. So I'm wondering, like, you know, and what we've tried to do in a very contemporary space is make all of those traditional teachings safe for folks that, because it's also more difficult in our spaces to decolonize gender as being a colonial construct. Right? So, when we talk about like Mother Earth, and Father sky and grandmother moon, and someone says to me, but I thought you were about like gender neutral stuff. Yes. But we don't think about gender in the same ways that the colonial construct has brought to our lands. So that's another contemporary thing we're sort of dealing with, right, is how do I decolonize that in the middle of a teaching that I'm giving to folks that I don't wear a skirt anymore, but I think the skirt teachings are beautiful, they might work for somebody else, they don't work for me. Right? So how we see ceremony, the intention, not the intention, but their traditions, and the reasons and the needs behind why we're doing ceremony, I think are still there. That's so important. It might look different because we are different, right? And as queer people reclaiming their spaces in circles, that I someone said something about improvising a little bit. We're sort of going you know, as we need to go, and we've had some feedback too on ceremonies or spaces, vigils rallies where someone said, 'Hey, you didn't sing four songs, like you said you were gonna sing'. Four is a powerful number sure in you know, indigenous culture, maybe we didn't sing four because the youth needed to sing six or eight. And I think that's okay to do. Right. So I think we're trying to go with the more contemporary, we're not static in time. But I think those traditional teachings are so foundational to how we look contemporarily, if that makes any sense at all.

So yeah, like, and I tell people, the teachings around the skirt, it's beautiful, the teepee, the circle, the home, the womb, all of those things are very beautiful. There's so many more teachings too about parents, and Two-Spirit folks and the roles and responsibilities they had in community. So I just wanted to reflect that, I was just teaching my class to about how ceremony might look different today, because we are different today. But those traditional foundational teachings are so very important. We need to listen to our elders while we listen to our youth, like at the same time, right? Seventh Gen and seventh Gen.

Bangishimo A4 1:11:04

Yeah, and it's like, it's also like, really, it's like, I guess a touchy subject too, with the work that Amy was saying that we do, is that we also need to acknowledge that that was, teachings have also been colonized. You know, we, we lost a lot of those stories over the generations, right. And we've done what we can to continue passing those stories down from generation to generation, right? And, but unfortunately, like, you know, a lot of them have become colonized. And now, we've had to decolonize those teachings. And that, and that speaks to the work that we've done, like, were we acknowledge that the people we work with, we come from many different nations, right? Like Amy was saying, so we have to be mindful of that. All those different nations, of people that we work with, or tribes, I guess the word is that some people use, is that they all have their own teachings. And they'll bring different things to the table. And decolonizing those teachings, we have to be mindful that Two-Spirit people, indigenous queer people have always been here, right. And, you know, you take the teachings of the skirts, like Amy was saying. Those weren't our ways, I guess, to be blunt. At some point, we've only been wearing ribbon skirts for like the last 100 years. But yet, in many ceremonial spaces, people who are, who are 'women', are now forced to wear these skirts, and are ashamed if they're not wearing these skirts. And for us with the work that we do, we have a lot of non-binary youth, a lot of trans youth who come into our spaces who don't want to wear pants, who want to wear a skirt, or who don't want to wear a skirt and want to wear pants, and why should we be telling people what to wear based on their genitalia? So that's a whole decolonial process that we we have to be mindful of with the work that we do, right? And at the same time, that all these different nations of people bring so many things to the tables, right? It's a fine line with the work that we do. And you know, and with that comes a lateral violence where people think that we're being exclusive of them. But yeah, we have created the space for the Queer Indigenous community. The straight sis community has their own spaces, they have their own services, they have their own buildings. We don't. Right? And which is why we're like doing this advocating for our own space, for our own piece of land. So we can gather in ceremony. So yeah, so I mean, it's a lot of work, but it's it's rewarding, like Amy was saying. Yeah, I'm just gonna end there.

Ramy Q5 1:13:50

Is there a lot of negotiation happening between that the indigenous cis communities, and let's say, the queer communities in relation to these conversations. How do they usually go? Like, do you feel like today, there's much more openness in relation to that topic than let's say, from the previously heavily influenced by Christianity, for example, aspects to it?

Bangishimo A5 1:14:15

Oh, yeah, yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. Yeah. Like I was saying earlier, like you, you hear so much now. Even just within like, within the last five years, five to 10 years, you hear so much of Two-Spirit folks, indigenous queer folks. We're being I guess, we use the term we're like, we're,

we're being welcomed back into the circle. We've always had a place in the circle. But now, you know, we we have always been the mediators, the poets, the artists, that people that walk into worlds, which is another definition of Two-Spirit, right? Yeah. So. But again, there are so many communities that, you know, that have been colonized, Christianized, that don't support indigenous queer work. Yeah. And it's frustrating that it happens here, right? In our own community here. And with a lot of work that me and Amy do, a lot of people do not support our space unfortunately, and it's from our own people. Why are we fighting one another? Right? When we all need access to space, we all need access to land, to ceremony. And yeah, here we are, we're fighting with one another. We still deal with the homophobia and transphobia on a daily from our own people. And it's it's hurtful, right? It's hurts a lot it like hits, it hits right here, when we hear those words, online and in person from our own community members. Amy?

Amy A5 1:15:41

Yeah, for sure. For sure. I think we're trying to create spaces that take that identity, the stigma of the identity off of them, like we nurture their gifts. You know, so I mean, I've heard all these wonderful stories from elders, they talk about, you know, when they took all the little girls out to like, pick medicines and berries, and they take all the boys out, and they teach them how to hunt and fish. And I'm like, but there has to be stories about the kids that like did the other things, right? Like, what if I was a really good hunter, would you make me go pick berries? Like I think nurturing the gifts of the child, regardless of the gender roles we've put on those activities, is so much more important and taking that, that piece of that identity piece of that shame that comes in other spaces off of them, they can just be who they are, and like flourish in the gifts that they have. Or they think that we're we're trying to go back to those traditional ways of parenting, where we nurtured their gifts, not their gender, because of the colonial construct that gender has been created on these lands. So yeah, we love to see our indigenous youth explore makeup, and clothing, because maybe they weren't allowed to do that in their homes. I am a big advocate for just putting my child's name and age on, you know, when I sign up for a gift program or something, because if I say she's a girl, she may get a doll. But what if she wants like a basketball, right? So taking away that part of it, they're just a child, their name is sky, they're 8 like, nurturing the gifts that they have, I think it's so much more important than shaming them for that identity piece that the colonial contract has done for so long. It's so beautiful to see them take the mic and just be who they are.

Chris - Final Thoughts: 1:17:27

I'm just conscious of time, and I know KJ has to go. So I'm just going to maybe ask people if they, if they wanted to make some final reflection in relation to the topic that we started off with, or in relation to anything that resonated with you in the conversation so far, the wonderful gifts that you've given us today.

KJ 1:17:49

I guess I just wanted to say that being colonized means that we got dispossessed of everything, everything was stripped from us as, as black fellows. And, and all the lost stories that I guess that we've spoken about, across this time being together, you know, of ceremony, of cultural practice of belonging, you know, where we inch our ways through white man's historical records, or borrow from other nations or clans as an opening for us as community people to decolonize ourselves, decolonize our spaces, to create ceremony, to cultural practice, to create gathering spaces, to, you know, sit down in public spaces. And doing all of that work, helps us heal, all of us heal. Even those of us who are old, like me, who sort of already have done a lot of dealing with that sort of stuff a lot. I know who I am, and I know where I sit down. I know my country, but there's a whole mob of people in my community that don't know that yet. But we all need to heal and we all need to do it together as a collective, because that's the that's the only way that works for black people. And while we're healing we, you know, we're growing our own identities, we're growing our belonging, we're growing our connections. And we been big, black, radical, crazy people out there pushing back against things that don't actually matter. They're just systems that have been put in place on top of us and around us. And we just sort of push our way through the fog and create our spaces and we get together and do it together.

Chris 1:19:33

Thanks, KJ. Puleng?

Puleng 1:19:36

I guess I guess for me, the one thing maybe that can be a takeaway from me, in addition to just the gratitude for all the sharing tonight, and again, just the reaffirmation of the importance and the necessity of the work that everybody is doing, and I'm just so grateful for this space and for all the sharing. And I think as one goes back, to continue with the work, it's with this knowledge of solidarity and knowing and understanding that we're together, occupying different spaces, but with, with this similar goal that we have for the betterment of our communities, and I think for me, that's what like decolonization is all about. It's, in the actions that we're doing. It's in acknowledging this, this multiple ways of being and knowing and acknowledging all of it all at the same time. So with the diversity with the different approaches, and acknowledging that all these different ways are important. And as someone who is based in academia, and always very frustrated by academia, and its refusal to shift, and more and more becoming this capitalist space, if you will, it's all about – I think it was Amy earlier was talking about funding, it's all about the funding. It's all about the money that you're bringing in. So when you're doing a project, when are you finishing that project? So we can get the output from it, but not really spending time and embracing and working at the pace of the community and with the community and alongside the community. It's about what is it that you can get from the community so that we as an institution can benefit. And for me, that's something that I always push back, within, within academia, that universities and knowledge production and questions that we ask are meant to be for the betterment of our communities and our societies. Otherwise, then maybe universities should not

be there. But also universities as spaces that should stop alienating students, so that when students come in, with their histories, with their worldviews, that they should know that all of that matters, that they're not there just to absorb, but to also teach us as well. So it's a collaborative, co creation, or co creating space. Just reminding myself, I guess, as I was, as I'm reflecting and listening to everybody, just reminding myself, that it's important to offer the kind of education that liberates. And liberation means taking time to learn. And you can only learn if you come into the space with humility, because if you don't have humility, you won't be open to learning because there's this assumption that you know, you are the expert. So come in with grace and humility is very important, because we will also then respect our students, what they bring, and how the diversity of their experiences and our experiences together can only work towards enriching what the teaching that happens in universities can do and can provide. So yeah, that's, that's my last thought. Chris, thanks.

Chris 1:23:13

Thank you. Thank you Puleng! Bangishimo and Amy?

Bangishimo 1:23:17

Yeah, I have absolutely loved hearing the stories of the young people, from you folks about the beautiful story about the sun, throwing towards the sun, to KJ's stories of the youth taking to the streets and reclaiming space. I absolutely love those stories, those moments, those moments, right. And that's the fuel that keeps me going with the work that we do here is those moments, those are so important. And when those moments, when we can sit back and watch the young people that we work with on the mic, taking to the streets, you know, causing disruption, which is needed, taking people out of their comfort zones, challenging them to look at their own selves, their own privilege, which is so important. And those moments where, you know, you see them, becoming the leaders that they are finding their confidence. It's from the beginning of the campaign 2020. You know, a lot of these young folks could barely take to the mic. Now, they are powerhouses, they are the loud voices, right. And Amy and I will sit back and listen to them on the mic. And we now we've now mentored them and guided them to take on their own initiatives, right. And we get invited to a lot of events and workshops and conferences. And now we will pass the mic to them. We're like, we don't need to go. We'll come with you. But we want you on the stage. We want you at the podium, because that's what it's about. It's about giving them the opportunity to grow, to flourish, to become and it's such a cool thing to be a part of, I don't have any children on my own. But all the young people that I work with, I think of as my kids, because they're like they're growing up. And they're becoming, they're growing into themselves and becoming these beautiful people. And I really, really look forward to the day when I get to see them doing this and working with the younger people. So it's a really cool, beautiful circle to be a part of. And it's really beautiful to hear that work being done in other people's territories as well, too. In your lands. Thank you so much for this opportunity to share space with you folks virtually, so miigwech.

Chris 1:25:38

Thanks, Bangishimo! Amy?

Amy 1:25:41

Yeah, you know, they said all the things. Yeah, you know, the witnessing moments too, when you've made a difference in someone's life when they- I tell the story of an indigenous mom who had never drummed. I gave them a drum one day casually, they drummed in a drum circle, they handed it back to me and said thank you so much, I've never drummed before. And I was like What did you just say to me? What? And then the next year at Land back camp, they had their own drum. And within that next summer, they were leading out songs on their own. So that to me is, that's a moment we don't often get, we don't publicize that or talk about that much. Right? But that's a moment. Those are those moments where the youth are organizing their own rallies. We don't have to do the work anymore. They are taking the mic. They deserve that 100%. You know, Sky has been at rallies, been at marches. Their first phrase was, hey, hey, ho ho white supremacy has got to go. I think they were three. So it is amazing to see how you do take up that fight. Right? Because we've been standing on the shoulders of so many great people before that, right. And we want to make sure they're standing solidly on ours. As they go off into the world. Yeah, we have these proud parent moments where like, man, like, Look at them go, right? Now they're doing pro-choice rallies, pro-abortion rallies, like all of these things that yeah, two summers ago, they never would have thought they'd have spoken in public. So seeing that reclamation of themselves and their identity, in safe spaces, just so important. And in academia, I speak I feel Puleng. And the way in which we teach, I've never taught a classroom not in circle. Because if I'm taking away a power imbalance, I am not an expert. I am literally just the person who took the job, I get a paycheck. But I take away that power imbalance because yeah, you're going to teach me a lot more I bet that I'm going to teach you. And I think that's so important in academia, and to question the knowledge and the gatekeeping of knowledge and who's holding knowledge and why, right? So really trying to decolonize those learning spaces in academia as well, to shift that. We don't all sit in rows and put our hands up, we don't all learn like that, you know, I might play a YouTube video, but I might take you outside and light a fire. Those are the very different ways where we should be decolonizing the academy as well, I hear you Puleng, I struggle with it every day, and students even who want to sit behind their desk. And I'm like, you know, we're gonna put you out here in the circle, you might be uncomfortable, you're gonna feel a little uncomfortable, let's be uncomfortable together then. So I really love how we're sort of decolonizing academia too, to work for the various people on these lands today.

Chris 1:28:30

Thank you very much, Amy, KJ, Puleng, Bangishimo, for sharing your experiences about I think healing, decolonize, community making. And I think being part of this community that we're also making, so that we can have these transnational conversations and I guess, creating this

series of work also as part of our own solidarity praxis, so we're really grateful that you are willing to accompany us and to, to be with us as we try and imagine ways in which we can be with each other in the local and more broader global struggle.

Ramy 1:29:12

Thank you all. It was great. I didn't want to talk much, because I was really enjoying listening to you. I was taking notes with minutes and all that, but thank you. I really appreciate it. I'm gonna follow up with you all later. But yeah, we're good for today if you have to go, have a lovely day or evening.

All 1:29:32

Awesome. Thanks, everybody. Thank you. Thank you so much. Bye !