

Dechinta Interview: Elder Doug Williams

Participants: Doug Williams and Leanne Simpson
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Abbreviations: Doug Williams = DW, Leanne Simpson = LS

(0:00-4:06): Casual conversation, not part of official interview (do not include on any official transcription or published video webinar)

(4:06) LS: Okay so this is part of my work at Dechinta, and we got a grant from the Master Card foundation to develop a COVID-19 response plan for Indigenous Northern communities and land-based learning. So, we've been working on that project, and part of that project, is a series of webinars where we're talking to land-based educators, Indigenous knowledge holders, Indigenous academics, Elders, about the ethics of moving land-based learning online and onto Zoom. And so, what are some of the issues, what are some of the concerns that folks have with this press from institutions to move education online, but our conversations have also sort of expanded a little bit from there to talk about pandemics and epidemics, and how Indigenous communities in the past have responded. So, the webinar is recorded, so right now it's just you and me watching, so if there is anything that you regret saying, or you change your mind about, you can just let me know and we'll edit that out. The interview is going to get transcribed by two Indigenous students and then we're going to edit them together into something that will be available online. We have an honorarium and I will hook you up with our executive director via email and she will work out how you can get paid. So, I'm going to introduce you. This is Gidigaa Migizi, Doug Williams from the Mashkinonzheh, or the pike clan of the Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg nation [confirm?]. Doug is from Curve Lake First Nation, he is a pipe carrier, a sweat lodge holder, a ceremonial leader, a past chief, a hunter, a fisher, a trapper, a ricer, a sugar-busher. He is a knowledge holder, he is fluent in the language, he's also an associate prof and director of studies at Trent University in Indigenous Studies and teaches the land-based course for the PhD program, and he is the author of Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg, This is Our Territory, that was published by ARP books in 2018. And so I wanted to say chi miigwech [?] for spending some time with us on Zoom today Doug, and I wanted to talk... to start talking about how Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg have experienced epidemics in the past, because this is not our first time faced with a disease that is very damaging to our health and to our communities it's something that... diseases came as part of colonialism and colonization and so, can you just start by talking about how our ancestors dealt with epidemics and dealt with sickness and what our history is with epidemics?

(7:40) DW:

Okay, well first of all, bonjour [?] [another greeting], greetings from us here in this part of Ontario. Yes, I am Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg from the... at this point in time we're living on the Trent river valley, which is one of the rivers that flows into Lake Ontario. Lake Ontario, the Northern Shore, is our traditional territory. We're now situated on five First Nations, and Curve Lake itself is on the upper Trent River, on the same river system as [Unknown place name or nation?] Ontario if you were to look for it on the map, which is North of Peterborough. Below Peterborough is another First Nation called Hiawatha which is where the Trent river flows into Rice Lake and it also continues beyond Rice Lake and through that part of Ontario and then flows into Lake Ontario. This is our territory, we've lived here a long time, for thousands of years actually. So, it honors me that you've asked me to speak to you. I did write that book, I touch upon our history, I touch upon the history of pandemics in the area. Not fully, but this current great sickness we're facing... it leaves me with having to think about what would've happened to our people at the time that the great sicknesses from the past have come upon us. And our people talk about that, I've spent a lot of time with our old people years ago, I was raised by them, and I appreciate that so much. I didn't know at the time that it was going to be so important to our younger ones for me to be the conduit, for lack of a better term, to be able to further transfer their knowledge to our younger generation. But anyway, the pandemics of the past were introduced by the Europeans, who came here, to this area, in the 1600's. Samuel Champlain was the first European to show up here in our territory, but at the same time, we had been living here with the Huron Wendat, who asked to come to our territory years before that to grow corn. This is a good area that can grow good crops of that nature, tobacco is another one that they grew, and there were several other nations that came with them to come here with our permission of course. They came to Ontario and they grew corn, they grew tobacco, and there is really good soil here for that and today you can find the agriculturalists going to those places and growing good crops. Like the Niagara fruit belt, as an example, is a good one. And all the area around Lake Simcoe was good for soil, for corn. So anyway, that was what was going on when Champlain came. He was very much attracted to the Huron Wendat and their lifestyle, because they were agricultural people, they lived in mount [?] houses, they were sedentary, to use their term, so they were very much understood... that's a quote by them, by the European. We are probably not so attracted to the European, because we were highly mobile, were not agricultural, but yet we lived in an area of agriculturalism, and we lived sort of in a symbiotic relationship, for lack of a better of term, we lived side-by-side together, different styles, but we survived very well for a long time. Okay, in came the European with its viruses, they introduced viruses to us, and this is what's happening today... we're going through a viral time, our people called it the great sickness and the great sicknesses. The first wave hit almost immediately, and those diseases were diseases that were... the Europeans were quite immune to them historically. We were not. We're

not immune to cholera, as an example, [indistinguishable], smallpox, those kinds of diseases. Some of them bacterial in nature, some viral. Now, our people talk about these things, and we know now, looking back, archaeologists tell us, historians tell us, and our stories tell us that the Huron Wendat really suffered greatly, along with the other nations like the [indistinguishable name], who were the tobacco growers, and the neutral people were the ones around the Niagara food belt, and they really got hit hard because I think what happened, if you compare it with the current situation, is that the long-houses acted as incubators for the viral diseases that hit. So, a lot of them succumb to that. We got sick also, and we were mobile, so we weren't hit so much. Now what that tell us is that if you are living out, away from these things, your chances of survival are better. So, that, still applies today. If you're in a very close situation, if you're in a very close contact situation, in an incubated situation, you're gonna get sick with this virus. If you're out in the open land, if you're up in the open air, and if you are not so much in contact with people, unless... we had to live like that in the old days because of survival, among other things, we had to separate... we didn't live in villages as much as say the Haudenosuane Iroquois people did, they got hit hard. We didn't, we survived because we had to leave the area too because we could... I think our people could see by the death occurring not to go near people, because naturally you're going to say 'once that family is safe I'm gonna go and see them today' sort of thing, and that very natural process will keep you away from being sick, they knew that because there is a story that is told by our old people, that the Jesuits, with due respect of what they were meaning to do, carried viruses. They knew that, so they kept away from missionaries. The Haudenosuane were visited by these people, it wasn't too long before the Iroquois people figured out it was the missionaries who were bringing in some of these viruses. So, as one story told, a priest, a Jesuit priest, had come to a Haudenosuane village on the St. Lawrence. He went to visit further on down toward Lake Champlain, and then he left to come to our area. The word spread from there to us, that this guy is coming, and they figured out that he left some provisions some down there for him to return to. In other words, he left some bags of things and people connected that if you did anything with these, you'd get diseased, in other words you'd get a virus. They figured that out, so, anyway they said, 'it's him that's doing it, it's him that's carrying this virus'. Of course, they called it different at those times, they called it [Indigenous word], that means that he's carrying a great sickness that we don't know about. So, they figured out it was him, so they waited for him... if he comes back for those provisions and those bags that he left behind, were gonna have to get rid of him, because we can't afford to have people dying. So, that's what happened, he came back and they got rid of him, I mean they had to.

(19:55) LS:

This was father Jogues?

(19:58) DW: Jogues. Father Jogues was his name.

(20:01) LS: He's famous, kind of.

(20:04) DW: He's been made a Saint. He's St. Jogues, right, but that tells a bit of a side of our story. In that it spread through our territory, you have to be careful of these sicknesses right. So, we left our area temporarily just to get away, we moved North up here for what I figure maybe ten to twenty years. When our people came back, and again these are stories that were told to me, when our people came back, they found a lot of people that... skeletal remains of people that have died en mass, right. They had tried to bury some of them, they buried quite a few of them, the Huron Wendat. It's a sad situation but our people were saved by moving away. So, there is some of that, that can be taught in a modern context. So, that's some of the pandemic situation that we have met in the past. What they said, though, we were warned as young Nishnaabeg, that there's gonna be... they are gonna come again. The great sicknesses are gonna come again. So, what they're saying, what they said, is be careful... try and deal with them as best you can. There are some herbs, I can't recall, what you have to do now is you have to build a lot of protection of your immune system. How are you gonna do that in a modern context, is always the question. You may not be able to lick this disease completely, but you may kind of do something with having it be so severe. It may cause you [indistinguishable] but not to kill you [indistinguishable]. So, they have to, you have to be careful with... the lifestyle then becomes very much [important]. Very simple rules at times, some of them would be like, eat only fish, not so much red meats. There is a reason for why they say that, and one of them is, fish don't cause inflammation in the body, while red meats cause some inflammation in the body. So, you try to increase your chances of survival by not introducing inflammatory items to the system, to your own body. That kind of thing, that's the way our healers think, it's done within the language and within the culture, but that's basically what they're trying to do. There are some plants you can take in the modern context, one of them is very much in the tree fungal family, the modern chaga is a drink that builds your immune system. It also protects you from such diseases as cancer, that kind of stuff. But anything that has, you know you can find that out through the web, anything that has quinine (?) as an example, works very good with protection against viruses. It's also, we're beginning to find out that its working... but I have to be careful when I say that, because were still... healers are still experimenting with how to deal with coronavirus. It hasn't hit our people, and throughout the North, to the extent that... it's really hard to experiment. By experiment I mean, for Nishnaabeg it's a trial and an error, right, but you can also use the word experiment on it, but that's very much a white man word I know. What I mean by that is that trial and error is hard to do if you cannot track individuals on a daily basis, like that's what you gotta do. Like 'here is something, try it, I'm gonna give you a couple of weeks' but usually herbs

don't work for almost two moons, which is like 60 days. So, by the time you catch up to that, what is working what is not working, it takes time. Time is something we don't have much of, for some people, if this virus hits it asks quickly. For some, it doesn't act so quick. You know it's a game of dip and dive and dodging and side-stepping and trying to remember those things and trying to deal with them in that kind of approach.

(26:29) LS:

So, what, with [Indigenous name], with the big sickness, our people, they were active. They didn't just let it kind of wash over them, they physically distanced for ten years, moved North in the territory. They did things to strengthen their immune system, like living really clean, eating lots of fish. They tried to work with their healers to figure out medicines. So, it was similar to some of the things that our communities are doing today. What do you think, philosophically, that the land is trying to teach us right now?

(27:23) DW:

That's a good question. Our people, it is really interesting that they've always said, ultimately the bottom line is that the land will protect us, right. We are in Nishnaabeg country, same as the Cree as an example, they are in Cree country. I would think the same philosophy would exist with any of the nations. That they've been in that land, that there is something on that land that helps them survive. We have survived this area in Ontario for thousands of years. Stories say that we moved on, in other words we were on migrations. Epic migration. These are great migrations that necessitated that we moved from the land at certain times because of big events. As an example, when the glaciers moved into Ontario we had to move, although we survived the cold pretty good, as witnessed by the way the Inuit's survived, just as an example. If we move away temporarily, there are examples in the past, from the great past, years ago, where we moved away, but we always wanted to come back to our territory. We always had great respect for our territory. We always trust our territory; we trust that our territory will keep us healthy. Anything that our land provides us is medicine, in a way, for our bodies. It's good food, its clean food, its good food for us, and our bodies have adjusted over time for that food. We were put here, we are of these things, our bodies are historically made of this, of all those things in combination that you find here on this land. It is important that we go to the land, it's the land that has all... everything. The basic philosophy of Nishnaabeg says 'there is nothing that can happen to us that we cannot find an antidote on our land'. We got to remember that, right, we have to remember and trust that it works...there is something here that will protect us from coronavirus but it's up to us, it's up to our healers to search that out, wait it out, go seek it out, it is there and they know it's there. So, they're probably working on it today as we speak. I know I asked some of the healers about it, you know, I asked something like [speaking in Indigenous language], so I'm asking them what's happening, what do you think, but its perplexing. In some instances they look at it as a game of chess, to use a modern explanation, so they understand that some of this, as a

virus... like it'll protect itself, it has a mechanism to protect itself, that's why viruses are there, because they are survivors themselves in spirit. It's a bad spirit towards humans but sometimes you have think that viruses are good for something somewhere. I know that they always said the Wetlands are very very important. They said... but that's also sometimes the home of sicknesses. So, what they are saying is that, [indistinguishable] the great Amazon down in South America would probably house some viruses that are gonna spring out of there someday and come out and be interested in doing something with humans. What is it in humans that does this, I don't know, it's hard for me to give some answers because I'm just human myself. I'd like to be able to say 'this is the answer' but some of this is not definite stuff. This is... beginning to try and understand, you know, the complexity of these things, and it's the same thing with our healers. They have to, in their own way, find out what's happening here. How come this virus has arrived, what is it about, [indistinguishable] you have to deal with it in a spiritual way too. It's, you know, you gotta depend on these tools that have been given to us through time by our ancestors living on this land. We have forgotten some of this stuff, unfortunately, we have forgotten some of this stuff. Because of colonization, because of our susceptibility to the European way of dominance, we have forgotten unfortunately, a lot of our healing ways. But it's up to our healers to try and remember as much as possible, there are healers left out there, which is so lucky for us that there is [indistinguishable] that we can see our way through this great sickness. It's not a good time, but you can see now how difficult [it is] to figure these things out, these complex viruses. It is nothing to fool with and it is nothing to play politics with. That's what I hear is unfortunate.

(35:08) LS:

I liked when you said that we have to trust the land, we have to trust that there's an antidote, and it makes me feel like the impetus to, for me, to have a close relationship to the land, to be putting my tobacco down, to be smudging, to be strengthening all of that, is really important right now. And supporting those healers, and supporting the elders, because they're the ones who have the skills and the knowledge to be able to do this really important work in terms of figuring out our way through this. I know that with younger Nishnaabeg people and younger Indigenous people right now, particularly the ones that are in the city, there's this concern that they... we can't go to big ceremonies right now, we can't go to the powwow trail, we can't have sweats, we can't do Sundance's... some of those bigger ceremonies are being cancelled right now, or sometimes they are not, sometimes they're going ahead even though there are restrictions in place. And I remember you talking one time about [two names?], and how their... they didn't perform ceremony, they didn't have these big sorts of gatherings where there was a sunrise ceremony, but rather they did things in a very personal, very almost private, very very... full of humility, sort of way, as a daily practice. And that is something I've been thinking about because those are all things that we can still do, even though we can't have these big

gatherings, so what do you say to people that are worried that we can't live up to our responsibilities to the land right now because of all of the restrictions in place?

(37:27) DW:

I understand. I get it. I do, you know, it's always beautiful to celebrate who we are in big community groups and as inter-nation groups. These have so much of spiritual meaning. Spirits who oversee it love this kind of situation, but we're in a... unfortunately again we're in a situation that we don't fully understand. We don't know what we're dealing with here, but we know how to social distance, that's from our past, that's the way our people dealt with these things. So, we have to understand, that the fight is on currently, we are in the middle of this, this is something that we cannot take lightly, cause we've been warned, like I said, we've been warned that this can happen again and great sicknesses will [indistinguishable]... befell our people. A missionary, biblically had this general story, but we also had it as our story. So, it's almost like a global, international concern. We have suffered because of it, imagine going to tell a Huron Wendat person 'you're sick but you're going to have to go and powwow with a whole bunch of people' it's... and they eventually died off en mass, it's, I mean, you have to think back and we learn, and we learn from past experiences, surely they have.

(40:12) LS:

Do you think this is happening now because we live in such an unsustainable way, an unbalanced way, so much consumerism so much capitalism that's damaging the earth and that's damaging our relationship to the earth, is this... do you think the pandemic is the land's response to this?

(40:45) DW:

Well, these spirits, if you want to call them that, come from the land. Now, how come these things happen, is what you're asking. How come they happen to humanity? Our people have always said, if this kind of thing arises again, look at yourself... what are you doing bad, how come you're being punished. They always said, you always have to think: what are you harming, what are you doing harm to? How come they're reacting like this? So, really, if you use that theory if you want to call it that, what it's saying basically is that we're doing something to the land because these spirits come from the land. As much as we love our land and so on, somewhere they came from somewhere, and are working against us because they see that we're the problem. What are we doing, what are we doing? Now, you could see there are some things here that I know that we're not... that I can see initially myself. Like when I look at people, when I see how communities are living, that we are... there are just some things that we're doing that really work against the earth. We know that. There are some things that are obvious, but we don't want to change. We don't want to change. If we are going to continue to burn fuel, fuel meaning like gasoline etcetera, like carbon, it's going to do harm. It's going to release other spirits from the earth. I don't know how that works, [indistinguishable], I'm a

thinker about these things and I try and take from what I've been taught by the old ones who think these things out, but it's like, if you release... if you do harm to one thing it's going to release something else over here and it's going to work against you. I don't know how that carbon thing works, but we know that if you... our people have always... were wondering with all the smoke that's going up in the air, what's it doing? It's not sent up there for prayer, it's sent up there because somebody wants to move from one area to another as fast as they can. Why? Why do we need fly all over this world? I remember an old man, I went up to him, one of the elders, he's now passed, he's old old old, and I went up to him and I was gonna talk to him about something, and I said 'oh Charlie' I said 'there was a big crash today, you know, all the people died'. He thinks and he says to me 'what are they doing up there anyway'? (chuckles). I kind of though 'geez that's a flippant answer' but really when you think about it, why are we having to jump on planes and go around the world, far far far away, as fast as we can, burning fuel. That's just... it's just that we take it so normally but yet we're doing damage. That lifestyle, like you say, like the question you raised, is our materialism, as an example, adding to this as well? Yeah... duh, you know? We have to kind of pull back a little bit, that's my... based on my association with older people. Some of them would not do that, in other words, you would not find a Nishnaabeg to be the first one on the boat, it just didn't happen, and it's... I don't think there's a Nishnaabeg gone their yet, because our basic philosophy is be happy where you are, be happy around your land. Why do you want to [indistinguishable]? Question materialism, question greed, they always said question greed. Don't desire things that you don't need. I don't know whether that answers your question but...

(47:42) LS:

No that's good, that's good, that's a good answer. In the North, some of the Dene chiefs have encouraged our people to go out on the land, and get away from the bigger cities, and just live off the land in canvas tents or in cabins. And I know this too is like a Nishnaabeg practice, to retreat to the bush, but it's hard for Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg to do that right now, especially right now in July and August, it seems like all of Toronto is here at their cottages with their jet skis and their boats, and it's hard to even get on the water right now. So, what are your thoughts on that, you know we've had the big settlement (sighs). I know that you've spent a lot of your life fighting for our land and fighting so that our children, and our grandchildren, and our great grandchildren will still have access to land. Wouldn't it be nice if we could just retreat to the land right now?

(49:05) LS:

Yes, I agree, but our area has been taken over by the urban cottager who has three houses. They have a house in Toronto, they have a house on our shoreline that [acts? lakes?] as a cottage, and they have a house or a condo in Florida. That's the pattern you see. It's a pattern, a lifestyle, that I don't understand. I remember this a younger man, I was already older, living in a

tent for the summer on Buckhorn lake, and there was a sickness going around, a virus, a flu. And we were saying ‘oh we’re not going home just yet’ we’d heard the other day from someone we’d met at the bay fishing, that they’re still sick in Curve Lake. So, that principle of staying away, was working then for us. But for Michi Saagiig today, because our land has been taken over by the cottagers, these shorelines that use to be our home... we’re shoreline people right, and that whole way of dealing with sickness by staying away from the village, remember we were forced to live in villages, that was not our style. Only certain times of year we’d get together, and sometimes apparently, we didn’t get together because there was too much sickness. So, we were still dealing with it by isolation, so I really like what the elders are telling the young one’s up in Dene country, to go out on the land, because it’s an isolation process. It will also force people to eat good, remember I was saying about the importance of eating the fish. Summertime is also a good time to look for plants that are healing. Now is the time to discover what gives you the chemical quinine, as an example. What plants... like there’s enough on the web now to tell you whether or not you can find that on [indistinguishable], Dene land, I don’t know, that’s not my territory... I can tell you where it comes from here by looking at the web. Actually, what I do, I’m too old to go into the bush anymore, my knee is bad. So, I just go to a certain herb store in Peterborough and say ‘hey what do you got for this’ and that old man that works in there, mind you he’s *Egyptian, but I know he knows it comes from the land to build up the immune system. And that’s really what I do myself right now, knowing... build your immune system, cause this is... if they don’t find a vaccine for this, or any kind of antidote, we’re gonna get it. You and I are gonna get it. Everyone is going to get it.

(53:15) LS:

So, over the last twenty years, you and I have spent a lot of time together on the land. I think that that’s the main way that you’ve taught me about [Indigenous word] and we’ve done a lot of land-based education together at Trent, and we’ve talked a lot about how we want those PhD students at Trent to understand the bigger philosophical, ethical components of the knowledge system, and not just have a tourist kind of approach to ricing or to sugar-bushing. And now we’re in this situation where a lot of our teaching is being moved online, and that, for a lot of Indigenous knowledge-holders, is a concern because our knowledge systems are so much about the land, so much about having a relationship to the land, the relationship between elders and learns, you can’t put your tobacco down on Zoom, you can’t smudge on Zoom, so what are some of the issues that you are thinking through at Trent with the PhD program and with your land-based courses? I know at the sugarbush we had to really pull-back in March and just have family groups boiling, there wasn’t as many people in the sugar-shack this year. It was a different way of doing it, and in some ways, I feel like my

* Leanne has asked that this specification of the man working at the herb store as being ‘Egyptian’ be removed in any published format of this transcript and from the video webinar.

family, because it was just the four of us, we really had to work together for the whole day. And there was lots of good teachings and lots of good learnings that came out of that, but I know it's very difficult for Indigenous students at universities who rely on land-based courses to provide them with a little bit of Nishnaabeg education.

(55:23) DW:

Well, yeah, that's the most current question. How do we... as an institution of teaching, typically we've done it face-to-face, especially with land-based knowledge. How do you now do it in a virtual, not face-to-face, situation? That technology, or pedagogy, is now very much in everybody's mind, everybody's doing different technique to be able to make it happen. Trent University as an example, has said there cannot be any face-to-face teaching, unless there is a special exemption. So, what I had done, I approached the director of the program, to ask the Dean for an exemption for me, because of land-based knowledge. Because I really believe, the way to learn Nishnaabeg ways or [Indigenous word] is through the use of land-based techniques on site. Very important to me that an old thing isn't a teaching tool in itself [?], that you cannot lecture on, it just has to be a hands-on situation. We've robbed our young people of that for a long-time, we cannot continue to do it, we have to give them the tools of land-based learning. That's the way we do it, that's the way we've developed our knowledge transference from one generation to the next. So, it's important, and I believe in it. Now, we face a situation now that we so have to be careful, because if we do the face-to-face teaching, then we are at risk of transferring this virus to each other. And yet, the cost is enormous, the knowledge is now being passed over [indistinguishable]... survive physically and that it's a lot [indistinguishable]. So, schools are going to face this generally, even in the general population this is going to be a big dilemma. The socialization of kids will suffer greatly, I've been thinking about that. So, anyways, personally I got an exemption except that the Dean wants me to hold off for fourteen days so that the students, when they first arrive here, would socially isolate themselves before we then go out on the land. But, the problem, and I'm going about this in a different way again, I'm gonna ask that that two-week period be an exemption also, because that's when the wild rice is ready. Soon as they get here, the wild rice is ready, so if I leave it for two weeks it's gone, and that breaks a basic Nishnaabeg thing... when your harvest is ready, you better be there, or you'll be left behind and you'll have a hard winter if you don't store that food. So, that's what we're up against. Now, if I don't get that exemption, there is the modern tool of camera work[?] that... we're so lucky. When I was a young man we didn't have cameras, we didn't have film at all, like I had to pick this all up by being there. Being on site. Being a young kid that loved the other kids in order to be with the old ones [Is this right?], I mean I was so lucky to do that. I probably was an odd kid. I don't know, but, it wasn't happening with the others as much, because there was only certain families and certain groups that would be out on the land. It was on the way

out and today I don't do it with my kids. That's how much I've lost, personally, although I've taught my kids a lot and hands-on stuff they know, right now one of the mis making medicine [indistinguishable], using a lot of bear fat as base. But anyways, that's another story, getting back to the camera work that is available to us now... we have all kinds of technology now with phones, iPhones, even can take photographs of people living on the land doing hands-on learning. So, it can be demonstrated, it can be shown, it is almost like we can be there. And I have taken videos of our activities of maple sugar bushing and ricing as an example that I have ready to show to the new students as they arrive if I can't get them out on the land. So, there will be a lot of camera work. Now, some elders don't like the idea of camera work, I know one of my elders who is still alive doesn't like camera, doesn't like that kind of thing because it's... when we're teaching, knowledge is a spiritual activity. That is what he believes, and he said, that spirits are scared by camera. Now I, there is some reluctance, to be able to do, for me, certain ceremonial things as an example, that I don't think there should be cameras around. But for hands-on learning like maple sugarbush work and ricing there can be, that's my understanding, and I think that's okay. But you're gonna put tobacco down that you're doing that, ask the spirits for an understanding of what you're trying to do... is transfer the knowledge of that activity to the children. So, it's important to do a bit of a ceremony at that time. So, any chance you have to speak to spirit or pray, that you put tobacco down and you mention that. That's important to me, you gotta remember that we're guided by spirits at all times, and it's up to us to make sure that we acknowledge that relationship. It's important. But you can work with camera and we can work with Zoom as a way of transferring some of this knowledge. I think it can be done. Not ideal, not ideal, the sooner you can get back to the land the better, but with the lack of doing that... some of this technology that is available to us is pretty good. It's cheap, not like the old days where a camera is gonna cost you \$2000, you can't afford it, [indistinguishable]... money. Now, it's there, it's all over.

(1:04:56) LS: So, it can't be a replacement for ricing or the sugarbush, but you can use it in kind of extreme situations like this to learn a little bit about those processes until you can get back onto the land.

(1:05:15) DW: And one of the things that I'm doing is that I cannot... if they give me tobacco to have a sweat lodge, as an example, I'm saying no at this point in time until they think this out. I mean, I could have sweat lodges on my own, or maybe even just choose one other individuals to have them with, and just do it in a two-by-two situation, but I cannot... somebody else has to be able to do the sweat lodges [uncertain word] besides me. I can only do it for one, sort of thing, personally I'm not well so I can't do sweat lodges at this time in my life, my own life. So, if I was healthy, I would only pick somebody to do it with, but I couldn't do it for others, for other people. At this time,

I'm gonna have to do more thinking about ceremony. I had a pipe ceremony on summer solstice and we, instead of smoking, we touched the pipe, but I smoked it for everyone. So, we didn't smoke it and pass it around at that time, because I wasn't sure. Now, there are some elders who say, 'well the activity of smoking a pipe supersedes any danger that would be around because of protection of those spirits and protect that pipe'. I'm not sure, you'd have to ask those elders about that, I'm not sure those spirits want to teach us that kind of thing. I think we recognize that there are bad spirits, there are viruses that are working against us at times, and we better be ready to deal with them, even if it means that we stay away from our sacred objects for a minute.

(1:08:03) LS: Do you think it's important, for say someone like me, like my family could come up and do a sweat cause we're all in a bubble. Is that important to do for the community and important to do spiritually at this time?

(1:08:28) LS: It's always important to be able to have the sweats and to have that kind of ceremony and pipes, right, you got to keep them going. You're lucky, as a family, that you have you, that can [indistinguishable word] how to do sweats and all that. Not all families are like that, and they depend on you, as an example, they would come and ask you to do sweats for them. You have to be careful. You have to be so careful. I don't know how to answer that because this virus right now is so shifty. It pretends to... it gives you the idea of 'everything's okay' because this family all tested negative, when in fact, maybe they don't. So, you got to be careful, because this spirit is tricky, that's what it's doing so well in, around the globe, around the world, because of its trickiness. These so-called scientists, the great healers, have not been able to fix this, have not been able to figure this out. That's why they've said, this is a complicated virus. That's why I'm talking to a lot of healers myself, if I had a neat little answer for you, I would give it to you, but I don't so be careful. If you hold ceremony for the sake of ceremony, and it's sacred, sacred, sacred, be careful because this virus is so tricky and complex that it can trick you. Be careful, no matter who you are, like I have to be careful and I think sometimes I'm... so good. (Laughs) That's a joke. But you can get into that mindset, so be careful is all I'm saying.

(1:11:04) LS: Alright. Do you have anything else that you want to share in this interview? Anything else that you want to say about land-based education or the pandemic?

(1:11:16) DW: I would suggest that people have an ongoing talk about these things. Maybe you and I, maybe in a couple of months have another chat like this, just to see where things are going because it's an ongoing situation. It's, you know, we're going... we're on a very current attack by a great sickness that's global. So, we have to be on top of it as much as possible. What have you learned, what have I learned, what have other people learned, and we'll

learn from each other. And don't be so naïve as to think that you have the answer, nobody has the answer at this stage, so be careful.

(1:12:21):

Interview ends here. Rest is a discussion about yard work and status cards that can be omitted (do not include on any official transcription or published video webinar).