

Crawford Lake Tells Her Own Stories of the Anthropocene
"Indigenous Perspectives" - Monthly Broadcast on HealthyLife.Net
39–May 23, 2024

Audio podcast:

<http://www.ecologia.org/news/39.CrawfordLakeAnthropocene.mp3> (57 min.)



Crawford Lake, Ontario, Canada¹

Segment One

Randy Kritkausky: Greetings, or may I say Bozho in Potawatomi, to those joining us for today's Indigenous Perspectives show. I'm Randy Kritkausky, an enrolled Potawatomi tribal member and the co-host of Indigenous Perspectives.

Carolyn Schmidt: And I'm Carolyn Schmidt, the other co-host. For our land acknowledgement, we recognize Vermont, where we are, as part of N'dakinna, the unceded traditional territory of the Abenaki people who for centuries have lived on the lands now included in present day northern New England and southeastern Canada.

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Randy: We also acknowledge that this is the unceded land of our other-than-human kin, the winged ones, the rooted ones, the four legged ones, and the mountains and rivers who have been present on Turtle Island and have been partners and caretakers for countless millennia. They were here before any of the two-legged arrived - before the Indigenous peoples who came over the Beringian Land bridge from Asia about 15,000 years ago, and before the European two-legged arrived more recently.

Carolyn: Today's podcast of Indigenous Perspectives is titled "Crawford Lake Tells Her Own Stories of the Anthropocene". Just as Native Americans would gather around a fire to share stories, we are gathering in the 21st century's virtual meeting place, with our two guests, philosophers and sociologists from Europe.

Randy: Perhaps more in the spirit of Indigenous story-telling, we are each going to tell a variation of the same story, the story that Crawford Lake is trying to tell us. Contrary to popular belief, Indigenous stories were not carved in stone and repeated over and over verbatim. They were adapted to the audience and to the needs of that audience as understood by the story tellers.

Carolyn: Now, to introduce today's guests:

Robert Braun is a Senior Researcher at the Institute for Advanced Studies in Vienna. He's also an Associate Professor of Sociology at Masaryk University in Brno, in the Czech Republic. Robert defines himself as a Central European diaspora Jew, born and raised in Hungary. In the 1920s, his grandfather, barred from Hungarian universities, was able to go to university in Czechoslovakia and then get a job in Romania, where he and his immediate family managed to survive the Holocaust. Robert notes that he is grateful to be teaching today in the same building, at Masaryk University in Brno, where his grandfather was educated and received his degree. So, Robert, welcome to the show.

Robert: Well, it's my pleasure.

Carolyn: Robert is joined by his friend and colleague Richard Randell, who defines himself as an Australian of European descent now living in Switzerland.

Richard is a Fellow at the Institute for Advanced Studies in Vienna, and a Senior Researcher in the Department of Sociology at Masaryk University. Richard

completed his PhD in sociology at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Richard notes that although he's lived outside Australia for much of his adult life, he's very aware of the impact of the British conquest and settlement of Australia on the Aboriginal people. He says, "Not only was the land stolen from the Indigenous inhabitants, but this entirely different world, the world and its metaphysics of Europe, was laid over, above, the world of the previous inhabitants."

Richard, thank you, and welcome to the show.

Richard: Thank you. Thank you, Carolyn and Randy.

Carolyn: So, how did Robert and Richard, two philosophers at University of Vienna, come to encounter Randy, a Native American in Vermont?

Randy: It began when I wrote a letter about Crawford Lake² to a group of international scientists who had been studying this small lake in the forest in Canada's Ontario province. The scientists - geologists specializing in naming epochs in the Earth's history - had been working for a decade on the question of whether or not they had found evidence in Crawford Lake's sediments which might suggest the planet's self-regulating systems had changed so much that a new era should be declared. They were on the verge of titling this new era the Anthropocene, amid recognition that humans - *Anthropos* - had become a dominant influence, if not the dominant influence in the natural world. I wrote a letter explaining my concerns about such a designation. The letter was distributed widely and rather quickly, much to my surprise.

Carolyn: So, Robert and Richard, how and when did Randy's letter come to your attention, and what were your thoughts and more importantly your interests in what a Native American had to say?

Robert Braun: Actually, the story is that the body that Randy mentioned is called the Anthropocene Working Group, which is an official body to do what Randy described they were about to do. And the deputy head of that group is a friend of mine; he's a professor of geology here at the University of Vienna. And he, when he received the letter - I'm not part of the Anthropocene Working Group, but I'm an STS scholar - Science and Technology Studies scholar - and I worked with the

² For information about Crawford Lake's location, geology, evidence of human impacts in the region, and conservation park status which includes a reconstructed Indigenous village and a museum, see

<https://www.conservationhalton.ca/parks/crawford-lake/>

Anthropocene Working Group to kind of understand the politics of this naming that Randy mentioned. And I was kind of observing what these guys were doing, and we had a lot of conversations about my take, their take, et cetera. And then Michael - Michael Wagreich is his name, the deputy head - he forwarded me the letter of Randy with a comment, "this is much more in your corner of the woods than it is in ours."

And so I read the letter and thought, actually Michael is right. This questions and calls to attention the politics of what these people are doing. And then I shared the letter with Richard, with whom we are actually working on questions of the Anthropocene, not exactly from a geological point of view. And then we said, wow, this is interesting, even more so because to much of our regret we're writing about the Anthropocene and *Anthropos* and all this, but we don't know any Indigenous persons, so why don't we try to get to know one? And so we reached out to Randy, who is, to our surprise actually, very open and that's where and how the conversation started. And that's why we're here today.

Richard Randell: Yes, and Robert - the original letter that Randy sent to the working group that was then sent to Robert - Robert of course forwarded it to me, and I looked at it and saw, then we had some conversations and some discussions about it. And as Robert said, we saw that, oh, here's some guy who's interested in the same kinds of things that we are. And in fact, I don't know, maybe it's the last year we've been writing about the Anthropocene, we have yet to get things really published about it, and we are interested in the politics of it. And we're also interested in the politics of the geologists.

And the geologists think that they're not involved in politics at all, they're just doing geology, right? And there's a thing called the Anthropocene and it's out there and they're discovering it and they think they've discovered something important in Lake Crawford. And we're not saying that they haven't. I think it's interesting. I mean I think this is something that needs to be looked at. But yes, we're interested, if you like, in the politics of what's going on amongst these geologists.

Carolyn: Could we back up for a bit and spend a little time on the idea of the politics of naming? Because I think this is getting to one layer of why there are these controversies. So why does the name Anthropocene - what is it about giving something a name that becomes political and philosophical?

Richard: I can maybe say something quickly about it. I mean, just one of the things that are contentious about the name is of course [*that*] it comes from *Anthropos* and from *cene*, which means recent. So this would be one of the geological epochs that we are in. And one of the reasons it's become a contentious name is that it suggests, if we think *Anthropos* refers to all humans, it suggests that all humans are equally responsible for the environmental destruction and climate change and the ecological disasters that we are living in. So the name has been criticized for that, that it suggests this.

The road - I don't know if you want to discuss this today, perhaps it will come up - kind of the road that Robert and I have been going down is thinking that *Anthropos* isn't really all humans, but we could think about *Anthropos* as being, for want of a better word, Western humans, those who are part of a particular metaphysics, a metaphysical - well, they're in a world where they have a particular understanding of what humans are and what animals are and what nature are and what the difference of these things are. And so I think this is perhaps a place we could start with the politics of the Anthropocene.

Robert: I think there are two things worth mentioning here. One, that the whole idea of the Anthropocene naming came up in 2000 in a contribution by Paul Crutzen³ who is a meteorologist and basically he's concerned with climate change or climate emergency. And he casually suggested that the impact of humans is so strong on the earth ecosystem that we need today - geologists - need to change the naming of what's called the geological timescale and introduce a new era. And what he suggested was that basically the beginning of this era has to be connected to technology. Therefore the onset of the Anthropocene should be the beginning of the industrial revolution in the 19th century.

And following up on what Richard said, part of what we're doing is, do a little genealogy. So looking into the origin of this thing, that western man - that is *Anthropos* - names stuff. And surprisingly it is already in the story or the book of the Genesis because if you might remember the Genesis story goes like this: God formed down to the ground, all the animals and all the birds in the air, whatever the man called each living creature was then its name : "Be masters of fish, of the sea,

³ Paul J. Crutzen, 1933-2021, was an atmospheric scientist whose work on how human-created chemicals were damaging the stratosphere and depleting the ozone layer led, among other things, to the Montreal Protocol of 1987 phasing out the use of many chlorine-based substances. His obituary in Nature.com has a good overview of his lifetime achievements. <https://www.nature.com/articles/d41586-021-00479-0>

the birds of heaven, and all the living creatures that move on earth. To you, I give all the seed bearing plants everywhere on the surface of the earth.” So actually naming matters. And apparently giving human - that is western human, - the power of naming all the animals and all the seed bearing plants already established the hierarchy that this western man wanted for himself. I am the boss around here I can name, therefore I can control, therefore I can eliminate, therefore I can raze.

And if you don't take these words really to be the words of God, but these are stories that have been written down, actually, they have been written down exactly the same time when the seeds and origins of Western philosophy - that is, Plato and Aristotle 500, 400, 500 [years] before common era BCE originates. So what Richard alluded to that this is not all humans that we're talking about, but this is a very specific type of human - that is Western man. And has its origins in both the origin story of the Genesis of Western man that is Judaism and Christianity, et cetera, but also in Greek philosophy. So naming does matter.

Carolyn: So it seemed that this small lake in Ontario, Crawford Lake - which is obviously not its own name or its Indigenous name either - she found herself in the midst of a controversy or to be more precise, at least three controversies. The first was this vigorous debate within the Anthropocene Working Group this international organization, about whether there was sufficient evidence to declare a new geological epic. This was becoming heated, making headlines.

There's another controversy that Randy caused when he claimed that the renaming Anthropocene risked erasing or more precisely overwriting an important narrative of pre-colonial Indigenous life on the shores of Crawford Lake. And finally, there's a controversy that you two, Richard and Robert, were wading into about what constitutes modernity and what are the deep cultural and philosophical roots of those who create knowledge in a Eurocentric world? So Richard and Robert, we'll toss this to you first. How do you see these controversies? How are they connected? Give us some thoughts here.

Robert: Well, there's a fourth controversy and it's worth mentioning, that the Anthropocene Working Group is a group of geologists that was tasked officially by the International Association of Geology [*International Union of Geological Sciences (IUGS)*] to name the Anthropocene. And that work, for twelve years, has been rejected a few weeks ago. So that's controversy number one within geology. And you may think on the one hand that scientists are able to determine through their

theories and through their observations and through their science what is and what isn't. So how does it happen that people discuss, debate and then take a vote and they vote about a scientific matter and reject something by a majority vote.

And then of course, as it happens, and of course most of our listeners are probably in America, they know this happens after voting. Sometimes the person who loses challenges the vote. Surprise, surprise. It's not only politicians who do that, but also geologists do that. So the controversy went on and on. It's still ongoing today. So both sides, both the minority and the majority, write articles. This is their way of doing: write articles that actually they're right and the other party is wrong. And also the vote has been stolen and it was not legal, et cetera. So this is controversy number one, and then the rest follows. Richard, maybe you want to take over.

Richard: Could you repeat the question again?

Randy: How are these different controversies entangled? I mean, is this the proverbial Gordian knot that we can't cut?

Richard: Yes, Okay. Yes, yes. No, no! I mean, I think the interesting thing about Crawford Lake, because you pointed out it has an Indigenous name, it has this European name, and I think this is another example of, as we put it, *Anthropos - Anthropos* has power to decide what name. This is about naming. This is about finding a place in which geologists believe we can identify this independently existing thing out there, which they've defined in a particular kind of way. It's not like we are trying to argue that there's no climate change, that there's no ecological destruction that's occurring, right? The interesting thing and the important thing is the particular way in which this is being defined, mean, just briefly most people think of the Anthropocene as being climate change and it's got to do with greenhouse gases. And I think for many of us it goes far beyond greenhouse gases.

Robert: To pick up on this, I think on the one hand, in Carolyn's narrative, it seemed like there are three controversies. I think there is no three controversy, there is only one. And the one controversy is the last one that we're trying to address here. Because if you understand that, then the rest follows. So what we're trying to say here is that as Randy started the show, naming matters. Because naming is not just putting a name that is a word on something, but actually it creates something. It

constitutes something. And not only does it constitute something, it also institutes⁴ something through the power of constitution. And so the overriding of the histories of Crawford Lake is exactly this process of constituting and instituting not only history, but instituting a whole world with its furniture, with its people, with its way two-legged and four-legged and other entities are seen, perceived, constituted.

And when you think of Western worlds, you think that there are things in it and these things are independent. There is Randy, there's Carolyn, there's Richard, and there's Robert, and there's a computer, and I hold a pen. And these are all different separate entities that interact with one another. But this is not necessarily the case. This is our way of seeing and our way of doing. And by our way of doing, we're instituting this as the only way things can be instituted. And I think what the fascinating thing here is that this is not so. Yes, Randy, go ahead.

Randy: I really love your fixating on the name. I don't know if you two are aware, but very recently the lake was renamed by the Indigenous people who live there. They gave it a new traditional Indigenous name and it translates as “we have a story to tell.” And to some degree I think they've been assimilated into the Anthropocene naming process because part of what they're doing is saying is our new story to tell the Anthropocene or is the story of our Indigenous settlement that was there?

Or as you two are saying, and I think what this program is trying to say, there's an even bigger story about what's been going on for two millennia in western culture, whereby some, many now, we call in Indigenous traditions “knowledge keepers,” knowledge authenticators, lay exclusive claim to naming and determining whose notion of reality and how we get to know reality is the only way to do it.

Robert, when you spoke, I guess it was a couple of weeks ago at your university in Vienna, you said you liked the scientific controversy. I think it is a teachable moment. And I think that's what we're getting to in this broadcast is that unwittingly, the Anthropocene Working Group has given us something far, far more interesting than this very nerdy thing about what's in the strata in the lake. And that is to open a public dialogue, which I'm hoping we're breaking open today, about

⁴ To constitute something means to create or establish it, to set up a plan. To institute something has the same meaning (to set up or initiate), but “to institute” also conveys more durability; something instituted is implied to be carried on into the future. *[I found the Random House Dictionary of the English Language – second edition, unabridged, copyright 1987 – to be more useful than any internet sources in getting at the subtle distinctions that Robert is making- CS]*

what's really going on behind the scenes and in the underlying philosophical expectations and assumptions.

Carolyn: So with that note, we'll take a pause, we'll throw a virtual log on our virtual fire and we'll be back in just a minute. Stay tuned.

Segment Two

Carolyn: Welcome back to Indigenous Perspectives, and we're talking with our guests Robert Braun and Richard Randell about Crawford Lake and various issues. So, Randy?

Randy: So I want to back up and give voice to Crawford Lake. Let her tell a little bit more of her story because, apropos of my letter, she keeps getting buried in all this. So for those of our listeners who haven't followed this controversy, Crawford Lake is in Ontario province [*in Canada*]. It's a very small lake; it's a very unusual lake. It's very deep and the waters don't turn over; sediments get deposited in the bottom layer after layer, like tree rings and they don't get oxygenated, they don't get disturbed. So there's a beautiful historical record of millennia of natural and human activity left as a marker in the bottom of the lake. So the question for the stratigraphers was what can we learn from that?

We would think from reading newspaper reports that the lake became famous and was studied because of its interest to geologists. The fact of the matter is that it was brought to geologists' attention by paleo-historians, ancient historians of pre-Columbian settlement, who discovered there was pollen⁵ in the sediments at the lake they were looking at. And they became really curious about what had gone on around the lake because of the beautiful evidence of when the settlements began there and when they ended.

So now my concern in my letter was this story of people living on the shores of the lake for hundreds of years in a very sustainable fashion, in harmony with nature, is being overwritten by another story of humans destroying the environment and dominating the environment. So the name was first changed to Crawford, it's been changed back by the Indigenous people recently to "This is a Lake that has a Story to Tell." And now the question is going forward, will we name the new era

⁵ A key point which Randy left out here is that the specific types of pollen in the Crawford Lake sediments were determined to be from domesticated corn. Thus, the corn pollen in the lake sediments is evidence of a long history of Indigenous presence and human impact in the area, going back to the period of 1100 – 1300 CE.

Crawfordian, as is the tradition? In other words, give the whole world this lake as a poster child for a new era for which it was not responsible and was a late victim. Your thoughts on that?



*Crawford Lake*⁶

⁶ Photo credit: DailyB, at Deviant Art. Creative Commons License, <http://dailyb.deviantart.com/art/Crawford-Lake-683475657>

Robert: I think giving voice to a lake is very important and interesting because this is the gist of the problem. Even you, Randy, mentioned that there were humans and there were other entities living side by side on the shore at the lake. So how can we talk about things in a different way than we white, European, Western humans have constituted the world? Because maybe there are no humans separate and no crops separate, pollens separate, lake separate, but they're entangled in a strange relationality. And it's only our way of seeing and our way of thinking and our way of naming, to refer back to you, that makes these things separate.

And there are two issues here. One, what is? But also, how can we talk about things? And we're writing sophisticated papers with Richard and sometimes our reviewers get back - we're doing philosophy - and our reviewers get back to us and say, please write in plain English. And we can't write in plain English, not because we don't know English, but because plain English is one way of naming. And it has a history why these reviewers want us to talk the language they understand, because they come from that specific tradition that we're criticizing. And it was Sylvia Wynter,⁷ actually a Jamaican writer, who once said that universities, and so Western knowledge, Western science, is the biggest neo-colonizer. Universities are all about naming; science is all about naming, but naming in a very specific way.

And by naming, again, you are creating worlds, you are constituting, but more importantly politically instituting worlds. And then claim that "this is how the world is, wow, I've only found it, I didn't do anything with it; it's out there. Crawford Lake is just a piece, a bunch of water that we can swim in." But Crawford Lake actually may exist in a totally different type of world in which other things are constituted and instituted. We can't even imagine it.

Randy: So Richard, you're familiar with this. You come from a piece of land where there were people for countless tens of thousands of years,

Richard: - 85,000, in fact -

Randy: The white settlers showed up and started naming everything.

⁷ Sylvia Wynter (born 1928) is a philosopher, writer, and professor of Spanish literature and African and Afro-American studies, now retired from Stanford University. She advocates understanding the impact of European cultural frameworks, such as the concept of "race", in order to decolonize and create new ways of viewing ourselves and our world. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sylvia_Wynter

Richard: Yes, I mean, I think reflecting on this particular name of Crawford, I mean the very fact that this lake has been given this name, this is an example of the Anthropocene. I mean if one thinks about the Anthropocene as a period in time where western humans and their metaphysics, the kinds of things that Robert was talking about, about Genesis and animals and nature and humans, and humans are sovereign power and all these other things that are less important than us. And Lake Crawford is an example of - is in a place namely North America, just like Australia where *Anthropos* has come with this particular world. And the very fact that this lake is called Crawford is an example of the Anthropocene, if we think about the Anthropocene, not just in terms of climate, but of essentially this colonial power which has come and created a completely new form of life in Australia.

Look, I don't want to make out that I know a lot about Indigenous Australians, but Australia is very much like the United States. People live in suburbs; private property is owned. So just like in the United States and Europe, people own the land. And I think in Australia, for Indigenous Australians, the land isn't something that you own, and you don't own it in some private way; you belong to the land. So these are different ontologies. As I said, I'm not going to make out that I know a lot about Indigenous Australian ontologies. I guess I know a little bit, but it's very different clearly from the particular world that has been created. And Crawford is an example of that. Just the very fact that this lake has this name.

Carolyn: The flip side, what's interesting -

Robert: - just one second. To add to what Richard says, maybe our listeners think that this is academic talk and it's maybe relevant for history or maybe relevant for academics in universities. But actually what's interesting is that there is another controversy going on. And that controversy is whether lakes or rivers have human rights. And not because you pollute a river and then through that humans die, but because they have an independent existence and they have a right to exist as they are. So this is something that matters today in our own life.

Carolyn: So thank you for that. We'll take another break, throw another log on the fire and return. Stay tuned.

Richard: I should start.

Segment Three

Carolyn: Welcome back to Indigenous Perspectives. We've been talking about the power of naming and now we're linking also to the power of, if you name something, then you are overwriting its previous names and everything associated with that. So Richard, take us from there.

Richard: Yeah, okay. That's really interesting. I thought what I'd do here is just share an experience I had when I was in Australia in September last year. I hadn't been back to Australia for quite a long time. I think this is about erasure, but not entirely erasure, but a covering up of something else. It's not just covering up with names, but an entirely different world.

So anyway, I was lying in bed one night in Adelaide, which is the city that I'm from in Australia, and I was thinking, here I am, I'm in this house in a suburb which is a piece of private property, it's got a yard and a lawn and it's a very nice Australian house and garden. I was thinking underneath here, however, there's another world, right? There's the world of the people who used to be here. And I was thinking it's there, it's been covered over, but there's still a trace. It's very difficult to explain it, but I felt like, you know, I can feel that there's something there. Just because there's something on top of it, it doesn't mean that what was there before has completely disappeared.

So this is sort of - coming to think about it - It's kind of how I think maybe about Crawford Lake. I mean Crawford Lake is also a layer that's been imposed upon another thing. And for the geologists, they're just interested in this most recent layer. But underneath those layers are, as you pointed out, pollens from other peoples and before humans even came to North America, there's another - there are other worlds behind that or below these layers that are above it. So that's how I make sense of your question.

Randy: So the question that came up the other night with this group of people who were interested in my Indigenous perspective on reconnecting with the past and with our ancestors, is when - this was asked *[of]* me, "When I have, Randy, the kind of experience that you, Richard, just described - what am I supposed to do when I look in the mirror and I say, was that real? Am I crazy? Am I imagining it? How do I push back on the culture that is so deeply ingrained and so deeply socialized into me that I feel" - and now I'm putting words in their mouths - "I feel like I've been through a residential school that told me to get rid of all this spiritual dimension to

my life.” How do we help mainstream people, no less Indigenous people, recover that kind of courage and ability to own and trust their own direct experience of the world, which isn't mediated by all of this naming and all of this overriding? How do we do that for them?

Robert: Well, first and foremost, I think before we engage with Indigenous peoples, I think we should engage with ourselves - that is Western white Europeans - and understanding and confronting the fact that for these past 2,000 - 3,000 years, from the Genesis story and Greek philosophy, we're trying to inscribe the names that we think are right as the real. Actually we are not naming, we are just putting words on things that exist independent of us. So we should tell ourselves and the people who believe it that maybe this is not so.

And if our audience thinks that we're the bright geniuses who say this for the first time, this has a hundred years of tradition, even in Western thinking, it's called phenomenology. Husserl⁸, who is the founder of the Phenomenological school of philosophy already 120 years ago, questioned this objectivity of the world out there and called attention to the experiential - that is the entanglement of the human and the world together forming what is real.

So I think we have work to do there. And if somebody thinks that this is all philosophy, and this is a mystical spiritual experiences, actually western science - and this will be a long jump - Western science, quantum theory, at least one interpretation thereof, says exactly the same thing. Quantum theory, which has positioned itself as the utmost scientific endeavor of the 20th and the 21st century, actually says the same thing - that in the end of the day, there is nothing out there but what is constituted by the entanglement of the observer and the object of observation and the phenomena.

This togetherness of the observer and the observed constitutes things. And Hugh Everett⁹, physicist, quantum theorist, whom I adore, died unfortunately in the *[his]* fifties, came up with what's now called the many- worlds interpretation of quantum

⁸ Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) was an Austrian-German mathematician and philosopher, best known today for Phenomenology, the study of our perceptions of reality and how they can be filtered and altered by many factors. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edmund_Husserl

⁹ Hugh Everett III (1930 – 1982) was an American physicist whose many-worlds concept was controversial during his lifetime, but is now increasingly widely accepted. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hugh_Everett_III

theory. He thinks that there are many worlds, but these worlds shouldn't be imagined as separate physical entities living, staying side by side. But these worlds are here, all of them are here with us in this space or rather constituting innumerable spaces. And the space of Crawford Lake is one of them. And the other space of Western theory is another one, and there can be many others.

Randy: So my letter to the Anthropocene Working Group may have been misunderstood, and at the time I may not have been as clear as I can be now, thanks actually to both of you. What I really feel is that there is nothing, quote "wrong" with what the Anthropocene Working Group is doing. It's rock solid science in its own narrow way. What bothers me, apropos of what you just said, is that they've ignored the other story that the lake is telling about another world in which people lived. And another alternative we have to throwing up our hands and saying it's game over for Mother Nature, which is to go back to the values and the mindset of Indigenous people who found a way of living a little more gently on the face of the earth.

So I see this wonderful moment in time that was given to us by the Anthropocene Working Group stumbling into the politics and the cultural sensitivities of this, as our opportunity to alert people to what I understand you're saying, which is to be aware of a multiverse. And what the Anthropocene is, *[is]* a choice about how we proceed. It is not condemning us to live in the world that those little markers on the lake would signal as the end.

Carolyn: So we're about to take another break and we'll be back.

Segment Three

Carolyn: Welcome back to Indigenous perspectives. And Richard, you're going to start us off.

Richard: Okay. So yes, I wanted to take up what you just said, Randy. And I think the interesting thing is we talked - Robert talked about many worlds and Everett, and you talked about Indigenous worlds, and so forth. I think the interesting thing about this particular world that is the Anthropocene, is there's a belief there that there is actually only one world. There is only one world. There's all kinds of perhaps different cultures. They have different understandings and different perspectives of it. But there's one world. And I think this is precisely what the problem is here.

And also, if you think there's one world and you think there's this one world that's out there and that it's separate from you - and this is perhaps how it affects all of us in a profound way - is you're essentially alienated from all of existence. Existence exists out there and you are just a subject. And you - either you look at it and you either get it right or you get it wrong. And western science thinks it, sees it, gets it the right way. But the more important thing is that much of western science, with the exception of quantum theory which Robert mentioned, is of the view, there's one world and it's out there and it's independent from us. So that's, if you like, the existential situation that we find ourselves in - completely alienated from the rest of the universe.

Carolyn: So what are some ways to make ourselves feel less alienated?

Richard: Ah.

Robert: Well, first and foremost, maybe start with not calling yourself Indigenous. Everybody's Indigenous. Because once you name yourself - get back to naming - once you name yourself Indigenous, you are, you're bringing up a whole culture of being victim of and also affording someone else determining who you are. And I think we're all Indigenous and we're all born and try to make sense of our being. And the most important thing is not to accept one version of the facts. Facts are multiple. And this is the politics of it. That's why, Randy, you refer to this - I love controversies.

And I love controversies because they point to even within science that there are various versions of facts. Therefore there are various versions of worlds. And if Crawford Lake could talk, which it can actually, because that's another thing. That maybe it's not only plain English, or language, that is the way of talking, but Lakes' talk. And maybe not even Lakes talk, but there is words and worlds out there. So we might rather want to listen to what's going on out there. Because by thinking that lakes talk, we have already created something, a lake. But maybe there is more buzz that we could listen to. And this is a conversation we had with Richard. What's - the Zen koan asks, what's the one hand clapping? And one hand clapping is silence. But silence is full of sound. And maybe, Indigenous or not, we should, before talking, we should learn to listen better.

Randy: I love what you just said, and I think we could do a whole program, we could do a whole yearly series, on, quote "listening." Because listening isn't just with your ears, it's sometimes listening with your eyes, your ears, your skin, all the different

ways we get neurological information. What we're just learning about it affects the gut, the heart, the spine.

Robert: And you think that you're now not talking scientific language! There is a biologist actually called Rupert Sheldrake¹⁰, who talks about morphic resonance. Memory is not in your head; memory is all over the place. So when you experience, as you just described through your skin, et cetera, you're experiencing also the memory of the world that's out there somehow in this morphic resonance. That's what I meant by listening exactly as you described, not only with the ear.

Carolyn: But it's also it's a profound effort at decolonization for anyone to reject the pressures of the dominant societies, the western empirical, private property, et cetera, world that we have, to get in touch with all these other realities.

Randy: I would like to think that Indigenous people talking about decolonization, which is - it's become a slogan that makes me a little uncomfortable - but I would like to think that this conversation that Indigenous people have started is enormously useful to mainstream people. Because as we found the other night, and as I have found in my own recent history, shedding this veil that was dropped over our ability to see is an enormously difficult process.

My - the work I did in graduate school as a sociologist, Richard, being trained as to be an empirical sociologist - it took me decades to get out from under it. And sometimes I feel like graduate school did to me what residential schools, three of them, couldn't do to my grandfather. And I'd like to think of myself as an independent thinker, but it's only recently that I realized, no, I was just reprogrammed and more thoroughly and more deeply in many ways than he was, because he and his generation were together and they were fighting back.

Richard: Absolutely. I mean, I think this is the other belief that we are independent selves, we're entangled with the world and we are made in a particular types of people. I have a little anecdote I can tell about sociology. When I was at Wisconsin, Ram Dass¹¹ gave a talk. He was previously Richard Alpert, he was connected with

¹⁰ Rupert Sheldrake (born 1942) is a British author with many publications on topics of parapsychology (abilities such as telepathy). https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rupert_Sheldrake

¹¹ Ram Dass (1931-2019), born Richard Alpert, was a sociologist turned guru and spiritual teacher. He was the author of a 1971 best-selling book *Be Here Now*. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ram_Dass Both he and Timothy Leary were high-profile advocates of using psychedelic substances such as LSD for insights into consciousness.

Timothy Leary and this whole psychedelic period. But Leary and Alpert were both professors at the Harvard School in the Department of Social Relations. Talcott Parsons, who was a famous sociologist, was head of the department and Leary and Alpert and another person, Ralph Metzner¹², were all fired. And anyway, Richard Alpert kind of then became interested in Buddhism. And anyway, in this talk he said, “in my previous existence as professor of psychology,” he said, “we used to believe that if something couldn't be measured, it wasn't real.” And then he said, “as you can imagine, we lived in a very puny universe, right?” So he was making the point that all these people live in this world where if you can't measure, it doesn't exist.

Carolyn: I hate to do this because we'd obviously love to keep sitting around the virtual fire and bringing up more topics. But we are coming to the end of our program. Hopefully, for listeners, readers, you've enjoyed “Crawford Lake Tells Her Own Stories of the Anthropocene” and our guests, Robert Braun and Richard Randell.

Randy: Yes, I hope this broadcast has given you something to think about and an opportunity to reconnect with your own roots in Mother Earth and maybe even your ancestral roots. Before your busy day distracts you and sweeps you away, we encourage you to reach out and feel the presence of living flora, fauna or animate kin, and perhaps even that of your ancestors who have walked on. Allow yourself to touch their presence, capture that moment and hold onto it.

Carolyn: And if you wish, write to Randy. Let him know about your experiences, or with any questions or suggestions you have for these shows. Randy can be reached at his email, randykritkausky@hushmail.com

Randy: Thank you so much, Miigwetch, to our two guests and to our listeners.

Robert: Thank you very much.

¹²Ralph Metzner (1936 – 2019) was an American psychotherapist, author, and public speaker who studied different layers of consciousness and how to understand realities in new ways, together with Timothy Leary and Ram Dass. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ralph_Metzner

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“Indigenous Perspectives” monthly podcast is hosted by Randy Kritkausky and Carolyn Schmidt, and broadcast on the fourth Thursday of each month, 12 noon Eastern Time (US & Canada), on HealthyLife.net.



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