



## INTERVIEW



## INDIGENOUS INTERNATIONALISMS

SPECIAL SECTION



# An Interview with Tiffany Joseph: Land and Water Stewardship in a Time of Crisis

Jeff Ganohalidoh Corntassel \*

*On November 3rd, 2023, Jeff Ganohalidoh Corntassel spoke with Tiffany Joseph. Tiffany is of Sk̓xwu7mesh and W̱SÁNEĆ ancestry. She currently coordinates the Rematriate Stewardship project with the XAXE TENEW Sacred Land Society. She describes herself as being “drawn to work that promotes wellness of our minds, bodies, and the environment in which we live, because the wellbeing of the land and the people is intertwined” (visit [her website](#) for more). The following conversation covers pollinators, extractivism, Palestine, and what it takes to show up for land and water defense.<sup>1</sup>*

**Jeff Corntassel:** I’m here with Tiffany Joseph. We’re here at W̱SÁNEĆ territory, and it’s November 3rd in the afternoon.

Huy ch q’u Tiffany for taking part in this. I’ll start out with asking you if you want to introduce yourself.

**Tiffany Joseph:** My name’s Tiffany Joseph. I’m W̱SÁNEĆ, Sk̓xwu7mesh, and Quw’utsun. My children are Cash, Nathan, and Calle Joseph-Sampson. I introduce their ninam̓in (Sk̓xwu7mesh nickname) which are Esch’ech’ewat-tay, Nekilus, and Ayasnitat.

I’m from the Underwood Family family here in W̱SÁNEĆ, the Joseph family in Sk̓xwu7mesh, and the Thorne family in Quw’utsun. My mother’s mother

is from Quw’utsun, and if you trace back further through my matrilineal line, going back even a few more generations, we’re still here on the island up to Snuneymuxw. I grew up speaking Sk̓xwu7mesh from preschool up until my early twenties, and then I started speaking SENĆOTEN in 2015, so it’s been 13—or wait—8 years—since I started learning SENĆOTEN. And that’s primarily the language I introduce myself in.

**Jeff:** Wonderful. Huy ch q’u for that. I still remember what you told our class, about how critical self locations are the passport to the territory. So sharing who you are, and your family, and where you come from is a way to make connections—possible connections—with people. And [a way to] to get permission to enter the territory. I quote you often, so Huy ch q’u for that.

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So, this first special issue is on Indigenous land and water defenders. And I'll start with the broader question: what does land and water protection look like for you? What does it entail?

**Tiffany:** Yes. So, being of Sk̓xwu7mesh ancestry, we're freshwater people, and that's because we have mountains—like Grouse Mountain, Whistler Mountain, Mount Seymour—all within our territories, and they have these glaciers. We have the Capilano river, the Sk̓xwu7mesh river, and other rivers within our territory and that's why that defines us. Those bodies of water define who we are, our territory, our responsibilities. And then, as W̓SÁNEĆ people, we're saltwater people, and that's because we spend just as much time in the sea as we did on the land, because we had villages throughout the Southern Gulf Island and the San Juan islands that we would travel to frequently for harvesting, for camping. [There] would even be seasonal summer villages on the islands. The [Saanich] peninsula was usually our winter village.

And so we have relatives—like salmon is a primary example, not just for Coast Salish people, but most of BC, because those salmon swim up the freshwater of the Sk̓xwu7mesh territory and then they move to the next territory and to the next, right. It goes all the way into the interior of BC. Everyone has survived off salmon. We are just the first points of contact where the sea meets the freshwater, right. So, there's not just a responsibility to these bodies of water, but an identity with them. As W̓SÁNEĆ people, one of our first ancestors was the rain itself. So, to be W̓SÁNEĆ means I'm a descendant of the rain.

But the salmon—the creeks and the riverbeds are their nurseries. It's where they lay their eggs. It's also where they come to die. They call it the salmon spawn. Salmon, they come to lay their eggs and spawn, but shortly after they spawn, they die. So salmon are born within waters on the land, essentially, and then they go out into the sea. And W̓SÁNEĆ people actually go and fish out on the sea, that makes us unique compared to the rest of the Salish people who fish out on the rivers. So, we had reef nets, and that's a sacred gift from our creator. And so, to be a steward of the land and the waters means to identify with the water itself, whether it's fresh or saltwater. I have a joke where I say “I'm brackish water,” because brackish water is salt and freshwater mixed.

But, with that knowing of identifying with the water, [we] essentially identify with these watersheds. Most watersheds are places that we have a responsibility for and, when I was growing up, I was always told that language comes from the land. Once I grew up, I was also thinking about—I'm like, well, colonizers are obsessed with land.

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Tiffany:** Therefore, that patriarchal lens that comes from colonization is gonna shape that concept of language, that language comes from the land. Well, what if it also comes from the waters? And so, throughout time I came to learn that like there's a—I think a spring in Tsawout. And this hydrologist traced the source of where that came from, and it was in the Puget Sound. And those are Coast Salish people, too, so I was like ‘We really are connected through water.’ It's connecting us in ways that we don't even know.

When you look at a map of the ecosystems—the biogeoclimatic zones—in so-called ‘BC,’ we are in the Coastal Douglas Fir geoclimatic zone. So ‘bio’ refers to the most dominant tree species within an area, ‘geo’ describes the fact that we're in a rain shadow, then ‘climatic’ is, like, how the climate is behaved.

We're in this rare ecosystem as Coast Salish people. It is the drier part of the West Coast, because people think of the West Coast—they call it the “wet coast,” they call it the “Northern rainforest,” you know. [...] And language—you can see, when you map out these biogeoclimatic zones, the Coast Salish language falls within that Coastal Douglas Fir biogeoclimatic zone.

**Jeff:** Wow.

**Tiffany:** And then, if you map out all the different watersheds, you could get more granular [view] of like, okay, why is this part considered this family's responsibility? I haven't done that mapping yet, but it connects just as much as the land does.

So, you can't really separate the land from the water, which is such a challenge as a caretaker because I might work with an organization [that only works] with terrestrial species, they only do terrestrial restoration. I'm like, “But it's for the water...?” [laughs] So in order to help colonizers, and settlers, and uninvited guests to understand why Indigenous land restoration [is] important, why restoration in general [is] important, you—it's unfortunate you have to center the human beings. And you have to be like “Well, these are food.” And I feel like that's so—it's so different than our worldview.

But even within a colonial worldview, it's like baby level of development, like: ‘This is food. This is why this is valuable to people. Like, don't you see how important this plant is, because it's food to these people, it's medicine to these people. Don't you see it's valuable now?’ And I'm like, “You really want me to talk to people that way?” Because that's what I see settler organizations doing. [It's] how they talk to other settlers. And I'm like: “If that is how you work, and if you find it's effective, that is how you're



going to do things.” For me, I don’t work with these plants as food and medicine often. I’ll pick berries, but I’ll only pick what I’m going to eat. I’ll literally only harvest what I eat in that spot right there.



**Jeff:** Right there.

**Tiffany:** That’s the level that I’ll pick. But I restore, because I feel like there’s not enough, [and I] still I want other people to have enough. And maybe that’s because we come from a gifting society where to be a respected person, you have to care for others. At the very least that’s been imparted upon me: that, to be a good relative, you make sure other people are taken care of first. So, I don’t want to be the one harvesting; I want to make sure that when my people harvest, we feel like we have enough.



But, going back to how I teach, I’m aware that I don’t really have good feeling when I think of harvesting. I think ‘How can I take when I know there’s not enough? I need to make more.’

I feel good when I feel like I’m making more space for Indigenous plants and foods to exist, like, I’m taking out these invasive plants that are changing the soil so that only they can grow, I’m taking out these plants that take up so much space that they shade out everything else, and I’m letting everything else come to life. [There are] so many invasive blackberries—if I could cut them all down, how many native plants are going to come through on their own, without even the addition of planting? How many plants come through just by having light? That’s very rewarding. Even if I just did a little bit, it does so much. That’s why I do restoration.



When I teach others about the land—the water, restoration, being a caretaker—really what I just teach them is about good thoughts and feelings—ÍY, SKÁLEØENS in SENÇOTEN, ha7lh skwalwen in Skxwu7mesh. I learned that from my grandma. The way she taught me that is she [said to me and my sisters] “Do you girls know the rule when you’re cooking? You always have to have good thoughts and feelings when you cook food, because if you have anger or other challenging emotions, you’ll be poisoning the food, but if you have good thoughts and feelings, you’re putting medicine into the food.” She’s like “It doesn’t matter what it is, if you put your good thoughts and feelings into your work, you make that food medicine.” [...] That’s whether you’re a teacher, an artist, a singer—anything we do in life we should be having those good thoughts and feelings.



A core teaching for Coast Salish people [is] that when you bring a human being into the world you’re here to nurture them and allow them to—I guess you could say ‘self-actualize’—know who they are,

and know that they’re here to serve a purpose, and [that] it’s their right and responsibility to do so. So, you teach them how to do that in a good way, with good thoughts and feelings so that they’re always bringing medicine into the world. [...] Everyone has their own purpose, and you can never impose your own will onto your child. You’re here to hold space for them, so they can know within themselves what they’re here to do.

**Jeff:** Beautiful. Well, you’ve already answered my next question.

(Both laugh)

**Jeff:** Maybe I’ll shift a little bit to something you’ve talked a lot about in the past: pollinators, and the ways we often take some of these things for granted. We don’t pay attention to the bee nations—even the plant nations, for that matter. Is there anything you want to share in terms of how to honour those contributions to land and water defense?

**Tiffany:** Yeah, I find that like there’s—there’s social justice movements that are about the well-being of people, [and] how people deserve to be treated with dignity. [...] That’s very valid, but then it tends to be separate from the land, [and] tends to be separate from the environment, ‘cause when I see an injustice happening to a whole ethnicity within their own homelands, I see ‘those are caretakers of the land who are being at risk of being lost from the face of this earth,’ and I can’t take care of their land the way they can. I could never live in their biogeoclimatic zone. It’s way too hot, it’s way too dry, and even those foods might have too strong of a flavour [for me]. [...] But we all have a responsibility to care for the land, so that’s an additional reason why we should all be in solidarity with one another and each other’s well-being.

**Jeff:** Absolutely.

**Tiffany:** So many people are passionate about pollinators, and [that] became more predominant when people had a fear that we wouldn’t have enough pollinators to pollinate the foods that we eat, because bees were dying. But when you look closer at [which] bees were dying, it’s honeybees [that] were dying. Honeybees are not Indigenous to Turtle Island; they’re from Europe, Asia, Africa, all these other continents. The actual Indigenous bees of Turtle Island are solitary bees. And I was like, wow, Indigenous bees are the ones that are actually threatened. Will people ever care about solitary bees, because they don’t produce honey?

Again, it comes back to—this is like a food system way of thinking, where it’s like ‘that bee is valuable because it makes honey for me.’ That bee is valuable

because we can ‘keep’ them, right? You keep honeybees and then you can bring them wherever you want to pollinate these different food systems.

Essentially honeybees are the same as cattle, or pigs, or chicken: they’re just an industrialized animal. And it’s heartbreaking when you think about it—just like when you think about chickens in cages, and you think about cows going to an unsacred slaughter.

So, a lot of people won’t care, but at the same time you can’t be too concerned about people not caring enough. I have to focus on how much I care, and I have to deepen that love and that sacred relationship. And it didn’t take long, it just took a moment really, but even undoing this idea of like the use and the value of bees, right—they’re not meant to be used at all.

Solitary bees only pollinate fifty to one hundred meters from their nest, whereas a honeybee can pollinate miles away from its beehive. So Indigenous bees—they stay close to home. Really close to home. And I see a respect there, right, like you only take what you need, and you know what’s yours and what you’re here to care for.

Also, many Indigenous bees won’t pollinate plants that aren’t Indigenous, because bees see differently than [us]. When you talk about pollinators people like to say “Oh, plant yellow flowers because pollinators like yellow flowers”—they don’t see yellow the way we see yellow! Perhaps [that’s] founded on an observation that seems true, but we don’t know that they’re looking at colours. But, we do know that Indigenous pollinators often don’t pollinate non-Indigenous plants, so we need to plant Indigenous plants for Indigenous pollinators, because without those Indigenous plants you won’t have Indigenous bees.

**Jeff:** Right. Wow.

**Tiffany:** But also, if you don’t plant Indigenous plants, you don’t have Indigenous people. So, a lot of people who care about nature, they can look at the correlation between Indigenous bees and Indigenous plants and they can devote their life to that. But they can live their whole life that way and think that Indigenous people don’t matter. People can see that Indigenous people matter, but they might not see the value of the land itself. So, we have to educate [on] both those things. I don’t know why—in my mind, how can any of that be separate? How can we separate people from nature; we are nature.

**Jeff:** That’s amazing, yes. I never thought of bees as extractive, and I say that as I gave you a big tub of honey today as a gift. And (inaudible) pollinated

blackberries so it’s appropriate to our conversation today, and it’s a good lesson, really, to think about does that compartmentalization (inaudible). And also that extractive mentality: the bees are working for me to produce something for me that I can take, versus they’re working for the ecosystem, or they’re working for the people to promote health and well-being. So, compartmentalization is our enemy, I think, in this conversation.

**Tiffany:** We wouldn’t have camas without solitary bees. We wouldn’t have solitary bees without camas. We wouldn’t have camas without WSÁNEĆ people. If camas is wiped out, we’re wiped out. We might exist as human beings, but we’re no longer who we would be with camas in the world, because it’s our food staple from the land, in terms of a plant. Many Coast Salish nations within this transnational biogeoclimatic zone did controlled burns to maintain what is colonially known as a “Garry Oak” or “Prairie Oak” Ecosystem. If Coast Salish ancestors didn’t do burns for thousands of years, the meadows would have been encroached upon by conifers such as firs and cedars

We [often] feel helpless in this world because of the harm being committed to the land—to the whole world—because of extractivism and climate change. We’re in a place that could potentially be very climate-change resilient because it’s a drought-tolerant ecosystem—at least in terms of the camas, and other plants within the Garry Oak ecosystem [within the] Coastal Douglas Fir biogeoclimatic zone.

And I’m like ‘If I just focus my life on that, is that going to make a big enough change in the world?’ I can never really know. But I know for sure it’s my responsibility to devote my life to the lands of my ancestors. And if I fulfill my purpose to care for this land, maybe it’s going to ripple out.

Not only by caring for my land am I making visible differences, I’m also being asked to educate people. I try to limit that because it is draining, but it also can be inspiring. I feel like I’ve made change, where things that I’ve said come back to me—I go to a conference and somebody’s saying something that I said. Like the term “colonially known as”—I started saying that, it was on my website for a food thing that I was doing. Months later, people started saying that. I’m like, ‘I guess I’ll start saying this,’ and people picked it up.

**Jeff:** So interesting.

**Tiffany:** Same with the term ‘homeplace.’ I started saying that, [then] I started seeing people saying that. [...] The reason I say that is because, again, that idea like homeland—land and water—nobody talks about the



water very much. Like, as saltwater people that's our identity, as freshwater people that's our identity, but we always talk about land. But you can't separate them, so it's just like 'ah, I'll just stick to homeland.' But we can say 'homeplace' because that's a literal translation of *ÁLENENEŪ*, which is territory.



**Jeff:** I'll remember that. What are some everyday ways that you honour those relationships to the lands and waters, and offer them protection or offer that stewardship, if you will?

**Tiffany:** Well, doing the talks that I do, teaching in classes—like UVic classes, like the Indigenous studies class —teaching with Leigh Joseph, [who is] my cousin from my Sk̓wxwu7mesh side. I've been teaching with her for years, in her course.



Speaking when I'm asked—not every time I'm asked, because then I would only ever be speaking!

I'm doing my best to come back to something that is led by me personally, rather than supporting other people's work. I know that that's impactful and positive, [...] but I'd ideally like people to come and learn something I'm already doing, because then I know that I'm putting my energy into something that I truly one hundred percent believe in.

For me to one hundred percent believe in something it is caring for the land, but also caring for my people. 'Cause the one downside that I've experienced in caring for the land is that I haven't been able to incorporate caring for my people.



I think, also, it's important for me to say that I introduce myself and my family in terms of that identity, which is the deepest part of, like—it's almost the totality of who I am, in terms of family and nations, but also I'm Indigiqueer, [which] could also be known as two-spirit. I don't usually use that term, but I use it to help people understand that I'm Indigenous and queer. I use it often because for some people that specifically means to them [that] it's a gender-related thing, that they're not male or female—they're two-spirit. I also don't tend to use it because I think that [it] reinforces a binary, which I don't think reflects my people's worldview. So, I like the term 'plural-spirit' because of recognizing more than two, but I am accepting of two-spirit, as well.



Also, I have ADHD and I've done an assessment for autism, and traits I have reflect autism. So, I'm a neurodivergent person, and with that I find lots of gifts. But there's challenges where I can burn out easily compared to other people, or I hyper-focus when it comes to helping somebody heal. It's like I'll hyper-focus on them, and that's why I don't have enough energy for the land. So being able to help lots of people heal, as opposed to just one, because

we need a community. We all need to be healing together, and we'll get there together faster than if we did apart.

**Jeff:** Yeah, absolutely. I think—and you started off with an introduction and supplication, if you will, and I'm sure you get this question a lot: what protocol should I be aware of when visiting this territory? I don't know how you want to respond to that, but does it come up a lot, and do people honour what you tell them, or what you share with them?

**Tiffany:** The protocol of introducing yourself is just being transparent, essentially like 'I'm a guest here' and 'I'm an uninvited guest here.' When you introduce your parents—for example, when I introduce my parents and grandparents—it's like: how do you feel when you introduce your parents? Does that make you uncomfortable?

We emphasize doing things in person. One reason is what do we read, 'cause as human beings we can pick up when somebody feels disgust, arrogance, shame, pride, when—whether they're being humble, or what have you. We pick up on those things subconsciously.

Also, I often ask "Have you looked at yourself?" That's a lot of what I advocate for people to do. Now we're beyond that point; people need to take action towards these issues in terms of the environment and climate change, in terms of racial prejudices, and Land Back for us specifically. We're past the point where people can do their healing through self-reflection so that they're not committing colonial white oppressive harms to our people. We just have to get it together. But, being able to see if somebody actually feels comfortable in their body—you're not a safe person if you don't feel a certain level of comfort in your body.

There's also the fact, like, 'why are you here?' When you introduce yourself, you state what you're here to do.

Too often people have an agenda. They have their own intentions and projects that they want my or my community's input on. People need to come to community ready to support what's already going on and being led by that community. On occasion, however, people show up and have work or a project that aligns with plans an individual or community already wanted to get in the works, and joining an outsider's project might be fortuitous and they have the capacity, resources, and also respectful ways of relating that make it a good fit. We're in a time where we have to act now. It's unfortunate—it feels like the relationship-building part is being lost, but that's the reality of a climate crisis, we don't have a lot of luxuries of time that we used to have, and that means when we did have those luxuries, people used

it to their own benefit rather than valuing relationship building and collaboration. [...]

That’s why ideally things happen in person, because you can feel deeper than a people’s good intentions, you can feel like: ‘Are you actually ready to do this work that you’re asking me to be a part of with you?’

So ideally people will be taking time now and, moving forward, when they come to our communities [they’ll be] willing to show up and support the community’s work and build relationships. Recognize that yeah, you want Indigenous leadership, but you’re probably not ready. You want to do the right thing, but you actually don’t know how. But at least here is a place you can learn to do that, or at least here you can be a part of this thing you say you want. If you want to be part of an Indigenous-led project, we’ll provide that, and if you genuinely want that then you’re already getting what you want. Does that make sense?

**Jeff:** Yes.

**Tiffany:** This is an Indigenous-led work, by showing up you’re a part of that, and that’s what you said your intention is so: done!

**Jeff:** There you go. It’s full accountability—immediate accountability—really.

**Tiffany:** Yeah. Because a lot of what people do, they extract us. Like ‘I have this thing going on over here, you do that, I get to have this on my resume, I get to have this on my website, get to have this in my bio. [...]

**Jeff:** And using you to leverage their own salary increase or marketability. Yeah, it’s outrageous. And yet it happens a lot, I think in academia as well. It helps build people’s names.

**Tiffany:** Yeah. Mostly academia and non-profits.

**Jeff:** Yeah. You’ve answered a lot of these questions already, so I’ll go back to what do you think is crucial for ensuring that our future generations thrive? And I think about that a lot, that’s why I ask it. What is it that I want my daughter to know? But also her kid, our relatives, the plants, the waters themselves—what needs to happen so that they thrive? Also (inaudible) that you were talking about earlier.

**Tiffany:** Mhm. I have to like provide a little bit of context about what’s going on right now.

**Jeff:** Sure.

**Tiffany:** It’s November 3rd, 2023. People have started waking up to the genocide of Palestinians on October 7th. So not even a whole month. But this has been

going on for decades, and I started learning about it maybe eight years ago. So, in the grand scheme, I’m still kind of new to this, but compared to people who just woke up to this a month ago I’m not new to this.

I’ve been sitting with this sadness that the colonization that came to my people in the 1800s basically only landed on the Palestinians in the early 1900s—[that’s] like when it started, but the real Nakba in the 40’s after World War II—like, that’s so recent, and yet it’s happening so fast.

They’ve been being killed so violently and quickly, and their land stolen so fast compared to us, and it’s painful what happened to us, and it’s horrible and it’s genocide. People invalidate that because the ongoing genocide isn’t happening so fast. It’s a slow torture and erasure of genocide that we experience as Indigenous people of Turtle Island. And then, Palestinians are going through it and people are denying it’s genocide, because it’s people who previously survived genocide who are committing this genocide, but it’s not all Jewish people committing this genocide—it’s Israeli Zionists.

[It has] nothing to do with any identity—it’s with greed, and a very sick person, very sick people, who want to be able to control the little bit that’s left of Palestinian-occupied land. Which is insane to me. They stole like 90, maybe 99% of the land, and they’re like ‘we need to kill every last one of you so we can get that last little bit’.

That’s the context of what I’m about to say. This would’ve been true 38 years [ago], [on] the day I was born: What we need to do for the future generations is walk out. All of it needs to stop now.

Trudeau has not said anything about a cease fire in Palestine, and yet he’s trying to go to mosques to get a photo op. Trudeau is committing genocide to Indigenous people, but he’s putting all this money towards IPCA’s, and to different programs within different ministries. Yet, is he stopping these pipelines? No, he’s now made it the financial fiscal responsibility of Canada. He’s not honouring Indigenous people here anymore than he’s honouring Palestinians. So, we need to just stop being apart of the system. Not just Indigenous—everyone needs to, because it’s not just Indigenous people’s lives at risk, it’s not just Palestinian lives at risk now. It is us and the world.

And we know—now more than ever—that millions of people don’t want a genocide to take place.

We know that I think it’s 90% of British Columbians don’t want old growth to be logged to death—to extinction. We know there’s more of us than them, and yet we are powerless. No, actually, we are more powerful, so we need to stop participating in these



things that give all of these wealthy people power, because we have been giving them our power for far too long. We need to take it back for our children, for our grandchildren, because if we don't, we're losing everything. It's just facts.



**Jeff:** So that could be seen as land back, and then what I've heard more recently is water back. Is that what that could look like or is that just a part of it?

**Tiffany:** Yeah it really is—each and every person has autonomy. That is a core teaching of Coast Salish people. Your child, they came to this world for a reason, but because of colonialism, capitalism—it takes away that, and it's like you have to do this form of education, you have to get this form of a degree in education to be able to do the work you want to do. Also, to do the work you want to do there's somebody else to decide if you're ready or not. That's not our way. For your children to be able to grow up in a different way, your child needs to know their autonomy. You also have your autonomy; our children are only going to know that when they see us do that ourselves.



We also need our elders to do that. They're the ones who survived residential school. We have all our pain about that, but they're still here. There's not as many as [those] who have died, but [many are still here]. [...] And what if they stand up? What if they understood, like, this is your land, and people are going to follow you because you're an elder and they look up to you, and you're a leader. I would love that, I would be on the ground crying right now if our elders were like 'we're standing up for Palestine, we're standing up to Trudeau and this bullshit.' I'd be crying with pride with my fist in the air because my elders are standing up for our land and our water, and our children, and our future generations. So yes, it's Land Back, but it really comes back [to]: 'Do you remember that you're sacred?'



**Jeff:** Yes... The closest I saw—in terms of groups of elders doing that—was in Hawaii, standing against the desecration of Mauna Kea, and they were on the front lines... Huy ch q'u.

Last question: Is there anything we haven't discussed around land or water defense that you think we should talk about?



**Tiffany:** Well I know there's probably a lot of people who've worked—like non-Indigenous people—who've been stream keepers and things like that. But a lot of them die of cancer, and it's probably because those streams are contaminated. It's literally what they go there to do is remediate something, and they get sick. So, land defense can make you sick. Water defense can make you sick, because those places are contaminated, right. I don't want that to go unnoticed.

I'm not a person who's really been on that ground level in the way a lot of other people [have], whether they're an environmentalist working for an NGO, or a land defender defending against mines or the oil sands. If I was, I'd be sick right now. I have to recognize that to even be healthy is a privilege. To be able to walk out in the streets is a privilege. [...]

We have so much power even as people who feel powerless. So, land defense, water defense, it can mean walking out of your job and it can mean getting other people to walk out of their job until all of this is dealt with.

Canada owns 75% of mines across the world. Like, they say Britain invaded 80% of the globe: Canada's not far behind, and yet they're the “peaceful” country. Like that's fucking crazy! And that goes back to what we were talking about before we started recording: this polite, gaslighting type of oppression that Canada does. Like 'oh don't bring up conflict, we're peaceful.' That's the antithesis of what peace means. You have to be a part of conflict, you have to face consequences. You have to have those hard conversations. You can't just be like no we're peaceful—you're the problem.

**Jeff:** Well Huy ch q'u. Huy ch q'u for speaking your truth today, and for sharing this with us, and for all the work you do every day.

## Note

1 This interview is part of the Special Section: Honouring Indigenous Land and Water Defenders, edited by Jeff Ganohalidoh Corn tassel, in *Borders in Globalization Review* 5(1): 7-53. The interview has been abridged; the complete interview is [available online](#).