RAD Story Lodge | Episode 3

Land Back: The Wabanaki Forest

Randi Russell: Oki and hello. Welcome to the RAD Story Lodge, a place where you will hear stories from the land and learn from Indigenous communities who are advancing regenerative economies and reshaping the way we think about conservation.

In today's episode, we learn about the The Wabanaki Forest, Climate, and Land Back Partnership, a unique collaboration between three Indigenous Nations and two environmental organizations who have joined forces to protect 9,000 acres of endangered Wabanaki forest.

Our guest host, Delta Flood, interviewed Darran O'Leary of the Passamaquoddy Recognition Group, Stephanie Merrill of Nature Trust of New Brunswick and Anne Herteis of Community Forests International.

Delta: Thank you all for coming and, instead of me saying a whole bunch of stuff, I'm just gonna start with, Stephanie, please introduce yourself and a little bit of what brings you here.

Stephanie: Well, thanks for having me. I'm Stephanie Merrill, and I'm the Chief Executive Officer for the Nature Trust of New Brunswick.

I was invited here with my colleagues Darran and Anne to share about our collaborative in New Brunswick. That's a very unique collaborative between Indigenous and non-Indigenous conservation organizations.

And also to soak in all the learnings from all the great speakers and knowledge holders that I've met here over the last few days.

Anne: my name is Anne Herteis. I work with Community Forests International. We're based in Sackville, New Brunswick, so in the Sikniktewaq district of Migma'ki.

My job title there is the Grants and Operations Manager, and I've been lucky enough to work for the last two years on supporting the work of this partnership. Community Forest International itself works in climate change around forestry issues. We work in conservation, applied forest management. We've worked in

the carbon sphere and we're really working now to try to figure out how we can best use the skills that we've developed to support The Wabanaki Nations that live and work and are the caretakers of the forest, in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, where we hold land. So we're very excited to be here and to, as Stephanie said, share some of the work that we've been doing and how much Community Forests has learned from the trust that's been put in us, from the other members of this partnership to move it forward.

Darran: Darran O'Leary, Passamaquoddy or Peskotomuhkati, in St. Andrew's area, Southwestern New Brunswick. I work for the Passamaquoddy Recognition Group, as we are unrecognized in Canada, under the Indian Act currently. Lands and IPCA project as well as this collaborative, around private land acquisitions to protect the Wabanaki forest.

Delta: So what is the current status of the Wabanaki Land Back Initiative?

Anne: The Wabanaki, Forest, Climate and Land Back Partnership, as is our official title, is funded through a pilot project for Environment and Climate Change Canada's Nature Smart Climate Solutions Fund. We are actually just wrapping the pilot, so it comes to an official close in March of this year. But we had some really ambitious targets to cover in that 18 month project. So in total, the partnership will conserve about 9,000 acres of endangered Wabanaki forest, between six participating organizations.

It is a partnership that's made up of four indigenous partners from the Peskotomuhkati, Mi'gmaq and Wolastoqiyik Nations in New Brunswick. And then the nature trust of New Brunswick and Community Forest International. So we are seeing sort of the benefits of the project in terms of getting private land directly back into the care of and ownership of the Wabanaki Nations.

And then the conservation partners have been able to work on different forms of knowledge sharing and support, and working through some of the administrative and financial management portions to really ensure that the partners have the most time available to them to work with communities and find out where the greatest needs are for land to focus on, in some cases, even building a land acquisition program from the ground up, for the partners that didn't already have those skills in house or have existing IPCAs or Land Trust projects. So this partnership, and so far we do have hopes to carry on in the future, but I'd say that the current status has been really incredibly successful in getting those acres of land back into the hands of their traditional caretakers and working on skills and knowledge sharing, throughout the year and a half that we've been working.

Stephanie: And then dreaming of the next stage of this work.

Delta: What will it look like in practice for the Wabanaki Nations to have this purchased land back, and what impact will it have to the communities themselves?

Darran: I think for our community, our Nation, it'll provide additional lands, you know, for traditional use, and without the industrialization or commercialization. But allow for community members to hunt, gather or partake in just being out on the land as well as just other members within our surrounding communities, to be able to enjoy the land and, I mean, have it available for the next seven gens plus.

Delta: Without having the conservation officer come and tap you on the shoulder every two seconds.

Darran: 100%. 100% no conservation officers coming to tap you on the shoulder.

Delta: So what does Land Back mean to you and how is this partnership advancing Land Back?

Stephanie: I certainly don't want, and won't and will not speak for, you know, the definition of Land Back for Indigenous communities and Nations. In our experience at the Nature Trust, it has been, and in working in partnership with our Indigenous friends and allies is it's kind of had many meanings and almost a spectrum of meanings from a complete transfer of title, ownership and sovereignty over decision making and, you know, allowable uses and things of that nature to, potentially co-management and shared stewardship of lands that may already be in the ownership of an existing land trust such as ourselves, the Nature Trust of New Brunswick or Community Forest International or others, whereby we can kind of reopen management plans and discuss things like, traditional Indigenous activities that perhaps had followed outside of the box of traditional colonial definitions of conservation, where we have tended to kind of, protected and forget it, type approaches. Where, where we tend to conserve and then kind of don't touch it, leave it alone. And the evolution towards, you know, providing these lands as being accessible and achievable for traditional harvesting, traditional artisan products, things of that nature. So really, you know, experimenting a little bit with pushing the envelope on some of these, like I said, traditional from a colonial perspective, ways of managing conserved lands to be a little bit more open minded to the intersection of how Indigenous worldview of people and nature come together. To, kind of on the other end of

the spectrum, just again, providing access and just the educational and awareness component of the fact that we have spent 36 years conserving private lands in New Brunswick, which has led to a portfolio of about 15,000 acres of land, which many Indigenous communities may or may not know exists in terms of protected spaces and areas that we fully encourage access to and enjoyment of and all of those things that go along with wanting to conserve these important areas. So in my experience it's been kind of a spectrum of definitions of Land Back, but I think every nation, every community can have a different definition of what that means to them.

Delta: So I'm listening to you and one of the things in a previous podcast that we had was, someone was talking about holistic versus colonial views. How would you describe the difference between those two, to somebody who's non-Indigenous, and then to somebody who's Indigenous?

And I'm getting the feeling that you've had that described to you, because you're already talking about not just, what's good for hunting. You're talking about that whole, how it actually interconnects with other things. So it sounds like you have a good partner in these people to talk to. Am I correct in saying that?

Darran: Yeah, this relationship, especially with the Nature Trust before the larger collaborative came together about six years ago, I guess, for the Passamaquoddy around a piece of land that was donated back to the Nation itself, by a private donor. And, the Nature Trust had an easement on it.

And so when it landed on my desk and I was asked to figure out what the easement was and who had control of the land we now own, sat down to go through the large thick book and get to understand a little bit about the Nature Trust. And then, so I contacted them to find out where they were coming from, what their views were. And after we sat down and looked at it, it was, we had a lot of similar end goals and so I figured that we could work together to sort of understand the needs for each other's organizations, but how we could possibly get there together. And that led to, a larger partnership on an IPCA project with,our other Wabanaki, partners, the Wolastoqiyik and the Mi'gmaq, along with, one of the Mi'gmaq communities, Fort Folly, or Amlamgog.

And, then we needed to figure out some more stuff. So CFI came on as a contracted partner on those so we could learn more about carbon. And so again, the relationship continued to grow and our understanding of where everybody was at. And then progressed into this pilot project and then, you know, hopefully future projects.

But it's spent a lot of time spent around the table, frank conversations. Just to get that understanding of the holistic view that the nations look at the stewardship, their obligation to the land. And they've been gracious enough to have open minds to sit with us and take it all in.

Delta: Can you expand on any of the specific vision or goals that, your nation has with this land and how this partnership can contribute to achieving those goals?

Darran: Yeah, so we are looking at a land holding entity in the future. We've started that, since our IPCA project in 2019 we have been working with the Nature Trust and we have a land holding agreement with them so that they hold our properties that we acquire through the project. Both the IPCA project and this project, until we have that land holding entity set up. We really wanted our Nation focused on protection of the land in our territory.

New Brunswick is a part of the Wabanaki Forest, which some may refer to as the Acadian Forest. Sort of in between the boreal and the lower hardwood forest. So it's endangered. It's heavily industrial in our province. So it's I guess. What's the word here?

Delta: cumulative effects.

Darran: Yeah. But it's more than that. It's, yeah. It's heavily forested.

Anne: It's degraded. Less than 1% of the Wabanaki Forest exists in a pre-colonial condition. Yeah. So everything there has been subjected to high rotation industrial forestry.

Darran: Yeah.

Anne: There's, unless you are sort of in the highlands of Cape Bretton for example, where it's been very difficult to get forestry equipment in there, odds are it's been cut repeatedly and regrown, you know, for further short rotation forestry, numerous times.

Darran: And if, you know, we want to preserve that. Then we've taken it on and that's been our goal from the start, that we didn't want to see it industrialized or commercialized, for those purposes.

There's lots of other areas out there that they're doing that and we feel that they don't really need those areas that we're trying to protect. And so we're working with a number of people within the territory to try and make that happen.

Delta: I just learned something really huge, which is that there's no such thing as the Acadian Forest.

Darran: No, there, there isn't.

Delta: Sorry, I went to school a long time ago, I might have known by now. That's really interesting.

So Anne, can you speak about the policy context in New Brunswick? What are the implications of this project being on private lands?

Anne: Yes. So just as we talked about what is the Wabanaki Forest, I think one of the other reasons that, you know, we really found it important to take on a project like this is not only because the forest is so endangered and so rare, but also because unlike the context in most of Canada, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia and PEI are largely private land ownership.

So that would be sort of small wood lots. You know, a lot of the original colonial land grants, for example, would still be the properties of that size. Whereas when we talk about large scale conservation, IPCAs, other Indigenous-led conservation projects in the rest of the country, this is often work that's happening on "Crown" or provincial land.

And so it changes the method of negotiation. It changes the method of conservation or what limits are being placed on the land when those that care for it. So for those of us that have been working in this sector, and I'm sure again, Stephanie, you're very familiar with this work, it's that the best way to quickly conserve land that is more likely than not to be clear cut as soon as it changes hands is to buy private land. And so we think in this case, and for this project, it has allowed us to work with partners that, as I said, may or may not already have a charitable land trust. They may have different methods of holding land available to them, but because the money of the grant that has funded this project is just being used to purchase fee simple land, it sort of allows us to work more quickly for land that is at immediate risk.

It also opens up a lot of opportunities for relationship building and working with communities. We found that, I know Darran, you've talked about this before, there's been opportunities for people wanting to donate land. You can make

relationships quickly in a small community where a lot of people might own forest land. We have an aging population. Not everybody has family that might want to take on management of a small wood lot. And knowing that for people that have cared for it in the long term, that haven't clear cut it, that have wanted to use these properties for conservation and recreation and just for their own enjoyment –having projects like this and knowing that there are Nations and Indigenous organizations in the region that are willing to take on and care for this land in perpetuity is a wonderful way to make inroads with communities and with those in the province that might want something else for their properties.

So I think we found it to be very useful. And you know, the public land in the east coast, a lot of it is earmarked for industrial forestry. And so again, the layers of access there are more difficult than simply purchasing fee simple land. Another factor has been in projects like the Nature Smart Climate Solutions Fund, where, really we're looking at a dollar to carbon stored ratio as one of the most important aspects of that project. Land is still relatively inexpensive in the east coast and so in order to have the largest conservation impact for the least amount of money, purchasing private land is incredibly impactful and we have found it to get really good conservation results and opportunities for further income if people do choose to seek things like a carbon project or other nature-based solutions and financing.

Delta: That's interesting you speaking about how the land is parcelled over there. 'Cause, I mean it makes sense. That's where everybody came first. So in Timmons, there's 1826, the records don't even exist. Yeah, right. It just starts later after that. Like you're just starting to see records starting to exist in that area. Meanwhile, you guys have probably had those parcels for longer than that. Yet, oh look, there's actually Indians living here.

Stephanie: It forces you to be a bit creative with what you have. Yeah. Right. And, this point about other IPCAs in Canada being mostly a negotiation process between the Nations and the Crown. In New Brunswick, they've had a real roadblock in negotiations with the Crown, but in turn that created an opportunity to pivot and kind of focus on the opportunity of converting private lands and the sale of, the turnover of private lands, into access and ownership for the Nations. And it's almost like we were talking earlier, it's almost a version of converting it more to a public, you know, ownership from a private ownership scenario.

Delta: I can almost see this happening for like when people actually learn more about what this is and exactly what is happening. There's still a lot of old

homesteads, even throughout all of Canada that might be saying, “Hey, you know what, maybe it is time. Like we'll offer it for them to purchase before we send it off.”

Stephanie: That's happening more and more often, and we've kind of labeled these folks as conservation sellers and that, our organizations and, the Nations have almost become buyers of choice. You know, where before a family will put their property on the market, they'll make a phone call, you know, to one of our offices and say, “we're planning on selling this land. We've heard about the work that you guys are doing. We'd like to chat with you about whether you're interested in buying it before we proceed to the market.” Where, when it happens, that becomes much more difficult for us to, you know, move at the speed of market forces mm-hmm. Or compete with market prices and things like that. So it gives us a chance to have that values-based conversation with landowners about what is their vision for the future. And often it's very much tied to the legacy of their family and their settlement. And you know, Darran goes in and talks about how you can still maintain that. You know, because there will be no clear cutting, this land will continue to be conserved and your family can still come and access it.

Darran: Yeah. That's, when you get to the nuts and bolts of the conversation with most people, they want that land available for their families as well.

And when you can have a fully stocked bank account for your grandchildren to go to school, get education or whatever, and they still can maintain access to that land, that we're not looking to kick anybody off. We're not looking to exclude anybody. We're not looking to tear anybody away from their land.

So for them it's a pivot in their minds on how they can preserve that legacy. And so it's worked out, knock on wood, to the benefit for a lot of conversations that we can sit down and understand what they're looking to see.

Anne: We had a great conversation at one of our in-person partnership meetings where everybody was at the table up in Northern New Brunswick, in Ugpi'ganjig, Eel River Bar. We really talked about misinformation around what might happen with Land Back, what might happen if Indigenous Nations have full access back to their territory in provinces. And one of the things that all of the partners gathered saw as the power of a project like this and working on private land is that, not only is the land going back to its caretakers, but it also, remains there for everybody, both for mitigating climate change and helping the forest stay intact, but also truly just for access.

So while the land is now available to all of the Wabanaki Nations and partners to use, to harvest, to exercise Treaty rights on, it's also available to New Brunswickers to have as intact forest and see. And so I think while we haven't done that kind of public communications work or promotion yet, I think there's a real understanding of the sort of the deep power of that and how that messaging could really counteract a lot of the other messaging that sometimes comes behind Indigenous-led conservation, when your forest is one of your main economic resources in a province.

Darran: Yeah, so for anyone who hasn't heard, we did go through an election recently and there was a lot of fearmongering with the previous government around, the Indigenous people saying, wanting to kick people off their land and take back all the land. And it was put out there, it was newsworthy.

So just to have that swing back now, a different feeling from the government and a different atmosphere. But then people are starting to talk about these two projects around the IPCAs plus this, uh, Wabanaki Land Back climate project. And so we're starting to see that a little bit more and other NGOs have taken it and they've spread the word a little bit for us.

And it's starting to work.

Delta: One of the things that I hear too is how a lot of non-Indigenous people are understanding how having our Indigenous brothers and sisters across Canada looking after our forests, I mean stewards of the forest, whether or not we own it or we're just stewards of it, is going to be a benefit for everyone.

And I think that, what's starting to show is that people are like, oh, this is actually not just for them. This is for everyone.

Darran: Yeah. and because a lot of our landholders are of a certain generation and age, their life experience has not always been that way. And so it's starting to, I guess, filter through a little bit and break down some barriers.

Delta: So Anne, you mentioned previously to the RAD team that the partners are advocating for changes in government granting processes to better accommodate Indigenous-led initiatives. Can you tell us a bit about that?

Anne: I think, so this, I'm gonna put on my don't say anything wrong hat. I'll tell a little bit about how we actually physically got to signing the documents for this partnership. So Community Forest International had taken part in a few

previous iterations of Nature Smart Climate Solutions Fund grants, but not under this stream that our project is currently funded by, which was brand new.

And because we had previously worked in the sector, we were invited into a closed grant application process. So it was an invite only process, not an open call. It was a lot of money. This was like a, it was a pretty big grant in a small region. And you know, we have been working as an organization for quite a few years now to sort of, as Stephanie was talking about, that more traditional or colonial conservation model to understand what our role was in perpetuating that model, and perpetuating displacement and dispossession through conservation. And we're looking for ways to do better and to be better as an organization and we're still learning.

But one of the things that immediately came to mind with that invitation is that for such a broad project and for quite a bit of money, it was really unconscionable that none of the Wabanaki Nations had been invited into this massive land conservation grant that would put their territory back in their hands. And so we had differing levels of partnerships with the three Nations in New Brunswick. And as Darran said, we had worked a little bit on some knowledge transfer and advising around forest carbon. We had worked on projects with the Wolastoqiyik Nation in New Brunswick as a partner, and we had some other projects around forest restoration with Amlamgog First Nation, who are a member of Mi'gmawe'l Tplu'taqnn, which is the umbrella organization for the Mig'mak nations in New Brunswick. And so we reached out to these partners, very humbly to ask if they would trust us to bring them in on an invitation only grant. And we had quite a few meetings before we got anywhere with it. And as Darran said, everyone was very honest about their concerns and it's an awkward position for everyone to be in. I mean, Community Forests recognized that as the invited party we would be the name on the grant. We would be placed in a position of being the go-between, between the federal government and partners. And we did not know if that would be okay with partners.

But we knew that we couldn't ethically move forward with a grant as a non-Indigenous organization in the field, and were willing to push that with the federal government. And so we had a series of meetings and we were given the go ahead to come in as a partnership. I think that was the only way we would've moved forward.

And so within that, there were a few things that, because this was a pilot project needed to be figured out. And one is that the grant in particular is based on carbon. It's based on Canada meeting its emissions targets, which means that for

the land conserved, the federal government is going to claim a portion of the carbon. That's fundamentally where the funds are coming from to conserve the land. But there isn't clear policy or understanding of where the federal government sits in terms of Indigenous carbon rights and what Nations can hold. Are carbon rights a resource? There's no treaties about carbon rights.

This is really new information. And so one of the things that as a partnership we did is we were able to include in our contribution agreement that the Nations would hold their carbon rights and all of the carbon emissions that were counted on the lands that the non-indigenous partners conserve, so Community Forests International and Nature Trust of New Brunswick would be the carbon that was counted for the federal government to meet its emissions targets. So we signed it. It moved forward, so we were able to keep the carbon rights in the hands of the nations, as a group, which was amazing.

There's been a few other things that we've been working on. We just came from a panel talking about IPCA designation, which in federal conservation, Darran, you might be able to speak a bit more clearly on this, about what it means to designate an Indigenous-led conservation project as an IPCA and how that is not in fact available in all of the grants.

Darran: So with their decision support tool, you can either fit into their categories, but there's no category for IPCAs, there's no consideration in their decision support tool for in CPCAD for cultural considerations. And so that's been an ongoing battle since they rolled out this IPCA project in, I don't know, I think the first meeting that I participated in was probably 2018 or 2019. Mm-hmm. So it's been ongoing as much as they, you know, wheel it out that this is a big thing, and Indigenous-led, but really there's no tool there that says that it's IPCA. You can self-declare, and we have lots of Nations who are doing that, but there's no teeth that stops, especially in New Brunswick, you know, your mining companies, your forestry companies, if they're, you know, part of the government from going in and doing what they're gonna do. If the government wants that lumber, if they want a miner can come in and post on your land and they have the rights. It's one of the things that needs to happen.

Everybody talks a big game about it, but there's a difference when you are sitting in a large room like we're in this week and everybody's feeling good and warm and fuzzy, and then walking away and actually carrying through with your thought process and making a change. That hasn't happened yet.

So in this project, we want those properties to count. We'll decide when it comes down to the time, if they do yet. But yeah, you have to fit their box. I think

we've sort of pushed that. We make no bones about it. we don't agree with their box. And fortunately we have some partners who are willing to stand by and let us push that envelope a little bit and the sides of the box until they're comfortable as well.

And we understand that a lot of times we put them in a bad spot maybe with our provincial government or the federal government, but they've shown a lot of backbone in believing in the work that they're doing with us and the work that we're doing with them.

Anne: That's the most important part. Yes. For the settler partners to just wait and see what needs to happen and put in whatever resources and social and political capital that we have to move those goals forward. And I think it's really the only way that this kind of conservation can move forward and it's the only kind of conservation that's gonna help in the long run.

Delta: Stephanie, can you speak a bit about the Nature Trust conservation model and how this might be seen as problematic in the context of Indigenous rights and jurisdiction?

Stephanie: Sure. It's super complicated. That's what I've learned. Yeah, like we've said a number of times, the kind of traditional Settler Land Trust organization model has been around for a long time. You know, dating back to U.S. national park system kind of era, where we identify areas of high conservation value for the just intrinsic value of nature and that it has the rights and the need to be protected and conserved and no-touch, fence it and forget it. I think that model has come a long way on its own. I think we have moved more into passive recreation, supporting lots of activities like scientific investigation and things like that.

The Nature Trust of New Brunswick in particular has started to go through this kind of learning journey of how our organization specifically can and needs to evolve to, both the expectation and the opportunity that exists in Indigenous-led conservation.

So we have talked a lot about how great and how, what did you say earlier, Darran? Touchy, feely fuzzy…We, you know, we always wanna tell the outcomes that are positive and that have led to success.

But absolutely there has been hard conversations. There's been a lot of emotional work on both sides, of Indigenous and non-Indigenous partnerships. Our organization has had to do a lot of work internally with respect to just

straight up logistics of how we work. From some of our policies around land acquisition, where we have check boxes that are very, you know, ecosystem centric, that have lacked the lens of cultural interests and medicinal interests.

And we have had to have a lot of conversations at our board of directors levels about why this is important work, how this is not just about the right thing to do, but this also has tangible positive benefits for conservation and for the things that we value as that, Settler organization in terms of biodiversity and, forest resilience and all of those things.

You know, we've even had to write a letter to the Canadian Revenue Agency to explain why we feel it's important to do the work of providing access and experimenting with traditional Indigenous activities with our Indigenous partners, because it is sometimes, many times seen to be counter to quote, unquote "conservation objectives". And as a charitable organization, that's the highest bar is how the Canadian Revenue Agency kind of grades us against our charitable objectives. What do we say we were doing when we applied to be able to use tax payer dollars to support this work?

And that's really important, you know, the governance of an organization, the board of directors, their job is to oversee the governance and the protection of your charitable status and all of those fiduciary responsibilities. And so they take those responsibilities very seriously. So that's been a huge undertaking for our organization to tackle some of those questions about that we've had to break down, push back on, change, be comfortable with being uncomfortable, not having all of the answers figured out before we might cross those bridges in 5, 10, 50 years from now.

But having the theory of that grounded in an actual partnership where we're trying to figure those things out together has just put like meat on the bones of really big complex questions and almost like existential, you know, considerations. And so having face and name and relationship behind these questions has really helped our organization boards and members and supporters and donors and the whole complex that goes behind this work, start to see that it has had and will continue to have meaningful conservation results and that makes them more comfortable at the end of the day.

So a lot of hard work and it's not over yet. We still have lots of nuts to crack and boxes to tick. But yeah.

Delta: You know, you're talking about you're having to wrestle with the colonial views up above you and everything like that. Not only that, but now I mean our

whole chief system is colonial and a lot of us are battling that on our own inside. So we have that and kudos to you guys. You're fighting a really good fight.

Stephanie: And they've also had to go through this, like similar, kind of inflection.

Darran: When we say, you know, Amlamgog, Mi'gmawe'l Tplu'taqnn, WNNB and Passamaquoddy Recognition Group, that's four organizations that represent their Nations. So there's 16 communities, 17 communities that make up the people sitting at this table. And so we've had to understand that there are things we can push back on and these organizations that we partner with are, can push. But we've also had to have a level of understanding with them as well that when land was donated to them, people had certain expectations as well. And so we've had to show a level of respect that if they didn't want hunting on it, yeah, that little piece of land may have to stay out of the pot and we can understand that, you know, people have reasons. If we find species at risk, people understand we may not be able to do certain things there. And so we've had to show a certain level of respect there. We've had to take that back to our chiefs and councils and tell that story to them on why it's not just give it, turn it over, it's the right thing to do.

But we've had to have that level of respect as well. And when you can sit down at a table and have very honest conversations and they both know with their organizations that sometimes we have really hard conversations when we go back to our office. Not just within our office, but the political landscape of three Nations that have territories within a pretty small province.

And so it's been nation building, I think. It's been relationship building and it's been community building at every level when we're looking at these projects. And the Land Back situation, the Wabanaki Confederacy was made up of the Wolastoqiyik, the Mi'kmaq, Passamaquoddy, Abenaki and the Penobscot. And we are Peace and Friendship Treaties. We're not numbered treaties. So the land coming back, we never ceded it. We never gave it up. We never walked away from it. Our treaties dictate between 1725, I think, and 1769 or 89, how we were gonna share and both utilize the land.

And so for us, the land coming back, you know, we never really gave it up. It's a little different than the rest of Canada. It's been an ongoing journey. It's tense and fraught filled at some times. But, it's pretty exciting work. I think we're getting to do a lot of talks about it and meet lots of people and protect a boatload of land.

Randi: Thank you for joining us in the RAD Story Lodge. We hope you enjoyed today's episode. To learn more, visit radnetwork.ca. Follow us on Instagram and LinkedIn, and be sure to subscribe to the podcast to stay connected and reach out if you have a story to share.

This episode was produced by Arina Isaeve from Wolf Eye Productions, hosted by Delta Flood and introduced by Randi Russell. The conversation took place at the 2025 Indigenous Lands Symposium which was hosted by Wahkohtowin Development in Bawaating Sault Saint Marie, Robinson Huron Treaty. Check out the show notes for a link to register for the fourth annual Indigenous Land Symposium coming up in February 2026.

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Darran: This is your fault.

Anne: It's all my fault there. This whole thing's my fault.