

Sticky Moments and Poignant Silences: The bumpy road to building relations with Indigenous food activists in the Earth to Tables Legacies Project

Intro: It's not a straight line

It may start with an uncomfortable feeling in the gut. A sense of confusion, of not knowing the appropriate way to build relationships with Indigenous food activists. Or maybe some missteps we made along our journey were not even in our consciousness. Perhaps at times, we just fumbled along, oblivious to the ways we were offending our potential collaborators or reproducing colonial practices.

I always encouraged my students to embrace and probe moments of discomfort as fertile spaces for deeper learning. Now it's my turn.

The reflections here are still very tentative, and the tensions unresolved. But I feel it is important to name some of the bumps along the road to co-creating the Earth to Tables Legacies Project. While, after a decade, we feel as though we do have some strong relationships of genuine exchange, we have never really collectively delved into the difficult moments of our history. Nor is relationship building ever a finished process, it requires ongoing nurturing.

In these reflections, I attempt to name MY memories of some of the sticky moments and poignant silences. I invite others to engage with them and offer their own understanding of what happened and/or what we can learn from them. One thing is clear – the path to developing relationships of trust and solidarity with Indigenous peoples, communities and struggles is not a straight road. These reflections also jump around in time, and even circle round, revisiting moments with new questions as well as potential transformations.

First Awkward Encounters

A few months before retiring from full time teaching at York University in 2014, I received a phone call from a newly minted (but middle aged) filmmaker: "I just read your book about the journey of the tomato from Mexico to Canada. I think it would make a great documentary." I had always thought the stories of the largely invisible women workers on the twisty tomato trail should be seen and heard, and even David Suzuki had agreed it would be perfect for his TV show, *The Nature of Things*. Maybe retirement would give me more time to revisit the journey with a camera.

But I had two major doubts. For one, the book, *Tangled Routes: Women, Work, and Globalization on the Tomato Trail*, had been primarily a critique of the global food system. Twenty years later, I felt we needed not more critique, but rather stories of people resisting that system and creating alternatives, stories of hope rather than

despair. Secondly, I was convinced that Indigenous peoples had the deep knowledge and practice that we all needed to learn from if we were to save the planet and all the beings that make it their home. I already had my own decades of experience collaborating with Indigenous educators and activists, and we were living a moment in Canada where there was a growing public consciousness about both our brutal colonial history as well as the resurgence of Indigenous communities taking leadership in key environmental struggles.

My filmmaker and her producer were open to this revised narrative. For me, a first step was to connect with local Indigenous food activists to develop the project. In nearby Six Nations of the Grand River Territory, I learned of Lone Anderson, an elder who had led the recovery of traditional [Iroquoian biodynamics](#) and had inspired the [Our Sustenance Project](#).

John, Lauren, Fulvio, the filmmaker and I piled into the van and made the 100 km to Six Nations. Before leaving, I had invited the filmmaker to join me in making tobacco bundles for the Haudenosaunee women we were meeting. When we arrived at the greenhouse in Ohsweken, we were greeted by Lone, as well as Kitty and Adrienne Lickers, the mother-daughter team managing the Our Sustenance project.



Meeting Adrienne and Kitty Lickers and Lone Anderson (right) at the Our Sustenance Greenhouse

They shared with us their efforts to rekindle local food production, something Lone had been doing in her backyard for years. Lone invited us to visit her garden and kitchen, where we saw how she preserved and processed the plants.



Back in the greenhouse, we expressed our interest in collaborating to document their work, and to exchange knowledges and practices of food sovereignty. We offered the gift of a poster reflecting this vision of an exchange that also involved Indigenous food activists in Mexico. They offered us some of their fresh produce. Gift giving is always a part of the encounter.

I offer Kitty Lickers (far right) a poster from Mexican food activists.

As we headed back to our van, our filmmaker whispered to me: “How can they do this work and be so large?”

That off-handed comment about their bodies tapped a doubt that I had been harbouring. This woman had little understanding of the history of Indigenous people in Canada. Or of the impact of colonization on the food system and on Indigenous bodies. I had first learned about the colonial roots of the [high rates of diabetes](#) from [Rodney Bobiwash](#) in the 1980s.

Lauren and I began to realise that the filmmaker did not share our analysis of the broader historical context nor was she able to connect personally and easily with the people we were meeting. Ironically, her first and only film focused on her father’s pressure on her to maintain a particular body image as his Forest Hill Jewish daughter. This led to a very awkward process of my “firing” the person who initiated this project. I communicated this via email, which, in retrospect I realize was probably not fair. Subsequently, I met with her to further explain why we felt the collaborative process we envisioned would not work with her. She was understandably upset, but we never looked back after that. Especially when I realized that I was already working with graduate students who were talented and community-engaged filmmakers (Min Sook Lee and Alexandra Gelis) and who also shared our political analysis.

False starts and serendipitous connections

Not that we necessarily knew how to develop relationships with Kitty and Adrienne either. Over the next few months, we visited them again to learn about the workshops they ran with kids about healthy eating. We invited them to our first gathering at a Muskoka cottage in June 2016 to help shape the collaborative project. They never responded to our various emails or phone calls, and so never came to the gathering. Silence seemed to be their strongest response to us. We can never know why they chose not to join us, but we can imagine that we may have repeated one or more of many classic missteps in our efforts to build relationships: being primarily a white settler

group, lack of understanding of the proper protocol, not connecting with Six Nations media producers, or maybe they were just too busy with their priorities in their community. It would be interesting to have a conversation with Kitty and Adrienne now, if they were willing, almost ten years later, to see how they understood those moments and our first efforts to develop a relationship with them.



One serendipitous encounter did stick, however. Chandra Maracle showed up at that first meeting in the greenhouse, with baby Vyolette in her arms. She was clearly a person who understood both Haudenosaunee traditional food practices and the brutal historical processes that had attempted to crush them. Chandra was open to talking further, so we began phone chats with her and found many resonances in our thinking. Eventually we visited her, starting, slowly, to build a relationship which has become the richest source of our learning and collaboration over the past eight years. That process is ongoing, and confirms the adage that building relationships of trust takes time.

Chandra Maracle with daughter Vyolette in 2016 at Six Nations

A way of understanding

One further experience from that fateful day: from the greenhouse, we went to visit Ryan DeCaire at his Mohawk language class at Six Nations Polytechnic. When we entered, he offered what we came to learn as the [“Edge of the Woods” address](#), or [condolence ceremony](#). He began “We welcome you. You have travelled far to get here and you may be tired from the journey, and carrying grief and concerns with you. I offer this doe skin to wipe the tears from your eyes, so you may see more clearly. And a feather to clear the cobwebs from your ears, so you may hear more clearly. Finally I offer some water for your throat, so you may speak more clearly.”

Lauren and I looked at each other, both of us moved by this multi-layered greeting. It seemed to acknowledge so many feelings and tap into unresolved questions. We all carry our own histories into every encounter, our own daily preoccupations, our own individual and collective pain. In the broader context of white settlers coming into Haudenosaunee territory, there are complex layers to that history. All of this needs to be acknowledged before we can even begin to talk with each other. Almost ten years later, I am still uncovering the layers of what this means.



We had met Ryan through Dianne Kretschmar, the Muskoka organic farmer who was at the core of our Legacies Project. In 2010?, he had approached Dianne to learn sustainable agriculture from her on Grenville Farm. He asked her to propagate the Indigenous corn that had been lost in his Mohawk community an hour from her farm. Before our project was born, I had heard Ryan offer an impressive power point presentation on Indigenous food sovereignty at a gathering of Young Agrarians that Dianne and her son Dan had offered at their farm in 2014?.

Ryan DeCaire at Grenville Farm, 2016

Ryan probably agreed to join the Legacies project because he already had a trusting relationship with Dianne and Dan. Whenever we gathered, he would offer the Haudenosaunee [Thanksgiving Address](#), greeting and thanking all the beings and elements of nature that, through their interrelationships, sustain life. This protocol, which opens all meetings, is, according to Chandra, a kind of Land Acknowledgement for Six Nations. Early on, we recognized that its acknowledgment of “all our relations” along with the deep sense of gratitude for each element, embodied the central message we wanted to learn from, how everything is of equal importance and interconnected.

So when we began to envision our multimedia project, we proposed that it open with a video of the Thanksgiving Address. During the first year or two, Ryan was opposed to having this sacred ceremony represented on video, online, and what’s more, produced by a non-Indigenous media team. What changed over time, that made it become central to both our website and our book?

For one, we invited a Six Nations videographer to film Ryan reciting the Ohén:ton Karilwatéhkwen (Thanksgiving Address) in Mohawk, followed by Chandra Maracle offering an English version illustrated with drawings by Rick Hill. But there was also a shift in the sharing of these sacred protocols online; in fact, we found many YouTube versions of the Thanksgiving Address on the internet. Perhaps our move into the world of online educational tools (hastened by the pandemic) was part of a broader process happening all over Turtle Island, and, in fact, reflected in productions by Indigenous groups around the globe. Was this part of what the Ojibway prophecy of the Seven Fires refers to as a potential Eighth Fire? A moment in history, when there was not only a healing and resurgence within Indigenous communities but also a readiness to share the wisdom with a world that desperately needed this understanding in order to address the environmental and climate crisis. In any case, Ryan finally agreed to having this sacred ceremony recorded and disseminated online. In fact, it is by far the most used [video](#) on the Earth to Tables Legacies website.

Nonetheless, it would be useful to check in with Ryan about how he now feels about having this on our website. It is one thing to agree to a production, and another to see it when it is out in the world. In fact, after we launched the website in 2020, Chandra communicated to us several times that she didn't feel comfortable with the way she was represented in that video. It had been a hard day for her, and she felt she didn't have the same positive energy she ordinarily exudes. She asked that we either remove her part or redo it. We kept thinking Alex would be back in the country to do refilm Chandra's part. When that wasn't forthcoming, we asked Diego to edit the second half of the video, still featuring Chandra, but only her voice, integrating new visuals over the images of her speaking. We felt we needed to honour her request, though it still may not have been the best solution for her. Again, something to check.

Seeking Indigenous partners and advisors

In 2014? I had the opportunity to co-teach (with Selam Teclu) a course on Food Sovereignty at the Coady International Institute at St. Francis Xavier University in Antigonish, Nova Scotia. That year I connected with an Indigenous woman coordinating Coady's Indigenous Women's Leadership Training Program. We hit it off, and she was excited about the food focus when I described our incipient Food Film project. I really wanted the project to be designed and led from the start with Indigenous leadership. So when I decided to go after SSHRC funding to develop the exchange, she agreed to be a co-applicant.

That is, until a week before the application was due. I had been sending her drafts of the proposal and seeking her feedback. She hadn't responded until the very last minute, when she suggested that we should first complete the official ethical review process before submitting the proposal. SSHRC officials, on the other hand, informed us that the research ethics process could only be initiated AFTER the funding was approved, as a first step in the process. Without much further conversation, she dropped out of the project. Again, a silence that I didn't know how to interpret.

Ethics – by whom, for whom, and about what?

There was another tension revealed around the ethics requirements. The mother-in-law of my potential co-applicant was one of the Clan Mothers at Six Nations. I took her suggestion that we connect directly with them, and started a conversation. On the other hand, SSHRC and York University, the home base for the project, required an ethical review process with the band council, the imposed colonial governance structure, as opposed to the traditional leadership represented by the Clan Mothers. But by then, Rick and Chandra were key collaborators in the project, the main participants from Six Nations. They advised that we avoid the Clan Mothers, that it would open a Pandora's Box. We were required by the university to go through the Band Council, which had an even longer survey to complete. Their ethics review process clearly didn't correspond with our project, its collaborative, transnational and arts-based participatory approach; rather it was very bureaucratic, assuming that I was a lone white anthropologist coming to steal local knowledge and get rich by publishing it for my own aggrandisement.

genocidal impacts, even in her family and her body, someone who has worked at recovering from multiple addictions which were produced by the colonial process, who has healed/is healing, and has become a leader in the decolonization of her people and us, the non-Indigenous who have benefited from the privileges of our race/class, but have also been harmed, colonized in our understandings of ourselves, and all our relations – human and the more-than-human.

The Flag as Provocateur



In our first conversation at the cottage, which was filmed, we began to name some of the tensions inherent in our settler-Indigenous relationship. We sat in a circle under evergreens and next to the lake, listening to the waves lap against the rocks. Between us and the lake was a flag pole with the Canadian flag rippling in the wind.

“I find that flag offensive,” Dawn offered. (check recording)
“It represents the colonial Canadian state that instigated the genocide through the Indian Act, establishing reserves (except in unceded BC), and residential schools which separated children from their families and communities from their land.” In my internal report, I wrote:

Challenging John around the Canadian flag waving above the cottage, triggered Dawn because it symbolizes the creation of the nation-state built on genocide of the original inhabitants; I brought John into the ‘difficult conversation’ (was I setting him up? Because I had challenged him about the flag earlier); he tried to defend it, as a symbol of Canada distinguishing itself from the UK, Fulvio spoke about the Nurio flag, and we had a conversation about other potential flags. Would John lower the flag? He suggested offering other flags like the Mohawk flag, representing the territory. This was a moment of tension that tested our capacity to talk about difficult issues, but I also fear it was unfair for me to bring John into it, which accentuated our differences.

This confrontation occurred in 2016, and since then, perhaps many Canadians have developed similar critical responses to the flag, evidenced in 2017, the 150th anniversary of confederation and in 2018 with the discovery of many unmarked graves of children who died in residential schools. The Orange Shirt and orange ties on schoolyard fences have perhaps offered a different understanding of the brutal side of the history of “so-called Canada,” as Dawn would name it.

In fact, right wing movements like the Freedom Convoy have wrapped themselves in the maple leaf flag with another more conservative message, one that not only doesn’t acknowledge the original Indigenous inhabitants and their role today, but also critiques

an immigration policy which brings in the many immigrants and refugees who are changing the face (literally) of this so-called nation.

This conversation is also an ongoing one, that we could revisit with our Legacies team.

Cedar and Sage: A Dance of Starts and Stops

Alex and I were privileged to be invited by Dawn to BC first to attend a gathering of the [Indigenous Food Sovereignty Working Group](#) and the BC Food Systems Network at the En'owkin Centre in Okanagan territory near Penticton. For the first four days we just listened to (and didn't film) the Indigenous-settler conversations in this beautiful centre founded by [Jeanette Armstrong](#), a researcher, consultant and writer at the [En'owkin Centre](#), managed by six Okanagan bands in conjunction with Okanagan College and the University of Victoria.



BC Food Systems Network gathering at En'owkin Centre



Dawn Morrison welcoming us to Secwepemc territory with ceremony

For the next two days, Dawn invited us to visit her family in Chase. When we entered Secwepemc territory, we stopped to offer a greeting and ask permission to enter with good intentions.

Dawn suggested we film her mother Bernice Heather, an Indigenous educator herself, sharing her own residential school experience. We sought out a quiet spot among the cedars on the Fraser River, where in 2014 a tailings dam failure at Mount Polly mine spill had contaminated the waters of lakes and creeks along the Fraser Valley.



The cedars along the Fraser Valley, site of the Mount Polly spill in 2014

First Dawn asked us to take some quiet time to prepare ourselves and then for each of us to name our intentions for the process to come. Taking the time to prepare ourselves spiritually, emotionally, intellectually and socially made all the difference. Alex and I agreed we should adopt this ritual before any filming. Bernice was very generous and open in sharing her story, at times very painful. We were honoured to listen to it, and were deeply moved, as we learned how she had transformed some of her pain into her successful teaching of native education. We connected easily with Bernice and her non-Indigenous partner Steve, and spent the night in their home.



Alex Gelis filming Bernice Heather along the Fraser River in 2016

The next day, we copied all of the footage into a hard drive for Dawn and Bernice to have and use for their own purposes. At that point, Dawn intimated that she didn't want us to use any of it for our project.

This was part of an ongoing conversation about what role she would play in the future of the project. She wasn't happy that we had arranged for a non-Indigenous Quebecois producer to edit the proposed trailer. She made it clear that, if she were to participate, she would want to choose the producer.

However, she didn't seem interested in really becoming part of our process.

Dawn made the point that has been an important principle for any collaborative work: "Nothing about us without us." There are talented Indigenous media producers in BC she can work with on projects that they initiate. While the Legacies project was never intended to be limited to Indigenous participation, and other aspects of the intergenerational and intercultural exchange were important to us, we returned to this foundational problem: no one on the production team was Indigenous.

There were other difficult conversations with Dawn during this visit, as she took us to film her in the sage fields, beautiful footage which she has used. Her challenges to us have been some of the most important learnings along the way.



Dawn Morrison gathering sage in the Fraser Valley

For example, she questions much of the language used in the food movement: to speak about food "production" reinforces "productivism", the hoops we have to jump through for the university imbed us in "techno-bureaucratic culture," and we are all living in settler colonial nation-states, in "so-called Canada." We have adopted her suggestions to be more careful about the language we use, and what it implies.

A few months later, Dawn was still willing to participate in a gathering we had at the Native Canadian Centre to shape the project, and she joined us on a panel for a Food Secure Canada Conference, at TMU where we shared on the screen our experience with her and her mother in BC.



Introducing Dawn at Food Secure Canada conference 2016

Dawn has had a big impact on our project, even in her ultimate decision to not continue participation. We understand that her leadership of the Indigenous food sovereignty movement is her priority, not the education of us, settler allies in the broader food sovereignty movement. We must tackle that ourselves.

Fiestas, Alcohol, and Local Videographers

The other two Indigenous communities collaborating in the Legacies project bring colonial histories that bear some similarities yet are also quite different from the way Indigenous struggles and leadership play out in Turtle Island (North America) today.

Maria Blas is a P'urépecha medicinal plant expert, healer, business manager, and community leader in the [autonomous community](#) of Nurio in Michoacán, Mexico. When Italian-born ethnobotanist Fulvio Gioanetto met Maria almost 30 years ago, he identified strongly with the values of Indigenous plants and healing practices. And he also fell in love with his translator, Maria. They now run a successful family business that employs many local families in producing organic inputs (fertilizers, herbicides, fungicides) from local weeds in [biofactories](#). Their partnership perhaps best reflects the notion of “[two-eyed seeing](#)” as they bring both western science and Indigenous cosmologies to their understanding of plants.

When we began to film this talented family and their offspring (Serena and Miguel, Bryan, Jorge, and Valentina) in 2016, we were welcomed into the very lively cultural life of this small Indigenous community. Inevitably, almost every time we have visited (perhaps 6 times), there has been one form of a fiesta or another.



During our first visit it was the *Perdón* ceremony, the first stage of a three-stage marriage process. The prospective groom's family fills a pickup truck with all kinds of produce and food, then deposits it ceremoniously at the home of the prospective bride.

This is followed by a large community feast in the streets, feeding as many as 150 friends and families. A band is setup on a makeshift stage, and the dancing begins. Women in the community meander around the dancing crowds offering everyone a small cup which they fill with either beer or tequila or both. This is in stark contrast to Indigenous communities in so-called Canada who eschew alcohol in gatherings, given its destructive impact on their lives and communities.

Alex and I were given permission to film this entire sequence of events. Maria insisted on clothing us in P'urépecha women's attire: flowing pleated skirts with layers of lace, intricately embroidered blouses.



Alex Gelis (right) with me filming in Nurio; Maria and me (upper)



P'urépecha women offering drinks at the Perdón ceremony

We were quite a sight – standing behind our tripods or dragged into the dancing – and then pummeled with one drink after another. I have a very low tolerance of alcohol, so was concerned I might get very drunk and sick. I noticed that some people receive the offering of yet another small cup of beer or tequila, and then toss it discretely on the street behind them. But when I tried to repeat that gesture, I was chastised, obviously offending the P'urépecha women who were trying to make me feel at home.

What is an appropriate response to this dilemma? I think Fulvio deals with it by just leaving the event early. I was reminded of some of the stereotypes about Indigenous peoples I was exposed to growing up. And in particular, Latin American Indigenous people – there was a kind of puritanical judgement of them by North American anthropologists, for spending so much money and time on fiestas, food and drink.

Yet, the more I observed these regular practices of communal meals, marking special moments in relationships from engagement to marriage, I realized that they served several social, economic and political purposes: they brought people together in community on a regular basis, they not only offered a meal but sent everyone home with “leftovers” to feed them for the next day, they represented the political power of the *padrinos* or hosts of the fiestas, they offered fun and great release through the dancing and playful pranks like covering everyone with flour.

Over the years, I've come to understand Maria's role as a kind of patron of fiestas. She and Fulvio support a large number of couples as *padrinos* or godparents and eventually their families. The massive collection of dishes in their house gets used quite often. This social commitment is perhaps similar to the pot latch tradition among west coast Indigenous communities in Canada, and represents a kind of redistribution of wealth.



Dishes for large gatherings in the home of Fulvio and Maria



P'urépecha women preparing food for 200 in Nurio

It was also in Nurio where we first tried to find local videographers to take over the filming we had started. A cousin was trained in filmmaking, but never pulled through. However, Bryan and Serena, two of Fulvio and Maria's adult kids, are very adept at filming on their high end iphone cameras. In fact, Bryan has even made a business of it.

When to turn on (and off) the camera

Times have definitely changed since the 1970s when I first started documenting communities with my SLR Nikon 35mm camera. I would use a polaroid to be able to leave photos with the folks I was photographing. Now with the ubiquity of cell phones, everyone is a photographer. But that doesn't mean we are necessarily free to document whatever we please whenever we please. There are still strong protocols, and it depends on who is holding the camera and for what purpose.



Angel with camera at UniTierra, Oaxaca

When I first met Valiana Aguilar and Ángel Kú in Oaxaca in 2016, Angel was already operating a fancy video camera. They were quite open to my photographing them, and I always returned photos to them. We made a short video of them introducing themselves to Legacies collaborators.

John and I had visited them in their home outside of Oaxaca, in St. Agustín Etla, and had filmed their older campesino friends and mentors Doña Yolanda and Don Antonio in their milpa activities.

During our third visit in 2018, we invited our Toronto friends D'Arcy and Barb along to a dinner that Valiana had prepared to introduce us to Yucatán cuisine. We were supposed to arrive early to film the whole cooking process, but we were late, so everything was ready to be served when we arrived.

After Valiana introduced us to the array of Yuacatan dishes, I hastily set up the camera with a wide-angle overview of the table, and let the camera roll. As we began the meal, after some explanations of the food, Angel interjected: "We consider eating a sacred act. So there should be no cameras here."



Valiana introducing a Yucatán meal in St. Agustín Etla



Sharing a Yucatán meal (me, Barb Thomas, D'Arcy Martin, Valiana Aguilar)

I was embarrassed, and a bit taken back because I had understood that they had previously agreed to being filmed. Of course, I apologized, and turned off the camera, and our meal proceeded with wonderful tastes and appreciation for the feast they had created for us. In reflecting afterwards, I wasn't sure what had provoked Angel's response. Perhaps it was that we had arrived late and were not there for the whole process; we had no time to warm up, to develop a comfortable rapport. Perhaps it was that we brought along people that they didn't know as well as us. Perhaps it was an opportunity to bring another Mayan concept and practice to us, who were trying to learn these important protocols and their deeper meaning. Perhaps this, too, is a moment that can be revisited with Ángel with whom we now enjoy an easy relationship of trust.

Rick Hill: from suspicious observer to valued advisor

When we invited Chandra Maracle to participate in the shaping of the Legacies Project, it still had somewhat of a focus on women workers, building on the Tomasita Project. Dianne and Chandra ultimately came to represent the two poles of the project's pillar – Dianne, the farmer who loves to have her hands in the soil, and Chandra, who focuses more on the table, the history and meaning of the food that goes into our bellies and builds community. Earth to Tables. But there were always men involved in the exchange – Dan, Ryan, Fernando and Adam – who learned organic agriculture from Dianne, and Fulvio in Mexico.

When Dianne requested a day of corn processing in Chandra's kitchen, her partner Rick was around. Of course, we knew that he was a valued knowledge keeper in the Haudenosaunee community. But this was Chandra's project, not his. It was important that we not cater to the older powerful male. Besides, he seemed a bit suspicious of this group of women laden with video cameras invading his home from time to time. In fact, Chandra once intimated that at first he had raised critical questions about us and the project. She defended us as "the real thing." Finally, when Dawn was no longer our key Indigenous advisor, we decided to ask Rick to take on that role. By that time, he seemed to see some value in the project that converged with his own work.

There were some awkward moments as we tried to get Rick paid for his consultant services. The processes required by York University were so petty and alienating, in not recognizing his status card, for example, that he must have felt like dropping out when dealing with the techno-bureaucracy of academic research.



Rick Hill at 2019 gathering

Over the next few years, Rick often offered powerful insights into our conversations and suggestions for directions of the project. We organized our 2019 gathering at Six Nations mainly with Chandra's vision, contacts and programming genius, but Rick became part of the hosting, led by her. When we visited the Everlasting Tree School that they co-founded, for example, he had set up an amazing display of Haudenosaunee artifacts, and introduced us to them through an inspiring lecture.

In 2021, Rick lent me a book, *Witness to Spirit: My Life with Cowboys, Mozart & Indians* by Robert Staffanson, about a successful American rancher/orchestra conductor who in his later years was inspired by Indigenous wisdom and created a space for Indigenous people to gather, without controlling the process. I was moved that he considered my role in this project as similar, as a non-Indigenous facilitator that could bring Indigenous peoples together, but let the encounters unfold on their own terms. I'm perhaps most happy when I see our Indigenous collaborators connect with each other, Fulvio and Maria sharing their work on organic inputs with Angel and Valiana in the Yucatán, for example.

I'm sure there are many other moments that I haven't named here, bumps along the road to building relationships in solidarity with Indigenous peoples. There are no formulae for this process. Each context is different, and each moment offers different challenges and openings. I welcome others' reflections on their own experience in our collaborative project and their reactions to mine.

We are in it for the long haul, and the learning continues.