Episode 30:

Living Languages and Earth Wisdom with Tiokasin Ghosthorse

Transcript *(lightly edited for readability)*

[00:00:00] Roxy Manning:
Hi, I'm Roxy Manning.

[00:00:20] Sarah Peyton:
And I'm Sarah Peyton. We're the hosts of the Fierce Compassion podcast. In this episode, we have the honor of speaking with Tiokasin Ghosthorse, a member of the Cheyenne River Lakota Nation, master musician, and founder of First Voices Radio.

[00:00:37] Roxy Manning:
Tiokasin invites us to reconsider our relationship with language, activism, and the Earth itself. We explore the concept of Earth Activator and how it differs from traditional activism, challenging our understanding of compassion and environmental stewardship.

[00:00:54] Sarah Peyton:
We delve into the power of Indigenous languages and perspectives, examining how they offer a more holistic, relational way of being that transcends conventional Western thinking.

[00:01:06] Roxy Manning:
Tiokasin shares insights on the limitations of our current survival language and how it shapes our worldview, urging us to move towards a more intuitive, Earth centered approach to life.

[00:01:18] Sarah Peyton:
Join us for a thought-provoking conversation that pushes the boundaries of how we think about our place in the world and our responsibility to the planet and each other. Thank you for joining us, Tiokasin.

[00:01:45] Tiokasin Ghosthorse:
Thank you for having me here today. Thanks.

[00:01:51] Roxy Manning:

Our podcast is called Fierce Compassion, and so we always start off with the same question for every guest. And the question is, what does self-compassion mean to you, and particularly in the context of your work and your life experiences?

[00:02:05] Tiokasin Ghosthorse:
Okay, let me preface it with this. Imagine a language without nouns. Imagine that this language is void of concepts. Imagine that we are interpreting, reading, feeling, moving through the energy. Imagine that this is where the language comes from, and that deep rooted sense of what we call wówačhaŋtognake.

Wówačhaŋtognake, is not compassion or passion. Those are concepts. Those are definitions. This wówačhaŋtognake is, meaning generosity. But the "wo" is inclusive, that the "čhaŋte" or "čhaŋto" comes first, the heart, you come from the heart. It's where, it happens.

So, you go about with compassion, in English, and you are looking for... to give compassion. In our way that motion is generosity. That compassion, or generosity in this case, all cases, is that's what Earth is doing to us. It's giving to us; generosity. She's showing compassion. She's living compassion, and it's not a concept.

So, with the language that I speak, its verb based. Nouns are very rare. Concepts are very rare because it's a moving, living language, like Earth, always changing. And that's where the rootedness of our language comes from. It's not conceived through the mind or the head, but it's directly from the generosity of earth. And so compassion for, me, or self, is non-existent. Because when you're in relationship with Earth, there's no need for identifying self, or I, or me, or my, or mine, or ours. So, what you're doing is exuding the energy already present, and that's the key is to be present with the energy, not in an idealistic future or the haunting past, so to speak, but to be present as energy is present all the time. It's not having an egotistical, psychological, you know, binary, pathological way of thinking. It's more or less that you are in the feeling of it. In this case, you call it compassion, we would say generosity, that comes through us through the heart, and you share or you're generous with that, with other people you may not know and with other beings rather than human, because this language is so non anthropocentric.

[00:05:32] Roxy Manning:
Can I check in on, like, part of what I'm getting from what you're saying? I want to check my understanding. It's almost like if I think of generosity as a quality that just exists as part of mother earth, it's just part of this field that's there, then there's no need for self compassion or other compassion because we're all steeped in this field.

It's there. It's available. It's about attuning to something that's already present. That's there for all of us. And, I almost, when I think of an idea of a field, I get this idea of, like, I can gently shift the waves of that field so, you know, maybe it can go more to what's where it's needed or less to what's where it's needed. Like it's, pulled where it is, but it's not about giving to you or giving to me. It's just around what's there and how we act on this field, how we're connected to this field.

[00:06:22] Tiokasin Ghosthorse:
Yeah, very on track. And the ideas that come into play, when I speak English, you want to give compassion, which is a natural, other-than-human, including human's, feeling. So, the word I said before, wówačhaŋtognake, means that you're not the only one who feels. And when we are lacking from it, we're not living it. So we have to come into practice with it. But we also say that you cannot practice living. You are living, so our language is living, just like the earth. You have to have a living language and to interpret the waves that come through, the energy that comes through.

And so we include English, so I have to get to know what concepts were, nouns, persons, places, or things. And so I have to get to know what objectivity was, or objection, or objectifying, and subjecting. I had to learn those in order to speak English because that was very hard for me to understand.

So it's things like, oh, I hear, "We have to go from the heart, from the head to the heart," but that's not existent with the way I grew up. It's always coming from the heart. that's the compassion. So we are coming from the heart, never going to it. It's a different way, and that's all we're saying, it's a different way. So , that's a hard way to try to define something as compassion, without meaning. Compassion is a definition that I've read. The meaning is really not felt, we conceive it, we conceptualize compassion. So what I'm trying to say is the energy is different, but inclusive that we all are natural beings, not just human. I keep saying that because that's the changing of language that we need to shift to rather than the self, because as some of you may know. One of my ancestors, Black Elk, said, the center of the universe is everywhere. So there is no need for self, or I, or me, or mine, or ours. So that's where I would say compassion comes from, the generosity.

[00:09:09] Sarah Peyton:
How old were you when you had to start learning English and trying to pick up this whole other way of being?

[00:09:17] Tiokasin Ghosthorse:
Yeah, six years old. And even today, I have trouble with, especially academic people... I did go to school, I had my education, took my degrees and just said, yeah, well, that's for this society, how

they learn things. Because this society has really severed its relationship with earth and the natural movements.

And so that's the distance I see. And I have to, like, take those degrees and then write academically and sometimes speak academically. And it's very different, a different feeling. It's like moving from the heart than just being in the head with concepts and defining everything without meaning, because once you define something, you have to move on to the next concept to define either prior or after the concept that you present. Right, so it's like a train, like data.

[00:10:20] Sarah Peyton:
Right. Does it hurt to speak English?

[00:10:24] Tiokasin Ghosthorse:
I'm going to talk about my mother, who lived to be 90 years old. And she always said her face would hurt after speaking English, because we don't have certain inflections like "R," you know. So she said it's very tiring to have to stop and be either stationary or stagnant and come up with a concept to define and put a period behind it.

So I will use her example, what she told me, and only in my later ages, I can feel that now. I'm sure we all can. Why do we need to say so much when in Lakota, we don't have to say so much because it's a multidimensional language of energy.

And so that's with the Ojibwe, the Cree, other Native peoples who have, as far as I know and been told, and directly, that there are 22 dimensions of our language. And so we come from that all spectrum language encompassing not just one or two directions, or literality, or linear thinking, or hierarchical thinking. As I said, the center of the universe is everywhere, and that to me is profound. And I think as children, we all know this inherently, but then we are programmed out of it. This is my experience of being programmed out of it. And we long and we yearn to be that.

Not innocent, because I want to say that every moment, as adults, we are innocent, because we haven't been here before, or we'll be ever here again, you see, and without putting the binary of guilt in there, guilty or innocent, you see, and that if you could think the rest of this interview without opposites. That's what I'm trying to get at.

There are not opposites in Lakota, the truer Lakota, and that most of our language now has been codified and standardized to take definition from our language and excluding the meaning and put it back into English, into the box of English. And that's what I would say why my mother was tired of squeezing everything, all that full spectrum accessibility into something that's definition.

[00:13:19] Roxy Manning:
I remember you wrote something, could you share the story with our listeners? You had shared something about a person who tried to translate to create a dictionary of Lakota and English, and there was like this, the number of words in Lakota language and then the number of words that he actually came up with, that big gap. Could you share that with our listeners?

[00:13:39] Tiokasin Ghosthorse:
Yeah, I think it was in 1926, a Catholic priest. His name was Buechel, the Catholics called him Father. So, Buechel lived among the Lakota, Dakota people, Nakota people. And as usual, at that time, around the turn of the century, 20th century, he felt that these languages and the people would disappear.

At that time, there were barely 225,000, total, Native people in North America. And that, you numbers are numbers, but we know that there's so much more than is given to us by anthropologists. So when Father Buechel went among the people, he felt there was much more there. So he went to the people because he wanted to really understand the meaning, but he couldn't get away from the definitions because he spoke English. And so he decided to make this, dictionary. And according to this, he had needed to break apart the meaning to come up with points of definition. So he created these words by going among the fluent Lakota, Dakota, Nakota speakers and was able to, you know, redefine, retranslate into English, but he did not speak these languages very fluently.

So he took his imposition of what this means and made it accessible for the people with nouns and concepts. And then he created 178,000 more words, whereas our vocabulary was barely 3,500 to 4,000 words. So you see, when I say in English, you have to explain a whole encyclopedia for a few words terminology of Lakota.

And it is the same at many other Indigenous languages in the Western Hemisphere. I'm not too sure about the rest of the world, but if that's a living, then the languages change with the earth, not so much civilization.

Because as we see, you and I see, we both see, we all see that technology has changed our lexicon, you see. And so what it is that these new Lakota dictionaries have basically lost meaning. And are being more honed down to shorten into concepts so that we can get it out quickly. Because this language that I'm speaking now is encapsulated in time. It's very temporal and less spatial. And that's the difference that I saw, know, about Father Buechel. He took the spatial and made it more temporal.

[00:16:52] Sarah Peyton:
Would it be sweet if we could all speak Lakota?

[00:16:56] Tiokasin Ghosthorse:
Well, you can speak Cree, you can speak, you know, you can speak Ojibwe, Hopi.

[00:17:03] Sarah Peyton:
A different language that would let us get out of our boxes.

[00:17:07] Tiokasin Ghosthorse:
Yeah, and it's freeing because what I'm saying here, Roxy and Sarah is the indigeneity in us, you feel that. Not that people can say we're all indigenous to the earth, but who is living indigenous? I have to survive in this civilization, but I know what culture is about, you see.

And if I could put it in more blunt terms here, it's when this elder met these Canadians recently. And he carries the history before 1492. And you could view this as before that, in 1492, the Native people were standing on a shore. And it was the view from the shore, watching this other way of thinking, of living, of conceptualizing life differently. And as we know, the story, what happened after 1492. This is the part we don't want to talk about, at least I know, in the West. That's why we don't think about history before 1492.

And so this elder, Cree or Ojibwe, in Canada, was talking and he thought, this is familiar. These people, these, Canadians, French, English, whatnot, were always referring to his people as you people. So he turned the tables and said to these Canadians, *you* people, we saw you come. We saw you bring your religions. We heard them, we respect that. We don't argue over God here. So we heard you, we feel you, and those are yours, those religions are yours. We won't take it, we won't try to take that away from you, we respect it. And then he said, we saw you bring your laws here. We studied them, we feel them, we're affected by them, but those are your laws, we respect that. You keep them, no one's going to take that away from you. And then he said, but there's one thing that we didn't see you come with, that was land. And how did those laws and those religions become the belief system, if that's what it is, systems, and the laws to believe that this is the correct way to live with the land here?

And this is where the base of all of us as humans and other life is created. So the severance is what I'm concerned with. And so these languages that I speak of are that. We should allow the presence of that meaning and energy be welcomed so that the language you and I, we are all

speaking here, begins to change. But it's not going to be overnight. It's going to be generations down the road. Because the earth is going to need that indigeneity. And that's what I speak about. Because we all came from that one time. And so many of my elders said so, and now I'm able to say it because I'm feeling into it, you see. So we have to look at those laws and religions. Are they working here? Or have they failed the earth? Have they failed Native people? Because we, or at least I see, these laws and religions failing the people who brought it.

[00:21:13] Roxy Manning:
I had a wondering as I heard you speak, and you've already started to touch into this, I think. And what I was wondering was, we have what happened, and I love this framing of people bringing in their customs and ways of being and ways of thinking, and the gap between that way of being and what's actually supported and supportive of the land.

But I also wonder where we are now. Like I have children, Sarah has children. I heard you have a child. I wonder about our children who are growing up without these, at least my children, growing up without these ways, these indigenous ways. How do we, without language, without this familiarity, what can people do so that they can actually be attuned to the land? Like you talk about language changing, if we let it change, rather than it being this static, stagnant thing. What are the things that you see people doing to create that relationship or recreate that relationship with the land?

[00:22:15] Tiokasin Ghosthorse:
We allow the land to create us. Instead of trying to recreate our scenarios, our bringing the land and the laws and the religions to the land, we must learn how to adapt to what the land is asking for, not us changing the land because our children are here. But the children sense that, as I said before, we all felt that as children. We were geniuses as children, and now we're searching as adults how to be genius. So you find that these geniuses are more... see, we have to become more non-anthropocentric.

So I would say a key to this is relearning the language differently, in the sense that the verbs, the verbing of this language needs to move us. And the less nouns we use means that we are less academic. Academia is accessible for only a privileged few who propagate that system that came from Greece. And only a few people can understand that language, where the common people of the world. You know, it's untouchable.

Those are concepts honed to a very sharp point. We feel that this is the elitism or elite language of all those because we have the Western education. Another elder said, so we have all this

information. We have all this education and knowledge. He said, there's nothing wrong with that. It's just that we have so much of that. We don't know what to do or where to go with it.
He also said, so we're at a point now, we are all starving for wisdom, and that wisdom is from Earth. And you see the separation from Earth because of the language that changed when industrialization came in to the West. We started becoming more mechanical, analytical, more patriarchal, because only men could do the machines and run the machines.

We start separating into masculine and feminine, so everything became very binary and very pathological in a sense, cause and effect. So it became that and for the rest of these generations that speak this language, we're trying to always piece it back together. But again, staying in the present and that language of verbing brings you into the present.

We have a word; akantu means the earth being from the ancient future now. Our language is at least 50,000 years old. It's not according to the anthropologists, it's according to our elders who haven't lost the sustainability of living with earth, because that's the truer intelligence. It hasn't created academia. Only the humans who are in love with the being of human have forgotten how to love themselves as well as the earth.

[00:25:43] Sarah Peyton:
How is it possible to preserve this beauty and begin to pass it on? What kinds of things support the survival of indigenous language and culture?

[00:25:57] Tiokasin Ghosthorse:
Thank you for that, Sarah. It's a good question, but we have to be determined as predetermined this language of English is.

So when the ships came with all these other ideas and peoples, you got to think what was going on as to why people were fleeing the land. Because what we are experiencing now, here in this country, the United States is a carryover from what happened there, the severing of earth relationals. And that survival language came over the ships, and so we are now speaking that survival language.

So we as Native people, who've been stereotyped in, well, we dig roots, and we're instinctual and were more like animals because they didn't understand who we were. So this language of survival came here, and it was one of not having enough. And so that was the number one, value, I could say, took over to have more and more so that you wouldn't fear of not having. And yet, we haven't lost our survival language, so we're speaking out of fear of that survival.

Now you have Native people who are trying to understand what's the panic. Here's food, here's water, here's the giving of it, the generosity, the compassion as a people, be shown by the earth, because the earth was presenting you with gifts, as that's what we did with people. We presented the people who came here with the thoughts of scarcity and survival.

So it's again, it leads back to the language. Why are we speaking a survival language? We have to look at those histories and we know those histories here because we experienced that. And it doesn't mean that we are better or worse because that doesn't exist. It's just that we are. And so the akantu comes into play. Yes, we are dealing with the present, but most of all, we know where we've been. We know where we're going by being in the present. And being in the present doesn't involve a survival language. So how do we preserve English? How do you preserve all those other languages that are afraid to even get out of the box? That's why the word or the terminology is out of the box, outside the box, you see, because it ventures only so far and runs back to the safety of survivability.

[00:28:59] Roxy Manning:
I definitely... I'm first enjoying this part of the conversation, and there's so many different questions I want to ask, and I know we have you for just a short amount of time.
So I want to change gears a little bit, and it's still connected because what I see you doing as you talk about languages and preserving languages is a form of activism, but it's a form of activism that I'm experiencing it on behalf of preserving Indigenous languages, but also maybe preserving life, like helping us all kind of wake up to what's necessary to regain... to reconnect to something that's already there.

But I want to talk a bit about activism, because that's part of the goal of the podcast, to inspire people to see themselves as people who can have an impact on the world around them. And I was reading that you've been an activist your entire life, and including speaking at the United Nations when you were just 15 years old. And so I'm curious, what inspired you to start advocating so early? And I suspect you're going to say something about being six years old and being forced to learn English, which is great. And, yeah, what was your inspiration?

[00:30:06] Tiokasin Ghosthorse:
Well, first of all, understanding the mechanics of English and how much I couldn't speak my own language, I was bursting with feeling and trying to squeeze it all into non-expressive words. And so I found myself at that age using words like yippee, yahoo, hooray, you know, eureka, and that was expressive. You know, turned into, you know, woohoo and all that. But that didn't express what I was feeling.

And so when it came to understanding how the constructs that I had to work with and understanding at a later time when I would be able to go home during the summer times. I was 12, I believe, because I grew up on the Missouri River. It was very wide, a mile wide. Everywhere I looked, blue mountain water. And at that time, I didn't know what whooping cranes were. In that time in the world, there was 14 of the so called 40 whooping cranes left in the world. Beautiful, tall bird, probably the tallest bird with the longest wingspan in North America, the whooping crane. And they fly in perfect circles as they use currents to go up the thermal. And even that is like this incredible sea.

So I was watching them in the middle of the river and then off the reservation on the other side, non-reservation land, they were shooting at these birds and I could hear the echo. An echo. You have your binoculars, you're looking like seeing these sprays of water. And then they got one. And I looked across the river and I could see these non-native people jumping for joy that they got one. Sipping their beer. All this, you know, you can see this.

And I thought, they're not even going to eat the bird. They just are practicing. All the birds were able to get away, but one. And I found out later what these birds were. How many were left. And that put more of an earth activator, not as an activist. Because I'm not worried about human rights or civil rights. I'm more understanding that we don't speak for Earth anymore. We're so anthropocentric that we look for human and civil rights within these laws and religions that came here. And so it all becomes about us, a civil thing, and becomes very anthropocentric and elitist in a way. And we'll forget about Earth.

[00:33:13] Roxy Manning:
I want to pause for a second because what you just said really, it's really reverberating for me. This piece around activism and the way that we're constructing activism is still operating within the constraints of the laws. It's like trying to make the laws fit but the laws themselves don't actually fit and don't actually serve the Earth. And so it's moving from activism that's around getting equal rights for everyone in a system that isn't working, to activator, I heard you say, that's around how do we actually support the Earth so that everyone is supported. That it's almost like the equality comes from the Earth itself being supported and therefore supporting every being on it.

[00:33:55] Tiokasin Ghosthorse:
Yes, and that's, again, non-anthropocentric. So if all these other beings have tolerated us and actually included us as Earth has given to us these gifts of earth, water, air, all that's provided, where is our care? Why aren't we giving care back to her, rather we are taking care from her? You're not giving care, we are taking care. And because the earth is made for us as humans, and that's to us as Lakota, we... uncle, would say, yeah, we Lakota, we understand that we were the

last to be created. And for us, that means that we're the least intelligent of all the beings. But he said, you'll go to a world that they think they're more intelligent than all the beings that created them. All the earth elements. So that's the world we live in. We think we're elite to earth, and we want to leave it all the time, as religions create dogma to leave earth.

And so this is a dilemma of how to reset thinking, the synapses, the, somatic spirituality. What happens now? Do we look to hope? Do we pray? Do we do all the things that seem to not allow us to do what's required? So, Earth is requiring of us now to be human beings, not just humans, looking for rights, equal rights here in civil, human. What rights, you know? While we are taking the right to life away from all other living beings, including Earth.

[00:35:52] Sarah Peyton:
It seems that your work in creating the radio outreach has perhaps allowed you to find an audience that can hear you. What's the response been like? How do you experience having created this?

[00:36:12] Tiokasin Ghosthorse:
Thank you for that again, Sarah. So this began in October of 1992. So that's 32 years ago, almost, and I was in grad school, and I had gone to a 500 year quincentennial in San Francisco, where 200, 000 Indigenous peoples from Canada, Central and South America showed up, and we marched from Fisherman's Wharf to City Hall, and it was not big enough to contain 200,000 Indigenous peoples and supporters.

And, I remember sitting on one of the benches in the plaza and an old man, obviously to me from South America or Central America, all dressed in white, came up to me. He said, now we need to hear your voice. And he looked at me earnestly and walked away. And I was like, well, what was that all about? He disappeared in the crowd.

So then I understood a friend of mine asked me to come on to his radio show. So I said, I've never been on radio, I'm just so nervous speaking, you know, for myself. Because of the language of Lakota, you don't speak about self, you speak about the whole because we're not separate from that. So I heard him speak, he wanted me to speak, and he spoke and he asked me to be on his show as a co-host. I was shy, so I kept doing that. And then one day we had death calls, death phone calls, threatening us for saying what we were saying. And so he didn't run, but he left the studio and I continued because I was sitting by the window and I said, the message is bigger than I am. That's what I heard come through.

And so I changed the language of the title. which was something like Indian Day or Indigenous Peoples Hour or something, and I turned it into The View From the Shore, because they kept saying we are the view from the shore, and no one hears that or sees that or acknowledges that. So a month or two later, the station gave an hour or two to the program that I began there with the help of course, the previous program I was on. And from that point on, I began to talk to other people, Indigenous Peoples, all over. Not because we are brown or any color like that; it's the relational values that we miss. As all peoples have the indigeneity, as I say, but more people are living it today than that time. People didn't understand.

I have the radio now. It had gone through several transitions. The first radio program I had was because of my youth, my fiery youth, and you probably could hear that in my voice, it's not anger, it's fiery. And that first show was, imagine this, exposing the apologetic predator.

[00:39:36] Roxy Manning:
What do you mean by that? Wait, what's an apologetic predator?

[00:39:40] Tiokasin Ghosthorse:
It's like what we do with land acknowledgement these days. Yeah, it's nice to hear, but we're not dead. You're just acknowledging that you own the land now. So that's not very comforting to me. So then I would look at people who were, you know, in the New Age movement, all that, and who were actually using nonprofits, environmentalists, to, you know, protect land.
And yet that was not saving the land, because you cannot save the land. Because the indigenous peoples have this. overall concept of the earth saves us. We can't save the earth. So we're allowing that to happen.

So when the program turned into First Voices Indigenous Radio, people thought, well, indigenous? That's a plant. In 1992. Yeah, and these were educated people because it was a new term coming out of the United Nations. And as I heard you say, Roxanne, yes, I spoke at the United Nations when I was 15, and that was before we had religious rights or freedom of religion in this country. So I was through that transition.

[00:41:03] Roxy Manning:
What were you speaking, what was the topic of that talk when you were 15?

[00:41:08] Tiokasin Ghosthorse:
Earth. Earth. Earth. Yeah, how much I missed Earth by being in civilization, you know. We all suffer that tragedy, that trauma, and we don't have a response to that. Even these days when we make

poetic psychology out of trying to understand the severance and our response, which is, we don't know how to act with it yet.

We don't know how to act how we were severed from Earth. We'll have come up with pretty, change the paradigm from the old paradigm into the new paradigm. But to me, that happened already. Didn't Columbus come with a new paradigm?

You know, so now it's prevalent among even young people that I've gone to other countries to with and taught and spoke and lectured. They're feeling the same thing. So when it comes to environmentalism, they were environmentalists, professional, who, stopped, who quit their job, who left their jobs, because the system, the boxed system would not allow them to perform what they felt. So they left. And these are the young ones that are now in their thirties and forties coming to fruition, so to speak. And that's what I'm saying. Earth is the activator in all of us. Daily. Every second.

[00:42:43] Sarah Peyton:
Wow. Just to jump slightly into the music and the flute, you have been reviving the ancient Red Cedar Lakota flute tradition.

[00:42:59] Tiokasin Ghosthorse:
Well, I wouldn't say exactly, because it went to a small number of Lakota people who could actually play it, as that was music banned; we couldn't sing our songs, dress like Native people, a Lakota, speak our language. You know, that's why they cut our hair. We couldn't be Lakota in the past. We couldn't be Lakota in the future.

But see, since our language is always present, consciously present, they didn't understand that they put us in the perfect place. And so that's how we got through this or survived. And so when it comes to music, I remember making my first flute when I was five out of a little reed. And it came naturally. And then I had to put it away and dabbled in it until my mid twenties, when I made my very first flute after my third try. And I started playing, but there are other flute players back then, too, that we didn't hear because we didn't hear much from Native people except through Hollywood, you know. And so that happened, and now everybody's playing flute, whether they're Lakota or not.

But again, I'll go back to the Greeks. what are the philosophers, Pythagoras, he said, all matter is only music solidified, and that's what I know. By example, Einstein went to Hopi in 1930. You could see this, and you could see the pictures, but he spent days there. He went there in 1930, but that

time he'd been to quite a few places in America and in Europe, and he talked to educated people most of his life. And then he heard about the plight, quote unquote, plight of the Indian.

So he was intrigued by the Hopi, because by then the Eastern tribes were basically non-existent. So he went to the Hopi and he spent that time with them. He came away with them because the Hopi were remote. They had no telephones, lights, cars. And you ask, how did he get there? Because he was provided with one. So he went to where they were remote.

None of them had gone to boarding school, either seen a white man or books. And we think, because of Westerners, thinking that why not? Those poor people need education. But we see it this way, as Einstein said, 12 year old children of the Hopi, meaning several other related tribes at that time, these 12 year old children of the Hopi were the most prepared to understand the theory of relativity than anyone else that he's ever encountered because they were living relational. And that's what I go back to the start. Our language that we're speaking is not relational because it looks for connection, mechanical connection because we're disconnected. So, but you're relational, you're living, you're in relationship with all, you know, even that we think is dead, which is still inanimate in English, which is not to us. So, if you get into the quantum physics, the 22 dimensions, then that's where the languages that we have to understand, the one we speak now, is very patriarchal, very mechanistic. Domination. One concept that doesn't exist among most of the peoples, Native peoples, in North America, South America, is this. No concept, no word, is called "domination."

[00:47:15] Roxy Manning:
Say more.

[00:47:16] Tiokasin Ghosthorse:
Say more. So, if you live in domination, you think about hierarchy. You think about owning, ownership, possessing, and control, stronger than the weaker. So you automatically jump into binary processes. So domination, you have to look at what wars are caused by superior thinking. And we always back it up by saying, well, nature does it too. Nature has a purpose, whereas our domination does not have a purpose.

And you cannot speak to all the relations other than human with a domination language. You have to speak with them with a relational language, and that's where the other conscious dimensions, like I say, of quantum physics, with the tree, with the rock, with the river, with the bird, with the sky, with the air, all of this comes into play, because we all speak different languages. So the relational is much different to domination.

If you're domination, there can be no relation with earth. So we could go through the holidays and say, peace on earth. It sounds really nice, even I hear it. I'm feeling that's not it, because we've been trying this way for thousands and thousands of years. But there's no thought process of peace with earth. We haven't tried that one. And how do we get peace with earth? It's by learning the relational. It's not through sciences or religions or laws. We have to let go of that domination thinking.

And of course, we as modern day humans want instant gratification. It took generations to get this far, and this, domination effect is, will naturally be taken care of by Earth, because when a species of, let's say, deer are too much, the Earth culls them back. There's too much trees, the Earth culls them back. That's a natural process. We fight that process of nature. Because of this domination language, we are actually making war or making peace with each other while we're killing Earth. So the severance is still there. So, peace with Earth, they don't want you to be conscious of that.

[00:50:11] Roxy Manning:
I want to talk to you for like forever, because I've got so many questions. And part of what's coming to me right now is you talked about the survival language. So naming the survival language that we're using and the laws and structures that we're using that's coming out of that mindset, the utility of being able to name and talk about these structures that do exist, and the way that using that language and naming it in some ways perpetuates those very same structures that we're trying to dismantle.

So I'm noticing distentions, like when you said there's no domination structure. There's a part of me that says, yes, I believe and I resonate with everything you're saying. But I also still want to be able to talk about the fact that we are living and using this domination structure. So I'd love to hear your thoughts about that, and I know we're drawing to a close, but I'd love to hear your thoughts about that tension between living the way we would want to live and then being able to talk about and confront these systems that we're trying to change.

[00:51:15] Tiokasin Ghosthorse:
Yeah. Yeah. I think what my experience leads to is one language rationalizes everything. These other languages are more egalitarian. Because it knows how to live with something. There are groups of people here that I talk with that are older and younger. And because of the way I'm talking to you, I talk with them the same way, sometimes harsh, and they get it to where they know I'm coming from my heart.

So they speak in egalitarianisms right now, where no one is better, the worst, especially with Earth. But one way of thinking is rational. We have to make reason for definition. And because we

consider is power, individualistic power, and where others is more community, I often say, our immunity is in community and not the national, "let's go vote."

The earth will take care of us. We haven't allowed that in the rational way. It's up to us humans to make everything, all life better, but that hasn't worked. Like I said, the laws and religions, the sciences have actually made the earth worse. Is that taking care of us? Are we taking care of our mother? So, being rational and egalitarian, or holistic, or Somatic spirituality, like your navel umbilical cord, is that relation. Over here, your navel umbilical cord is severed, cut off, and thrown away. Well, one is spiritual, one is scientific. We don't need that. And so we, get our infants, our babies away from nature as quick as possible. we train them to be diabetics. We train them to be, you know, in the binary as ASAP, by our educational processes in the West.

I know I've been through it, but I still retain the functional foundation that helps me get through these talks with you. It's not that it's not easy or hard, just that this is needed. You two are needed here to get this truer word out and less of the intellectual academic, so we can listen to the common person that hasn't reached the PhD level or not.

Because I think only certain people who could pay for that, are accessed with that because when academia, which was a plaza in Athens, I believe philosophers would gather only certain people who could afford to go to this plaza could pay. And then it was cut off on a common person and then only people in academics could go, and that was elitism.

So on the other side, there are the egalitarian relational people who are offering it generously, compassionately. So when I saw the term that you all have, fierce compassion, I said, oh, yes. I need to be part of this, put it differently in more simple terms, maybe blunt, but that's what Earth is requiring now. She's in charge and will let us all know when the changes come.

[00:54:49] Sarah Peyton:
So with our average listener not probably being an indigenous language speaker and trapped somewhat within the English box. And if they said to you, Tiokasin, what can I do? Well, how can I begin to take some steps to become an activator? What would you... what might you say for folks?

[00:55:13] **Tiokasin Ghosthorse:** Wow. See, this is where we pay attention to individual and self that are in cubes and cubes within the box, the cube. And so we, we have layers of history that's tragic as far as, you know, we don't want to talk about grief. We don't want to talk about what happened to the native people here. We want to come with this big romanticized, oh, now it's okay, that God said this, it's okay. So the religions come in. But we have to instill these laws, these, gods, religions with laws. And here's how you're going to do it. We'll create property. Not

happiness, property. It will give them terminology that they can survive with to think that they're living in happiness because they have a land, law, a lawn and a house, property, a car, place to get food. That pavement that we drive on, the car that we have. So that's a different type of happiness.

So it's understanding relationality, because it exists in English. So it's etymology that we are speaking in English. Look at the etymology, because this language I'm speaking now to you is about 70 percent Latin, going back to the Greek philosophers. How they took reason and they put it above intuition. Because that's our language. My 90 year old mother said before she passed, we cannot speak Lakota- *La* ko ta, not La *ko* ta, without intuition.

[00:57:02] Sarah Peyton:
So it sounds like you might be inviting us to move toward intuition.

[00:57:08] Tiokasin Ghosthorse:
Yes. We can do that, but it's not looking through a crystal ball, or gut feeling, or a guesstimation, or anything like that. It is actually being a presence because that's what all other life lives through and with, is intuition. And we cannot, especially nowadays, of artificial intelligence, but there never will be artificial intuition.

[00:57:35] Sarah Peyton:
Mmm. I like this quote very much.

[00:57:42] Roxy Manning:
I think we're coming to the end of our time together today. Gosh, I'm really delighted that you said yes to being on the podcast. I could imagine a lot of people listening to this podcast will be eager to learn more and to follow your work, to support it, to learn from it. So how can they do that?

[00:58:02] Tiokasin Ghosthorse:
Well, there, it is again. I'm sorry. To say that's the appropriation. It's not as easy because it's a living language. It's not a dictionary. You can practice a dictionary, but you cannot, like the Father Buechel, he couldn't figure it out. So a living language is not a dictionary. A dead language, a stagnant language, is the definition and concepts. That's what we feel we're not going.

[00:58:35] Roxy Manning:

I want to be clear that. I wasn't suggesting that they come to learn Lakota, that it was more around if somebody wanted to learn more of your way of thinking to understand some of the concepts that you're bringing, how could they find more? Where can they go to find more?

[00:58:50] Tiokasin Ghosthorse:
Yeah. Just as you all have found out about what I say, I spoke with Bayo and Vanessa and other folks and that mindset, that heartset. That there is something not new and old, but there is something more present and unknowingly or knowingly is that they also, as younger people than me, were also feeling the changing of earth. But the language is not there, you see. And I think to enliven this language that we speak now, to re-spirit it, not re-wild it, because we need to, again, the etymology, but also look into decolonizing, I could say, but that's a worn out term for me, unlearning is, too.

I know what I learned that was forced upon me. Most people aren't aware of that because they didn't have, as you said, Roxy, we don't know, we actually what can we do? So it's always a point of privilege when we say, how can we do this? How can we know this? What can we do? It's not about doing anything.

I say, there's human doings. That terminology of progress, it came with the ships. But then there is also, there's human doings, but then there is human beings. Did we really forget how to be human beings? Are the elder cultures based upon the closest intelligent elder, earth? So, we, I'm speaking a very baby like language that I have to put above the shoulders. It comes through somehow, that Lakota comes through, because that message is much bigger than what's above my shoulders.

[01:00:54] Sarah Peyton:
Wow. Well, thank you so much for being with us, Tiokasin.

[01:01:01] Tiokasin Ghosthorse:
Thank you. I feel like I'm a bull in a china shop for some reason.

[01:01:07] Sarah Peyton:
Oh, that's not the metaphor that's come to mind for me. I was more like, sense of being in the ocean and swimming together.

[01:01:18] Tiokasin Ghosthorse:
Oh, yeah. I get that. Thank you. Wow.

[01:01:24] Roxy Manning:

Thank you very much for joining us.

[01:01:26] Tiokasin Ghosthorse:
I was very honored and... thank you. Beautiful. Thank you.

[01:01:37] Sarah Peyton:
We're honored, too.

Thank you for being with us. If you enjoyed this episode and are finding value in these conversations, please help us spread fierce compassion by taking a moment to share this episode with a friend and rate and review the podcast on your podcast app. This helps others find us and helps make sure these conversations reach everyone who might benefit.

[01:02:08] Roxy Manning:
If you would like to receive live one on one coaching from Sarah or me on a special episode of the podcast, or you want to find out more, follow the link in the show notes or visit our website. You can find our books, *How to Have Antiracist Conversations* and *The Antiracist Heart*, and learn about our podcasts, guests, and new classes on our website, antiracistconversations.com.

[01:02:31] Sarah Peyton:
And, Roxy and I love teaching, and we're always offering new classes, courses, and other opportunities for learning in our own individual work. You can visit us at roxannemanning.com and at sarahpeyton.com to learn more about our individual offerings.

[01:02:51] Roxy Manning:
We hope to see you.