

Anishinaabe Bizindamoo Makak

Episode 2: August 19, 2021

Erik Redix (ER): Boozhoo Anishinaabedoog. Miskwaa Anang indizhinikaaz. Migizi indoodem. Odaawaa zaaga'iganing indonjibaa. Gichi-Onigamiing indaa. Ingikinoos'amaage Ojibwemowin Oshki Ogimaag Gikinoos'amaadiiwigamigong.

Boozhoo! My name is Erik Martin Redix. My Ojibwe name is Miskwaa Anang. I'm a member of the Eagle clan from Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe reservation in Wisconsin. I currently live on the Grand Portage reservation and work as the Ojibwe Language Coordinator for the Grand Portage Band. Welcome to Anishinaabe Bizindamoo Makak, a program featuring Ojibwe first-speakers telling stories in English and Ojibwemowin, the Ojibwe language.

In this episode I speak to Maajiigwaneyaash, Dr. Gordon Jourdain, Director of the Waadookodaading Ojibwe Language Institute and a member of the Lac la Croix First Nation.

I wonder if we should shift gears here a little, and talk, if you could maybe talk a little bit about, you mentioned this earlier, your kind of family connection, to Grand Portage and this area that the radio show is being broadcast in.

Gordon Jourdain (GJ): Ok. When the Quetico Provincial Park was being made Anishinaabe people lived, Ojibwe Anishinaabe people lived, right in the center of the park. There was a vital and strong Ojibwe community right in the center of the park there. And a lot of the people who are prominent in Ojibwe history around the area, around the Border Lakes where we live, and that includes Grand Portage, were dispersed from there. And they didn't flee, they were forced to leave in the middle of the winter, and of course they knew how to survive in the winter. They knew how to travel. So it's not fleeing if you know how to conduct yourself in the environment that you were placed in. And of course, Ojibwe people never flee from anybody, ever in history, other than just get away from people, so they don't get bothered by them. They went to Seine River, Lac La Croix, Grand Portage, all those people that along that place where our nation was vibrant. I'm not saying that's the only place where it was vibrant. Our Ojibwe nation was a strong and huge nation, *apii mewinzha*. Generally, my grandmother would say, "*Gakina inawendiwag Ojibwe-Anishinaabeg*. All of the Ojibwe-Anishinaabe are related," and I thought they were brothers and sisters but that's more into a more philosophical thought about a philosophical development of an that we are all related as human beings. It goes further back than just the family relationships. But all those people that essentially were chased out of that stronghold of community dispersed. They were related there, they're still related when they're outside, right? So that is how I have a family connection with Grand Portage, Lake Vermilion, Nett Lake, Seine River, Stanjikoming, Naagaajiwanaang, Nigigoonsiminikaaning, Couchiching, all those kinds of communities, because all those people have families that are huge, humongous. I remember my family lineage through my grandmother. My grandmother made it a point to make sure that I knew who I was related to.

My grandmother was (4:24) *Bebikwewidamook izhinikaazo, moozoon odoodeman*. Her sisters were *aagodaa* Amelia Burnside, and Alma Caribou. Those were her sisters. And I still know that information. *Mii dash iwe Nenaa'ajiiwebiik izhinikaazo* Alma Cariboo. *Bebikwewidamook*, my grandmother, *gaawiin ingii-kikenimaasii* right now . . . *aagodaa*

Amelia Burnside-iban. *Gaawiin ingikenmaasii ezhinikaazod*. So in the later part of their life, and I'll relate that to what I was saying earlier, I used to be the communicator for my grandmother and her sister. My grandmother was in a nursing home in Thunder Bay and Alma was in a nursing home in, I think it was in Grand Marais. So when I was going to Thunder Bay I would purposely stop by and see *Nenaa'ajiiwebiik* and I'd talk with her and then she'd ask about my grandmother. And she'd she tell me things that she wanted to say. So I'd go and visit my grandmother in Thunder Bay and relay that message. And then on my way back, it could be a week or so, or a month later, I'd stop by it where *Nenaa'ajiiwebiikiban* was and let her know what her sister had said.

So that's the way that . . . that I understand, and those older generations of people understood how to . . . um . . . keep the part of our essence, that is *manidoo-bimaadiziwin* alive, and have that really deep family connection with whoever you're related to, and that's through communication from the heart that way. I think . . . I think telephones and all those kinds of things kind of sever that with us, and we start to kind of just drift apart from feeling what that communication was meant to be for us as Anishinaabe people. Even though my grandmother was uh . . . didn't speak English, I remember going everywhere to go see those relatives when I was a kid. And the greeting was always like . . . if they were doing something, and we would just walk into their house. They'd drop whatever they were doing, and they were like, "*Ohhh Bebikwewidamook dagoshin nashke Maajigwanayewiiaash gaye*." They would be so happy that drop everything and it was beautiful. So, and, I always knew, in all those different communities, and I still do to this day, who I'm related to, despite being dispersed from a central place within the establishment of the Quetico Provincial Park by the Government of Canada by the government of Canada. And also the Boundary Waters Canoe Area of Northern Minnesota that was established so that we wouldn't have that nomadic lifestyle and the connection to the to the land where we know we came from. So that's how I know those things because my grandmother was strong in community, family and understanding, how to maintain those kinds of relationships despite, not that it would have improved her condition to speak English . . . I'm not, I'm not suggesting that she was disadvantaged at all because she didn't speak English . . . she was able still able to, ah, you know, go around in a world that wasn't designed for us as Ojibwe speaking people. But family is important. I still love, as a dancer, as a traditional Ojibwe dancer, I find it to be more . . . a really positive and powerful experience to go and dance in the communities where my relatives live.

ER (9:04): And you were saying something the other day, too, about kind of the role language plays in that, Ojibwe language, in the sense that . . . I'm not gonna say it as eloquently as you did, but about how Ojibwe kind of operates in a different part of our brain, almost.

GJ: I always default to that . . . to what I what *gaa-bizidamayaan abinoojiwiyaan*, when I was paying attention, maybe not deliberately, I was playing all the time when I was with my

grandmother. And my grandmother's friends. When I was born she was already in her 60's. And when I think back, I can't remember how old I was when I start to remember what they were doing. All her friends are really older and traditional people in extremely knowledgeable in who they were, what they spoke about, and also in ceremonies and the

richness of the language they that they use to describe those things in, in their immediate environment, and also that the ones that they learned as children. It was extremely rich. So I was gifted by the Creator to be immersed in that kind of environment. I'll always say the most phenomenal words that ever heard my grandmother used for the words that she didn't say but rather the lifestyle that she had, the way she conducted herself.

I stayed in an old log cabin with her in Lac La Croix, and I can't remember who made that might have been my father or my grandfather, but she lived in a in an old cabin. And I remember living in there with her and being immersed in who she was. Every morning she'd be like sitting on her bed, brushing her long black hair, and humming Anishinaabe tunes (hums). Never any words, but she was always humming, and she would respectfully take all the hair that she removed from that fell out up when she doing her hair and braiding it and put it in the ball, and put it away. When I had long hair, and this was ... I had long hair up until last fall, that's how I did it, too. And just this past supermoon a lot of my friends that that do full moon ceremonies came to my house to do the full moon ceremony, and I asked them if I participate and put all my bags up here, away. And I did, fully not knowing why it would have to be there, but because of the lifestyle that she had, and she did it all the time, I felt like I shouldn't just threw my hair away, I should keep it, but not ever knowing why I had to do that.

But she said, she did the same thing to me as a little boy with *asemaa*. *Mii go bi-noodaagozid animikiig*, every time we heard the *animikiig* coming, she'd say, "*Maajiigwaneyaash, daga biindaakoojiden, ezhi-biinakamigaag?* Can you go and put *asemaa* out?" On where where it is pristine, pure, and land that hasn't been charted on by animals, or anything like that. And I fully never knew why I did that. But I did it anyways, because that was my lifestyle. She was showing me how to do that, but this day ... because of my ... um I call it ... Ojibwe academic teachings in the lodges, I understand why she did that, and I know why I put tobacco out now. But anyway, what she said one time, and I overheard her talking, with her friends was, "*Manidoowan gosha i'i Ojibwemowin.*" The sound of Ojibwe language when it's being produced is a spirit. So in that essence, you know, it is the way that we voice who we are. But as it departs our physical body through enunciating Ojibwemowin, it leaves. The spirit leaves in the form of a sound. And it goes into anybody that's around us hears that Ojibwemowin.

Mii go naasaab the teaching, we were talking about *bizindam* or *bizindamaa*, the children will be all around us seemingly misbehaving. But they're still listening to us and watching what we do. So we as adults, we need to be mindful of all those things. But the ones that are around us, including the plants and the animals, and everything that is here, are given the spirit of life when they hear us voice our language when we speak in the forest, the trees around us are like, "Wow! It's been a long time since I heard the Ojibwe people speak in

Ojibwemowin *agwajiing!*" There was a time when when nobody out there spoke Ojibwe language but a language that came from somewhere else. So the language heals those ones that are out there, and uh ... including the Anishinaabe people, the Ojibwe-Anishinaabeg people. It grows inside of them, and kind of like my analogy is it ferments in there until it gives them enough courage and positive feelings to be able to release that language again in the voice of the Ojibwe-Anishinaabe people, which is *enweyang owe nakake apii*

gaagiigidoyang. It cures them and helps them develop into what we were meant to be as Ojibwe-Anishinaabe people to the point where they are powerful enough that they are speaking Ojibwe again. *Mii dash owe nagake*, how I understand Ojibwe language to be. Or it is because of the extreme traditional understanding and teachings that I was privileged to live in when I was a child. And I can describe them in both languages.

ER (16:42): That's really interesting. I'm just kind of curious, how would you phrase this because that really struck me that the sound of Ojibwe is it spirit. How would you phrase that in Ojibwe?

GJ: *Manidoowan i'i Ojibwemowin*. "*Manidoowan gosha*," that's what my grandmother used to say. Very, very definite in her understanding, in her feeling that it is a spirit. It's alive, *bimaadizi*. So it's a spirit entity, it's not a thing. It cannot be captured in writing or in a scripted speech. Sadly. (Laughter).

ER (17:46): I wonder if we can circle back for a second on something you mentioned about Quetico Park and that being kind of the origin place for a lot of families in the Border Lakes area. And I'm wondering if in your family you had any stories about that place, specifically about people in your families, or how the families worked and then, you know, when that unfortunate stuff happened when Canada, you know, made it, the Provincial Park, then coming to the Reserve was there any kind of stories or anything like that you may be heard about that?

GJ (18:33): My grandmother was a child there. And she recalled it, like the um, the leadership in the community. And I can be corrected on that by our elders at home in Lac La Croix. But some of this one of the most eloquent speakers of Ojibwemowin was *Makadewasin*, Blackstone, *izhinikaazo Anishinaabe mii awe bezhigaa*, a very prominent part of our Ojibwe history there. And those kinds of things are not taught to our children. I have absolutely no idea why not? That is who we are. That is *our* story, not *his* story. (Laughter). But my grandmother was a child in that community. And uh, and she remembered she remembered those things, but to tell how it was like to live there, *gaawiin gikendaasii*. But I know that it's a powerful and significant place for our families in, Lac La Croix, Seine River, Grand Portage, all those places that we were talking about earlier. And I think, as adults, as we get educated in the Western ideology of what it is to know something, we need to write those things down, and also talk about them publicly like this on radio and perhaps some listener will take it upon themselves to do the research and find out and help us in this endeavor to you know bring these, these missing parts of who we are back into our communities, even though we are far apart we're still community through family, we can

still be community through a shared knowledge of our history. Not only that we are still community through our language in an overall sense of who we are as an Ojibwe speaking Anishinaabe people.

ER (21:18): I think it's interesting, too that these places are still out there, you know. They're but they're very different places, Quetico, the Boundary Waters, Isle Royale, certainly fits that, in that they all have this Ojibwe, they're Ojibwe places. They're very different spaces, you know. They're this wilderness, whatever that means. I think if people

were, you know, not just Ojibwe people, but if we we're all kind of a little more aware of that.

GJ: I totally understand what you're talking about. The school that I worked in, Misaabekong School, at the time I was there was a total Ojibwe speaking institution, for any child. It did not just include Ojibwe students, with lineage, to Anishinaabe. The focus of that program was the language. And it included anybody that wanted to come in there and be educated through the language with curriculum that's derived from our understanding of who we are, as Anishinaabe Ojibwe people. Ojibwe speaking people. So we had a lot of a lot of different children that were there. We celebrated the language. We also celebrated our relationship with the environment that we are in and the difference in the children that went through a school with that type of philosophy was amazing to see, and still is to this day. A lot of those kids that I was with in a little community there I still have really, really deep friendships with their families. And uh, I'm not sure if that Western elementary school system or public school system has that kind of connection, because I went through the system, and I don't have that kind of relationships with my teachers. I don't even know where they are. (Laughter).

But the sense of place, the origin, was also the focus that we have that school in *Onigamiinsing*. Misaabekong derives from the local vernacular to describe, you know, the history of the place there. And as we progressed we started from kindergarten. A lot of the families went there because it was a destination school, a place where you were offered a different way of looking at education, and not public education, as it does not work for everybody. So all those people that are there are still in community with you, with one another. And I think that is an important aspect of what we who we are as Anishinaabe people. We have a lot of things to contribute, and sometimes we allow our voices to be severed from the public communication about things. I don't speak eloquently in English, but every time I'm given an opportunity I'll go on forever talking about things. Plus I'm also, I was also educated in the Western system. And I know a lot about . . . well, not a lot, but I know enough to have discourse in education and things like that. There's nothing wrong with being um reading about other philosophical ideas about things. You know if you are strong in a belief in who you are, those will not be deterred by a concept of who you should be in in this space. As a matter of fact, it only enhances your acceptance, and other ideas of humanity. And to not include that in teaching about the ancestral, to me it's not just ancestral, it's still our place. Everywhere I go it's our place. Every everybody else is a visitor. And that's how I treat them, *biwide*. And we have to declare that. And how we do

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that we have to have the courage and also be a you know, fully informed, in our identity, to be able to talk about those things in a positive way. Rather than trying to make laws, or religious institutions to sever ties to the land, to our indigenous right to this land. And that's still happening to this day. So, yeah, I appreciate you having me on your show, and many more shows to come, I hope, *minwaabizin*.

ER: Alright! Giga-waabamin! Miigwech for tuning into Anishinaabe Bizindamoo-makak. Support for the series comes from the Grand Portage Band of Lake Superior Ojibwe and the Minnesota Arts and Cultural Heritage Fund. Our producer is Staci Drouillard. Our theme song is performed by the Stonebridge Singers. Until next time, this is Erik's big album. Giga

waabamin!