DOCTRINES & DISCOVERIES

AN MCC PODCAST

S1E3. Fort Carlton: A visit with Amy Seesequasis

Intro (Amy Seesequasis):

“You would have been able to see the river from here. It would have been visible, of course, just beyond that field, and that tree line is where the river is. But back in 1876, it was much larger. And of course, you would have been able to most likely smell sweetgrass, because of that river being so close, and the waterbed that would be around it. And prairie sage, you’d be able to smell a lot of buffalo sage. I think there would have probably been, you know, an abundance of wildlife, whereas now we’re in “gopher sanctuary,” right? [*laughs*]

But I think you know, the thing, though, is when you stand out here on a day like today, where it’s not so busy here, I mean, we get to hear some of that, right?, with the wind blowing in the trees and, you know, but I think that… what would have made it much more different was the visibility of that water. Which is powerful, because when you think about when Treaty Six was being negotiated, the importance of what these terms were and what it meant, not only for the nations negotiating, but for those that were coming and settling… it was always said that those treaties were to last “as long as, you know, the sun shines, the grass grows and the rivers flow.” And so while they were negotiating this, the sun would have been shining, the grass here that we’re standing on, the river would have been visible, and they would have been able to hear it from here. So, you know, that’s always important. Because what that was, was, you know— treaties last forever, no matter what happens, you know. The treaties will always be here, you know. As long as we have the sun, the grass, the river—they last forever.”

[music]

Host (Randy Klassen):

This is *Doctrines & Discoveries*, the podcast that takes you to sites across Saskatchewan to listen to great stories and hard truths, as told by Indigenous knowledge keepers. I'm your host, Randy Klassen.

Today we’re taking a trip to ground zero for Treaty Six territory at the site of Fort Carlton, about an hour north of Saskatoon. This Hudson Bay Company trading fort was established in 1810 and became a central gathering point in the Northwest Territories. The original buildings were destroyed in a fire in 1885. This reconstruction was built in 1967 and is a National Historic Site of Canada. If you grew up in central Saskatchewan, there’s a good chance you visited Fort Carlton on a school field trip.

My guest today is Amy Seesequasis. Amy is a proud Cree woman with Métis lineage, a member of Beardy’s and Okemasis Cree Nation. She is a Treaty Relationship consultant and part of the coordinating committee for the Treaty Land Sharing Network. Amy and I met outside the walls of the Fort Carlton stockade on a sunny July day. It was at this place in

1876 that the Cree gathered to negotiate treaty with the Crown. I wanted first of all to know what life was like for her people, the Willow Cree and their leader, Chief Beardy, in the years leading up to treaty.

Amy Seesequasis:

Well for my people, the Willow Cree, the people of Beardy's, that were under Beardy's leadership, a lot of what it was was survival. You know, that's the simplest way to put it, is that it was about survival, survival of the nation, survival of the culture and the language, survival of, you know, the buffalo, and survival of the land. Because, you know, not only for Willow Cree, but Indigenous People in general, of Turtle Island, the main purpose for why Creator put them here on Mother Earth is to be protectors of the land and to ensure that the land's always maintained for future generations. So, a big part of why Beardy's negotiated that treaty for his people, the Willow Cree people, was to protect them and to ensure that the generations to come would have survival and stability.

That was the main reason, and I think that was a lot of the reasoning behind any signatory band. And I guess I don't often like to use that word signatory, because there was no signing, but "agreeing to" the terms of the treaty that were negotiated. It was survival, whether it was Treaties One to 11 at different times throughout history, whether it was, you know, 1870s to the 1920s, there was different impact to the stability of their survival of the nation. So, I feel like that's the main number one reason why— [it] was survival.

Host:

So why exactly was Fort Carlton here in the middle of the traditional lands of the Willow Cree and other Cree nations. And why was *this* site chosen for the treaty negotiations?

Amy:

Well, Fort Carlton was here serving as a trading post, as a central location for settler community to access goods and services here, but it was a place where Indigenous community could also come and barter and trade, so, trading furs, pelts for rations. And main reason that was taking place is because of, you know, the loss of the buffalo and the impact of settlement on the prairies, limiting access to hunting and gathering and fishing.

So what the fort was doing was serving community in these territories, settler community. And so when Treaty Six was being negotiated, it is why it was negotiated here is because it served as sort of a central location away from sort of urban, which we'd consider urban, because at the time, you know, Duck Lake was a settlement, but not as large as it was at that time in the 1870s as it was, you know, say, 40 years later. But it was chosen because of how it had services, but also because it was away from those settlements, like towns and urban areas. You know, part of it was to keep those Indigenous people away from those locations, right? A lot of the times, that's why it was chosen, because of those misconceptions, you know, racist misconceptions, of who Indigenous people were at the time, right?

So that's the reasoning why this place was chosen. It was almost secluded, in a sense, right? But also, was a main location of providing those services. And at the time when

Treaty Six was being negotiated, there was different bands that were set up here, you know. For example, Ahtahkakoop, Mistawasis. And you think about how they brought their whole tribe over here, and their leaders, you know, to come and negotiate. And they had set up here for months, negotiating with government officials and interpreters. But by the time Alexander Morris had come that August of 1876 there was over 2000 Crees here.

And so you think about …how it was important to come together to negotiate this treaty. And when you look around where we are now, at this beautiful landscape, and you think about how many teepees, you know —we're fortunate enough we get to see one here, but you can imagine how many were here, with 2000 Indigenous people here coming to ensure survival and stability of their nations. And that's why that this location was chosen. Because obviously, by Treaty Six, they already knew what was kind of taking place, governments, officials, right? So they knew from negotiations of Treaty 4 how large those gatherings can be, right? And it would make a little bit more sense to have that out here in this kind of secluded area, out on the land, rather than somewhere like Duck Lake, for example.

Host:

I was blown away by the reality of two thousand Cree gathering on this plain. Battleford, the territorial capital at the time, had maybe five hundred residents and even Prince Albert, less than eight hundred. I wondered what would hit our senses, what we would see and hear and smell if we could take a time machine back to that gathering.

Amy:

Back in 1876 you would have been able to see the river from here. It would have been visible, of course, just beyond that field, and that tree line is where the river is. But back in 1876 it was much larger. And of course, you would have been able to most likely smell sweetgrass, because of that river being so close, and the waterbed that would be around it, and prairie sage. You'd be able to smell a lot of buffalo sage.

I think there would have probably been, you know, an abundance of wildlife, whereas now we're in "gopher sanctuary," right? [*laughter*] But I think, the thing though is, when you stand out here on a day like today, where it's not so busy here, we get to hear some of that, right? with the wind blowing in the trees.

But I think… what would have made it much more different was the visibility of that water. Which is powerful, because when you think about when Treaty Six was being negotiated, the importance of what these terms were and what it meant, not only for the nations negotiating, but for those that were coming and settling: it was always said that those treaties were to last "as long as the sun shines, the grass grows and the rivers flow." And so, while they were negotiating this, the sun would have been shining, the grass here that we're standing on, the river would have been visible, and they would have been able to hear it from here. So, you know, that's always important. Because what that was was, treaties last forever, no matter what happens, the treaties will always be here. You know, as long as we have the sun, the grass, the river, they last forever.

Host:

I was so curious about the details of that treaty negotiation, and I asked Amy about that. How was it done? Who all was involved?

Amy:

Absolutely, yeah. You know, the negotiation process, of course, varied, based on the territory you were in. You know, for example, Treaty Four does include Cree bands, but is predominantly Anishinaabe, Saulteaux. So a lot of the protocols and procedures of Treaty Four would have followed that. And then, for example, here in Treaty Six, we also have Saulteaux, Ojibwe bands that are part of treaties, the negotiations here, but predominantly Cree. So those impacted how the process of treaties went, right? Based on the language group of that territory, the protocols and procedures as such.

And so, for Indigenous people coming to the table to negotiate a treaty, it was not something that was uncommon for them. It was something that they had been doing for... since time immemorial, because for Indigenous people, we see the land base that we consider North America to be Turtle Island, and all the Indigenous people, the tribes that inhabit the regions of Turtle Island, are all relatives of each other. And like I mentioned, they're all protectors of the land. You know, that's their main purpose. Creator put them here to make sure that the land and the resources, the ecology, maintains for future generations, right? So Indigenous people had intertribal treaties with each other, right across Turtle Island.

So, the idea when they came to negotiate treaties, they already knew the process. They already knew how these should go about in a way where you have a relationship with each other of mutual respect and reciprocity and mutual benefit. Because, for example, in these territories, one of the intertribal treaties that we do have is the Iron Alliance of 1860, where we have the Cree, the Saulteaux, the Stoney and the Métis coming together to say that they're going to support each other. And what it started as was, you know, a political and a military alliance to protect their nations, to work together. And that's why when, by the time the number treaties came into place, there was already an understanding, right?

And so when they came, the Indigenous community brought their chief and their headmen. "Headmen" is what we would consider now like a council member. So, they bring their chief and their headmen, they bring their medicine people. They bring their warriors and their hunters, because, of course, as they come, they need to be protected, they need to be fed. But most importantly, they bring their *kohkom* societies. And every tribe historically had a *kohkom* society, a grandmother society, and it was the women that grew up in the community and were raised, well, grew up in the tribe, were raised in the tribe, and they were the ones who were the highest form of leadership. So, when the chiefs and the headmen went and negotiated with the British Crown, who was the authority over Canada, they would then, after, go consult with the *kohkom* societies, and they would tell them what to do the next day, what to say, what to agree to. And for the British Crown, they came, you know, with government officials. You know, both representatives of the British Crown

and Canada, who they were the dominion over. And they would have, you know, interpreters, clergymen, church officials, and that's who they would come with.

So that's who was there negotiating, and for Indigenous people, they had already been doing this for so long. And a big part of these agreements was ceremony, because this agreement isn't just with the treaty partners. They're both here, you know, protecting the land, and they're both put here because of Creator God. So when they negotiate these treaties in ceremony with the pipe stem, they're doing so with Creator God there, represented. And it now becomes like a tri-party agreement. It's not only between those two treaty partners. They also have a third partner that they have to recognize. And so it was very ceremonial and sacred. There was prayers and songs that were shared. And those are things that we often refer to as the spirit and intent of treaty, the things that we can't have in written form, that are not recorded in a sense of what is considered the Western way of recording things. Those are things we pass on orally, and they're those things that remind us of how sacred the relationship to each other is.

You know, spirit and intent also meant the relationship of mutual benefit, respect and reciprocity, that we had to treat each other with respect and ensure that one treaty partner wasn't benefiting more than the other, right? And to have a continual fulfillment of that, where we would come together and continually have these ceremonies to make sure that that treaty was always strong, right?

So that's, you know, how things would have been unfolding here. It would be a lot of ceremony being shared with the treaty partner, with the one they were negotiating with, and then, you know, parting ways for the end of the day, going back to their camp, negotiating with the *kohkom* society and amongst each other, having more ceremony the next day, more negotiations, ceremony again. It was always important to have that, you know, to have the ceremony aspect, because it needed to be a safe space for everyone, and because of that intertribal treaty: understanding that they had an experience, they knew that in those treaties, you couldn't just go in there thinking of yourself. You had to go in there thinking of your treaty partner as well, which is why I often will share with people those four treaty principles that were important, you know, to Treaty Six and to Cree people, but I think applies to everyone. It doesn't only have to be just Treaty Six, right, or just Cree people. I feel like it applies to everyone, when we think about why those treaties were negotiated, agreed to, and what it meant going forward. It meant that we had to live in a certain way with each other, you know, abide by certain rules and principles of relationship and laws of the land, and that was always important, right? The relationship building.

Host:

I was quite surprised to learn that Beardy wasn't present for the negotiations in 1876. What was up with that?

Amy:

Well, Beardy often sent his representatives and his headmen to come out and be a part of the treaty negotiations on his behalf. From the beginning of the negotiations, Beardy had always had this idea that rather than negotiate a treaty to share the land, that they should

instead rent or lease out their land to settlers for settlement. So he was always a bit apprehensive about those negotiations and those agreements ...only because he had seen that in Treaty Four, which was negotiated in 1874, that two years later, they still hadn't received their terms of the treaty. They were still not being honoured. So he was apprehensive, because those treaty negotiations for Treaty Six began right after the Treaty Four was agreed to. So that's two years of back and forth between government officials and interpreters, where they're sending them to come and meet with the Willow Cree here, sending them to meet with other Cree bands, and then going back, you know, and it's just a lot of back and forth conversations leading up to when they finally agree that Alexander Morris is coming out to negotiate this treaty here at Fort Carlton. So then bands started making their way here to settle, some arriving sooner than others. So it was a process of months where bands were settling, and officials were meeting with them. But Beardy was always sending his officials over. He had a different perspective of how treaty should go.

You know, he was a bit of also an entrepreneur at those times, because he had set up a toll booth on either side of his land base. So, right before where Duck Lake is, and right before where Fort Carlton is, which is his traditional territory, he set up a toll booth and he was charging, you know, rations and items, goods that his people needed in order for people to pass through. So that was kind of also a big reason why they wanted to negotiate with him, you know. But he didn't want to come here.

He was a spiritualist, and he had a vision that if treaty were to be negotiated in a place that was sacred and ceremonial to him, which is the highest point on the community of Beardy's, which is where we now bury our loved ones— but that was his sacred space, like a place that had been in he had inherited from his family, and it had been used to have ceremony, to fast, to have vision. And so he had this vision that if the treaty were to be negotiated on that spot, on that hill, then the terms of it would always be upheld, it would always be honoured, and treaty partners would both thrive, you know. But however, they didn't want to come to that space. So what in fact happened is they negotiated on that location, the monument just before you enter the park. So he wasn't actually present here, but was continually having his own ceremony all the time, making sure that although he wasn't present here, his supports were there as well. The thing is that, when you think about it, though, for the Willow Cree people, the bands here, who his headmen were, that were here representing him are now Chiefs that took bands. So for example, One Arrow, Mistawasis, Ahtahkakoop—those are Beardy's headmen. He had sent them here to negotiate. They were all one large band. You think about how large of a tribe that is, right? And so what he had told them, through these negotiations, as they were here meeting and they would go back to Beardy, who was there, was their chief. But the negotiators here didn't know that. They did not know that. They thought they were their own separate chief of their own band, but Beardy was their chief, and they were his headmen. But they all had their own territories. So what he did is he told them, take the treaty as your own chief, and you will get your own land base, and you will take your family, and you will go there, and you'll have your own band. Otherwise, we're only going to get a small piece of land if you tell them that I'm your chief and you are just my headmen. So what he, in fact, did was

elected other headman, right? And these ones became their own chief, and they took their own reserves, therefore giving the people a larger land base, right?, to survive.

So what then he did is told them, Well, I'll negotiate with you, but you come and meet me here. I'm not coming to you. He was very adamant about that, right? Some people may say he was stubborn. I just say he was strong willed, right? He wasn't going to bow down to them. "I'm sharing my land with you. You will come and meet with me." So that is where it was negotiated.

And, you know, he was always wanting to make sure that treaty was upheld, the terms of it, you know. And when we're at that monument, I can share a little bit more with you about what took place, what Beardy tried to do, and what happened to his nation for a while, how they were impacted by how vocal he was. Because he was labeled a rebel, but he was not that. He was a visionary. He was a leader. He was a hunter, a spiritualist, an entrepreneur, a protector and promoter of the spirit and intent of treaty, right? That ceremonial part, you know, the spiritual part that sometimes is hard for treaty people to understand, right?

Because for so long, it's just been taught to us as a ceding of land, a surrender and a giving up of a way of life when it's completely the opposite. We're going to share the land, and we're going to maintain our ways, and you will maintain yours, and we'll respect each other, benefit mutually, off of the land… in a good way too, right? Because it's important to understand about Treaty Six is that, you know, it's an agricultural treaty, is what they call it. And the people here always wanted to think seven generations ahead. And that's a part of that spirituality, having that humility and that humanity, to think about those other than yourself. And it was important for them to do that, you know, to continue to think that way. So that's why, when negotiating treaties, [they] said only the depth of a plow, you will only get six inches of topsoil, because the resources underneath need to be kept intact. Because when we start to affect those, we affect seven generations ahead, right? And that was always the important part of that treaty, right?

The spiritual part of it is easier to understand also when you recognize the treaty principles that are help us to understand what how we are, to have a relationship with each other, with the land, to maintain the sacredness of these treaties, which is… And they're in Cree, and I'll say them in Cree, and then explain them in English.

It's "**wāhkōhtowin"**: kinship and family. We must treat each other like family, you know, even though we may not be from the same bloodline, we're not, don't have the same genetics, DNA, we're still family. **wāhkōhtowin,** treat each other as kinship and family. **"wīcēhtowin"**: honour and respect each other. We must always have that honour and respect for others, because "**wītaskīwin"**: we all share the land. "**pimātisiwin**," because we want to have a good life. We want a good living. And so when we think about those treaty principles, **wāhkōhtowin, wīcēhtowin, wītaskīwin, pimātisiwin** —treat each other as family and kinship, honour and respect each other, because we have to share this land together, and we all deserve to have a good life. Then it's easy to understand, you know, why it's important to recognize your treaty identity and the roles and responsibilities associated.

You know, it's not just about us right here now, you have to think about the future generations, right? Working together to make sure what we leave them is something they can be proud of and we can be proud of. You know, we got to work to be good ancestors, right?

[*music*]

Host:

I wanted to know more about Chief Beardy and his approach to treaty. The right place to do that was at the monument that's a mile east of the park entrance. And so we made the trek out of the river valley up onto the surrounding farmland, and continued the conversation by the Beardy's Treaty Six cairn and flagpole.

Amy:

Yes, absolutely, yeah. So this location is where Chief Beardy, on August 28 of 1876 had agreed to Treaty Six. On August 23rd is when a majority of the other bands had agreed to treaty. And that was when what I mentioned his headmen had taken treaty and become chiefs now, and had their own territories and their own bands. So, the terms that were agreed to there were terms that he was also in agreement with, but there were certain things that he had wanted. And so, what's important to understand about Treaty Six is that it brought forward the **medicine chest** clause and the **famine and pestilence assistance**.

So, the medicine chest clause just meant, what they had asked for was healthcare. They wanted healthcare, you know, because diseases that they had never had exposure to through settlement were now ravaging their tribes, and the numbers were dwindling. So that was something that was negotiated. The famine and pestilence assistance, of course, in times where there's not access to food because, lack of the buffalo, unable to hunt where you could in your..., you can't honour your inherent right as much as you could because of settlement. You can't access the lands, right?

So those treaties, I mean, those terms of treaty, are really i6mportant because [they were] negotiated in Treaty 6, but [applied to] all of Treaties 1 to 11, it's for all of them. And it's important to understand that when we talk about treaty, that it was to be benefit for both treaty partners. When the treaty tribes, the treaty bands enacted the famine and pestilence assistance in 2020, due to COVID, that wasn't just given to the bands. You know, for example, in Treaty Six territory, Saskatoon, there was a COVID vaccination site sent up by Treaty Six bands, and the access was for everyone, for all treaty people. And that was the terms of treaty being honoured in a way that they should have, where everyone has mutual benefit, mutual respect, mutual access. And that was a time where we had done that at a mass number. And it's important to know that that's because of negotiations that happened here.

And why, when Beardy wanted them to meet him in a different location, he wanted it to be a sense of asserting that they are sovereign nations. That's the only way you can make a treaty. Treaties don't make nations. Nations make treaties. So, what that was recognizing is they were sovereign, and by him having them come and negotiate and agree here, that was

him making, ensuring they understood that he was his own authority and he was his own sovereign. They were their own sovereign nation, and that they wouldn't have to bend to their rules, that they would do things with mutual respect. And so with it being agreed here it was Beardy's way of asserting himself, that he was the leader and that he was here to ensure protection and promotion of his people.

But what was happening is that it still wasn't being honoured by 1884. And you think about that— that's eight years where treaty still wasn't being honoured, the terms and benefits of treaty, the agricultural benefits, the support, a school on reserve, farm instructors, educators, that wasn't happening. Instead, the people were given the pass and the permit system, you know. They were not allowed to leave the reserve. They were given residential schools instead of education. So by… in 1884 Beardy's had called upon all Treaty Six bands and tribes to have a council. And he wanted to meet on Beardy's, between Beardy's and Duck Lake, and he wanted to gather all of them. And so that's what he did. They had a council there.

But, in 1885, when the Battle of Duck Lake happened, you know, Beardy was implicated in that battle as a rebel, a "rebel chief" is what they labeled him as, because the war between the Métis Nation and Canada's military took place on Beardy's land. And that's a story in itself of why it took place there and how it directly impacted Beardy. But what happened is that the government took his title away from him. He was still chief of our people until he passed away, but they took the label of chief from him on their on their papers as government officials, they stripped him of that. To the people, no, he always held that title. But because of that, what they said [about his] involvement in the Battle of 1885, the Battle of Duck Lake, they no longer provided rations to the people. They no longer gave treaty annuities. They no longer recognized them as a Treaty band, and gave them nothing again, until allowing them to have an elected leader under the Indian Act, not our traditional forms of government, in 1936! So, for that many decades, the people of Beardy's starved, and they suffered due to the… what I say is, the settlement of the land, in a way that wasn't honouring treaty.

Because, it's important to know that during the Treaty Six negotiations, many of the individuals and the leadership that were here negotiating wanted the Métis people to be included in treaty. They were all relatives sharing the land here. So that kind of gives the setting and precedent as to why that battle happened here in Beardy's land. You know why Métis people would have been here on Beardy's land. They lived here too. We shared the land. You know, that was important. We were relatives. And you think about our chief— his name is "Beardy." He's a Cree man. He has a beard, right? It's because he had Métis bloodline in him. And I know that's a story too, in itself, right?

But it's important that you know this space is also honoured and recognized, because it shows that, you know, Beardy wasn't a rebel. By agreeing over here, he was asserting that this was his territory, that he's the leader here. They are a sovereign nation, that they will share this land with the newcomers, the settlers, but we have to make sure we protect it for future generations. Protect the land, protect the nations, protect the culture, protect the language. When we do all of that, then we ensure that seven generations ahead still has

something to make a living off of, right? And when we do that, then we're also ensuring that those principles of treaties continue for future generations, that nobody forgets about **wāhkōhtowin,** that we're family, we're kinship here, all of us, all of us that share these territories. You know that we have to have **wīcēhtowin,** respect each other, honour each other; **wītaskīwin,** we're all sharing this land; **pimātisiwin,** we all want to have a good life. We all want to make a good living. We want to have a good life with each other, with our family, you know, good relations, and that's important.

And I'm proud of my leader, for always asserting himself, and being a visionary for the people, for Treaty Six people. When I started my journey of treaties and understanding this knowledge system, it was asked of me by a knowledge keeper, do you think that our Treaty Six chiefs had vision and foresight, or were they tricked by the government? And that really got me thinking. And I've always known, you know, through the research and through interacting with Treaty Elders and other knowledge keepers, and even I feel it in my heart that no, they had vision and foresight. And I learned it also through learning about who my leader is, of my band, my nation, that he absolutely did. He had vision and foresight. He knew things weren't always going to be strong, but we had to keep on going, right?

And that's a big, important lesson of it for Indigenous people, Willow Cree people, is that everything's circular, you know, like things may wear away over time, but they always return back to the circle stronger. So I always see that relationship of treaty, like, you know, it weared away for a while, it was severed— I wouldn't say severed, but it wasn't as strong. There wasn't as much connection there because of the Indian Act, right?

But we're in a different time, in an era where we're starting to recognize, yes, we are in Treaty territories. We have Indigenous people that have been here since time immemorial. They need to be honoured and recognized in that, that circle gets stronger again, when we do that, right? That relationship gets stronger. Yeah, and I think that's important to always work towards that.

Host:

At this spot, which is so significant for Treaty Six, as well as all the other numbered treaties, I asked Amy how we can lean into the spirit and intent of treaty. For those of us who aren't Indigenous, how should ***we*** understand that we are treaty people also? Do we have a treaty identity?

Amy:

Most importantly, for Indigenous people, they want access to the land, to honour inherent rights. That's a big part of what treaty was about. And so, for Saskatchewan residents who aren't First Nations, who don't come from Treaty Six, or Treaty Four, or the different treaties we have in our province, right? —you know, we have 8 and 10, 5, a section of 2— but it doesn't... wherever the treaty territory is that you come from, that even if you aren't First Nations, you do have a treaty identity. Your ancestry, your family lineage and heritage— whether you understand it or not, or you've heard it before—is connected to the story of treaty. It's how the land was able to be shared and forced settlement to take place.

So, for those individuals that feel like they've never had that identity because they aren't First Nations, they need to think of it as a way of just understanding land. That's the easiest way, you know, for settler communities... during the 1870s it was important to settle the land, for survival, to make a livelihood for their families and ensure that they had that stability. So that's exactly what Indigenous people wanted to do as well. They just wanted to access land for survival and stability, to maintain their families and their nations, their communities, right?

So, when we think about that, the importance of land, settler community needs the land to be healthy so that, for example, for farming community, right? They need that land to be healthy. They need to make a living off that. There's been generations of farmers that have been on, have had access to, land that used to be traditional hunting territory, you know. So for Indigenous people, they just want to access that land for their inherent rights to hunt and fish, gather medicines, gather food.

I think it's easy to understand the identity you have as a treaty person when you think about it in that context of land, right? That was the whole basis of treaty, was land. Because without land, you don't have survival. Without the survival of the people, you lose the culture, the language. And that was important, you know? So, when you think about it in that sense, just the importance of land, I hope that helps community to understand how treaty is just not for us, but it's also for you. Because if we've been here since the beginning of time, protecting the earth and the resources, protecting the land, making sure it's here for seven generations ahead, that's important to settler community too. They want to have a livelihood for their generations to come.

So together, we should understand we have a treaty identity and roles and responsibilities, so that we can honour that treaty relationship. Honour the spirit and intent of treaty that took place during those negotiations, where ceremony took place, where prayers and songs in Indigenous languages were shared, where it was meant that we will be mutually benefiting off this land, and we will treat each other with respect, and we'll have reciprocity. I'm not getting more than you, and you're not getting more than me. When we think about that, I think it's easy to understand that, yeah, I do have a treaty identity. I do have a responsibility. The land's important. We need the land. So of course, I'm going to honour that and recognize that, yes, there's principles of treaty in these territories that I'm going to live by. I'm going to treat everybody like family and kinship, and I'm going to honour and respect them, because we're all sharing the land. None of us are going anywhere, and we all deserve to have a good life.

I find that when we think in that mind frame, then it doesn't matter whether you're First Nation, Métis, from settler community, from newcomer community, that you can see an identity in that, right? And I hope that it helps to foster safe spaces in community, and foster safe spaces of just getting to know each other. That's one of the simplest acts of being a good treaty person, is just greeting somebody with a handshake and saying hello.

For so long, treaty partners have been separated because of the Indian Act, and we don't have to do that anymore. You know, we can do our own relationship building, right? And there are places like that that are happening. You know, we don't need government to tell

us to get along and honour treaty. The people can do it at the grassroots level, right? And we see it in this province with initiatives such as the **Treaty Land Sharing Network**, which I'm a coordinating member of and one of the founding members. What we do is we honour treaty, the treaty relationship, and we honour treaties in the context of land sharing. You know, we share land in a good way, and it's something that's in Treaty Six and Treaty Four in Saskatchewan, expanded to Treaty Six in Alberta, and it's just the people recognizing that they have a treaty identity and that we have to work together in a good way and make sure we are responsible for the roles we have as treaty people, making sure that we ensure things for future generations and think ahead and think smart and think with love, like my leader did, Beardy. You know, everything he did was to ensure that the land maintained, and the people maintain the culture and the traditions and the language.

And that's really important, because settler community has their culture too. They have their language, their heritage, their stories, and our people wanted them to come here and be able to have that too, but let us have it ours too. Let's work together in a good way and thrive and make sure we have something for those seven generations ahead.

[music]

Host:

You've been listening to ***Doctrines & Discoveries***, a production of MCC Saskatchewan Indigenous Neighbours program.

A big thank you to **Amy Seesequasis** for sharing traditional knowledge, local history, and important insights. Proper protocol was followed for the sharing of these truths.

Thanks to the music artists whose clips are used under the Creative Commons license. The opening loop is by AudioCoffee. Closing music track is "Around (instrumental)" by Oursvince.

MCC gratefully acknowledges support for this project from SaskCulture and Sask Lotteries, through the Multicultural Initiatives Fund.

For more information on this podcast project, including travel directions to the sites, discussion guides, and suggestions for next steps, follow the link in the podcast description. I'm Randy Klassen. Thanks for listening.