



Decolonizing Theatre, One Joke at a Time with Kim Senklip

Harvey

Nerdin' About Podcast Transcript, Season 1 Episode 9

Michael

Hey everyone welcome to Nerdin' About. I'm Space Michael, and with me as always, is someone who if she was on the Starship Enterprise, she'd be wearing a blue shirt, because we can now call her Dr. Kaylee Byers. How's it going, Kaylee?

Kaylee

Oh my gosh, I'm really good. Thank you so much. You know what I have this immediate response to downplay that achievement, but there's something about it being in terms of the blue suit that actually means a lot more to me.

Michael

Yeah, put on the blue sweater.

Kaylee

Although still like no more capable of actually saving anyone's life on the Enterprise, unless it is related to rats or philosophizing.

Michael

Now, if there was like a rat outbreak on the Enterprise like how crazy would that be? I'm thinking of like ships crossing the sea, like how dangerous that would be taking them into a new environment.

Kaylee

Number one is controlling your own environment, and I feel like the Enterprise has the technology to do so really well. So, I think it would probably be fine. The real important thing is that you get the buy-in of all the people on the Enterprise who want to do their part.

Michael

Well, I think you still have a role to play. So, keep that blue sweater on.

Kaylee

Well, thank you so much. I will wear it proudly, and I'm really excited to be here. It's an early Monday morning, I've got my blue jumpsuit on, and today we're here to talk with Kim Senklip Harvey. Kim is an Indigenous theorist, and cultural evolutionist who shares her work through her theatre, blog, and her podcast: The Indigenous Cultural Evolutionist. Kim is also completing a



Masters in creative writing at the University of Victoria. Kim, thank you so much for making space for us this morning.

Kim

Thanks for having me. I'm very excited. I'm learning a lot already. I didn't know what a blue suit was. I didn't know about space rats, so really I feel grateful, we could end now, and I would leave a better person.

Kaylee

Oh, gosh, I really hope that there is at some point an episode in TNG with space rats. So, to start this off, in your work, you talk about self-location and the importance of self-location in building relationships among people. So, I was wondering if maybe at the start of the episode you might share with us about what self-location is, and then also how you use that to share who you are?

Kim

Yeah, self-location, especially in the context of space, and the Universe, for me is an act of presencing yourself about where you are in this moment, with an understanding and respect to the people who are in your life, the people that you're serving, the areas of society you're working on. That way when I meet you, you know what I'm about, and then I know what you're about. I jokingly say sometimes, like "Who's your fucking Grandma?", because people want to dive in, and I'm like "I don't know who you are yet". Especially sometimes with social media, when you do make yourself available, people really want to dive in immediately. I think if we want to be vulnerable and courageous with the work, it helps me to know: 1) where I am; and 2) how I can best serve the people that I'm interacting with. So, with regards to being an Indigenous person, I like to present my indigeneity. So, on my mother's side, I come from the Tsilhqot'in and Dakelh Nations, and then on my father's side, I come from the Syilx and the Ktunaxa. I come from educators, I come from advocates, and for me my service is to ensure that my community members have equitable opportunities. So, I use my modalities of work and my research and my theorizing, to ensure that Indigenous peoples have equitable opportunities. With regards to this mode of working, and both of you, I think my areas of interest around art and space are very similar to the both of you. I'm like a compulsively curious person who just likes to do nerdy things, but gives off the vibe that I'm cool, but I'm really not. Like, I'm really not cool, and I do theatre, and I talk about space. I don't know, maybe that is cool. Maybe I'm in the right company this morning!

Kaylee

Oh my gosh, I think we both think that you're cool. But then again, like you just said, we're probably the people who are deeply not cool.



Michael

Well, let's take us back to what I think is a collectively uncool time when you're first developing as a teen. So, you say that you come from a family of educators, and at some point, you were drawn to the theatre. What drew you to theatre, and now moving into completing a Masters now in creative writing?

Kim

Yeah, so understanding my responsibility as a community member is going to be my lifelong job. I'm going to have to be really alive and responsive to understand how I inherited this role. I have a couple Indigenous theatre friends, and we talked about the fact that we've been called to theatre from generations before us that we have been stewarded in by our ancestors that we've been gifted through our blood, the ability to tell stories, and so I absolutely started theatre in high school, but then I started thinking back about my dramatic impulses as a child, and my interest in telling stories, and I really have been doing it, fostering, and building my capacity for a while, but I would say my official entrance into the world was like Grade Seven when I got cast as Scrooge, really killed it to be honest. I beat out all the boys, and I put on a white cotton beard, and a cardboard hat. I just really decided this was it, this is the life for me, dressing up like old English men is my gift to the world. Obviously, that didn't continue, and I realized how fucked up that was so I decided I needed to investigate this more, and I was pretty intimidated. I actually started off my theatre career - retired I guess after Scrooge - and said I'm going to go and do like makeup and hair. So, I actually went through the theatre program that way, and then I realized the other side was like a lot more fun, and I built up my own bravery. I went to UBC, and did their BFA acting program there, which was also very strange, learning again, like English accents, and playing like Chekov characters. I remember my Black friend Sarah and I were like, "What the shit are we doing? We are never going to get cast as like, Cockney peasants. This is so absurd." I did learn a lot at UBC in terms of understanding the classics. I went on to act for about five years straight, which was a bit wild for theatre people because it's supposed to be really hard, but there was not a lot of Indigenous performers, and there was a lot of work to be done. But I found that I was playing a lot of roles that were being killed, that were enduring violence, that I said were dying or crying, and I got really impacted by that, you know, we talked about how you embody a role. I think when I played something like Scrooge, I got really confident I learned a little bit about commerce, but when you play somebody who gets killed, and you play somebody who is positioned in society to not be as valued, that impacts a person's spirit, and I'm sure the both of you, when you engage in a part of your work, you do start to catch some of that energy, you do start to feel that vibe. So, I did actually retire that time. I said, this is not what I want to be doing in theatre, I don't feel this is what I'm supposed to be doing with my storytelling abilities, and my responsibilities. So, I went into child and social welfare work, working for the ministry working for the Native Youth Center, and learned about how to be a good community member, and one of my favorite actors, Gordon Tootoosis. He told me that he was a social worker for six years, and this guy was on like North of 60, Dances with Wolves, Legends of the



Fall, like you know him as soon as you see him. I said, "You were social worker for six years?" He goes, "Yeah on my Poundmaker Reserve, nobody remembers that, but I'll tell you this Kim", and it was at a diner in Saskatoon, over horrible coffee and like greasy eggs, and we sat for like four hours he was giving me this rallying speech that I had to get my shit together. He said, "Nobody remembers that, but that's actually where I learned to be a storyteller". Working with my people working on the frontline, understanding the complexity, and nuance of our position in society, reminded me when I was on set, ignited me when I felt tired, of who we're actually working for, and the stories we need to be championing. So, I went and did what he did for four or five years, I went and worked in social welfare. I feel something very similar happened to me that happened to him, and I honor his spirit always because he really impacted me, to ground my ability to tell stories. Then I came back and I said, "I'm coming back, but I'm doing it my way". That's where Kamloopa came from. That's where this idea of the theory of centering Indigenous joy and love over trauma and violence. This notion of using comedy as an ability to relate, and Indigenous matriarchal power, because I just wanted to do it in a way that I wasn't afforded that opportunity, and it wasn't being groomed and stewarded in by the Canadian theatre community. I would say it made a little bit of an impact, people started to listen. Going to doing my Masters? It was just time to write, like it's time to go and work and study and be in an academic environment, and churn. Like I think we need a lot of Indigenous matriarchal comedy, and I'm trying to churn out as much content of that as we can.

Michael

Well, let's get into the heart of your work, just for a second Kim. Dismantling colonial and neo-colonial systems with a particular focus on Indigenous matriarchal led systems. What really led you down that path to focus on that particular aspect?

Kim

There's a famous play, I think it's by George Ryga who is a white man, called "The Ecstasy of Rita Joe", and that became like the Native play. It's very odd to me that it's written by a white man, basically stars men, and they kill an Indigenous woman on stage, and it's always directed by a white man. I was like, "I think there are some problems here". I think that we need to address the oppression of patriarchy, femmes and women, the oppression of non-binary people, and the celebration of patriarchy in Indigenous communities, and how that intersects with patriarchy in the Imperial state. I believe in colonization when it came, a lot of our matrilineal and matriarchy systems, clans and ways of being or ontologies being oppressed, because the Canadian state I believe has been attacking Indigenous matriarchies for a very long time, which is definitely related to the state's desire to remove Indigenous people from our land, to remove Indigenous peoples. You know, the residential school mantra was take the Indian out of the child. I'd take that a step further and say, the better way to do that is to make sure they don't have a child so that it becomes a state problem. How do you do that? Well you control women, one, because we're powerful, two, because a lot of our systems are matriarchal led, where Indigenous



men were kind of the messengers where you'd sit around the fire, or sit around and gather, but they would go back to the matriarchs, and actually they would do the consultation, and the thinking and the matriarchs of the community would do the theorizing, and decide the outcomes, or the processes, or what the community needed. I just didn't feel that in theatre. I didn't feel that in my work. I didn't feel that even in my social welfare work, I felt the patriarchy real hard. And I was just interested in, if I was going to write a show like Kamloopa, which is three Indigenous femmes about unearthing what it means to be an Indigenous femme. I wanted a femme and Indigenous non-binary team. So, I just said, let's try this. I've never heard of an all-femme team executing a play. I've never heard of having a predominantly Indigenous team at that, and it was a battle. Like I had the artistic directors being like, "Well, we really always get Joe to build the sets", and I said, "Okay, think about this for a minute. We're building a play steeped saturated engulfed in Indigenous matriarchal love. And you want Joe, a like 70-year-old, old white dude to build the sets? Are you not even just interested a little bit to see what would happen if we got young Indigenous women, young women, young, non-binary people to view what it's like to be in this? You don't think they're the experts in the field?" And they kind of agreed, because I'm a little assertive, and I didn't take no for an answer. To me, it became even from like a scientist's perspective, and an experiment, and exploration, and investigation, because I had never heard of it occurring before. Could it have blown up in my face? Possibly, but I think the variables of these awesome kick ass women are pretty strong. From that point on, because of its impact on the community, I have a deep exploration, and curiosity, and also now a responsibility to create systems, methods, and opportunities for marginalized groups of the community. So not only are Indigenous people marginalized, but Indigenous men do get treated differently with more possibility and opportunity than Indigenous women. So, if we go back to that original question, what is my journey as a storyteller, my responsibility is about creating equitable opportunities. So, investigating and employing these methods that undermine trouble and dismantle patriarchy, are incredibly important. Plus, I like going to work where women are there, because it reminds me and it evokes this really ancestral practice of matriarchs making decisions. I also say, working with men is just like a saturated market. I just don't need to write a story with Indigenous men at this point. Non-binary yes, trans people yes, I have that responsibility again I'm in service to their stories, the fact that they've been oppressed for so long. There's a lot of people writing about men. There's a lot of people writing about Indigenous men, I'm just not interested. I said, I'll write all-female non-binary casts, until I have the impulse, and if there's a need to write something else, I just feel like other people are capturing those stories. So, I have a responsibility to ensure the scope of how we're talked about in art is full and truthful, which I don't think it is at the moment.

Kaylee

So, you were just talking about the importance of centering matriarchal systems within your works, and you also talk in your podcast about the disenfranchisement of Indigenous women, particularly as it relates to the Indian act, and sort of your own personal relationship to that



disenfranchisement. I'm wondering how that impact of the loss of status for Indigenous women has impacted your work.

Kim

It's wild. I think of those women almost every day, because it's also my mother, you know. I can't imagine when Bill C-3 came in, and if an Indigenous woman married a white man, that they were losing their status or their indigeneity under the eyes of the Canadian state. That to me like, is a pretty traumatic event, and for them to not only say that we're going to take away your legal status, the emotional and spiritual impact that must have had? I was just talking to my mom the other day, she was like, "Oh, yeah, I remember receiving that letter", and I was like, "What in the heck was that? Like, how did that feel?" She was like, "Yeah it sucked". Like it was this awful feeling, and then to receive another letter back when the state repealed that part of the Indian act. They were like alright, you're Indigenous again. The fact that it feels topical, the fact that the government thinks that it's just a line item to assign and remove like a budget item, actually detrimentally impacts the way all of us feel or can feel about our groundedness of being Indigenous people. The fact that the government has ruled vis-à-vis the Indian act, about the stipulations of what it means to be Indigenous, can harm and has harmed the community around if we think we are Indigenous enough, which is the basis of Kamloopa. The question is, we want to be, "real Indians". That was a play in a show that I wanted to talk about, really, because of the impacts of colonization, and the Indian act about the government and state trying to enforce and oppress what it means to be Indigenous, when really all it is that I am because of my ascendancy from my peoples. I am Indigenous. If I don't know my language, if I don't know my culture, if I've been displaced from the Sixties Scoop, if I'm a kid in foster care, and I've met a lot of those kids, when I worked for the ministry. They ask questions like "Am I Indigenous? Like I think I come from this Nation", and I'm like, "Yes, you are. You absolutely are." This propaganda of the state deciding if you're Indigenous is not true. My work is in response to the damage that the state has done around people feeling comfortable, safe and excited about their indigeneity, because we still have a lot of people who because the state has been so harmful, oppressive and violent to us don't even want to admit that they're Indigenous. I totally radically empathize with that decision, because it's been so abhorrent, and harmful for us. My work is to get us excited, and proud, and love ourselves, and refuse the shame of the state that being who we are, is a detriment, and a bad thing, and somehow, we're less than.

Kaylee

So, you've touched on this a little bit previously as well. So, these are obviously serious, and urgent issues. You touch on in your blog, you touch on in your podcast, you touch on it in your work, and yet, you're using comedy, right? You're using comedy as an uplifting force. What's the benefit of using comedy to talk about these issues? And what are the challenges to using comedy?



Kim

That's a great question. I'll just go immediately to challenges: being funny is hard. I think it's way more challenging than writing a drama, like writing a good joke, writing funny characters that aren't offensive, that aren't actually hurting what you're trying to talk about is also very challenging. The reason that I use it is because people listen, I find that when you get mad at a group of people, and if you even take this to your own micro scale within your life, if you're getting angry at somebody, they start to shut down because that's the shame Canadian culture, and they start to build walls up. For me if I really want to change the way Indigenous and non-Indigenous people feel, and understand our importance and value within the ecology of the state and our own Nations, I need them to listen, and I need them to listen for a good amount of time. Comedy, jokes, joy, laughter, pulls people in. Hate, negativity, violence, pushes people out into the universe in a way that's not useful to my work. I say with every joke that I wrote in Kamloopa, it was a moment for people's hearts to start opening. So that by the end of the journey of that story, people were able to cry, people were able to laugh, people were able to sit in that theatre, and go, holy shit. These women are brave, they are valued, they are necessary, and I want to be a part of them, and know more about them. If I started there, and didn't build a relationship of love with joy and humor, I don't think we would have gotten there. So, you could also say it's structural, it's a method about how I actually get people to listen for any sustained amount of time, and also that if the process is the art, I want to go to work and laugh. Like I want to have a really good time in the process, because I know the work is challenging, but I firmly believe that real transformation is going to happen when we're sitting and laughing, and relating, and we'll swing between tragedy, and hurt, and pain, and end with a joke. And I say that some of the funniest jokes I've ever heard have been at an Indigenous funeral, bar none. Indigenous people's resilience to find joy in some of the most intense emotional situations reminds me that it's in us, and if I'm going to write for my people, we want to be laughing, like my mom wants to come to a show and laugh. The first time she laughed at Kamloopa, I was like, "YUSS", because she's just not into the drama, because lots of Indigenous people's lives have been dramatic and sad. So why would I be like "You know what you should do? Pay money for the show, and give me two and a half hours of your life to sit and be told about how awful it is to be Indigenous because, you know what, you haven't learned in your very trying life just how challenging it is". No! Absolutely not. My family, my community, they don't need that, and if white people or non-Indigenous people need that fine, but I write for my people, and if other people want to come and be joyful, which I think they do, I'm going to continue to write that way.

Michael

Well, speaking of laughing, capturing my attention, there is a podcast that I've been obsessed with recently that I'd like to talk to you about. It's called The Indigenous Cultural Evolutionist. I love this podcast. It is all of your work, and you, condensed into an hour in each episode. Talk to us how this came about, and how you find time to add this into all of the other projects in your life?



Kim

The Indigenous Cultural Evolutionist, TICE, is a product of again, my responsibilities as a storyteller, I find academia, and I find some of the work that I do to be an extraordinary privilege, and a lot of barriers. Actually, it was my little cousin Trevor who was the inspiration. I was like, "Hey, I think this blog would be really important for you to read." He was like, "I don't really want to read it". And I was like, "Huh, okay, I think you should probably still check it out", and he was like, "you should just like record it, and then I'll listen to it in my car." And I was like, "Oh my God. I imagine there are a lot of little Trevors out there who don't want to sit at a computer to do that." And I said, I should start doing that. I was also starting to go to school, and I did have some uncomfortable feelings about going back to the Academy because of how violent education has been towards my people, and how it can separate us. Because when you get your Masters and I'm sure Kaylee, you can feel and relate, and Michael being such a knowledge keeper, sometimes people feel like they're not good enough, or smart enough to be in relationship or conversation with you. I wanted to make sure that if I was going back to the Academy, I wasn't going to destroy relationships with the community that I've worked so hard to build. So, the podcast just became an amplification, and a modality to access the work. It has absolutely evolved, like if you listen to the first episode, there's like no music, I'm just like "err ahh uhh", and then if you listen to Season Two, which I'm in production on, and recording, and releasing them now, it's a little bit fancier. But the concept there is just space to share the theoretical, and ideological work that I'm working on to fall on my face, to have a bit of a laugh, and also to totem the work that I'm doing. As a life-long researcher and learner, I want to look back and be able to capture where I was, and where my investigations were. The podcasts and the blog are not going to be correct forever, but they are going to be a capsule, and an emblem of where I was at in that moment. Also access, a lot of Indigenous people are not in the city, they don't go to theatre, they aren't in areas that I can connect with them, and I'm sure as you two know, a podcast can go into anybody's home, pocket, ears, and becomes kind of a really intimate relationship, and I was interested in investigating what that was. I'm always surprised people listen!

Kaylee

It's so good.

Kim

Thank you. Yeah, I basically read the blogs, I do a small, I don't know, what would you call like it like an analysis?

Kaylee

I call it a reflective piece.



Kim

A reflective piece after I read the blog post, which is also an opportunity for me to further investigate ideas that have literally evolved since the time that I wrote it, or if the environment has changed, I can self-locate that piece in a new time, because it's a different space. I think it's important to also be an embodied example that: ideas evolve, everything's relatively impermanent, and we have to be nimble enough to say: I don't know if those ideas are as relevant or urgent right now. Also, because the blog sometimes, I don't know, tone in them can sometimes be a little cheeky. I feel like once you hear me and you realize that I'm just kind of joking around most of the time, that is not so serious, and if I do swear in them, it's like not at people usually.

Michael

Okay, so before we transition here, we have to get into your current piece Break Horizons. Kim, you're provoking me in all of the good places. You talk about it many times in your podcasts where you've read passages, this blending of astrophysics and Indigenous knowledge. Tell us about Break Horizons.

Kim

Break Horizons, A Rocking Indigenous justice ceremony, is a piece that came out of an article about Indigenous women being the fastest growing population in the incarceration system. And I just thought you know what, sexy prison reform, yeah you know what else is really sexy? Astrophysicsism. Let's add that into it. I don't know why I challenged myself to this degree to be like, quantum mechanics, prison reform, Indigenous liberation. That's the three I wanted to capture on the show. That's what's going to get 400 people a night to see a show, but I'm just that absurd. Where I said, this is what we need to talk about, so that's again my role as a storyteller, and then I have to make it captivating, engaging and entertaining enough, impactful enough to get people to come see it. So, I added Rock 'n Roll. I added Indigenous futurism, I added latex leather outfits, I added a sexy vibe to it, because my work with the Indigenous community of matriarchs is all of those things. The connection, like if we were to distill this, and this is what I was thinking about last night, the distillation of how those two things are connected, I think really go to the notion of time collapse within Quantum Leap Theory, you know, electrons can jump time and space. I was thinking about that when I was reading the Scientific American Journal, about this notion and I said, "Oh, that sounds very similar to the way ideologies and Indigenous communities believe that we can kind of move through time, through our blood, through blood memory, and experience things that our ancestors taught." It's this concept of when you hold say a fishing net, and you're like, "I've been here before, I've never held a fishing net in my life, but I've been here before I know this somehow." Then your muscle memory starts to come in, to me that's a form of traveling back through time, of presencing ancestral knowledge that you did not know you had. I believe that there are many intersections that I have yet and humbly and obnoxiously fearfully go and say, "I'm going to try and find those connections". The



notion of astrophysicists right now who are some of the most humble people who are constantly saying, "I don't know, I don't know about that. We don't know what happens before that, you know, singularity explosion of the Big Bang. We don't know what's happening, after when the universe is expanding. We don't know if it's going to collapse, and be the Big Bounce Theory or String Theory." This notion of scientists and western scientists constantly saying, "We're not sure", actually made me feel really safe because when I go into other sectoral reforms of society, I'm always wrong. I'm always told the Indigenous paradigm is not correct. My theories are the opposite and paradoxical to what is right, but yet when I exist within the scientific community on this area of space and astrophysics, I'm never wrong, because nobody really knows yet, and I find that fascinating. So, it's just that continued notion of how do we ground Indigenous mysticism, of this connection to animals, relationisms, the universe, and how we connect that to western notions of science, and this search for universal order, or the theory of everything. I just think that our astrophysicists right now have become our greatest philosophers. I find that really alluring. So, the show itself is about emancipating Indigenous people from judicial systems that are meant to oppress us, but in a sense, the theory, or the pedagogy around what Break is about, is freeing all of ourselves through the prisons of thinking we have to know everything, of patriarchy of roles that we've created conditionings that tell us we're not good. So, I hope when people leave this ceremony, they leave feeling ignited to be braver, and transformative in their own lives. I think you know, the reason why I look up at night, the reason why I love stargazing, the reason why I love looking into dark matter, and dark energy, cosmic dust in the ether, is because of how rich and infinite it is. I think if we start reflecting that inside ourselves, there's a growth there's an excitement, there's a connection to all things. You know, I heard on one podcast, they say the universe is much like a wave, it's these different parts that are all connected, and create the ocean. I think in a secular time when we want to be separated so often, I'm interested in us connecting, and making bonds through space and time.

Michael

God damn it Kim. I have to just pause, and just say how great that is because as a science communicator that doesn't have a science background like this is where I try to intersect too, because astrophysicists, and some of the hard sciences, they need storytellers that don't have that background to translate, and take us into this new way of understanding. So, everything you're doing when you say is not sexy, to me is the sexiest thing in the universe. Like keep going, I will be there front row, I will buy tickets for all my friends. I can't wait for Break Horizons. Alright, let's get to some Nerd Herd questions. So, first one comes from Bronwen who asks, "What is the main difference between Indigenous and European story structure?"



Kim

Great question. If more people understood this, I think they'd be able to receive Indigenous theatre and storytelling more effectively. It's the concept of a European structure, like the well-made play structure is like, can I say this? It's like kind of ejaculatory.

Kaylee

Yes, you can, and please do.

Kim

So, western notions of story structure are quite patriarchal, and ejaculatory. It waves, and then there's a big climax, and this thing shoots out, and then it like drops immediately, and then it's over. That's like beginning, inciting incident, climax. I don't even know it that well, and I'm doing my masters. That's not interesting to me. It's kind of like a rollercoaster that ends after the first hill. That would be unsatisfying. And I've heard that experience is unsatisfying for a lot of people, beyond anybody wanting to participate in ejaculatory experience or journey. So, I thought, and I really started to study the story structure of Indigenous theatre, and it's a lot more circular and cyclical and more of a slow burn. There's a warming up, there's an invitation, and there's this necessity for people who are coming to engage with Indigenous stories to be activated, and to participate, that watching an Indigenous piece, we're asking you to bear witness, which is actually a role within the whole ceremony. Whereas if you're going to, I don't know Mary Poppins, you're kind of just watching what's happening, and having a good old time, and being really isolated in your seat, and then you rock and roll out of there, that's it. Within Indigenous theatre, I find a lot of artists who I'm very much interested in are actually saying, "We need you to participate by listening deeply", and then what we said at the end of Kamloopa is that you're then responsible to once you become a knowledge holder, to share that knowledge with other people. So, if you come and see a piece of Indigenous theatre, it's not just like you throw your tickets away and that was that, you actually have a responsibility the next time Indigenous issues come up, the next time somebody says something racist as a witness, to participate as an advocate for truth, and Indigenous ontologies. I don't think Canadian theatre asks that, I ask that as an Indigenous practitioner and also, I can't speak for all Indigenous theatre, this is my experience, but also my observations are that there's a linear kind of that ejaculatory structure, and with Indigenous theatre, it's very cyclical, it's very inviting. There's this notion that you can come closer to the end, and it's actually like an orbit.

Kaylee

Oh, my gosh, Michael is going to be losing his mind over there already. Okay, and our second question is from Sharon, who asks, "How do you ensure you give all you can while also not depleting and sustaining your own creativity?"



Kim

Ooh, Sharon, I have failed at this often. I failed at this with Kamloopa, I gave everything, and I took like a year-long leave to nourish my spirit back. And I think this is really important to talk about because in this kind of neocolonial, capitalistic understanding of being a good worker, or a hard worker, if you're not busy all the time, if you're not burnt out all the time, if you're not exhausting yourself, there's this presumption that you're not an effective community member. I think that's really violent and oppressive. I'm now trying to celebrate people who I meet where they're like, I take wellness times, I take breaks, I work a five-hour day, actually work a four-day work week. That's where I'm celebrating them super hard. Because those are actually values that allow you to have meaningful relationships, have good family time, enjoy romance, go on dates, hang out with people to ensure that you bake that into your practice, because that nourishes the spirit that gives you perspective, if I'm going to go on and on about being connected to the universe, and yet I'm disconnected to the opportunities, and people in my life and relationships, and the events that are occurring within my little cosmos, then I'm not going to be as effective as I can, and I'm not going to be able to amplify them. It goes back to what Gordon was saying "We have to know our people". I think as an artist and a creator, I have to know my environment and the spaces around me, and ensuring that I don't burn out is a part of having the knowing and the knowledge that this work does take, there is a cost, there is a spiritual cost to doing the work, and I have to make sure that I have a process to re-nourish that, but there's no two ways around it. I don't think any of us have gone through a really challenging project being, like, I could do that again. You know, it's like we need a break, and it's just a matter of when you look at like the variables and variants, you're just trying to manage beforehand, how you can make sure that you've at least talked about those to ensure that the mission is not going to get overtaken by something you didn't plan. I think that's why when I watch and study space programs and how they plan, it's so meticulous, it's three times over, it's prevention before disaster. And I think that's a lot of how I try to approach my work, like I say for Kamloopa I trained for it like an Olympic level athlete. I went to my psychologist, I started running 5K a day, I did meditation. I got my nutritional needs met, so by the time I got to Kamloopa, I was ready to go knowing that that mission, that journey, that project was going to take a lot of what I had just invested in. So, it's a learning lesson, now I'm preparing for Break launching in 2022, and I actually am doing a lot of mental, spiritual, and cultural work now, knowing that this work does take, and I'm not naive to that.

Kaylee

It's so important to be remembering that balance, and always trying to find time, and I know that that's something I've experienced in my PhD, knowing that when I'm starting to feel like I can't give anything else it's usually because I have not been taking time for my own mental and physical well-being. I'm hearing this sort of similarity in that there's almost this very, like in academia, there's this very weird culture of people being like, well, if you don't work six days a week, then you're not working hard enough, or if you don't work 70 hours a week maybe you



don't care about what you're working on, and that's not true. It's trying to create space that you can work on this thing that you think is so important, and you need you to do it.

Kim

Totally. If we're not in good spaces, the work cannot occur. I know that, and that's work that I've done with my spiritual and mental advisors like, "Kim when do people get served the best?" When I'm taken care of. So then make decisions to take care of yourself.

Kaylee

So here we are nerding out about our own mental and physical health. Michael?

Michael

Should we nerd out?

Kaylee

I would love to keep nerding out.

Michael

Kim, what have you been nerding out about recently?

Kim

I have been nerding out - one, the work of course, like I feel like the work is so nerdy. I was like, could I get nerdier? Carrying around science journals in my backpack like that's just who I am and I'm okay with that. I was saying the other thing I was thinking was and I am getting pretty nerdy about is trying to be useful. You know, got to be prepared if the apocalypse does occur, and the pandemic has made me realize like wow, I could be isolated for some time, and I really don't know that much about things beyond theatre. So, I've been trying to learn survival skills like how to really make a fire, how to tie a knot. I was YouTubing about how to like hang meat from a tree, all those things that I feel like if the apocalypse occurs or I somehow had to be out in the rural environments, I have been spending time up in the Tsilhqot'in. I just don't want to be the first to go, you know, I don't want to be voted off the island because - I could set up a dynamic tableau, but I'm not really contributing to what they say in the survival world, you need to go from surviving to thriving. I've learned how to sharpen a knife, which has been really interesting. I've learned how to tie a really good knot on a fishing line, which is actually really challenging, because the first few times I did it, I threw my lure into the water. I, did not tie it well enough, and I just threw those things in, I was like, "Oh, okay. And this is really important to know." So, I've been nerding about trying to be more useful.



Kaylee

I love that. And I think even if there are some things that you feel like you don't have under your belt, by the time the apocalypse comes, you've got the leadership skills that you'll have some time.

Kim

I agree with that. I hope we have to meet in the bush together so that maybe we can just vote each other to stay for a little bit longer.

Kaylee

Oh, that's right. Number one, use your leadership to set up a democracy.

Kim

Or an oligarchy, and then we just decide everything but only for a short amount of time because we have to.

Kaylee

Michael, have you learned any useful skills lately? Is that what you've been nerding about?

Michael

Well, yes, I have Kaylee and I have been nerding out about comets. Now I love me some comets, as a space educator. They are these icy bodies that linger in these really long elliptical orbits. They hang out in just the very edges of our solar system, and just before they're about to leave, the sun kind of just pulls them back. So quite often, they come around in very long intervals. Now, as a space educator, the comets that have come around in my time have been disappointing, and I hate disappointing people. So, when there's a comet approaching, as it gets closer to the sun, it's releasing this gas trapped inside the comet, and so sometimes as they pass by the earth, they're really bright like Halley's Comet or comet Hale Bopp in the late 90s, but the ones recently have just fizzled, and they just haven't been visible. But this morning, I woke up to so many people sending me pictures of the comet called comet NEOWISE named after the telescope that discovered it, this morning it is visible from the city and I am a city stargazer. I know those two things don't go together. If you're in a dark spot, you should be able to see it with the naked eye in the city, maybe not so much, but with a camera you can see it. By the time this episode gets released it'll be gone, but there will be a meteor shower, which is the result of a comet, when this does get released around second week of August which is the Perseid meteor shower, usually the best one of the year. So, when you're up there looking up at the meteor shower, that is the remnants of a comet, and our Earth is passing through it. I always advocate going out looking for stars, but this summer may be a special time.



Kim

Whoa, yeah, I saw you post about that comet this morning. I was like, oh my gosh, that looks so beautiful. What is happening here?

Michael

Kaylee, what have you been nerding out about?

Kaylee

Well, as you mentioned, at the top of the episode, I just defended my PhD. I like to sort of joke that Buffy was seven seasons and my PhD was also seven season, and now that chapter has come to the end, and I'm leaving the Hellmouth. Something else that was sort of very interesting is that the day I defended, my last thesis chapter was published online. So, there was this very odd coincidence of timing and I've been thinking - that last chapter was about rats, obviously. It was about using genetics of rats to understand who is related to whom, and then using that information to find relatives, and where they are in relation to each other in space, and then mapping that to look at whether or not those patterns tell us anything else about the pathogens, so these disease-causing organisms that they carry. What I found was that most relatives stay in the same city block here in Vancouver. So, like 99% of all these siblings and parent-offspring pairs stay in the same block, and that also seems to relate to what we see in the pathogens that they carry. So, some city blocks have lots and lots of rats carrying pathogens, and then the next block over might be pathogen free. So, if they're all staying on the same block, and they're not moving, then there's no opportunities for spread, and then that plays into human health risks because it says that your risk is really dependent on the block that you're in, and that's all because of these rats, and how they're related to each other and how they move. So, I guess I've sort of been nerding out about how we look at relationships to tell us broader truths about questions that we have.

Kim

Yeah, that's fascinating Kaylee like that's really wild. I have a question. Like, we should not be looking for these rats and being like, what pathogens do you have? Like are rats from a distance, something that we observe? Like all these siblings – which is also wild – they stay within a city block 90% of them?

Kaylee

Like 99%, only 1% of these pairs were across city blocks, which is really interesting. So, I mean, they could move more than that, genetics is only telling you when they've gone and mated and had babies, or they've gone and they've stayed, because they can move and they could come back, and then I wouldn't be able to track that. But yeah, it's kind of weird that you're really just tracking if they've had sex successfully or not. I think usually like for most of these things that



they carry, you're fine to observe them. You mostly worry about if they're getting into like food or anything like that.

Kim

My favorite rat ever is Rizzo the rat from the Muppets.

Kaylee

So much fun. Talk about comedy.

Kim

Yeah. He's a great comedic partner like he foils everyone around him. Very generous comedian, as a rat too.

Michael

Oh my gosh, Kim, you are amazing. Thank you so much for joining us on Nerdin' About today. If people want to find you and all of your creative endeavours, where could they go?

Kim

You can find me @KimSenklip on Twitter. If you go, just google my name, and my website comes up, and my contact information is there, and my blog is there. I try and be as accesible as I can, but I'm pretty available online. You can just DM me on Instagram, and I'll usually get back to everyone.

Michael

And don't forget The Indigenous Cultural Evolutionist.

Kaylee

Listen to it. Re-listen to it. Thank you so much for spending time with us. This was a lot of fun, and thank you to all you listeners for tuning in. Also, if you want to hear more from us, you can find us on our socials @NerdNiteYVR. We'll be back in two weeks and until next time, keep creating and sharing your own stories.

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