
Home: “People as Place”

A podcast about the role of environment in direct and clinical social work practice



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Abstract

Crises of climate breakdown, ocean acidification, mass extinction, pollution and other forms of environmental degradation demand global transformation. Direct and clinical social workers are on the front lines of responses to the social consequences of these crises. They have critical skills needed for socially and environmentally sustainable solutions to these problems. Yet for the most part, direct and clinical social workers are not engaged in environmental action and do not see their work as “environmental social work.” Micro-level workers need information and resources in order to integrate environmental health in practice, and particularly tools which center the needs of the people they serve. The *Home* podcast series is geared to respond to these needs in an accessible format. *Home* seeks to engage a notoriously busy group of people by combining storytelling, theory, interviews with practicing direct and clinical social workers, resources for assessment and intervention, and shareable educational materials in an accessible format. Its goal is to inspire direct and clinical social workers to integrate an ecosocial worldview in practice while providing them with information and tools to do so.

Introduction

Intersecting environmental crises—climate instability, ocean acidification, mass extinction, pollution and environmental degradation—are immediate and existential threats to life on Earth. These crises share upstream causes with the social problems social workers address. Social work as a profession arose in response to English and U.S. American poverty and illness created by the Industrial Revolution. The same forces of industrialization, urbanization, displacement, and exploitation which created the need for our profession have also led the nonhuman world to the brink of collapse. Their downstream impacts threaten communities social workers serve. The social problems our profession works on today have their roots in white supremacist, capitalist, patriarchal relationships with land.

Social workers are on the front lines of responses to social consequences of environmental breakdown. We are uniquely well-prepared to connect individual health and healing with community empowerment through our micro-mezzo-macro lens on social problems. We are taught to view crises as opportunities for growth and transformation. We learn relationship and communication skills that are critical for bringing diverse stakeholders to the table to develop socially and environmentally sustainable solutions. We are distinguished by our person-in-environment framework. Our code of ethics includes an advocacy mandate! Yet thus far, the bulk of the effort to develop “environmental social work” in the United States has been done by academics and macro-level workers, and remains more the realm of theory than practice. Meanwhile, most social workers are in direct and clinical practice (Salsberg et al., 2020).

In my research for this project, including reviews of the literature, a mixed methods survey, and interviews with nine direct and clinical social workers, I found that many are responding to environmental harms in their work without identifying what they do as “environmental social work” (Mason et al., 2017; C. Pate, personal communication, December 1, 2021). Many of my interviewees were concerned about environmental health, yet expressed that they found messaging around it alienatingly “abstract,” “moralizing,” “scienc-ey,” classist, or “woo woo.” Many expressed confusion about how it applied directly to their work with clients. “Environmental social work” was conceptualized by practitioners I spoke with as a niche area of practice focused on “Erin Brockovich” responses to environmental injustice.

All the stakeholders I interviewed—even those who identified themselves as skeptical about the topic at the start—were able to identify physical environmental considerations for their practice with supported inquiry. As stakeholders reflected on their experiences, they became more curious and enthusiastic about the topic and its relevance. This series of interviews led me to conclude that an intervention incorporating a popular education approach focused on inquiry and relevance to real-world micro contexts could be very effective. Stakeholders wanted

information and resources about environmental health which were accessible (in terms of time commitment, language, ease of use, and/or affordability), directly applicable to their work, and which centered the needs of the people they served. Several asked for stories: histories, personal narratives and counter-narratives to dominant messages. Two stakeholders explicitly mentioned the importance of making a resource “fun” or uplifting—something they would want to do in their spare time.

The podcast *Home: “People as Place”* is a response to these identified needs. *Home* is a 10-episode podcast series devoted to recognizing and understanding the ways our world shapes (and is in turn shaped by) human health and well-being. The goal of *Home* is to inspire social workers to integrate an ecosocial worldview in direct and clinical practice, while supporting them with tools to do so. Its objectives are to engage listeners and increase listeners’ motivation to act. Indicators of these outcomes include unique subscribers, visitors to the website, and followers on social media; and resource downloads from the website and social sharing of educational materials, respectively.

Home is shaped by several theoretical frameworks and concepts. First, an ecological perspective depends on systems theory, as well as intersectional feminist theory, which help make sense of the dynamic interplay of Earth systems with human bodies and relationships. An “ecosocial” worldview “moves our understanding of person-in-environment to person-as-environment or person-as-place, where the environment and person are seen as part of the same holistic entity, or a Web of Life” (Powers, et al., 2021). Second, a neurobiological lens on attachment and trauma helps explain relationships between the nonhuman world and human health and well-being. Political ecology helps complicate ideas of “built” versus “natural” environments and provides a framework for understanding interrelationships of human power relations and environmental health. Postcolonial theory historicizes environmental degradation, refining “human” relationships with environment to *specific* relationships of *specific* cultures with *specific* landbases. It also offers nuanced understanding of various forms of colonial and neocolonial violence geared towards controlling and exploiting Indigenous homelands.

Literary theory offers an analytical lens on stories dominant culture tells about “nature” and those associated with it, as well as counter-narratives offering hope and challenging dominant ideology. Critical theory offers a great deal, particularly Marx’s explanation of “primitive accumulation,” Bourdieu’s concept of “habitus,” and Gramsci’s concepts of hegemony and relationship of material “base” to cultural “superstructure” which rationalizes its material base through ideology (Bourdieu, 1977; Federici, 2004; Gramsci, 2000; Marx, 1977). Kropotkin’s theory of mutual aid complicates interpretations of “nature” which universalize Darwin’s Malthusian theory of natural selection. Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart’s historical trauma and unresolved grief theory helps explain intergenerational impacts of colonization on collective

land-based identity (2017). Finally, critical pedagogy offers an approach to education which honors reflection on lived experience as a key source of empowerment, connection, and transformation.

Project Description

In its pilot season of 10 episodes, *Home* will explore ten areas of environmental health across ten areas of direct and clinical social work practice. Each episode will begin with a question, introduce topical theory, include an interview with a social worker exploring the role of environmental health in their area of practice, and a story providing a related counter-narrative. Each episode will be accompanied by shareable infographics on social media (see *Appendices D* and *E* for examples) and resources for assessment and intervention linked in episode notes on the show website. Each episode will be convertible to a ~2-hour workshop (see *Appendix F* for general episode outline and *Appendix G* for sample episode content).

Home will explore areas of environmental health including relationships with nonhuman animals, living conditions, working conditions, neighborhoods, special places, food, water, air quality, weather, and infectious disease as they relate to direct and clinical social work practice. Areas of social work practice to be covered include school social work, gerontology, child welfare, developmental disabilities, health care, justice and corrections, mental health, substance use treatment, and public welfare.

Interviewees will be recruited through outreach on social media, social work listservs and discussion boards, and word-of-mouth. Prior to the recorded interview, a “pre-interview” conversation will help “prime the conversational pump” by helping the worker conceptualize how environmental health might connect with their area of practice, as well as ensure they understand the interview and recording process, goals, and expectations (see *Appendix A* for

more detail). Guests will be asked to sign a consent form (see *Appendix B*) and provided with USB headphones if needed prior to the interview.

Budget

Expenses for the pilot season of this project are mainly limited to the cost of necessary hardware, software, and cloud computing. All expenses are direct costs. For the show’s first ten episodes, its biggest expenses (production, post-production, graphic design, and marketing) will be donated in-kind. Guests’ time will also be donated in-kind. Similarly, a laptop, headphones, recording space, and internet access will be donated in-kind. Audio recording and editing software (Audacity) is free. Use of Zoom for interviews is free for half-hour sessions. Canva (cloud-based visual design for logo) is free, while Piktochart (cloud-based visual design for infographics) is \$40/year for an education plan. A subscription to Buzzsprout cloud-based podcasting platform includes a website and access to streaming platforms for \$18/month (for 6 hours of uploads per month). Intro and outro soundscape recordings will be donated in-kind. Google Docs and social media accounts (Instagram, YouTube, and Twitter) are available for free. The cost of advertising through Instagram is an estimated \$6 per thousand “impressions;” I am budgeting \$1 per day for six months of “impressions,” or \$180. I am budgeting \$250 for ten sets of Sennheiser PC 7 USB headphones to provide for interviewees.

Revenue		
Individual donations	\$686.60	\$686.60
Grants	TBD	TBD
Producer stipend (in-kind donation)	\$20/hr x 20 hrs/episode x 10 episodes	\$4,000

Graphic design stipend for logo (in-kind donation)	\$20/hr x 12 hrs	\$240
Marketing (in-kind donation)	\$20/hr x 6 hrs/ week x 16 weeks	\$1920
Guest stipend (in-kind donation)	\$100/ interview x 10	\$1000
Apple MacBook Pro 16'' (in-kind donation)	\$2,899	\$2,899
Apple Airpods Pro (in-kind donation)	\$149	\$149
Comcast high-speed internet	\$150/month x 3 months	\$450
Total revenue (incl. in-kind donations):		\$11,344.60
Expenses		
Producer hourly stipend (in-kind donation)	\$20/hr x 20 hrs/episode x 10 episodes	\$4,000
Graphic design stipend for logo (in-kind donation)	\$20/hr x 12 hrs	\$240
Marketing (in-kind donation)	\$20/hr x 6 hrs/ week x 16 weeks	\$1920
Guest stipend (in-kind donation)	\$100/ interview x 10	\$1000
Apple MacBook Pro 16'' (in-kind donation)	\$2,899	\$2,899
Apple Airpods Pro (in-kind donation)	\$149	\$149
Comcast high-speed internet (in-kind donation)	\$150/month x 3 months	\$450
Piktochart subscription	\$40/year	\$40

Buzzsprout subscription	\$18/month x 12 months	\$216
Instagram “impressions” marketing	\$1/day x 180 days	\$180
Sennheiser Consumer Audio PC 7 USB Headphones	\$22.91 x 10 plus shipping & handling	\$250.60
Total expenses:		\$11,344.60

Advertising/Marketing

The advertising or marketing plan is tiered and begins with the podcast’s cover art (current draft is a linoleum block print and oil pastel image by Clementine Van Orman-Ballantine and Amory Ballantine). Social media accounts will be created in stages (Instagram to build up shareable visual resources and followers a few months prior to launch); Twitter (begin following accounts and sharing resources in daily posts for approximately a month prior to launch); and YouTube (uploading the show’s first 3 episodes and generating transcripts for search engine optimization). Pay for “impressions” on Instagram and other Meta platforms, and publish website beginning 3 weeks prior to launch. Publish 3 episodes at once, at 5 a.m. EST on a Wednesday, and upload them to YouTube synchronously in order to maximize visibility on streaming platforms and maximize first-time listener subscribers. Create infographics and visuals to share with guests (featuring a favorite quote from their interview, for example) and invite them to share on their social media/ etc. prior to publishing episodes. Fonts include Acumin Variable Concept, Avenir, and Open Sans. Color scheme is jewel toned and illustrations are a combination of hand-drawn, photos, and graphics. Graphics should be either very simple or very detailed. Finally, publish infographics and behind-the-scenes Instagram stories for each episode.

Evaluation

The success of *Home* will be measured by how well it meets its goal outcomes of listener engagement and increased listener motivation to act. Listener engagement will be measured based on the number of unique subscribers to the podcast in its first month; unique visitors to the podcast website; and unique followers on Instagram. Measure listener motivation to act based on the number of unique resource downloads from the website and social sharing of educational materials. Success is indicated by gathering at least 30 unique subscribers in the show's first month; at least 20 unique visitors to the website in its first two weeks; at least 30 followers of its Instagram account in the first two weeks; at least 10 unique resource downloads in the show's first month; and at least 20 re-shares of Instagram educational materials in the first two weeks. To measure listener engagement, use episode and listener analytics from the Buzzsprout podcast hosting platform, which can count unique subscribers and visitors to the website, as well as report geographic data for visitors, as well as Instagram's analytics which offer additional demographic data once more than 100 users are reached. Use a web survey for each episode linked in the show notes, with open-ended questions to gather qualitative listener feedback (see *Appendix C*). Buzzsprout and Instagram analytics also offer information on unique downloads and re-shares, respectively, which function as proxy measures for listener motivation to act. Tracking user locations and demographics via IP address and registered user accounts are standard data gathering methods in the industry. The same survey questions will be used for each episode in order to protect reliability of data.

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Appendix A

Interview Procedure

1. Identify/ recruit social worker in direct or clinical practice.
2. Conduct pre-interview:
 - a. Goals: prime the conversational pump and ensure the participant understands process, goals, and expectations.
 - b. Discuss the topics of the interview and likely interview questions.
 - c. Discuss needed equipment & space for conversation (<https://castos.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Email-script-to-guests.pdf>)
 - d. Request participant feedback on questions (re-wording? Adding? Removing? etc.)
 - e. Request key details they'd like mentioned in their bio.
3. Share & collect a signed consent form.
4. Mail USB headphones to guest if needed (Sennheiser PC7 USB Headset, \$22).
5. Write a guest bio tailored for audience (<https://castos.com/podcast-interview/>)
6. Email a copy of final interview questions at least 1 week in advance.
 - a. Request guest consider stories/ anonymized case studies related to questions.
7. Conduct a Zoom interview. Prompt guest for stories.
8. Connect back with participant for feedback on their experience and confirmation they are happy with what will go on the air.
9. Email thank you and copy of social media image with quote from interview. Invite them to share the image & episode air date with their networks.

Appendix B

Consent Form

“Home” is a podcast on “people as place.” Its goal is to inspire direct and clinical social workers to integrate an ecosocial worldview in practice, while providing education and resources to do so. Each episode is hosted by Amory Ballantine, MES & MSW [expected June, 2022], and features a guest social worker in direct or clinical practice exploring how a given area of environmental health relates to their area of practice. Thank you for helping move this effort forward!

Before we start our interview, I seek your consent to record audio, and to disseminate an edited version of the recording on the internet (e.g., on the podcast website, YouTube, and through podcast directories). I will allow you to preview the final edited version prior to publication. I will provide you with the questions to be discussed prior to our recording session and ask that you edit/add to them as you see fit.

This is meant to be a collaborative, informal conversation to generate ideas as we learn from each other. We want it to be fun and not stressful in any way. If there are specific parts you prefer we remove during editing, we can do that for you.

Statement of Consent:

I understand and consent to be recorded during our session. Our conversation will be edited, and I will have final approval prior to it being published.

Name of Participant (please print)

Signature

Date

*Adapted from Powers, M. (2022). Consent Form. *JAM Sessions: A Podcast on Social Work & Climate Justice*.

Appendix C

Episode Survey Questions

Hello! Thank you so much for supporting *Home: People as Place*! We'd love it if you could take 5 minutes to let us know how we can bring you the best possible content for Season 2.

About Episode []:

- Which topics did you find most relevant?
- What did you like most about the episode?
- What would you change about the episode?
- Please share any lingering questions you would like answered:

About the podcast as a whole:

- How did you first learn about this podcast?
- How could this show be improved?
- What topics would you like to see more of?
- Is there enough diversity represented in the podcast guests?
Strongly disagree | Disagree | Neutral/ No opinion | Agree | Strongly agree
- Would you recommend this podcast to another social worker?
- Do you have any other feedback you'd like to share?

If you are a social worker in direct or clinical practice interested in being interviewed, please share your contact information here or at [Link_to_Interest_Form_on_Website] and we'll get back to you with more information!

Thanks for supporting *Home* with your time and feedback!

Appendix D

Sample Social Media Materials

Image 1:

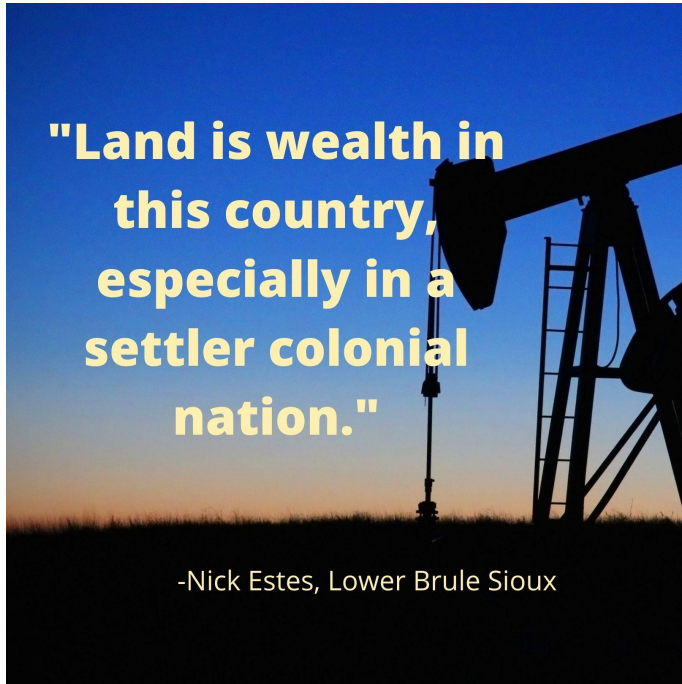


Image 2:



Image 3:

"If a person wants to stand on her own two feet, I recommend undertaking the care and feeding of something. It could be children, or it could be house plants, you know? By doing that you come to understand your own limitations. That's where it starts."

-Banana Yoshimoto



Appendix E

Sample Infographic

People as Place

fruit

physical health
mental health
community health
environmental
health

leaves

interpersonal
neurobiology

flower

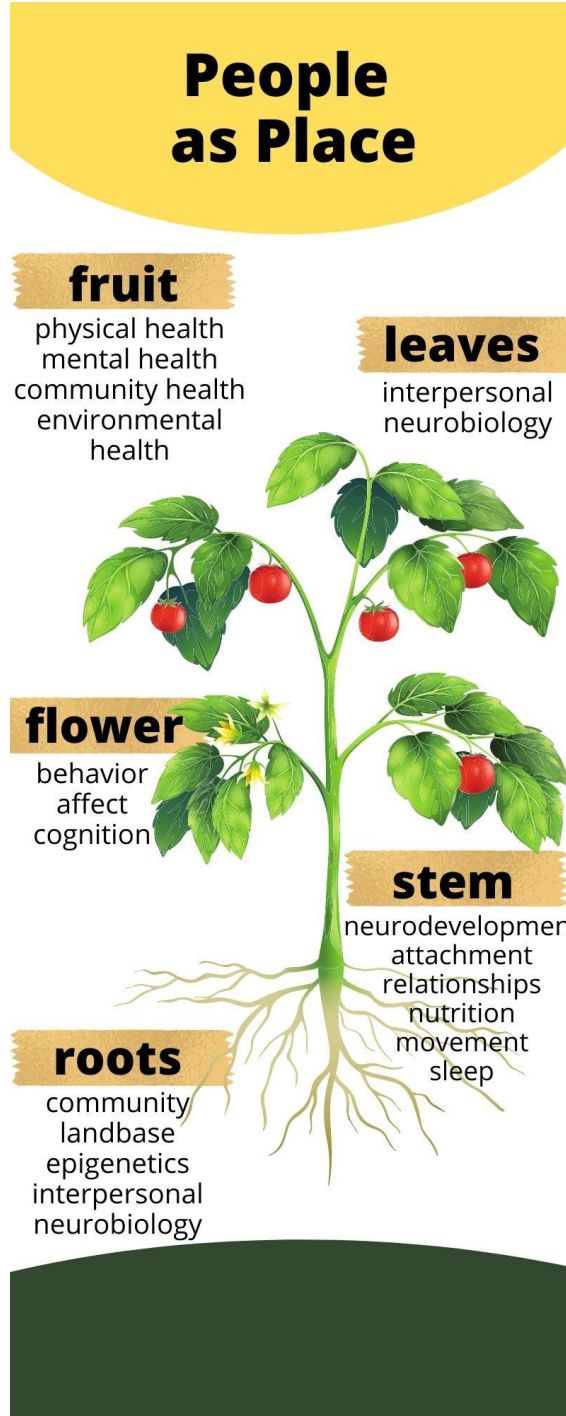
behavior
affect
cognition

stem

neurodevelopment
attachment
relationships
nutrition
movement
sleep

roots

community
landbase
epigenetics
interpersonal
neurobiology



Appendix F

General Episode Outline

Intro music (5-7 seconds, soundscape recording)

Story (case study or other story regarding the topic)

Greeting & Introduction

- Host
- Show purpose
- Episode topic & question
- Interview guest and topic
- Teaser re: history/ myth/ legend/ fairy tale counter-narrative at end

Theory - our map for making sense of a situation

Guest introduction/ bio

Interview

- Application of theories discussed
- Ways aspect of environmental health impacts clients
- Assessment process
- Interventions used
- Where aspect of environmental health fits in their work

Counter-narrative story ideas:

- Related dominant narrative:
- Counter-narrative:

Summary/ recap of key points

Invitation to visit website for citations and more information, as well as a listener survey.

Invitation to send questions & comments on social media

Thank-you to listeners who rate & review

Outro soundscape

On website:

References

Resources

Infographic

Survey link

On social:

Shareable images

Appendix G

Sample Show Content: Season One, Episode One - "Home"

Home Season 1, Episode 1 Outline

Intro music (5-7 seconds, soundscape recording)

Story (case study or other story regarding the topic)

Introduction

- Host
- Show purpose
- Episode topic & question
- Interview guest and topic
- Teaser re: history/ myth/ legend/ fairy tale counter-narrative at end

Theory - our map for making sense of a situation

- Architectural psychology
 - Fortress/ disciplinary/ hostile architecture
- Soundscapes
- Place attachment & place identity
 - Interpersonal neurobiology
 - Bachelard and "topoanalysis," childhood home as "initial universe" (Bachelard, 1994; Cultural Studies Now, 2011)
 - Intimacy, protection, exploration, safety/security, imagination
 - Conversely, may be site of trauma, ambiguous/ complex relationships, triggers
 - Health & life outcomes
 - social network theory
 - Linguistic communities
 - Transportation justice
 - Opportunity mapping
 - Access to parks/green spaces; walkability; food deserts; access to resources for food storage & preparation
 - Mental health
 - Chronic stress
 - Physical health
 - Heatwaves
 - Chronic stress
 - "Lifestyle diseases"

- Disenfranchised loss
 - Gentrification
 - Tran et al., 2020
 - Fried, 1963
 - Community violence
 - ACEs (Harris, 2021)
 - Solastalgia
 - “It is the time you have spent with your rose that makes your rose so important” - Antoine St. Expeury, *The Little Prince*
 - “There are many, many difficult times, god knows. If a person wants to stand on her own two feet, I recommend undertaking the care and feeding of something. It could be children, or it could be house plants, you know? By doing that you come to understand your own limitations. That's where it starts.” - Banana Yoshimoto, *Kitchen*
 - “We cannot win this battle to save species and environments without forging an emotional bond between ourselves and nature as well –for we will not fight to save what we do not love.” - Stephen J. Gould (in Orr, 2004)
 - & Traditional Ecological Knowledge - Winona LaDuke
 - “[TEK] is the culturally and spiritually based way in which Indigenous peoples relate to their ecosystems. This knowledge is founded on spiritual-cultural instructions from “time immemorial” and on generations of careful observation within an ecosystem of continuous residence...Frankly, these Indigenous societies have existed as the only example of sustainable living in North America for more than 300 years” (1994, p. 127).
 - Historical trauma (Chavez, n.d; DeGruy, 2005; Yellow Horse Brave Heart, 2017)
- “People as place”
 - Home as extension of body (Scarry, 1987), neighborhood as extension of home
 - Relationship to food, medicine, furniture, seasonal holidays/ ceremonies, sounds, etc. & place
 - Food cultures and place (Kingsolver, 2008; Krohn & Segrest, 2017)
 - & microbiome, enteric nervous system/ “second brain”
 - Relationships with soil: *Mycobacterium vaccae* & serotonin
 - “[The planet] needs people who live well in their places” (Orr, 2004, p. 12)

- Anna Tsing’s concept of “refugia” (Tsing, 2017).
 - & homelessness
- Concept of “endemic” and “endemicity”
 - Time frames & slowness, tipping points
 - Are you endemic if it takes generations of separation & destruction to make you sick?
 - Colonization & the body
 - Federici, 2004
- Indigeneity
 - “Decolonization is not a metaphor” (Tuck & Yang, 2012)
 - Lower Brule Sioux scholar Nick Estes describes land as “wealth in this country, especially in a settler colonial nation” (Estes in Denvir, 2019). He explains how enslavement of Black people and genocide of Indigenous peoples were driven by white colonial relationships with land (Denvir, 2019; Estes, 2019).
 - Indigenous feminists like Sarah Deer (Muscogee), Winona LaDuke (Ojibwe), Ramona Bennett (Puyallup), and Katsi Cook (Mohawk), among many others, have clearly outlined relationships between oppression of women, children, and Two-Spirit people and destruction of landbase and culture.
 - Cook is a midwife who identified the impact of environmental pollutants on mothers’ breast milk, and therefore infant health. She views “women [as] the first environment... women as the Earth” (Goodman, 2018).
 - Deer is a legal scholar whose work centers around the ways colonial legal maneuvers geared toward control of Indigenous lands have both promoted a rape culture and rendered Indigenous women and children uniquely vulnerable to violence (Deer, 2015).
 - Bennett has also called for a “generational worldview,” like that of Chief Leschi, a Nisqually-Yakama farmer. Leschi led a regional Indigenous uprising against harmful treaty terms being forced on his nation. He was wrongfully convicted and hanged by the U.S., but succeeded in forcing a transformative treaty renegotiation with intergenerational consequences for the entire region and beyond (including the 1974 Boldt and 2007 Martinez Decisions). Telling his story to young people at the tribal school, Bennett said, “And you know what, if he had it to do over again, he'd do it over again because he loves you. And he knew if he didn't stand for the

Indian people, that the future generations were going to have nothing. And he knew that he loved us, without ever seeing our faces-he thought generationally, and that's how we have to think. That's how we have to think, we have to leave something good for the ones coming after us, because we know we love them” (LaPointe-Gorman, 2009).

- LaDuke has long called for the environmental movement to center multigenerational, reciprocal, and cyclical Indigenous worldviews, explaining that “a society based on conquest cannot be sustained” (1993, 1994).
- Habitus & corporeal hexis
 - “New York City Habitus” YouTube video & analysis by Lisa Wade (2012)
 - Ergonomics
 - Linguistics

Guest introduction/ bio

Interview

- Application of theories discussed
- Ways neighborhood and living conditions impact clients
- Assessment process
- Interventions used
- Where neighborhood, living conditions, and “people as place” fit in their work

Counter-narrative story ideas-

- Dominant idea: people distinct from place; class and “cosmopolitanism”/ sophistication of constantly moving around *by choice*, vs homelessness
 - Sophistication of longitudinal knowledge of place, deeply rooted relationship with place (e.g. strongly recognized link between individual, community, & environmental health (One Health recognizes now); accountability & place-based community (colonial DV/SA & prison abolition movements recognize now); land management e.g. prescribed burns and relationships w wildlife/fisheries (Forestry, Fish & Wildlife recognize now) (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022; Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation, 2022; Deer, 2015; LaDuke, 1994; U.S. Forest Service, 2022)
 - Roger Hernandez, “Grandmother Cedar” (2016).

Summary/ recap of key points

Invitation to visit website for citations and more information, as well as a listener survey.

Invitation to send questions & comments on social media

Thank-you to listeners who rate & review

Outro soundscape

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Resources:

- Historical Trauma and Unresolved Grief Intervention (Yellow Horse Brave Heart, 2017)
- Mind-body therapies (somatic healing; Somatic Experiencing; Mind-Body Awareness Project)
- Post-Traumatic Slave Syndrome (DeGruy, 2005)
- Culture & community-based healing
- Gardening as intervention (*Mycobacterium vaccae* & serotonin)
- Farm-based youth justice programs (e.g. GRuB/ Garden-Raised Bounty in Olympia, WA)
- Community violence intervention programs (CVI) <https://www.vera.org/community-violence-intervention-programs-explained>