“Unapologetically Nêhiyaw”
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Samantha Martin-Bird (S.M.B.)
Samantha nitishinikaas Peguis First Nation nitoonci. I'm Sam Bird. I'm here by zoom with Max FineDay.

Max FineDay (M.F.)
[Speaks nêhiyawêwin] Taansi. [Speaks nêhiyawêwin] So great to be here. My name is Max FineDay. I come from [Speaks nêhiyawêwin], the Sweetgrass First Nation in Treaty Six Territory, [speaks nêhiyawêwin], in Saskatchewan. And I am the executive director of Canadian Roots Exchange, a national nonprofit that delivers reconciliation programming to young people all across the country.

S.M.B.
Samantha nitishinikaas, Peguis First Nation nitoonci. My name is Sam and my family comes from Peguis First Nation inside of Selkirk, Manitoba, which is originally a reserve until it was illegally amalgamated in 1906. But I grew up in Kitchener and I now call Thunder Bay home. I work here at the Thunder Bay Public Library as the Indigenous Relationship Supervisor. So, we met a few weeks ago when Canadian Roots Exchange and the Thunder Bay Public Library co-hosted an event here with local Indigenous scholars and activists and artists.

M.F.
You know, the Canadian Roots Exchange is a national organization. We know that reconciliation has to occur everywhere but also, we know that Thunder Bay has been in headlines in the last while about the need to repair such a fractured relationship. It's not alone of course. You know, Winnipeg has had those same headlines and Saskatoon has had those same headlines. Obvious sorts of things but I really felt, you know, that it was our responsibility, my responsibility as sort of like an older young person, I'm twenty-eight year old, to try and help facilitate that dialogue, that elevation of the voices in Thunder Bay of young people who are doing this beautiful work of cultural revitalization. You know, language revitalization, during that important work of decolonization, reconciliation, in Thunder Bay. We packed the house, we packed the library, which is such a, a beautiful thing to see, this beautiful community space, of people who wanted to talk about how do we repair that relationship.

And, and I got to pontificate and talk longer than I probably should have and then we got to listen a beautiful panel of young people who are doing this extraordinary work in Thunder Bay. It was first, you know, major event in Thunder Bay and I'm really looking forward to doing a lot more in partnership you and in partnership with the library.

S.M.B.
I really enjoyed it. One of the highlights of my job is creating spaces that centre the experiences of Indigenous young people, which I think historically the library has not

been one of those places. So, it was really cool for me to see Indigenous young people come. We had an Indigenous young person get up and speak impromptu near the end and he shared quite vulnerability his experiences with systemic racism, challenges he faces in high school as an Indigenous young man. And I think that for me what was so special about that moment was that even though he was sharing something that was, is really hard, that there was something about the event that we created that gave him the freedom to be able to speak up like that cause I, I don't think that's something that like regularly happens at library events, either here or anywhere in the province.

M.F.
Well, he was fifteen years old, he was from Deer Lake, you know, an isolated community, he talked about the challenges he had faced in pursuing a post-secondary education. He couldn't do that in his community. I noticed that whenever we talk about difficulties Indigenous people, and particularly Indigenous young people, he also talked about his, his hopes and his dreams. He wanted to be a, a software engineer and he already knew which university he was going to apply to in Canada but also in the States. This kid was way smarter than I'll ever be. He said, "That was the first time I've ever talked to people in public." You know, he got sort of emotional, but he powered through. Such a powerful moment for people to see.

You know, I think when we're talking about reconciliation, people see it a lot in headlines, a lot in news, and it’s very sort of separated from their day-to-day life. They don't see the impact of, of systemic racism. They don't see the impact, you know, of a young person maybe not, feeling uncomfortable in, in post-secondary or, or even in a library. But that packed room in Thunder Bay in the library could not ignore this young man's journey, his story, his struggle, but also, and I think most importantly, his perseverance. I think you know, a lot of Canadians, non-Indigenous people, came away from that event saying, you know, "This is now a little more personal, I can see this." And Indigenous people in that room had an affirmation that they're not alone in, in feeling that sort of way. And that ability to help to build that community for that young man so that he doesn't have to feel so alone in his struggle.

S.M.B.
It such a great moment. I'm really thankful for you and for the other panelists that helped kind of facilitate the atmosphere, like the environment and to give him the courage to speak in that way. So, I'd like to switch gears a little and do you want to talk a little bit about how you got involved with the work of reconciliation and what initiated for you?

M.F.
I come from as I said, [speaks nêhiyawêwin], The place where the hills end, in, in Saskatchewan on my dad's side. But on my mom's side, I'm a proud descendant of Norwegian farmers. So, I carry that, both sides the Treaty relationship, Indigenous and non-Indigenous. My dad always likes to make this awful joke that I'm a product of reconciliation, an act of reconciliation. So, I'm like, Oh god, no Dad [Sam laughs] but that's, that's nêhiyaw humour for you. I have, you know, vivid and keen, distinct memories growing up of being in places where Indigenous people and non-Indigenous

were, you know, not all those memories were, are, are happy ones, not all those memories are ones where people felt comfortable, where people knew each other, where people knew where each other came from or, or their shared history, their stories.

S.M.B.
I'm just curious. As a mixed-up kid, did you ever, like, feel ashamed of being half white or wrestled through what it meant to have a white parent? For me, like, my dad is Anishinaabe, my mother is Swiss German. Something that I kind of wrestled through like in high school, not knowing how I felt about also being white. But was it something for you because of the way your parents raised you, that it was never an issue, that you're always comfortable with it?

M.F.
You know, I was so lucky, and I love my parents so much and I think they did as, as, as much for me as they could. You know, I was raised in the lodge, I was with my traditional teachers, I was raised with medicine people, I was raised with storytellers and so cultural and, you know, [speaks nêhiyawêwin]. At the same time, you know, I would spend summers on the farm with my grandparents in southern Saskatchewan where we would talk about Norway, where we would talk about, you know, this, this beautiful culture that we also came from. [speaks nêhiyawêwin] At the same time, you know, that, that ability to understand my non-Indigenous side, my Norwegian side, was so powerful, I went and lived in Norway for a time. So, I feel so rooted in both sides of my family. I think for teenagers, you know, we all go through identity struggles and problems, you know, figuring out if you're too native or not native enough or what that means, all these sorts of things. But I've always been very comfortable with who I am and where I come from and that's a real gift that I hope for all Indigenous kids but also all the mixed kids that are out there.

And I think, you know, something that all Canadians should, should figure out is who do they come from. This Canadian identity that is sort of homogenous isn't actually your history. What is the proud history and culture and beliefs, traditions of Norway or Switzerland or Germany or other places in the world that people come from. I think that if we dig back into our roots, it helps us understand our identity, you know, back then but also now. So, reflecting back on how I got into this work, I knew nêhiyaw people and I knew them to be beautiful and smart and funny and wicked storytellers and great mechanics and you know all these sorts of things.

And I also knew my grandparents to be hard workers, people who loved the land they that were farming. I, I knew my grandparents to care about community, to be people who were so full of love and kindness and happiness. I was raised in that as well. But when they got together, you know, when I would see in society, when these two constituencies, these two pieces of my family, these two pieces of the treaty relationship got together, they didn't show that to one another. They didn't explain that to one another. And we know that Canadians have no idea who Indigenous people are. We know that Indigenous people have a certain idea of who a Canadian is and they weren't

talking to each other. And I remember when I graduate university, my Nookum, my grandmother on my dad's side, said to me, "We're going to send you away now and there's going to be a job coming for you, it's going to take you many places and you have to go because you can tell them who we are. You can tell them about us. You can tell us about them, mîna, at the same time and not a lot of other people get to that. Some months later, the opportunity to move to Ontario came up and as my grandma, my Nookum had asked me to, I've doing this work of explaining who each other is to different parts of my family for that last number of years.

S.M.B.
Well, it sounds like your entire childhood sort of prepared you for coming from Indigenous and white families.

M.F.
Absolutely. [Sam: Yeah.] The thing that I tell both sides of my family, we're a lot more alike than we think. We're more similar than we are different. It's just that our education system and the places we interact in haven't allowed us to understand that. So that's one of my great missions, is bringing young people together, so that they can begin to understand what our parents and our grandparents never got the opportunity to.

S.M.B.
You sort of touched on it already, but I'm curious about the role of ceremony and how that informs you work? And how you make time for it? Maybe your job keeps you very busy and if you could flesh out that, especially for white people listening who have really no idea what that might look like. I was in Saskatchewan back in February for the SICC was putting on a conference for Indigenous library, archiving and museums. And they were explaining at the conference that the word for the conference came to them in a sweat. And I was like, "Man, like in Saskatchewan they will have a sweat for anything." And then I was like, "That's a good idea!" Could you talk a bit about maybe how ceremony influences your work?

M.F.
Absolutely. Ceremony is foundational in my work. I am very lucky to be raised in ceremony, not a lot of other Indigenous youth are given that. I was lucky to be raised by my dad, who is a Lodge man, who is a Medicine Man, who is a story keeper, Traditional Knowledge Keeper. So, I was raised in the culture. Something I think Canadians don't understand about native people, is that we are inherently, everything about us is, is ceremony, everything about us is spiritual, everything about us about us is about our connection to mâmawi-ohtâwîmâw, our kind and loving Creator. We're not like the rest of Canada where we sort of like leave our ceremony or our religious beliefs at the door, or leave it at home. This isn't a belief system, this isn't a religion, this is everything in who we are, everything in the way we interact. It is how Indigenous people do everything. So right before I got on to record this podcast with you, I smudged in my office. And I didn't ask permission to smudge, I just did it. And I think for the last a hundred and fifty-two years that Canada has been a country, even longer than yet, Indigenous people have been banned from doing ceremony or they've needed to get

permission to do ceremony. And a lot of people, because of those first two things, have lost ceremony and we see that a lot of that within Indigenous youth and adults today.

Something I was raised to do was to be unapologetically nêhiyaw in every place that I am, in every place that I go, and every place that I travel. We know, and we're, we're told so often by our Knowledge Keepers, that we see Indigenous people fill the jails, we see Indigenous youth fill graveyards, we see Indigenous young people fulfilling every negative statistic in this country that is available to us. And it's not because we are genetically predisposed to dying young or not genetically predisposed to stealing a bike or these other sorts of things. It's because we have young people who are walking around with beautiful brown skin, skin that is the colour of the earth and what a gift that is. But they don't know who they are, they don't know where they come from and they don't have that connection to Creator. So, I always say to people who want to do reconciliation work, that's a spiritual endeavour. It is, you know, a matter of connecting young people back to ceremony. And if your space, if your workplace, if your strategic initiative does not centre ceremony or does not make space for ceremony, if you ask people to go outside to smudge, that's a continuation of that violence that Indigenous people, particularly young people, have had to suffer or endure to try and reclaim those sorts of things.

S.M.B.
Yeah, it makes me think about our smudging policy here at the library, it could use some work, which means I have to do the work.

M.F.
It's sort of like that everywhere, right, and policy, I'm sure people listening to this podcast will say, "Wow, you know, I completely agree but there's a policy." And little do they know that we only have .5 percent of the land base and we don't have our ceremonies anymore, we weren't allowed to leave the reserve because of policy. It's the foundation of colonization in this country. Polite policy is what I call it, cause in Canada we pretend to be so polite, "Oh sorry, you know" apologetic, all these sorts of things, the policy that has predicated a genocide. Now, do I think that all Canadians want to endure another generation of genocide, no I don't think so. But Canadians also really like to follow the rules and live within the confines of structures that have been set up. I would challenge people listening to this podcast to think about, “Do these policies serve Indigenous youth?” Because you know what, if your policies serve Indigenous youth, your policies will serve every other constituency that you are serving, whether at a library or hospital or university or whatever. Because Indigenous youth are the most marginalized, or the hardest to get in the door, are the hardest to retain in terms of access or participation, all these sorts of things. So, I would encourage everybody to take a look at their policies and say, "How can we change these in order to better serve Indigenous young people in this country?"

S.M.B.
Cause I think for sure it often feels more like the policies are there to protect the comfort of non-Indigenous folks, even something as simple as smudging can be disruptive to their sense of space and, and being comfortable.

M.F.
We could all tell stories [Sam: Uh, hum] about policies across the country, in libraries and different spaces. I think, think, that's, that's a wake-up call for librarians, that's a wake-up call for Canadians, to say, "This isn't just isolated." That reconciliation isn't just words, it's not just the land acknowledgement, it's not just hiring Sam, as, as incredible as you are. Reconciliation is systemic and it's change that's going to hurt and be difficult. And, you know, it's going to ask us to challenge ourselves and our beliefs and all these sorts of things. I, I go back to the conversation about Bill 21 in Quebec, the religious symbols bill, how you know, this is, in parts of this country, we ask people to leave to leave who they are at the door. But we've asked that of Indigenous people for over a hundred years, almost two hundred years. And that hasn't worked out very well for us. So, I wonder about what things would be like if we did the opposite. If we did things differently, ignored the ways in which we're different. If we add value to who each other was and our identities. If we learned about each other and what smudging even is and how the library could benefit from having a feast or a sweat or sponsoring a round dance or doing other things that would not only encourage trust in the library but then open up the space to spiritual identity, that I think a lot of Indigenous people could take their Indigenous young people are craving from public services.

S.M.B.
My next question is kind of, kind of related to these questions around ceremony. I am curious in your work what it looks for you to have a relationship with the land and be connected to land as someone who is maybe travelling more than the average bear. What does it look like to be connected land and how does that inform your work?

I guess to give context, you know I'm now on the road about 220 days of the year, to different events, for speeches or interactions with young people, from coast to coast to coast across this country. And for me, I grew up on the farm and on the rez and also in the city, so the land has always been with me, the land has always been a part of my life. I always go back to the rez when, every time I come back to Saskatchewan cause that's sort of home page, that's sort of where I get my recharge.

S.M.B.
How far is your reserve from the city?

M.F.
It's about an hour and a half. Even though I'm living in downtown Toronto, I get back to the reserve about once a month. For me, that's foundational, that's essential. I think it's hard for Canadians to understand something. We, we native people, we're always talking about the land, what does that even mean? When I recharge, I go to Costco. It's just different ideas and different methodologies. And I always remember my dad and my

teachers saying, you know, when you got to out to the land, it's your pharmacy, it's your library, you know, you can read different plants and their messages, it's your playground, it's your court. There's natural laws, Creator's laws, that you can observe on the land. And it's also your church, it is the place where you can connect back to mâmawi-ohtâwîmâw in a way that is, that I find a little difficult sometimes in the city. Certainly, I use ceremony in the city but there's just something about being at home in my territory. To have that relationship to the land is so essential for a lot of native people, particularly if we grew up on the land and I think for those of us who grew up in urban centres, it's a relationship with the land that we're seeing more of a craving for. You can call it a romanticized creation but it's really, you know, the historical connection that we have to the land and you know our Knowledge Keepers will say that we're connected in our bones and in our blood to the land. And there's a rejuvenation that occurs when we do ceremony, when we visit our relatives on the land.

S.M.B.
To kind of go back to what we were talking about earlier, like about ceremony and mixed backgrounds. Do your white Norwegian grandparents come from a particular faith background or spiritual background? And, if so, how does it affect you?

M.F.
My grandparents were devout Lutherans. So, you know, my grandma and grandpa worked at the church. My grandma was on the Ladies' Aid Committee for decades and all these sorts of things. There were little articles written up about them and their commitment to the church in the local bulletin, the local newsletter throughout Saskatchewan. I was so lucky because they never pressured me to follow the church way. If I had questions, they'd answer them and, you know, I was so interested, and I loved going to church with my grandma and grandpa and hearing the hymns. You know, I thought they were so beautiful. And I think there's a lot to be learned from the church, you know, about how Canadians interact with religion and faith and what gives them motivation, the way that ceremony gives us motivation.

But I was really lucky in that my grandparents never pushed anything on me. And I grew my hair long, you know, I still have the braid and my grandma would just come up to me sometimes and say, "God gave you ears to put your hair behind them." And she would put my little rez braid, you know, that was a little disheveled from playing outside all day behind my ears and pat me on the head and continue on her way. I remember distinctly my grandpa taking a historical book of the area that he lived in and saying, "This is where the natives used to come and do their hunting." And that was his little affirmation to my bicultural self, that he was supportive. He understood, he loved me. And I think that's something that Canada could learn from my grandparents a lot. We could be different but to love Indigenous youth, their love for me despite our differences, was so foundational to feeling rooted in who I am. And if Canada can learn to love Indigenous youth the way that my grandparents loved, we'd all be better for it.

S.M.B.
It's really interesting to hear you talk about that because most Indigenous people tend to have a lot of baggage or like really ill feelings toward Christianity so it's really interesting to hear you talk about that not being true for you. I find here, it's expected of me to be anti-Christian and hostile towards Christianity from my coworkers but I'm actually a Christian. But we're still getting to know each other so [laughs]. On my mom's side they're Christian and on my dad's side they're surviving colonialism.

M.F.
My dad went to residential school. So, for me, this isn't black and white photographs, this isn't chaos long time ago, this isn't deep in our history. This is Dad, who I helped celebrate his birthday just yesterday, and as Canadians have heard about all the atrocity, that was done in residential school, Dad got the worst of it. Everything that people have heard about residential schools is stuff that my dad has endured. And he's spent a lot of time with that disruption. People call it different things, trauma or abuse. I like to call it disruption ‘cause it really disrupted his life for a lot of decades. And even within my lifetime, he's been sober for about thirty years now. Any child, any grandchild of a residential school survivor, also carries that disruption. And I think you rightly point out, there is a culture of hostility towards Canada, towards Canadians, towards Christianity, you know. These are constituencies that have done us great harm. And certainly, Dad was angry for a lot of the time. Dad carried that anger with him, anger that you wouldn't believe but when I was born, he'd done the work you know. He came to ceremony, he back to his teachers. He always talked about his experience. He didn't hide it from us, he didn't hide it from me and my siblings. But he always talked about his experience matter of fact, plain as day, without a lot of emotional intervention. It was just things that happened to him. Things that he wasn't happy that it happened to him but he had healed enough that he could just talk about his experience without being overcome with anger or shame or other emotions that I think some survivors, rightly so, still feel.

You know, my dad gave me one of the greatest gifts that a survivor of genocide could give, and that's hope. He didn't pass on his anger, his hurt, his damage. Or else I'm sure that I would angry at Canada, I'm sure that I'd be angry at Canadians, I'm sure that I'd be angry at Christianity. How could you not be when those things hurt someone who you love so much? From Dad's gift, I was able to come to church with my grandma and my grandpa, and listen to those beautiful hymns and hear about values that Christ spread the message out, you know, humanity, and peace and prosperity and other sorts of things that actually are very similar to, to Lodge teachings and to the teachings I heard in various families. It comes back again to we're not so different, you and I.

S.M.B.
So, I really appreciate hearing like your upbringing related to things. I wanted to switch gears a little bit and talk about white fragility. I'm just really curious how you navigate this. For me, like, one of the biggest challenges in my work is being a supervisor to a team of library technicians, who supervise library assistants. Also, within that organizational structure, like there's supervision of pages, of students. And, besides one person, it's been all white [laughs] team that I supervise and one of the strategic

directions of the Thunder Bay Public Library over the next five years is to decolonize. We have like sort of this mandate from, from our directors, and really from the community, to decolonize the library. And so, a big part of that in my job as a supervisor is to help this, this team of white staff understand their bias. I wouldn't even call it unconscious bias [laughs], and their privilege and their fragility, and their, the ways sometimes in which their actions can have racist effects. Or, the ways in which they're just not curious about why there are no Indigenous people coming to their programming, when our city is twenty-five percent Indigenous.

And so, I'm caught between this tension between, like I want to be really direct and blunt and call out racism when I see it. And speak really plainly about it and like the need to be more diplomatic because people might shut if they feel too offended. But then it's frustrating for me ‘cause I think that if I am taking this very diplomatic approach in how I deal with racial conflict at work, then it's inherently not anti-racist because its centering the needs of white people. And the comfort of white folks. So, I was wondering, like in your work, how do you navigate it? What is your wisdom in dealing with all the people you meet that have racism and might not have realized it and who might be quite sensitive. There was someone that I had a meeting with a couple of weeks ago that was asking about this sort of thing and she said, "Oh, Sam, you have to remember that white people are precious." [Laughs] Do you have thoughts on that? Because I see, I see that you are good at this diplomatic thing but are there moments where you choose not to be that way?

M.F.
Yeah, and I was raised by very traditional people so that the way I interact with the world is sort of very traditional. You know, to be direct is such a, such a you know contravening of nêhiyaw law and nêhiyaw way of life.

You know, my, my first thing is to always, you know, to try and tell a story. And, you know, I catch a lot of shit for this and our people, you know, I'm sorry if I'm not allowed to swear, from people, you know Indigenous people, who say, "Max you're too nice." [Sam: Laughs]. "You're too nice to Canadians." "You're too nice to white people." And you know what, maybe that's true and may it's because I love them and maybe it's because, you know, I see them as my family. But you know I think about this past summer when I was speaking to two thousand nurses from across the province of Saskatchewan. We know that nurses interact with Indigenous people at such a high rate because Indigenous people have such poor health outcomes. And I told them a story, I told them who we were, you know, I went and told them about the treaty relationship that was founded on peace and prosperity and I told them things that both our ancestors had envisioned.

And afterward, I heard from a friend whose mother was in that crowd, who held some pretty hurtful views about native people and she texted her daughter that day and said, "Why doesn't everyone want to learn about reconciliation?" And she texted her daughter, "Maybe I'm holding some racist views that are harmful?" "And maybe I need to learn more about who native people and who my clients are, who my patients are?"

And this is a woman, who what I'm hearing from her daughter, was totally unwilling to engage on the topic of reconciliation, unwilling to engage on topics of anti-racism, you know, all these sorts of things. And, after an hour of time with me, was willing to be open to the idea that she held racist views. Now, I'm not some great disciple of reconciliation. I don't think it's any special skill that I have that changed this woman's mind. I think it's because I approached with respect and understanding who she was and who were the nurses were in the room and I said, "I know that sometimes you feel frustrated by my people. What you don't see is the past, you know, 150 years of mistreatment that we've suffered that causes that." And you say things like that and you see people in the room shifting. You see people in the room going sort of, "Hmmmm, I never thought about it like that before." And if I can get to "Hmm, I've never thought about it like that before," you know, I know that our people are better off and I get shit from you know native people, particularly academics and those who choose to spend a lot of their time on Twitter and social media, all these sorts of things, who seem to have all the greatest ideas in the world about how to decolonize. Or who talk a lot about to get land back, things that I'm very much in favour of. To me, reconciliation is a worthy and worthwhile endeavour.

And we hear a lot more questioning of that from, from our people on social media, different constituencies who don't think reconciliation is worth their time. Now I've chosen very deliberately to engage in this work. I think it's worthy, it's worthwhile and it's changing hearts and minds. I know that going into a room of a couple of thousand nurses and berating for things that we know are true, isn't going to change anybody's heart. It's going to change anybody's mind. It's going to change anybody to say, "Well maybe there is something more here." They're going to look at me, say, "Ah, another Indian presentation" and tune out for the next forty-five minutes to an hour. I know that my intervention at that nurses conference has the opportunity to save lives of native people. To ensure that native people are treated with the care and respect that they deserve. That they're seen as people, that is a revolutionary concept for this country. It wasn't so long ago that we weren't seen as people. Now, do I get the same sort of satisfaction that I would from maybe calling somebody out directly and, and saying that they're upholding values of settler-colonialism and the patriarchal, hegemonic, you know, all these sorts of things? No! But did I hear from many nurses that that changed the way they saw their patients, our people, our relatives, my Dad? yes! And so, for me, will I take the pontification from our people on Twitter and on, on Facebook who say, "Max you're too nice to white people" or "You're too nice to Canadians" to be able to continue doing this work? I will unapologetically because I know that I'm changing people's opinion and I know that's what my family has asked me to go and do in the world.

And I know it's hard, I want to stress, that it's hard. And, if I'm brutally honest, it takes everything out of me. I will walk off the stage, you know and I did this a few weeks ago when I was talking to about four thousand, and I walked off the stage and I nearly collapsed. I came very close. I had to hold onto something because it takes so much out of you to be truthful, to tell the truth in a way that people can engage in and it's so hard for us. And that's why I go back to my dad who spent a lot of his time healing so that he

was able to do this work. He was able to educate our own people about our traditional ceremonies, all this sort of stuff. And it's incumbent upon us native people and sometimes we have a hard time hearing this but we need to heal first before we go out and do the work. If you can't talk about your know your family's experience without breaking down, maybe you shouldn't be talking about it. If you can't go out there and talk to Canadians without your ears getting red from anger, [Sam: Laughs] you know, your face getting red from anger, then maybe you shouldn't be talking to Canadians. We have to heal too as native people. [Sam: Uhm hum]. And I certainly am not done healing, I still feel the echoes of, of the difficulty that my father has been given, what he has experienced but I am trying my best. And I've gotten to the point without feeling anger, I've gotten to a point where I can do this from what I'm hearing from my community and, and people who hear me, I can do it pretty effectively.

So it's, it's incumbent upon me, it's a responsibility to me to do this work. Not a responsibility of every native person to do this work. Sometimes, in fact, we shouldn't. So as native people we have to reflect and ask ourselves is it a part of our journey, our story, to engage in reconciliation because for, for everyone, you know, isn't always yes. You have to do our reflection ourselves.

S.M.B.
I really appreciate that. I think that sometimes it's the expectation of the non-Indigenous folks in the room, that we will always do that work and do that educating for them. You've given me a lot to think about, especially if I'm thinking about what I want out of the interaction and the thing that I want is for them to actually change and to actually do better work therefore in this community or do I want to feel justified in the interaction. [Max: You know] It's hard work [laughs], yeah.

M.F.
It's the hardest work and what I always say is, is that reconciliation isn't the solution, but what it is harm reduction. For me, I can go out and make sure that fewer of our youth are treated poorly or treated as troublemakers because of, of the words that I say to Canadians. You know, for you I think it's that they don't see, you know, a native kid who comes into the library as a troublemaker or you know, someone there just to loiter or someone they're going to have to keep their eye on. They are a community member, they are coming home to their library, their public service and how do we make them feel welcome? How do we make them feel like they know that what programs exist, how do we make sure that they know how to get onto Facebook at the library because that's a worthy endeavour too and, that's what the library is there for too. How are we in service of native youth? That's what this comes back to, no matter what. And for you and me, people who are leaders, people who can talk to Canadians, how do we make sure that our coworkers understand the honour of being in service of native youth? The privilege of being in service of native young people. That's hard work that we have to do, you and me.

S.M.B.
Yeah, I really appreciate your words on that cause I think it helps me have like a sort of refreshed vision for what is that I'm working for in all of this because I can get really lost in the [laughs] like, the soul draining work of dealing with racism internally in the organization.
Totally.

Thank you so much for sharing your thoughts with me and for sharing about your vision for reconciliation for Canada. I think that it's something that all people, including librarians in Ontario, [laughs] can learn from.

M.F.
That's great kinanâskomitin. I'm so grateful that you asked me to participate, I hope it's been useful for you and for your colleagues. And I think that through the work of librarians and through the work of all Canadians, we can achieve reconciliation in our lifetime and that's the goal.