

Vidya Shah ([00:00:09](#)):

Hello and welcome. My name is Dr. Vidya Shah and I'm an Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Education at York University. Welcome to the UnLeading project. I'm so very excited to be organizing this podcast series alongside Jocelyn Shih, Amanda Lima and Sayema Chowdhury. UnLeading asks us to question the taken for granted assumptions we have of leadership and asks how we might embody construct and imagine leadership differently when we centre different knowledge systems. If you are in education, this podcast series is for you. If you are in community, this podcast series is for you. If you're unsure of whether or not leadership is for you and you're questioning what leadership means, and this podcast series is definitely for you. Folks, you are in for a real treat today. We have a wonderful group of panelists that we'll be speaking about their ideas, their experiences, and their hopes for decolonizing and uncolonizing leadership. When we first met with this group, there was such palpable energy, and I know that as they share of themselves, their wisdom and their leadership, it will be as powerful for you as it has been for us. So if you want to know more about our panelists, so for their full bios and contact information, please check out the UnLeading webpage at www.yorku.ca/edu/unleading. Tanya Rodriguez drawing on the work of Eve Tuck and Wayne Yang in 2012, suggests that decolonization is for Indigenous people to these lands, while complications and complicities exist within historical and contemporary power asymmetries. While we do not all benefit from these systems of oppression in the same way and further, while some of us did not come to these lands by choice, and instead came by force. I hear Rodriguez' urge to people who are not Indigenous to these lands to consider the notion of uncolonizing over decolonizing, which she explains as a voluntary distancing and detaching from colonial mores. As a colonized settler on these lands, I am continuously grappling with my histories of colonization, indentured servitude, Indigenous roots in India, and my responsibilities as a treaty person on the stolen lands of Turtle Island. We begin each of our podcasts with the speaker who will help to frame the discussion to explore the tensions and contradictions, to look for sites of convergence and to consider moments for pause. In today's podcast, we have the wonderful Dr. Ann Lopez full Professor at OISE University of Toronto and author of "Decolonizing Leadership" who will spend some time helping us make sense of issues of colonization, coloniality, decolonizing and uncolonizing as they relate to conceptions of leadership. Welcome Anne.

Ann Lopez ([00:03:19](#)):

Thank you Vidya. Thank you so much for inviting me into this space, to share some thoughts around decolonizing and uncolonizing leadership. To start, the most important thing for me at least is to begin to think about leadership itself. And, as we all know, for those who are listening and so interested in this work and in understanding leadership, it is a contested term. It really impacts all of our lives. It's a contested term. We do not exactly know the meaning. It has many meanings, but we know when leadership is not present. Notwithstanding, we are discussing decolonizing and uncolonizing leadership because leadership has always been wrapped up in systems of power that has often reinforced ideologies and practices of the status quo and also in many ways perpetuated coloniality. As we're having this conversation today and framing this conversation around decolonizing and uncolonizing leadership, it is important for us to examine, to explore ways that coloniality is perpetuated through leadership. One of the things that I want us to look at today, Vidya, as we're looking at this is really to think about ways in which educational leadership in particular for a very long time was really the purview of the White male. Educational leadership in many ways have been grounded in White supremacy. It has been grounded in experiences of the dominant group of Eurocentric knowledges, ways of knowing. And so as we talk about decolonizing and uncolonizing, it is important for us to think also of coloniality, ways in which coloniality is perpetuated not only through knowledge, but also through power. And as we talk about leadership, it is so very important for us to think about ways in which settler colonialism brought with it, practices and

knowledge, and really heaped what I call and many scholars would call epistemic violence on those in education. And no aspect of education really has been spared from this kind of elimination, eradication, and as we say, destruction of knowledge, deconstruction of values. And so, much of leadership has been really ordered to this stripping away through this kind of coloniality of power and knowledge that has really taken hold and passed on through generations through practices. And so, as we begin and with our amazing panel today to talk about decolonizing and uncolonizing leadership its going to be important for us to think through some questions and really to think about what might that mean for practices, no matter where we are, doesn't matter where we're thinking about leadership or engaging in that practice. And so, in many ways, what we really want to do in this podcast and how in framing is really to think of ways in which coloniality can be disrupted in which the spaces where colonial education and the remnants of that, what I sometimes refer to as the colonial sludge, where that is really embedded in practices and perpetuated in ways that are really violent to students, violent to educators as well. And one of the folks, Vidya, that I really would like to draw on is Abdi. And he talks about colonialism in a psychological, educational, cultural, technological, economic, and political dimensions and ways in which this has not been cleansed from our schooling, from our practices. And in many ways continue to inform the work that we do. So I'm really, really grateful for the space to begin to think through how then do we move from really this space where we're wrestling with undoing disrupting dislodging, the colonial sludge, dislodging coloniality of power, dislodging coloniality of knowledge, and really to begin to think through them, how do we engage in this decolonizing process? And it really is about in many ways as, or a dear colleague, Marie Battiste says is really about actively resisting the colonial paradigms. And so, as we begin to think about and framing our conversations today, how we engage in decolonizing and particularly around educational leadership, what are some of the things that we have to unsettle? What are some of the practices that must be unsettled? What are some of the ways of thinking that must be unsettled? And then what does this look like as we engage in practice? And for those who might be listening, whether they are in Higher Ed, whether they are in K to 12, whether they're in their communities, whether they are in whatever the space is that they're engaging in, what does this look like? And what does this mean and what it is that we want to trouble? And so for me, as I'm beginning to think through this, I think the first place that we have to begin to trouble is that space of self. What's the self that we bring to this decolonizing process? What is it that we ourselves have to think about? What it is that we also have to unsettle in our minds? What it is that we have to unsettle in how we embody, in how we engage in the space. And so I think that really is an important aspect as we begin to think through and begin to think of practices and ways that we engage in the decolonizing, decolonial process. The other thing that I think Vidya that way, we also it's so important to think about is our connections to community. What does that look like and how do educational leaders honour that space? What are the practices? What must be dislodged, what must be revoked, what must be reclaimed as we begin to think through decolonizing, and uncolonizing educational leadership. And so, in framing the conversations for this evening, I think it's very important as we're thinking through this process to think about some questions. And so, for example, how do colonialism, settler colonialism, coloniality, White supremacy and neoliberalism limit the possibilities and constructs of educational leadership? What might that look like? And really, how do we begin to unpack and to unsettle and really tease through what it means to decolonize and uncolonize and what do those spaces look like once we're in that process? Also, to engage our listeners, to think about what are some of the key elements of this leadership? What might that praxis look like? What does that feel like in the space and as well, we're going to be thinking through and having conversations around what are some of the possibilities that this new thinking and way of re-imagining and really reconstructing thinkings around leadership. What are some of the possibilities for leaders in leadership as we begin to open up spaces for decolonizing and really, uncolonizing and Vidya one of the things hopefully that we're going to be teasing out for our listeners today is this whole idea also of the possibilities, as well as the tensions and how decolonizing and uncolonizing, what's the

interplay, what's the interplay between those two ideas. So thank you Vidya, and looking forward to the rest of the conversations this evening.

Vidya Shah ([00:12:08](#)):

Oh Ann, thank you so much. Thank you for setting such a beautiful tone for us. I'm thinking about what you said with regards to epistemic violence and the deconstruction of knowledges and values from around the world. And that so sits very deeply with me, the idea that starting with self and connections to community and reclaiming ourselves and our spaces and our knowledge systems. Thank you so much for opening up the space for us and for asking such wonderful questions for us to move into and to think about more deeply. I now have the wonderful opportunity to introduce some of our panelists that will take up some of the questions that Ann just posed for us. First step, I would like to introduce Kahontakwas Diane Longboat. Welcome Diane.

Kahontakwas Diane Longboat ([00:12:57](#)):

Thank you so much Vidya. It's lovely to be with all of our listeners this evening and to dig deeply into these questions. Thank you so much Ann for bringing us to a place where we can actually in a very safe space and in a very creative space, embrace all of these questions. Thank you.

Vidya Shah ([00:13:18](#)):

Thank you, Kahontakwas and welcome to Aina-Nia Ayo'dele.

Aina-Nia Ayo'dele ([00:13:24](#)):

Hello, and thank you so much Vidya for inviting me into this space. I am so very excited that we are examining, exploring, disrupting, really looking at opportunities for uncolonizing and decolonizing leadership. So thank you so much for inviting me here.

Vidya Shah ([00:13:50](#)):

So happy you're here. Welcome Nick Bertrand.

Nick Bertrand ([00:13:54](#)):

[Speaking in First language]. Thanks so much, Vidya for having me here this evening and to Ann for bringing our minds together around the focus of our conversation here this evening. I'm really looking forward to this chat. Selfishly, I think I'm looking forward to it the most because I know that I'm going to learn a tremendous amount in the time that we have here together. So tonight is a real gift for myself to be with everyone here to share and to learn. Thanks so much.

Vidya Shah ([00:14:30](#)):

Thank you Nick, and I feel the exact same way such a gift. And Pam Agawa, welcome.

Pam Agawa ([00:14:34](#)):

[Speaking in First language]. Thank you so much for inviting me to this conversation, just to echo my brother Nick's words. This is such a gift and Miigwetch Ann for opening us this evening in a really good way, and really positioning our thinking for a wonderful conversation.

Vidya Shah ([00:14:59](#)):

Oh, so folks let's dive into what I know is going to be a wonderful conversation. As we were thinking about this and you know, for the listeners, we really wanted to get a sense of what possibilities emerge from decolonizing and uncolonizing leadership. What specific examples can the panelists share about what possibilities exist in these spaces that might not exist in more colonized spaces. So Aina-Nia would you like to share your thoughts first?

Aina-Nia Ayo'dele ([00:15:32](#)):

I love that question, and again, all that Ann has shared, but when I think about decolonizing and uncolonizing leadership, the first thing that comes to me is liberation. You know, the possibility of true liberation, what will emerge from this way of leadership is freedom and love and ultimately peace. When we move away from these old colonial ways and how we think of leadership as this hierarchical, structural of control and a singular way of being, we will then begin to see leadership and the diversity of leaders all around us. You know, the woman who struggles each day to feed her family, but is also supporting her village and her community and workplace and the various ways. The young person who brings insights that comes from lived experiences and not theory, the ordinary people, the ordinary people who I think are extraordinary, who integrate their life lessons and know that leadership is about the individual, as well as the collective. That leadership is the person, as well as the community, you know, the possibility of working together and seeing the strength. I think about the way we are as Indigenous African people or Indigenous people of this land, where we look at the newborn, the new born tells the elders and their mother, their parents, even before they came, who they are and what they're bringing into this life. And then they come in and we promote that and embrace that and strengthen that - that's the leader and that leader then contributes to the community. So when we decolonize this way of leadership, we then open ourselves up to experience these multiple ways and these strengths that are common, and I get excited just thinking about that possibility. That collective leadership, which sees the strength in each of us as leaders, the strength of community and really it's about self love for community and societal love, growth and acceptance. And I could go on and go on, but I'm going to pause there for a minute for the other panelists that I have so much more to share, so I can come back to it. But let me pause just for a moment at the possibilities of seeing leadership from this uncolonized decolonized space.

Vidya Shah ([00:18:12](#)):

I just love that Aina-Nia, and I think about how rarely you hear the word love associated with education or with leadership, and it just such a profound statement to equate them and so simple at the same time. And shouldn't at all be about all the time, this idea of leading in and with community and as community. Oh, such great ideas. Pam, I know you had some thoughts on this as well.

Pam Agawa ([00:18:43](#)):

I think really it's just to continue building on that idea and we need to move away from a space - there seems to be a lot of head work happening in leadership. And I think, Indigeneity, we lead with our heart and, my auntie always says, it's all about the heart to heart connections that we make with people. And sometimes the head part gets ahead of the heart part. I think that's where we start to see complications in leadership. I mean, I would just ask people to imagine leading with your heart and leading without that hierarchical construction that exists within our system. I think a lot of the time, those pieces become huge barriers for us. If we aren't working in relationship with community, with our students, for community, for our students, then I think we're in the wrong profession. I mean, coming into education, one of the things that I loved was that I would be surrounded by students and children every day and

that I could have the potential of moving or shifting or building a connection with them every day. After 20 years, I can still say my favorite part of education is still the students and families that I serve. I think we definitely need to reframe our position more into a position of service, in relationship with our community members and our students, and move away from this colonial construct of leadership being hierarchical, being figure heads, and being very political. I think that that could pose some challenges within our system.

Vidya Shah ([00:20:22](#)):

Thank you so much, Pam. I think this idea of leading, leading with heart is oftentimes I feel like we are talking heads walking around and saying what needs to be said and questioning all of that. But there's a difference between intelligence and wisdom between accountability and responsibility, it engages different parts of us. Thank you so much for naming the importance of centering heart in this work. Another thing that we're thinking about is this idea of how does decolonizing and uncolonizing leadership or approaches to decolonizing and uncolonizing leadership, how do they disrupt our ideas of both schooling and leadership and what challenges might leaders face in leading from this standpoint? Nick, did you want to share thoughts on this?

Nick Bertrand ([00:21:13](#)):

Sure. Yeah, it's a big question and I want to thank Aina-Nia and Pamala for their thoughts because their words have sort of struck a chord with me around something I want to speak to today, which is relational accountability and love. Unconditional love and in leadership, treating one another like family, but just before I maybe jump into that, I think that idea of leadership to Aina-Nia, thank you for talking about that sort of flattening of hierarchy, because I think in education when you work with kids, everyone's a leader, that's critical. When I think about sort of this decolonized and uncolonized model leadership, there's two components that sort of stick out to me that I think are critical to how we might be able to move forward. And I can talk about how that will disrupt our ideas of schooling in a moment. But those two key pieces for me are this idea of relationship, as Pamala has just spoken to and/or relational accountability and that we truly need a system. The second part is that system needs to be informed directly by those individuals who experience it. And so by that, what I'm saying is that youth play a critical role in a decolonized education system. So when I think about those two pieces, it truly does disrupt our idea of schooling in general because if we think about relational accountability, what that means is that at all levels of the system, all across what is education, we need to invest the time to authentically build relationships. When we're sitting in a position of leadership or perceived power, this is truly where we need to see these cultures of listening at practice. That is in my experience vastly different from the colonial system, which is very reactive in nature and often speaks over top of those voices. So certainly that disrupts that type of leadership system, but it's funny, we were chatting about relational accountability on the weekend, actually in one of the AQ courses that I facilitate with Nancy Rowe. We were talking about this idea of relational accountability and she said something really powerful, and it really stuck with me and that I'm not going to do it justice. She said in a decolonized leadership, she was talking about from her perspective, she said, leaders should have the very least of us all. I kind of leaned in a little closer to really understand what it was that she was saying. And she said, because true leaders will give everything to those folks who they are in service to. And I thought, wow, isn't that powerful? And she said, but the kicker is when you're in this relational accountability, the paradigm at play here is that you really don't have nothing as a leader. She said, because when you do fall on hard times or when you are in need, she said, you can look to those individuals who you've given everything to, and they will take care of you. My mind just kind of paused there for a moment. I sat with her words because they were so powerful and it takes me back to what Aina-Nia has just shared, which is

love. Could you imagine a system that treated one another like family and that positioned love at the core of everything that we do? What would come from that? We know trust would be in place because we're family, we trust one another. We know that we would have an unwavering commitment to one another and how we do business together. When I think about anything that I look to in my time in education that I've done that maybe I see as being positive, I can't think of anything that was done in isolation, but it was done in firm, authentic and relationships that go beyond work. They go deeper than that. I think that idea of relational accountability is just so critical, but also, the other piece that I spoke to that I think might be important is this notion that in a decolonized system, kids need to be at the table and not in a tokenized way where we have one voice and it's a position and we check the box, but that they're there in a way where there are structures of advocacy behind them to gather up their voices and to bring a united voice. It's everything, kids need to be at the table and youth at the appropriate age, for everything, from funding decisions, to the programs that we put into place, all of those pieces, even the learning that they experience. Curriculum, they need to be at those tables because could you imagine how honest and true our education system would be if we had kids sitting right beside us during every important decision that was in front of us. We would give them everything that we have. There would be no ego in that, it would be all about the kids. So I've been thinking about this idea of how, how that would disrupt business and that would be a huge shift in how we do things, relationships, and having kids right by our side, every single time that we make a decision,

Vidya Shah ([00:27:04](#)):

Oh, Nick. So powerful, the idea of relational accountability and being accountable to students in every decision we make such, again, it's powerfully simple, that should be how every decision is made and yet given colonial structures, it seems it's something that we just take for granted that they would not be part of our regular decision-making. So thank you so much for naming that. Pam, did you want to share as well?

Pam Agawa ([00:27:34](#)):

Well, I think Nick framed that incredibly well seeing as though I am part of Nick's circle and family in this work and outside of the work, quite honestly. There are two things that I kind of want to keep rolling along. I think with the cultures of listening, oh my goodness. Imagine going to a learning session and actually just sitting in the space and listening, not taking notes, not having to engage on social media, just giving your whole self to that person and/or that speaker. I just think that that's so powerful. When we move in spaces of institutions, such as education, there seems to be this like fight for voice. So I wonder, how do we create cultures of listening and model? Because as leaders, we should be modeling those cultures of listening. So I love that Nick. I think you've hit it well when you say that students' voices need to be at the table in every decision making space. I think I would push that to say that when we hear what they need to say, and they are our accountability people, I believe, we also need to create action from that. And so ensure that that voice is driving what our next actions are within this system. I know that I've often said in the work of Anti-racism, it's not the kids that really need to be taught. It's the adults. I think that the more that we can find space and time to empower and listen to them, please listen to them. They know, and then creating action from that. We have enough data showing who we serve and who we don't. We have gathered student voice in terms of who we serve and who we don't. We need to create concrete action, not just strategies, alongside accountability frameworks that has to be centred, like that is the work. I think a lot about, we talk about students' voices, but our families too, they need to be heard. They're in these spaces, advocating for their children, and we need to cultivate that culture of listening to our families. I remember sitting with a parent for over two hours and hearing their story, I can tell you two things came from that conversation. One, I wholeheartedly understood that

student's lifeline, quite honestly, I understood the moments in her life when she experienced specific trauma. I understood that sometimes there may be triggers in our system that would reactivate that trauma, and then I could build those supports around that young lady and her family. I think that that's the work that we have to do. Part of the question you've asked us tonight is what challenges we face in leading from this standpoint? This is not a way that we see a lot of leadership leading. One of the challenges that we experience is simply just risk, risk of being judged, risk of being held back, maybe in promotion, risk of not being supported because maybe someone who needs to support you in that work isn't understanding how to lead that way. But, I think that all of the gains that we can make by also leading this way. I think about building that trust, that relational trust that Nick's talking about with our communities and our families and our students. The thing that I love the most is when the students will say to me, I know I can bring an issue to you and it will be addressed. I love that I have had the ability and afforded the space to build that trust with the students, but all of that can't come overnight. It comes from being able to serve in a position. I mean, they are positions of power for an extended period of time. I remember Dr. Alan Luke speaking at an international conference, and he said to really facilitate change or lead change, you need to lead for anywhere from seven to eight years. Well, when we're moving administrators in the system every three to four years, how can we really have change in that particular school building? We need to rethink how we define leadership, what our expectations of leadership are. As Ann opened and said, how do we honour knowledge systems outside of the dominant ideology?

Vidya Shah ([00:32:19](#)):

Thank you so much, Pam, such important pieces there around relational trust and around action and accountability systems that need to be put into place and centering all that from a place of love. As folks are talking, what's really coming up for me is there's a lot of folks that talk about the importance of interruption and dismantling and interrupting, and that isn't always spoken about in the context of love and humanity. And then you have other folks that are talking about love and humanity, but absent from that conversation are conversations of power. And so I'm wondering what's really coming up for me in this conversation is some examples of what it looks like to centre both of those things together. And another question that's coming up for me is how might leaders lead with, and for love and with, and with and for humanity, if leaders themselves haven't, or aren't experiencing that love and humanity? These are big questions, so I'll just sort of put them out there, but I'd love to hear as well from Aina-Nia.

Aina-Nia Ayo'dele ([00:33:30](#)):

Yes, that's a really good question, but can I just add on to what Nick and Pamala were talking about? This relational accountability it's so rarely spoken about. So I thank you so much for bringing that into the conversation because that relational accountability creates solutions. Our colonial processes are inherently Anti-Indigenous, Anti-Black, homophobic, ableist, it's all about the othering. Then it creates barriers to do anything but that. It creates barriers to see assets in everyone, right? I often think of when I think about relational accountability is one of the key tenants in the work that I do around sacred leadership. I've even brought it into the city, to be honest in my own way. This is about really emphasizing our responsibility and accountability to each other in a gentle, loving way, not downward support, but what's holding up accountability and responsibility, the holding up, and this whole idea of when we say by us for us. I think it was Pamala talked about students bringing students into the decision making. I see that as bringing students into decision-making then having them hold us accountable cause there's a lot of fear around that. But, how awesome that is, because it means that we're always working for them. Or, I think about the government system and bringing residents into the centre of the decision making, not this consulted thing that tends to happen, but bringing residents into the centre of the

decision making, meaning that they are the focus, their voice is the focus, their experience, their leadership in however they lead is the focus.

Aina-Nia Ayo'dele ([00:35:51](#)):

There's a lot of fear around that. There's a lot of fear around that, but that's exactly what we need to do, is embrace, promote, bring relational accountability into the mix of how we lead everything. I think about some of the work that I've done in this with women, in particular, around sacred leadership and it's us holding each other accountable and us being responsible. This idea of I say to my mother. My mother lives in Jamaica and she tends to worry about, oh my goodness, you have nobody there. You have nobody. And I say, I have this community that holds me that I hold, and so we take care of each other. So I'm so grateful that you brought that up, and before I move away from that the question you brought up Vidya around, how do we love and disrupt? How do we love and disrupt the system? And it is about the self-love starting there first, inside out approach, so that when we disrupt we're disrupting in a loving way.

Vidya Shah ([00:37:06](#)):

Disrupting in a loving way, that is a life goal for me. Ann, did you want to jump in as well?

Ann Lopez ([00:37:15](#)):

Yes, thank you so much Vidya. This conversation has just been so wonderful, listening to stories of Nick and Pam and Aina-Nia. I just wanted to share, as you asked, Vidya, around this idea of what are some of the ideas that we're going to disrupt and what are some of the challenges. One of the things I want to draw on is the work of Ted Manson, who talks about this idea of restoring capacity instead of building capacity, as we think about decolonizing spaces and how leaders are going to do this through love and humanity. He talks about this idea that for so long, the colonizers really took away our capacity. They stood in the way of us showing what we have, showing what we can bring. So in the decolonizing process, it is so important, I think anyway, for leaders to let students know and to bring in the voices of community that they actually have capacity. And that there's actually knowledge. This I think is so very, very important in terms of what are some of the ideas that will need to be disrupted. So this idea that there's this vacant place and we're going to bring all of these skills. No, the skills and knowledge actually already resides there. So there's this idea of restoring capacity, which is so very important to the decolonizing process. And as Aina-Nia, Pam and Nick are talking about community and students and in spaces and how much knowledge is already in these spaces and much knowledge that oftentimes is crushed through hierarchical leadership and really what we take on in education as a way of going about business. And just quickly, Vidya, I just thought I would like to share maybe some of the challenges that I think we have to think through. I think Pam mentioned this whole idea of people just feeling that there are going to be challenges and issues around if they begin to do this work openly and really, sense of harm to their personhood. But I think we also, some of the challenges we have to name is this idea of what I refer to as the embeddedness. The embeddedness of coloniality that sometimes is obvious, but sometimes it's almost invisible in the practices and, and in the policies. We constantly have to dig deep and really work hard at removing, I would say, some of these policies and practices that are so embedded in coloniality, colonial ways of thinking that those go into leadership. I think it's Pam who talked about this hierarchical way that we go in and we just pick up, but look for ways that we can begin to disrupt as we're moving along in the process. It's going to be challenging, but I think it's so important to bring in the knowledge that was already there of our ancestors that was passed down through the stories. The colonizers made us feel as if we are without knowledge. I think it's Linda Tuhiwai Smith who talks about taking away our rangatirantanga, our mana, taking away our insights. I think it's so very

important to be supportive. I think Vidya, this all comes around. I think I can already feel the theme of this evening is leading with love and humanity. And so I think it's just very exciting as we think through that. So I just wanted to share that little bit.

Vidya Shah ([00:41:09](#)):

Oh Ann, thank you so much. Thank you so much and restoring capacity, what a beautiful way of thinking about this. As we about what we might want leaders to take away from this conversation, some key key points. Kahontakwas, we haven't had a chance to hear from you yet, and we'd love to hear your thoughts on that question.

Kahontakwas Diane Longboat ([00:41:35](#)):

Thank you so much, Vidya. My name is Kahontakwas, and I want to say [speaking in First language]. You know, this conversation has been so rich and so deep. I want to throw out some ideas for you to consider. And that is, that as we talk about deconstructing, uncolonizing these systems, I want to say to you that this, these systems are already obsolete. These systems don't even represent the people that are the colonizers. And it is really the young people in this generation with all of their gifts of vision and ability to see into the future, to learn from the past, to pick up many languages all at once, to be able to have profound and deep memory. Their capacities far outweigh all of us who are sitting here this evening, talking about these issues. And that is because the prophecies have all said that the young people born in this generation are going to change the world and they need to be spiritually activated and uplifted and believed in for the gifts that they bring into the world. I want to talk about the spirit of the child, and it really is an education system that looks at the cognitive capacity, a little bit of the physical capacity, even less of the emotional capacity of the child and virtually zero on the spiritual nature of the child. And, as we move into this era, the one that we live in now, the one that's coming in front of us with this next generation of young people, it is this spirit that has to be uplifted. It has to be activated. It has to be supported and affirmed. And if we don't do that, then we are going to allow colonialism to overpower our people in many different ways. And it's nothing short of a wholesale change in human values that will revitalize an education system that truly respects humanity and its beauty and diversity and richness and respects the land where we live. And so, this is an important conversation because we're talking here now about compassionate leadership. And we're talking about a concept that we have in our culture called [speaking in First language]. And that is, a natural human being with a good mind, sharing a real sense of consciousness, of relationship to all the beings in creation, equitably across all creation, being inclusive and embracing the richness of diversity. That concept of a good mind is embedded in those values of kindness, compassion, empathy, sharing, generosity, caring for one another and love. Those are the highest values of our people. I believe those are the highest values of all Indigenous peoples throughout the world. So when I say to you that there has to be a wholesale change in human values in order for, not necessarily deconstructing the education system, but revitalizing an education system that is constructed on those essential human values and ethics. That's what's going to change how our children learn. And I'll just tell you straight up after I was trained as a teacher in the system, and I practiced taught in that system - there was nothing in that system that made me want to stay there and be a teacher, nothing, because there was no love in that system. And when I felt and saw for myself, what was existing in that system, I walked away from it and I walked into a world of education for evaluation, policy development, curriculum design, that kind of thing, to start to look at how do we move this system. So, when I think about the education system that our people have, we're in a process now at Six Nations in the Grand River territory of looking at our entire system and bringing thought leaders together to say, what is it that we need moving into the future to build a strong Haudenosaunee child? What does that child need to be strong and stand in the

world? And looking at all the values that underpin the building of that child. And it seems like a monumental task, but we have all the answers that we need. We have the people in place that we need to build that system. This is for me, an important pivotal time for the human family. When I think about the spiritual calling that every single one of us on this podcast has, every single one of us has been called to serve in the world as a compassionate leader, a loving leader. One of our elders talked to me about leadership. And what he said was this. He said, a leader does not stand above the people, a leader in true fact stands underneath the people. You do your very best work in your life to give everything that you have. So that that next generation of leaders, you can raise them up and you can see the very best in all of their capacities. You can say to the Creator, I've done my best work to enrich this generation of young people. And I raised them up to you, Creator, for a blessing because they have gone further than I have. They've been emboldened with Spirit to walk in the world, to be a hundred percent functioning human being because we always talk about the cognitive abilities of the child. And we have the EQAO which is serving, but what do we talk about in terms of the spiritual nature of the child, their gifts that they're going to bring into the world, how many young people have you ever run into in your life? Who say, I don't understand who I am. I don't understand the gifts that I carry. I don't understand why I'm born into this life. When you start to look at the suicide rates among Indigenous peoples, whether it's here or anywhere in the world, young people need to be lifted up for the spiritual nature that they carry because it's a spiritual fire that they have that feeds their hearts, their emotions inspires their minds and the physicality of them. It feeds their physical nature for optimal physical performance. There's no other way. There is no other way to raise up the child. Until these education systems, whether it's here or anywhere in the world, realize that they're only doing part of their work and then move into a place of courage, fearlessness, being bold to make those changes. Our children are going to continue to suffer. That's the decision we have to make. I look at a school in my community and sometimes people will say, well, where did these schools exist? Look in First Nations. Typically those schools that are in First Nations will be started by their family members, who cooked lunches for the children, raise all the money for the school, clean the school at night and make sure that the school is open and ready to go in the morning. Parents do that. Parents fund the school, hardworking parents who have very little live month to month, but they believe in an education system for their children that will build their children into strong spiritual human beings, emotional human beings, physical human beings, of course, strong as physically they can be, but also have that cognitive capacity to do whatever they need to do in the world. But, we have to start with the spirit. I want to share that with you because when we talk about education, the system that we have at present is absolutely and totally obsolete. When we talk about the young people having a voice in the system, that's what they're going to tell you. So, as compassionate leaders, loving caring leaders, what do you take on as your responsibility to disrupt that system and revitalize the system that you know needs to be built. I leave that challenge with you, [speaking in First language]. Thank you.

Vidya Shah ([00:51:15](#)):

Thank you so much Kahontakwas. My eyes were closed as you were speaking, and I was just imagining and picturing what the revitalizing of a system, of education systems might look like. Thank you, thank you for that invitation to action and to being for all of us so powerful. Aina-Nia, did you want to share thoughts on this question, what you hope leaders might takeaway from this conversation?

Aina-Nia Ayo'dele ([00:51:44](#)):

I'm still sitting, bare with me cause I'm still sitting with what my Elder just shared. I'm sitting with that because everything that she shared is what I feel has been the work of sacred leadership, what I call sacred leadership, with simply just mean leading from a place, a sacred place, a spiritual place. What I'm hoping that those who are listening, who are taking this in we'll do some of the things I want folks to

take away is that you have a responsibility to decolonize leadership. It's your responsibility. It's my responsibility. It's our responsibility as a leader, as in however you're leading, especially in education. You have a responsibility to decolonize leadership by disrupting the system that Kahontakwas just talked about is already obsolete. But it's embedded, it's there, so we have to disrupt it. What that may mean is that you have to unlearn how you have been nurtured into leadership and how you have been practicing a default leadership. Then you have to choose to step out of your own complacency, which I see as complacency as a greater threat to change than the discomfort of disruption. Let's step out of that complacency and be uncomfortable. It may mean that you have to stand fully in your power to experience the discomfort because it's going to be uncomfortable. It's going to be uncomfortable. Disruption is uncomfortable, but as long as we're self-loving, we can get through it. And it's kind of like having a fire going and walking through the fire and you don't get burned. That's what love does in the disruption I believe. It may also mean that you taking on the responsibility of disrupting the colonized leadership may mean that you yourself have to lose your own privilege and position of the so-called leadership. You may just have to give up your own privileged position. I want folks to think about that and think about decolonizing and uncolonizing leadership does not mean saviorism. I want you to remove the idea of saviourism because sometimes especially in the anti-racism, anti-oppression world, there is this belief of saviourism. Nobody needs you to save them. Saviourism is colonialism and it actually reinforces the ideas and the standards of better than otherness as power. Remove that from your thinking, and de-program that thought because nobody needs you to save them. Start with seeing empathy and start with yourself, start with the decolonizing of your own mind so that you can disrupt these colonized, obsolete ways that exist. Those are the things that I'm hoping that folks will walk away with, and most importantly, remember to model the behaviors that you're trying to change.

Vidya Shah ([00:55:51](#)):

Thank you so much, Aina-Nia. Thank you. Oh, what a rich conversation. Nick, did you have thoughts on this question?

Nick Bertrand ([00:56:02](#)):

I mean, I operate on hope every single day. I think it's a necessary part of the work to continue to do what it is that myself and many others do in education to push back and to question and to disrupt in ways, in a good way to get traction and movement for what I described as our most sacred responsibility, which is our youth. My hope on the very practical level, I'll be honest, I am sitting here listening and I am just blown away with what has been shared here. My hope is that everybody listens to this because I am loving every single moment of it. I want to say [speaking in First language] to all of the panelists here for giving me this gift of learning. I think one of the things, when I think about hope, I think about, when I share with educators to try and position them about where I'm coming from and why I think the work of decolonizing and uncolonizing is so important. The first bullet that I'll often share is that we need to have a very clear understanding that the education system that seems to be operating en masse and the nation was designed for Indigenous people and in complete absence of them. In that design, the goal was in many ways to eliminate us from the conversation. We know that the methods deployed in doing that were very violent, in nature. That's an important foundational truth that I share with folks, because I found myself not long ago, we all have those days where we question what it is that we're doing, we question everything that we've done, whether it's been enough or whether it's even worthy. And it's in those moments where, you raised a really good question Vidya, about how do we love ourselves in a system that maybe doesn't love us? This is where friendship and our circles are so important, and Pam is one of those individuals. She is somebody who I pick up the phone on those days and have a conversation about where I'm at and find comfort in that she will have the words, even if she doesn't

have the words, she'll listen. Again, there's that culture of listening, cause she's a great leader, just listen. Sometimes that's all that we need, but for myself, I found great hope and I'm actually looking right now at a copy of Dr. Marie Battiste's "Decolonizing Education," and, Ann I'm so happy that you brought her name up because it was a few months ago where I had the opportunity to hear her speak. Her words truly sat with me in giving me hope for what might happen. I'm going to share this quickly because I think it's relevant and important. She talks about decolonizing education and sort of this two tiered model. She said, we need to understand where we're at in that model right now. The first tier of decolonizing education is about deconstructing what is currently in place. And she said we do that deconstruction through a whole variety of means, whether that's naming inequitable policies, naming the eraser of Indigenous people from the education system, constantly bringing to light the continued oppression systemically, that Indigenous people endure. She talked about intergenerational trauma and naming that. Of course, the fact that all of us need to interrupt our thinking because she talks about cognitive imperialism. She said in education our efforts are really locked into that system of deconstruction. And I thought, yeah, maybe that's what it is that I'm trying to do. Kind of pull out some of these pins through education, through love and through trying to do it with a good mind and a good heart with people that maybe were able to pull out some of these pins and Kahontakwas talked about the youth and what that will mean for them in the future. It's not to pin all the, that's not what I'm saying on the youth, because we all have a collective responsibility to make the change now. It's that in this deconstruction, if we think of that as a long term project so much will be good, in terms of setting up the youth for going over to the second tier of decolonizing education, which is the reconstruction of a system that is designed for, by us, and is going to serve us much better. I was thinking about that and that is kind of the long road. If anybody's interested, you could probably Google the quote, burn it down, and you might find a photo of my sister, Pam Agawa, right beside that quote because that is the efficient way of perhaps going about this decolonizing model. I say all of this because my hope is that folks who are listening in today understand what Aina-Nia has said, that we all have this collective responsibility as leaders that we can play a pivotal role in that deconstruction. And that to me is what I really hope folks take away from our conversation is that it's an ethical and moral responsibility when the foundational truths of how this education system that we're currently in is structured and armed with that knowledge, I think that I have great hope. I have great hope because I've seen that change happen in individuals. At the end of the day, I think about my own kids in this and that leaders have a responsibility to my two girls as well on a parental level. I'll leave it right there, and say now, of course, to everyone [speaking in First language] feeding me such wonderful insights this evening.

Vidya Shah ([01:02:55](#)):

Thank you, Nick. Thank you so much. Such great points that you share and this idea of burning it down as an efficient way and reconstructing this notion of self-determination and it's such an important part of this work. Thank you so much for naming that. Pam, did you want to share some final thoughts with everyone?

Pam Agawa ([01:03:19](#)):

I think, well, Nick and I are involved with the Anti-racist educator reads book series. And so when he brought up Marie Battiste, I immediately went to "Braiding Sweetgrass". I'm thinking about Kimmer's words around using gifts and dreams for good, and then I'm thinking about the idea of relational accountability. We have to remember the key to, I think, relational accountability is to ensure that we're always feeding the relationship in two directions, so there's reciprocity woven through that relationship. Again, Kimmer talks about that relationship with strawberries and how really the strawberries have taught us how to give and how to be in relationship and how to reciprocate that relationship. I don't

want us to think that this is just about humans. I want to also remind us that we are thinking about our relationship to not only each other, but also to the land that we walk on every day and the relationship that we're in with all aspects of all living beings. If we centre that in leadership, I think that we can be on a good path forward.

Vidya Shah ([01:04:36](#)):

To be in connection and relation with all our relations, what a beautiful gift and experience again and again, thank you for sharing that. And as we come to a close with our panel discussion, I wanted to ask Kahontakwas if she would close us off with the final question of how might we begin this work within our different institutions, how might we begin this work?

Kahontakwas Diane Longboat ([01:05:04](#)):

What a beautiful question. I've had an opportunity in my lifetime to be in meetings where people have no agenda and they simply say, how do we bring change into this organization? And I think it takes inspired leadership who are compassionate leaders. They are servant leaders. They possess all the qualities that we spoke about here this evening. Those leaders really do set the pace for how the organization is going to transform itself. It's not just about the top down, here's the new policy and we're all going to dance to the new policy. It's about educating everyone so that people are on the same page with history, with contributions that Indigenous peoples and all peoples of colour have made to the country that we look at truth-telling. And we say, what is it about the truth telling that's going to bring us into a different relationship with one another? When you work with the truth, some people are going to stand by it. They're going to say, this inspires me, it impacts me. It brings me to a higher level of consciousness. And then there are others who resist. It's been my personal experience that you have to go up and over those who resist because you can never stop that train. Once it gets going, you can't stop the train. You have to keep going because more and more people will come on to that train and they will bring new life into the work that we all want to do together. Those people who were the resisters are the individuals who need a little bit more time to understand the bigger impact of what is happening in the world.

Kahontakwas Diane Longboat ([01:07:07](#)):

The rise of Indigenous wisdom traditions in the world that is feeding a new economy, a new health system, new laws, a new governance system, a new political system, new health systems, and certainly new education systems. The world is changing and I think we need to have a global viewpoint of it. That means educating everybody within our institution and making sure that we have coaching and mentoring that goes along with it because it's not just about a class or a program or a graduate degree in a particular area, but it's about all of us all together forming community, within our organizations, learning together, coaching, mentoring, and really having an opportunity to do something that may be challenging to people. But that is to get out there on the land. The code of life is written on the land. It's not written in an institution it's not in books. It's not in the films. The code of life is written on the land. And until we as human family, make that sacred connection to the land once again, and understand that all of those beings that are on the land, whether it's animal life, plant life, the winds, the waters, the bird life, the living beings that are in the waters. They are sentient beings. There's a language of spirit that can communicate with them. There is a part of our brain that is in a state of atrophy because we have not embraced silence. Silence on the land is the greatest teacher because now when you're on the land, there's nowhere to go. There's nowhere to go. There's no technology that's out there. There's nothing that is going to grab your attention and pull you away from communication and learning that language of spirit. You may have to sit out there for a week. Maybe it'll be two weeks. Maybe you want to play the

resistor role. Maybe you'll be out there for a month, but one of the things that will happen to us as human beings when we return to a solo or a silence on the land is that we begin to turn on those light switches, I call them the spiritual light switches of your DNA. And you begin to change. You start to become a real human being. When we think about how do you move this agenda forward and in organizations, yes, it's leadership and compassionate leadership. Yes, it's about educating all of our colleagues, but it's also offering opportunities to become a real human being on the land. That's part of every employee assistance policy that should be in place at every organization so that we all have that opportunity to spend time by the water on the land in the mountains. Maybe some people would even like to go into the caves. Maybe some people would like to go to the petroglyphs, the rock carvings, the rock paintings. These are important times for us as human family to really think about the values that we carry because when you think about what was happening in Europe in the 1200s, the 1300s, in the 1400s, the mind that was formed in Europe was the mind that came to the shores of the Americas and the absolute genocide that evolved as a result of that. We say that there were over a hundred million Indigenous nations and peoples in North America, Central America, South America, that there were great cities bigger than what was in London or Paris at the time. Medicine, architecture, trade routes from the Arctic to the very south of America [speaking in First language].

Kahontakwas Diane Longboat ([01:11:34](#)):

Can you imagine the richness of the cultures that were here, the richness of all the nations and the cultures and the continent of Africa, but the mind that came to the shores of the Americas was not a mind that valued women. Stories of Haudenosaunee Confederacy, the Six Nations Confederacy meeting with the British, and as they met with the British, all the military, the British military were dressed in their uniforms. When the Haudenosaunee arrived, they arrived with women as well as their leadership and their visionaries and their prophets. They talked among themselves and they said, "Hmm, well, look at the British, we're going to treat with them. We're going to negotiate with them. They have 50% of their power because they left their women out of this equation. They left their women at home. The role of our women was always to take on that sacred leadership, the role of the women was to own a home, own the children, be responsible for the gardens. The business of the men was in the Bush, the forest hunting and fishing; providing. When you disrupt a society that has everything that it needs within that great law of peace, within all of the cycle of ceremonies to give thanks for life, a ceremony every single month because our minds are small, and we got to keep being taught. Don't forget to give thanks for the strawberries, next are the green beans coming up. Don't forget to have the green beans ceremony. All of these ceremonies were given for that purpose. When you have a mind that comes over here with a different set of values, we're still suffering from those values that are manifest in all of our institutions today. I don't spend any more energy trying to decolonize those institutions. My energy goes to building the Indigenous nations of my own people with our own institutions, our own languages, cultures, faith traditions that empower the work that we need to do and share with others who want to know what is this? How did you do it? What effect does this kind of an education system have on the future of our children? I want to lift up school in my home community based on language and culture ceremonies.

Kahontakwas Diane Longboat ([01:14:18](#)):

We have individuals graduating from there in many, many different fields, going to university, college, all the professional faculties. They are standing in the world in a profoundly different place because they have an absolute gift of their identity, a fluency in their language and understanding of the ceremonies and their duties as a human being in the world to give thanks every single day for all the life beings that are in creation. Giving thanks to the Creator on behalf of all of us, those who forget to give thanks. They pray for us and ask the Creator to help us so that we can become conscious of our duties and

responsibilities in the world. That's what an education system does, is it builds a real human being. We can play around with that old mind and we can spend a lot of energy on it, but as far as I've come in my life and I'm going to see 70 fall seasons this year, I think that it's really important to assist and guide our relatives who are non-Indigenous. Very important. We need allies, we need support. There's no question about it, but the full energy I need to give in my life goes to my own people to raise up my own people in their education system to keep on going and to do the best work that we can to raise, Haudenosaunee citizens. That might seem small in the world in terms of the concept of people today, say, I want to be a global citizen. You can be the best global citizen you can be if you know who you are, you know where you come from, you're proud of who you are, and despite any racism that is out there that tries to challenge you, it will run off your back like water because you know who you are. There is nothing that they can say to you that will diminish your vision, your understanding of your purpose in life, the gifts that you carry. You will keep motoring no matter what. Those are the kinds of young people that I want to see for all nations of people, all nations throughout the world. Keep the richness of our cultures and diversities and our faith traditions, keep it in gender, such pride and such confidence in those young people being able to speak many languages, not just English because you're in Canada, but many languages of the home countries where you come from.

Kahontakwas Diane Longboat ([01:17:05](#)):

This is a really rich time to be a human being, and I believe with this pandemic that the Creator is watching us on how we're behaving with one another, and our relationship with the earth. Making decisions about how we want to live, what our education system should look like, what is the economy that we're all going to participate in? Are we going to continue to pollute the earth and create environmental change that's going to take a long time to repair? What are we going to be as the next evolution of humanity? So that's a big question in front of all of us. I think what our education system can do is to prepare our children in the best way possible, but these pieces of evolution that are in front of us now, and I say pieces of evolution because there's disparate parts that are kind of floating around. One is the environmental questions. One is the racism, which is in my opinion, a form of mental illness, there's the economy and how are we choosing to live? Where are we choosing to live? How are we choosing to build our homes? These are all questions that we individually need to answer. Knowing the natural laws of Mother Earth, knowing the spiritual laws of the Creator, by whatever name you call the Creator, is important. It's important because it situates us in relationship to the spirit and to the land. What I would hope for education is that it'd become a place of absolute love and safety for our children. Then when our children go into that school, they just adore their teachers who are more like aunties to them, that they respect the teachers, and the teachers respect them. That when racism or anger or fighting happens amongst children, as things will go, that we know how to bring those children out of that feeling of anger and maybe abandonment, maybe grieving, maybe loss of some kind. We know how as teachers to bring them out of that state of their emotional distress. And we know how to create right relationship between the students who are having a difficult time with one another. I would like to see Indigenous wisdom traditions honoured in the Canadian school system. I think it's a duty of every Canadian to learn about Indigenous history. What was here prior to colonization, what happened at the point of colonization and onwards and how we are changing those systems because the systems need to become equitable for all people. We have a lot of work to do, but I always encourage people. Yes, that's the big picture, but here's the little picture for all the listeners: bring your gifts to the forefront and just do what you need to do with your gifts to bring harmony into the world. If every single person in Canada did that, we would change the face of Canada. We would change the political system that is not really a democracy. We do not live in a democracy when Indigenous people did not get the vote in this country until 1960. Canada was not a democracy. All of these political parties that fight back and forth, they're

like the Hatfields and McCoys. The real question of how to form a government is embedded in the great law of peace. That great law of peace was received by the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, not just for us, it was received for the world. The tenants that are built into that great law of peace need to be brought forward in the world today so that we can understand what is relationship? What is education? What is it that we're trying to do when we're building human beings in the finest, in the best way possible that each human being can live to their optimal wellbeing? What is it that we have to do? That great law of peace is the answer because if we use the social element, the kinship element, it weaves the politics, it weaves how to live by the laws with with certain behaviours that are acceptable and what happens when those behaviours are not acceptable. All of the politics, the environment, the economy, the education, the social systems are woven into that law with a spiritual foundation. That's where we need to go as a human family, that's where we need to rebuild our education systems.

Kahontakwas Diane Longboat ([01:22:24](#)):

I fully believe that every single person has a contribution to make, to move our systems forward and to create a system where every child falls deeply in love with learning. I don't think that that's an unachievable goal. I think our children are made that way. It's up to us to ensure that they're like the seeds in our garden and that we bring everything to that garden, that they need to be the blossoms of that next generation. They're going to be the ones that are going to change the world. How we treat them, how we raise them, how we educate them is going to be our challenge. I want to thank you for listening and to you, Vidya, for offering this opportunity for us to share so richly this evening. And I think every one of my sisters that are here this evening, and to my brother, Nick, I'm so grateful for you to be in the world to bring that wisdom and the action that comes with that wisdom to contribute to a transformation in the education system. Thank you so much. Thank you, Vidya.

Vidya Shah ([01:23:48](#)):

Thank you, Kahontakwas. Such beautiful sharing and invitations for us all, as teachers, as leaders, as humans, as people connected to land and life all over. Thank you so much for sharing that. This has been such a wonderfully rich conversation. At times, I felt like I was praying, at other times I felt like I was just deep in thought. And at other times it felt like a very embodied experience. It's interesting listening and learning from all of you. And I just wanted to say a huge thank you. Huge thank you. And as we come to a close today, we'd love to hear some final thoughts from Ann just to close us off in terms of any pieces that she thought were important for us to take away from today's conversation. Ann.

Ann Lopez ([01:24:45](#)):

Thank you so much Vidya, thanks to all of our listeners. It's just been amazing, just been amazing being in this space with Diane and Aina-Nia and Nick and Pam, and really to all of our listeners who have really entered the space to be in learning. This was really being in learning. I just wanted to share some ideas and a few closing thoughts to this amazing, amazing conversation around land and spirituality and humanity. It's the whole idea, a notion of community that really grounded us today, and that we're really experiencing as we're on this conversation. It's just been amazing. And also the idea of leading as we think through decolonizing and uncolonizing, Pam reminded us that we must lead with our hearts and not just our heads. That's so very important. Aina-Nia reminded us of sacred leadership and how that is embodying love. That is so important to have that love and that humanity and Nick, reminded us that as we're engaging in this love and humanity and leading to disrupt and leading to reconnect to the land, that we must have relational accountability because that is what's going to bring the change. That is what is going to ensure, as Diane said, that young people who need to be activated, they need to be uplifted spiritually and in every way. I really am very appreciative when Diane said, you know, we have to

be mindful as leaders as we engage in the decolonizing process, where are we putting our energies? And it's so resonated when she said that sometimes we are going to have to go on top of the resistors. There's many people on the bus and we're going to have to go on top of those resistors, as we begin to think about different ways of leading, different ways of embracing, and different ways of being in the space. It has just been a wonderful, wonderful evening of learning. I would like to leave our listeners with this idea of reconnecting and recentering. And really that decolonizing and uncolonizing is about creating space for renewal. And it is reconnecting with our history, as Diane said, and Pam and Nick, and Aina-Nia, and you Vidya, that we must connect in this process with the land, with spirituality. So, it's important, I think, for those who are listening, leaders, begin to think about what are some of the ways in which that there has to be this recentering and reconnecting, the role of storytelling, the role of remembering, the role of creating. All of that is important in leadership, which is not necessarily embedded as we think of leadership now in our schools, as we think of those who are engaging. These are not some of the ways that we go about thinking about leadership. As we end this amazing, wonderful dialogue, this was really enriching, empowering, uplifting. I think it's so important to close that circle as someone who's grounded in African Indigenous knowledges. I walk in this world on the shoulders of my ancestors and their spirit guide me, and so important for us to close, for us to reconnect and for us to really ground ourselves in this collective space. For me, my closing thoughts would be all those who are listening begin to think about, particularly the educators' ways to reconnect and to recentre and to draw as Diane said, of all of that knowledge and it embedded in our spirituality as we think about leadership. Thank you all and back to you, Vidya.

Vidya Shah ([01:29:13](#)):

Oh, Ann, thank you so much. Thank you for opening us in such a wonderful way to give us insights, to think through, to framing the conversation, to asking such important questions and for your summary, just now, that was filled with beautiful invitations of recentering and reconnecting in this work and a very special thank you to our panelists as well. Aina-Nia, Kahontakwas, Nick and Pam. Thank you for your hearts and your spirit and your mind showing up today in full force with such grace. Thank you to our listeners. Those who may listen to us now, and those who may listen to us in years to come. Your energy and your engagement and your willingness we feel, and we need on this UnLeading journey. We want to remind listeners as well, that the contact information for the speakers, their bios, and some follow-up learning resources can be found on the UnLeading website (www.yorku.ca/edu/unleading). May leadership be an opportunity to come home to ourselves again and again., May it be an opportunity to live, love, and lead in relation with all life. May leadership be an opportunity to live out our greatest humanity, honouring generations past, and preparing for generations to come. Thank you all.