



Feast Centre for
Indigenous STBBI Research

Indigenous Sexual Futures Podcast – Episode 4: My Grandmother said “Leave some for the Birds”

In Episode 4, Doris invites Métis Elder Marjorie Beaucage to be featured as a special guest to talk about her 'hot off the press' published book titled, Leave Some for the Birds - Movements for Justice. In this podcast storytelling episode, we hear in her own words about the movements in her life that culminated in the writing of her poetic memoir that highlights seven decades of living and seeking justice as a Two Spirit Métis woman who still retains her Michif language. Additionally, as part of celebrating Indigenous History Month and PRIDE Month, Marjorie is a beautiful fit for this special episode. Marjorie is an acclaimed filmmaker, art-ivist and educator, land protector and a water protector. Born in Vassar, Manitoba, to a large Métis family, Marjorie's life's work has been about creating social change, working to give people the tools for creating possibilities and right relations. She is a beloved Feast Centre Elder and a soul-filling storyteller!

(00:00 – 00:29) Doris Peltier:

Indigenous Sexual Futures is produced by The Feast Center for Indigenous STBBI Research on the ancestral lands of the Mississauga and Haudenosaunee Nations within the lands protected by the Dish with One Spoon wampum. We acknowledge the ancestors of this territory, and we also acknowledge the lands and territories of all our guests.

(00:54 – 01:57) Doris Peltier:

You are listening to Indigenous Sexual Futures, a podcast storytelling series that is produced by the Feast Centre For Indigenous STBBI Research. And, yes, you heard the word sexual, STBBIs, and research in my first sentence. Hope that caught your attention. But you also heard the word feast, which is what we hope to do with all of you through this podcast storytelling series. You should also know that we are aligning this podcast series with a growing body of work by scholars, artists, writers, and community in Indigenous Futurisms. You will have to listen to our series to learn more about what Indigenous Futurisms is and why we dropped the word sexual into the middle of Indigenous Futurisms. Stay with us. Now, let's get started.

(02:00 – 05:34) Doris Peltier:

Adiniwemaaganidook. E-amakawaataagoowazid dizhnigaas, waawaashkesh nidodem. Anishinaabe n'dow. Hello, and welcome to Indigenous Sexual Futures. My name is Doris Peltier. I am

Anishinaabe and your host for this podcast storytelling series. For this episode, I am calling myself Auntie D because we all know how important aunties are in our lives, right? Aunties play important roles. I think we all know that. At one time, my sisters and I had special names for each other as aunties. I was auntie *baayaadik*, which is a play on words in what I call Ojiglish. *Baayaadik* is an Anishinaabe word to denote they are here visiting. One sister called herself auntie-social, another auntie-depressant, and the one name I quite liked was vigil-auntie.

The latter auntie's name, if you think about it, captures what we do as aunties. We may take a deeper dive into the role of aunties for a future episode. Today, though, we will be talking to a very special auntie. On today's podcast, we are so excited to be featuring newly published Metis author, Marjorie Beaucage, whose book was just released. It is titled, "Leave Some for the Birds: Movements for Justice." It is a poetic memoir that encompasses 7 decades of Marjorie's life, from the little girl picking blueberries with her grandmother to who she is now, a beautiful 2-spirit Metis elder, auntie, art-ivist, educator, and much more. She is also an acclaimed filmmaker. Her film work stretches back to over 30 years. I first met Marjorie when she was a filmmaker many moons ago when we both lived in Toronto. Our paths crossed again in 2015 in Saskatoon. I approached her about being an elder for one of our Visioning Health research sites. She said, yes. Today, she is an elder and an auntie for many groups, including the Peace Center Council of Elders. I would like to also acknowledge that today's podcast is being launched during Indigenous History Month, which is also Pride Month. Yay. Happy Pride to everyone. This is a perfect time to feature Marjorie. You are in for a treat. I really enjoyed speaking with her. She has many powerful truths to share. So, let's get started and listen to Auntie Marjorie read one of her poems titled Grandma's Hands. And immediately after her reading, we will segue to the storytelling session.

(05:35 – 08:35) Marjorie Beaucage:

The old woman with heart wide open welcomes me home.

Sit down. Rest.

Night wrapped its arm around me.

I watched her shuffle around the kitchen

looking for the tin of gingersnaps.

She sits in her rocker

one leg out, the other under

picking up her crochet

fingers moving over the thread

like a spider weaving its web

grandma's hands.

How many babies has she guided

into the world

first contact

in those hands?

How many gardens had she planted and hoed

arms getting browner in the summer sun?

Those hands yanking out baby teeth as they loosened

wrapping scarves around resisting necks

kneading dough as if it was a feather

peeling apples in one curled motion

into a pie wedged into perfectly equal triangles

no room to argue over the biggest piece.

Those hands gathering eggs from under hens

without disturbing them.

Wielding an axe cleanly

for kindling.

Circling rosary beads in her lap

lips moving silently

with the rhythm of the words

over and over and over.

That pile of mending and darning

always there.

A torn knee, a hole in a heel, a shirt button gone

all receiving a scolding

as her hand repaired like new again.

The tightness of a newly sewn button

the comforting fresh darn of a sock.

If the damage was too great

*scissors would carve out little squares that later reappeared
transformed on a quilt.*

*Sitting for hours,
poking her needle in and out of the frame
making little rivers of thread
through all those patches of colours.
She seemed in a trance
her hands circling in and out, over and under
looping the stitches across and back.
Sometimes humming a strange sound
between her teeth
it wasn't a whistle
it wasn't a hum
it seemed to come
from far down inside her
and float out onto the air.*

*Other times
those hands picked up jars to make
teas and poultices, healing potions and ointments.
Sometimes washing and preparing bodies for burial.
Those hands were messengers
of life and death
rough and ready to do what needed to be done.
Those hands.*

(08:35 – 09:23) Doris Peltier:

I really see us as two aunties for this particular podcast. So we'll just get started. We'll cut to the chase and get started right away. So I was wondering if you could tell our listeners a little bit about

who you are. I ask each guest to tell a little something about themselves that is much different than the standard bio introduction we might hear about you if you were speaking on a webinar as a panelist. It might be about your upbringing or your connection to your identity as a Metis woman or your connection to the land as a Red River Metis. We want to know who Marjorie is. So this is your opportunity to give us that little story about who Marjorie is.

(09:23 – 11:28) Marjorie Beaucage:

Well, who am I today? That's it. I'm here in Duck Lake. I'm 76. I just turned 76, and I'm feeling the weather. The weather is part of who I am. It's like every day I discover who I am depending on the weather. I was winter born. I carry the winter as part of who I am. The seasons are very much a part of who I am. I grew up in the bush in Manitoba, and the first 15 years of my life, the bush raised me. I feel that's my foundation for who I am. And after that, I've been moving moving moving and moving through different parts of life and different places and people. Part of me is being on the move. I guess my book about movements for justice, it's, the different movements that I've made in my life. And it's my childhood. The first 15 years in the bush, like I said, is the foundation, and then my journey as a woman through the different parts of life is huge. My relations to women, my relations to institutions, that I've been tilting at forever, like, trying to bring about social change and justice. Asking questions, I guess, is who I am too. They... I've discovered that's my gift is the question. And sometimes it's welcome and sometimes it's not. But it is me and that sort of curiosity and questioning always opens new possibilities and new doorways for me and for the people around me. So it seems to be a way into whatever it is we're living. So that's who I am today, I guess. Yeah.

(11:28 – 11:42) Doris Peltier:

In terms of if somebody were to ask you, how do you identify? That's usually a big question. Right? So if you were to encapsulate that in one kind of swoop, what would you say?

(11:43 – 12:10) Marjorie Beaucage:

I hate that question, but I'm Marjorie. I'm many things. There's different aspects. Like, I'm a woman. I'm a 2-spirit. I'm a Metis. Those are all parts of me, but it's like all of it is Marjorie. I just don't like labels, and I know people want you to be this or that so they can put you in this little box, you know, but I never fit boxes very well.

(12:10 – 12:44) Doris Peltier:

Mhm. Okay, thank you, Marjorie. So, I like what you said earlier about movements. And I have a question for you later on, like, about what movements suggests for me. It's not only about Indigenous movements, but there's... we'll come to that later on in this storytelling session. So we're really excited that you have written a book with the title Leave Some for the Birds. Why did you decide to write a book at this time, Marjorie?

(12:45 – 14:14) Marjorie Beaucage:

Yeah. Well, the book decided itself, really. I was decluttering my life when I turned 70, and I found I have two box fulls of journals. And I decided I don't want other people going through my stuff. I've

seen what happens when people pass and a lot of things, you know, get thrown out or whatever. And so what am I gonna do with all this stuff? And so I decided to go through it myself, And I went to Santa Fe. There was an equal justice residency, and I applied and I got in. And I loaded up my journals and drove down to Santa Fe and started going through and seeing what I could salvage from them, if anything. I had I wasn't planning to write a book necessarily. I didn't know what I was gonna do, but I thought, well, I'll go through and see what it was there, and what I could maybe share with others that might be helpful in their journey for justice. Social activists, maybe, for the generation that maybe there's something that I learned in all these years that I could pass on. So it's kind of a little bit of a legacy, I guess, to share whatever insights and reflections I might have that might be useful. Because I've been through lots of different movements, and what did I learn? and what can I offer? That was the question.

(14:15 – 14:24) Doris Peltier:

Were you surprised by some of the the writings that you went through? Was there any that stood out for you?

(14:24 – 16:03) Marjorie Beaucage:

Well, one of the things I realized was I had a lot of poetry in there, and I had never shared it with anybody. And at the same time that I was in Santa Fe, I went to, spoken word workshops. And reading your poetry out loud is very vulnerable, and it's different than just seeing it on a page. You know? But, it was a really good thing to do, and and so that was one thing that I realized was worth saving some of the poetry. And the other piece was there were some things that kept repeating themselves over the years, like, my essential questioning of myself and who I was, and there were certain themes that just kept coming back. And that was kind of, like that's my foundation stuff. There's some things that haven't changed. My basic values are still the same, but there's lots of things that have changed. So it's all about change too and how you go about change for yourself and for the world around you. That was an interesting process to uncover as well. So those are the things that I kept in my book, basically, those elements. The rest was vomit. It was survival. It was like, you know, you write in your journal because you got no place else to say things where it's safe. So writing was a way to keep me alive and safe many times. If I didn't have writing, I would be dead.

(16:05 – 16:12) Doris Peltier:

Wow. That must have been amazing to go through how many years of writings?

(16:13 – 16:26) Marjorie Beaucage:

Well, for sure since the sixties, seventies, eighties, nineties, 2000s, a little bit. After I started filmmaking, I wrote less, but I still wrote, But it was different. Yeah.

(16:26 – 16:45) Doris Peltier:

It will be really good for all of us to read your book because I would imagine, you know, that many years of writing would also follow the movements that - as Indigenous people - it would follow what was happening in the world through those different times.

(16:47 – 16:55) Marjorie Beaucage:

Yeah. But mostly, I was writing about what was happening in the world through me, like, in my place in it. It kept changing.

(16:57 – 17:06) Doris Peltier:

Yeah. I really like what you said about there were things that were repeating. What would be one of those things that seem to repeat itself?

(17:06 – 18:34) Marjorie Beaucage:

I doubted myself a lot. I didn't have much confidence in my own being or my questions. I guess, because I wasn't heard. I didn't feel heard a lot of the time. I would hide sometimes because it wasn't safe. But always questioning... it was also all or nothing. Like, there was this whole balancing back and forth between all or nothing, like, either or, like, that duality of thinking. I realized that it controlled me a lot in my earlier years, especially. It was either this or that. You know, there was not much gray. As I grew older, I could see that I was a little bit more in the gray, and I had more room to breathe. But, yeah, I'm trying to think of the pattern. The thing about relationships, too, I was always looking for where I belonged because I oftentimes felt like a misfit and didn't know where I belonged because I felt too different than most everybody around me in most situations. And that was kind of hard to process and because I wasn't being completely myself because I was hiding, but I also didn't know how to be myself in my difference.

(18:35 – 18:39) Doris Peltier:

Wow. That sounds amazing, Marjorie.

(18:40 – 19:03) Marjorie Beaucage:

So those are the struggles that I had and that I was trying to sort out in my journals. Yeah, the big questions, you know, who am I? Why am I here? What's my purpose? Those are always, you know, the ones that we where do I belong? They're the big universal questions, but those are the ones that, yeah, I was struggling with too.

(19:04 – 19:14) Doris Peltier:

Mhmm. So did the writing, the compiling all those, poetry, the writings show you something about who you are today?

(19:15 – 19:45) Marjorie Beaucage:

Oh, yeah. I'm there. Yeah. It's pretty cool, actually. I feel good about who I am today and where I am today and what I put together. It's not your usual memoir. I'm not good at details and stories. I realize I'm more of a philosopher... Philosopher poet, I'm very concise in distilling everything, so it's kind of like little nuggets.

(19:46 – 20:20) Doris Peltier:

I really look forward to reading your book. I was gonna ask you for a galley copy, but I thought I'm just gonna go into this storytelling session with Marjorie. And this podcast will actually come out around the same time as your your book. So it'll be really good, promotion for your book as well. So I

was just wondering about some of your process in going through your writings. I remember you telling me what you did when you came home with your writings.

(20:21 – 22:35) Marjorie Beaucage:

Well, when I was in Santa Fe, I went through all my journals, and then I kept the covers because I realized when I started writing in little scribblers, and then as I valued myself more, I started to get nicer journals and nicer books, and the covers were cool. So I kept those. I thought I'm gonna make something with these. And I did make a quilt, a paper quilt with the covers and some excerpts from my journals that were kinda colourful. And then, once I was finished and I had pulled out the things that I thought were worth keeping, then I had a ceremony on my 70th birthday up there in the desert, and, I burnt them all. I had a big fire after the sweat and burnt them all. It took about 2 hours to burn them all, and it was so freeing to just keep putting them in there and watching them be transformed, you know, my whole life being transformed for the fire. And then I thought I had bought a jar, put all the ashes of my journals in this jar like an urn, you know, like cremation. And I... but then there were so many ashes that the jar was too small. So I had to go back to the hardware store, and I got a big 5-gallon metal pail, with, you know, trash can with the lid, and I put those ashes in there. So I thought I'm gonna do something with these ashes too. So I actually used some of them for the paint for my... some of the collages that I was after when I came home. But, I still have the whole pail full of ashes that I wanna do an installation or something. I'm not sure yet what it's gonna be, but I know it's an element for creating something new with it. And, I had a lot of fun making my collages, like and using the paint and the ashes for that last winter. Mhmm. You know, cold winters. But, yeah, it was, it was good to make something new out of the old.

(22:36 – 22:40) Doris Peltier:

Wow. That sounds amazing. What a movement.

(22:40 – 22:58) Marjorie Beaucage:

Yeah. The past and the present and the future, they're all together in one moment at a time and it was like I was making that happen with these collages. Right? Because I'm making something from my past and today and passing it on, so it's just like yeah.

(22:58 – 23:21) Doris Peltier:

You straddle both the past, the present, and the future, and we're really good at that as Indigenous people. You know? And I love that. So I want to ask you about the title for your book, *Leaves Some for the Birds*. And as an auntie, what does *Leave Some for the Birds* evoke in terms of title choice for your book?

(23:22 – 25:38) Marjorie Beaucage:

Well, even finding a title, I had one. I had, you know, *The Movements of My Life*, but it was, like, it wasn't right. And they were pressuring me to get a title because they wanted to make the cover. And my editor, she said, well, go keep going through the book and the line - whatever the title - the line will come from one of your poems, and that's what happened. And it's the... it's actually the first poem in my book, and it's also my first teaching from my grandmother when we were out picking blueberries when I was about 7 or 8 years old. You find a nice blue patch, and it's velvet and

beautiful, you know, on the rocks and the moss, and you just wanna go grab them and eat them. And and I feel my grandma's hands on my hand, and she says, leave some for the birds. Remember where they come from? Leave some for the birds. Those were the two things that I remember from that moment. And every time I go to a blueberry patch, I feel her hand on my hand like that. But I realized as I was doing this that that's my first teaching. And we never she never sat down and gave me a teaching, you know, she lived it, and we were living it in that moment and, its the... it contains everything leave some for the birds, like, that generosity, that sharing, that respect, that reciprocity. Everything that I value is in that thing. And remember where they come from, like that gratitude for everything and not taking it all, and, you know, the whole thing about greed and, you know, sharing. I everything is in that teaching, which I didn't need like, we never had teachings when I was growing up. Like, people come to you and they want you to give them teachings while you do it by living. And that's the thing that my whole life is about living, not do... not talking about it. Just living that. Leave some for the birds.

(25:39 – 26:06) Doris Peltier:

Wow. I love that because I think the the old ones, you know, our [Indigenous language] the old... our ancestors actually didn't sit us down and say, I'm gonna give you a teaching, and I'm gonna talk about the 7 sacred teachings and teach you about that. No. You're absolutely right. They lived those teachings.

(26:06 – 28:54) Marjorie Beaucage:

We didn't have that anyway. Like, when I was growing up, everything, even ceremonies and everything, they were still against the law. I mean, we didn't have those things because they were not allowed and not till the late sixties and when it wasn't against the law anymore that the revival started. And I write about that in my book as well, that spiritual, cultural revival that happened after those things were no longer underground, and people were trying to reclaim them and share what they knew and, you know, revive those ceremonies. So what happened at that time was also because of people's experience in residential schools and in jails. A lot of people learned their culture in jail. I mean, and then they came out and they became, like, preachers and missionaries, and they were very patriarchal in the way that those teachings were being shared, and it was mostly men. We went to gatherings at Morley and everywhere else, and it was always men leading. There was nothing nothing from the women. There was nothing from certainly, 2-spirit didn't even exist. We're not even on the radar at that time. And so a presence of 2-spirit only became... showed up with AIDS, in the nineties when our brothers started dying of AIDS, and then we started to gather and just started to identify and support each other. But it, you know, it wasn't something that, you know, was taught. It was lived or it was hidden or it was, you know, all of those things. So that's why I'm saying, I'm In the midst of all of that, trying to figure things out. And with the seventies, there was also the women's movement and the feminism. And alongside the Indigenous, you know, revival of the cultural, spiritual path. There was the women's movement. And so, like, sometimes those two were colliding. I was in the middle of all of those too. Like, I'm a Metis. I'm in the middle all the time, halfway between the two things. And as a 2-spirit, I'm between things. I mean, we're the people in between. I mean, that's who we are, and that's who I am. I'm an in between person and balancing those worlds all the time. So and trying to figure out what my place in it is. So it's all of that, I guess.

So there's no... you figure it out as you go. You live and you think about what you're living, what you're learning, and you... my questioning helped me to sort out what was going on.

(28:55 – 29:01) Doris Peliter:

Mhmm. So do you write about that in your book? Like...

(29:01 – 29:03) Marjorie Beaucage:

Yeah. That is basically what I'm writing about.

(29:04 – 29:23) Doris Peltier:

Your journey as... specifically your journey as a 2-spirit, Michif woman navigating her way through, what we're now calling the 2SLGBTQ+, and that acronym is really getting down.

(29:24 – 30:24) Marjorie Beaucage:

One of those label things. But, yeah, figuring out who you are, who I am, and all of that all along the way, that's sometimes one thing takes more place than the other. You know? Sometimes it's the the spirit part. Sometimes it's the physical part. Sometimes it's, you know, the mental or emotional. Like, all the... like, there's different rhythms that go through about which one gets highlighted at different times in my life as I explore different things. So if I'm in the like, even my in the... my journey from religion to spirituality, you know, my journey from the being a feminist to spirit to, you know, now, elder, auntie. It's all different layers. Right?

(30:24 – 30:31) Doris Peltier:

Mhmm. Did you also, write a little bit about the religious part, you know of your story?

(30:31 – 30:42) Marjorie Beaucage:

Yeah. It's 15 years of my life. I have to... I reflected on that as well and what it brought to me and what I learned from it. Yeah.

(30:42 – 32:02) Doris Peltier:

Oh, well, we're not gonna reveal everything that you wrote about there because people will need to buy the book to read more, I think. And so I wanted to kind of now talk about the poetry that you... as your form of writing in your book. So I did a little bit of research on poetry and what it evokes for people and why poetry has been around for a long time, like 4,300 years. It's the oldest form of human literature, according to Google, and written poetry dates back that long, 4,300 years or so. And... but the oral recitation of poems goes back even further. So it suggests that this longevity is a testament to the emotional effects that it has for people. So you tell your story. Your story is told through a moving journal memoir poetry collection. Has poetry been an entry point for you in writing about your experiences? And have you always written poetry?

(32:02 – 32:45) Marjorie Beaucage:

Well, that's what I found in my journals. But, yeah, I find that poetry captures the essence of something. It's like getting rid of all the, stuff and coming to what's the heart of something. And it's

usually, like, a feeling or a moment in time. Yeah. It just captures the... usually of the essence of that moment in a way that say it otherwise. Like, sometimes there are no words, but somehow poetry, you know, it's like putting some order to the things that you can't say otherwise.

(32:45 – 32:55) Doris Peltier:

It's probably a very difficult, modality, writing modality for some people. It's like...

(32:55 – 33:12) Marjorie Beaucage:

It's my natural way of expression. I found that it is more my voice than anything else, like I said, because I... and I'm not, like, a storyteller. You know, I can tell some stories or tell you something that happened, but, really, my natural way is poetry.

(33:13 – 34:13) Doris Peltier:

Wow. So this brings me to my question around movements for justice and... because that's the subtitle in your book. And for some, the word movement might refer... they might understand it as referring to the Indigenous movements that have happened over the many years - movements towards finding justice. Because you're using poetry I took it slightly different... my understanding was slightly different. Like, I was thinking about the movements of music and composition that has crescendos and ends with a big crescendo usually at the end. And I think, when you think about it as music movements, as a movement piece, I think it mirrors our lives in a way, you know, because... and poetry captures that.

(34:14 – 35:49) Marjorie Beaucage:

To me, movements, like you say it's always changing. Right? It not static. It's, like, if it's moving, it's not static. And that's one thing. But I was thinking of movements also like rivers, underground rivers in our souls, you know, like and all the different movements that are going on in us. There's also, like, the actual social movements that were going on in the world as well, like the Indigenous revival, the feminist movement, you know, all the different social... the peace movement, the, I don't know more. Like, all the different movements that I've been part of through my life to change things. So movement, for me, implies change. And, yeah, there's different... sometimes it's fast. Sometimes it's slow. Sometimes it's, you know, up and down and all around. Like, you never know where it's gonna go because it's in flux. It's always changing. And that's the exciting part of being alive is that you're in flux and you're changing. If you stop changing, you're dead. It's like breathing. It's like there's you know, it's, in and out, up and down, all around. Like, to me, it... that makes music. Sometimes, it's harmony. Sometimes, it's discord. Sometimes, it's upsetting. Sometimes, it's beautiful - depending on that moment in time.

(35:50 – 36:01) Doris Peltier:

Mhmm. How does your book position itself when you think about the future? I know you touched on it earlier, but in terms of sexual futures.

(36:01 – 37:54) Marjorie Beaucage:

What is that? No. I always have trouble with that. What is that sexual futures? I mean, I suppose yeah. I do have, it's like the whole idea of how we express our sexuality is always changing too and

in flux. And we're in a time right now where the young people are challenging our assumptions about that. And I honour them and salute them for that. Because that binary that's in the world, that duality that's in the world, it's not us. And we have always had a much more fluid way of being in the world and not in little boxes. Like, it didn't matter who was in your teepee for when you went to bed. It's how... if you were a good person, if you lived a good life, and if you took care of people, like, that was the what was what mattered. And people have gotten so into, you know, pronouns and labels and all this. And like, for me, it would be the future would be going back to the past when we didn't have that. To finding those places where we could be our whole selves wherever we were without all these boxes and barriers. That, to me, is the future that I want to see in how we are as human beings and how we express ourselves in our whole being, sexual, physical, you know, all of it, but it's not in a box. You know?

(37:55 – 39:07) Doris Peltier:

Right. So, one of the foundational pieces in terms of the, Indigenous futurism's movement, one of the foundational pieces that they use is an Anishinaabe term **[Indigenous Language]** and the way we conceptualize that word its meaning is 'returning to ourselves.' So that's what Indigenous futurism is about returning to ourselves and moving into the future, harnessing that knowledge before all this crap covered up everything. And there's there's a comment you made one time, you know, in the work you do as one of the elders at Feast. And you talked about, you know, we were talking about rekindling or reclaiming, and you pushed back against the usage of those words. And you said we haven't lost our way. The pathway is still there.

(39:09 – 39:31) Marjorie Beaucage:

Yeah. We just had... it's still there. It's like people say, you know, we've lost it. And I say, no. It's still there. And we get it when we're sleeping. What happens when you sleep? You dream. What happens when you dream? You know, you get answers. That's one way. There's, like bushwhacking. The trail is still there. We just have to clear it, but it's there.

(39:31 – 39:53) Doris Peltier:

I love that. Yeah. That you know, there's certain things that elders say sometimes that just really stick to me, and that's one of the things that I've heard you say among many things. That one really stuck to me. And so in terms of your book, how does your book position itself when you think about the future?

(39:53 – 40:48) Marjorie Beaucage:

Well, it's about finding what was still there in my own life. Right? Like, going back to that source in me. Like, we're born with those gifts, and they get covered over. But if we kind of excavate it again, we find that our truth and our purpose and our way forward. And that's what the book illustrates for me is that my my life has been about that and the, you know, the different ways that I tried to do that, some more successful than others. But it's about the journey. It's not about the end, you know, but being true as much as you can in your journey. Mhmm. Because I have been. I can say I have been, and I guess that's something.

(40:48 – 41:12) Doris Peltier:

So now we're... I think we both have an understanding of what Indigenous sexual futures is just based on the what we just touched on. I would love to hear one or two of your poems at this time. And, if you could maybe, yeah, just share the poem with us. And then if you wanna give some context about the writing of that particular poem, that would be wonderful.

(41:14 – 42:42) Marjorie Beaucage:

Okay. There's so many so many possibilities here. I'm looking for the one that... about the 2-spirit gifts. This is one that I wrote for the youth to honour what they're bringing to us:

Hello cruel world

time for a little kindness

show some respect for difference

many of us never got to explore sexuality as children

many of us were not taught about our bodies our

responsibilities our roles our gifts

many of us suffered sexual abuse in residential schools

from relatives in our own homes.

No one spoke up for us.

Today I salute this generation

asking for different kinds of relations

needing Two Spirit gifts acknowledged.

mamāhtāwisiwak

spiritual beings

Gifted Ones

wanting rites of passage

ceremonies to take our place

digging through the colonial trash

finding the original blessings

staying alive

rehoming

bringing medicine

balancing masculine and feminine

tastawewiniyak

standing in the middle

healing our communities

making spirit whole.

My prayer: Creator, clean our hearts of any emotional poison that we have. Free our minds from any judgment. That we can live in complete peace and complete love with respect for difference. Open our hearts without fear to share ourselves in freedom to be who we truly are. Rally the love inside each one of us to counter the hate and fear all around, to honour the gifts of Two Spirit.

We know our names best when we are loved.

(42:43 – 42:48) Doris Peltier:

Wow. That's beautiful, Marjorie.

(42:49 – 43:08) Marjorie Beaucage:

Yeah. That's for the youth. Then I have the one I'm going to read to you, but for my grandma. The first one in the book the title comes from - leave believe some for the birds. I can read it in Michif, or I can read it in English, or both.

(43:08) Doris Peltier:

Both, would be nice.

(43:09 – 44:25) Marjorie Beaucage:

Because I first wrote it in French Michif:

The seeds on the forest floor **[Indigenous language 43:16 – 43:48]**

Li bleuets tout ronds toute murs toute bleu.

Blueberries so round so ripe so blue.

Prends les pas toutes ma p'tite

Don't take them all my girl

prends les pas toutes

don't take them all

laisse zen pour les oiseaux

leave some for the birds.

O lies oiseaux.

O the birds.

J'appris leur language dans le bois

I learn their language in the bush

leurs chuchottements leurs chansons

their twitterings their songs

leurs cantiques

their hymns

de remerciement.

of thanksgiving

Oublie pas ma p'tite.

Don't forget my girl.

Oublie pas d'où sa vient.

Don't forget where they come from.

Je me souviens mémère je me souviens.

I remember grandma, I remember.

There you go.

(44:25 – 44:39) Doris Peltier:

Wow. That is so beautiful. Wow. Thank you for sharing those 2 poems. Is there another one you wanna share? Or... yeah, one more would be good.

(44:39 – 45:01) Marjorie Beaucage:

One more. Okay. Let's see. My hand I got the my grandma's hands, but that's a little bit longer. Try to get a shorter one, I guess. Oh, wait. Looking for something sexy here. No.

(45:01) Doris Peltier:

Oh, yeah. Let's get sexy.

(45:02 – 46:49) Marjorie Beaucage:

I've got lots of... okay, the first kiss. There's one here called the first kiss. Okay. How about we do that one?

First Kiss

I was 30 years old bad. When I first kissed with a woman, I did. Anyway...

A world flew into my mouth

with our first kiss

and its wings were dipped

in all the flavours of grief.

O my darling

tell me what love can mean in such a world.

You touched

with so much gentleness

my darkness.

You brought me clarity.

Gift after gift I wear.

If I have known beauty

let's say I came to it asking.

To sit empty

in the sun

receiving fire

that is the way to mend.

Sitting perfectly still

and only remotely human.

Did you ever see a closeup of rain falling on the water?

Droplets of rain fall

Change into spinning tops

as they touch the surface

spiral together

in a dancing circle.

Laughing and giggling all the while.

Sky is dancing

with meteors and flashes of lightning

catching the beating of my heart.

The wind

the night

the trees

caress and comfort me.

Fire warming.

Woodsmoke rising.

Loving my woman self

woman to woman.

Coming to my senses

with artichokes and songs.

Birkenstocks, plaid shirts and overalls

making visible this new sisterhood.

(46:50 – 47:32) Doris Peltier:

Wow. I love that, Marjorie. Oh, you've got the very poetic way with words. I could see those images. Yeah. I love that. And I also maybe we'll close now with... there's another aspect of you that I'd like you to maybe touch on, and that's your more recent role as a water walker. I hear water in your poetry and in your movement, there's a fluidness. And now in your late seventies, you're a water walker. Can you tell us a little bit about that?

(47:32 – 52:15) Marjorie Beaucage:

Yeah. Water. I walked on water for the first 15 years of my life. I didn't... when I started to think about water, the water is my first water is where the water is under me. We didn't have a lake close by. Like, it was 40 miles away, Moose Lake, and that was far, where they had the bush camps there, but it wasn't a part of my everyday life. And we had underground springs. The water came from underground artesian. Like, there was between the rocks underground, and we walked on it all the time. It was, like, part of that movement under me. Like, I'm saying all these underground currents, that was the water that I grew up with and came up in the well, right, Butcher Hill where we got in with the you know? And so it's part of that fluidity and the rock that I, you know, I'm both the rock and the water, like, in terms of how I was formed in those first 15 years, like, with that rock and that water and that bush. And it's always been what I connect to. When I first heard about grandmother Josephine, walking for the water down east with the Midewiwin Society, and she walked all the great lakes and many rivers. And for 17 years, every year, she walked around a body of water, and I always wanted to... she was one of my heroes. Like, I always wanted to walk with her, and I read about this Japanese scientist who did experiments about water that if you love it and you say positive things to it you can change the water crystals. You can change the water and clear the water and clean the water, and that was very powerful. And so **grandmother Jo Boshee [not sure of spelling]** died, and at the same time, I was sharing that story with a group and that next thing I know when we were talking about the South Saskatchewan River where we live and it's very endangered and it's a huge huge freshwater delta on North America. It's the 3rd largest freshwater delta in North America, the south river that we live on, and it's been threatened, so badly by every farming and industrial pollution and oil and everything along the way. So they came and asked me, because I was talking... to do a water walk for the river, and I thought, oh my god. What are they asking? I don't even know all of it, but I said I took the tobacco and that was... this would be my 3rd summer this year. It's a long river. We're still not finished. It's gonna take 4 summers to do the whole thing. We did the North Saskatchewan and now the South last year, and it and we now we're gonna do another section. And then the final one, north again with the two joining together, but it's one step at a time is, like, the prayer, is your steps. And when you're walking on the land by the water, you connect with everything in a whole different way, and you're in ceremony the whole time. Right? The whole thing is prayer. So it's easy because there's nothing else to do to be there and be aware and, take one step after another. And I look forward to it because you're really totally 100% present to what you're doing and being in that moment, and we so seldom are 100% present to anything. So whether it's a bug that's been squished or a truck that goes by and gives you the finger, it's all part of the prayer. And you just, you know, offer it up and, pray for them, pray for the water, pray for the land. Like, it's all a prayer, and that's all you do.

(52:15 – 53:04) Doris Peltier:

Wow, Yeah. I think many of us don't even think about, you know, that connection to the water. I like what you said. You walked on water for the first 15 years. And so here you are in your late seventies walking for the water. I think that's beautiful, and I wanna say *miigwech* to you for doing that, for the water. And I also picked up on it's gonna take 4 summers. Well, you're walking in Saskatchewan in Cree territory, and they are always about fours. They do things in fours. Like, the fasting you know, you do it in fours and...

(53:05) Marjorie Beaucage:

Yeah. It just happens that way.

(53:05 – 53:19) Doris Peltier:

Yeah. So I thank you so much, Marjorie, for taking some time out of your afternoon to have a conversation with me. And I wanna say *miigwech* to you, and congratulations.

(53:19 – 53:22) Marjorie Beaucage:

I didn't think it would go by so fast.

(53:22 – 53:32) Doris Peltier:

Yeah. It went by so fast. We've been on for about an hour now, and that's generally... I don't wanna keep people much longer than that.

(53:32 – 53:40) Marjorie Beaucage:

That's good. Well, thank you for having me, and I'm gonna go and do my [Not sure what was said: love in?] now. Students at the university.

(53:40 – 56:29) Doris Peltier:

Chi-miigwech to my co-auntie and friend, Marjorie Beaucage. You leave us with much to reflect on, Marjorie, particularly when you spoke to how the title for your book, *Leaves Some for the Birds*, came from your kokum, from when the two of you were picking blueberries. You talked about how we learned back then without specifically calling what we learned as teachings. You said, we never had teachings. Your grandmother did not seat you down to teach you. She did it by living it. This is an important takeaway for all of us. The old ones embodied what we needed to learn. We learned by living it. Another big takeaway for me was when you talked about what movements signified for you in your own life. Movements that you witnessed. Movements like your journey from religion to spirituality. Movements like your journey from feminist to 2-spirit to elder and auntie. As you said, you are a philosopher poet who uses poetry to encapsulate those movements in your own life. I also love how you honour and support young Indigenous 2-spirits. You said that we are in a time when our young people are challenging our assumptions. When you said that we have always had fluidness in our lives and it should not matter who is in our teepees is spot on. Thank you for sharing the poem that honours Indigenous 2-spirit youth and for sharing your gifts with all of us, Marjorie. Listeners, I want to thank you, too, for tuning in to this podcast. I hope that, like me, you took what you needed in the moment from what Auntie Marjorie shared with us. *Miigwech* to you, too.

This wraps up episode 4. Hope you enjoyed it as much as I did. In closing, we would like to acknowledge our funders, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, for making yet another aspect of the Feast Centre possible. Thank you for tuning in. This is Auntie D, your host, signing off. *Baamaa-pii miniwas kakinoodidme! Miigwech!*

(56:30 – 56:48) Closing:

There's so much healing that needs to take place, and we, as Anishinaabe people, have these sacred items that Creator left us that we can share with the world. In our healing journey where ourselves and everybody else that walks with us equally.