



Feast Centre for
Indigenous STBBI Research

Indigenous Sexual Futures Podcast Episode 7: Saanginiiniq Qalunaanimiutauluni

*In Episode 7, Doris invites Inuk Elder Naulaq LeDrew to the table in an episode titled **Saanginiiniq Qalunaanimiutauluni**. In Inuktituut, the title translates to ‘being strong in the urban setting’, which speaks to how she maintains her Inuit way of knowing and being despite having lived away from her homeland for many years. Naulaq is an artist and an avid storyteller and shares about her upbringing and her deep connection to the land and to her Inuit culture. From stories about the importance of food gathering on the land as part of survival to sharing about how throat singing reflects the sounds of the land, animals and water, but more importantly, she tells us that throat singing was for the babies who were carried in the amautis that Inuit women wear to carry their babies. She finishes with the powerful story of Sedna and highlights why these stories were told.*

[Intro] (00:00 – 00:28) Doris Peltier:

Indigenous Sexual Futures is produced by the Feast Centre for Indigenous STBBI Research on the ancestral lands of the Mississauga and 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.

[Intro] (00:55 – 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, STBBI's, 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.

(02:02 – 04:21) 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. Today, we are going to be hearing from a very special guest who is also an awesome storyteller, a skill that she says she learned from

Elders from her community. When we recorded this episode, my guest literally needed no prodding from me. The storytelling immediately began to flow in a very captivating way. As is usual in these podcasts and because podcasts are about storytelling, I only had to invite her to tell us a story about who she is, to perhaps tell us a story that she normally might not share. It is always amazing when the stage is set for my guests to jump into responding to this request. Tell us about who you are. Today, you will be hearing from Naulaq LeDrew, an urban based Inuk woman who now makes her home in Toronto, Ontario. She is also one of our Elders from the Feast Centre Council of Elders.

Naulaq, I want people to know who you are a little bit. And this is something I ask every guest that comes on to Indigenous Sexual Futures. I usually don't like to read the professional bios of people because this podcast is about storytelling. And so I usually like to draw out a little story right at the top from my guest. And so I'm gonna ask you, Naulaq, who is Naulaq LeDrew? Is there a little story that you would like to share to tell us who you are? We would love to hear from you.

(04:21 – 13:39) Naulaq LeDrew:

Thank you, Doris. I'll tell you who Naulaq LeDrew was, is, she was born and raised in Apex Hill, Nunavut with a family of 11 people, including her parents. In the culture where it was thriving, much alive of the Inuit culture. I am descendant of that heritage. I was raised with 9 siblings, but all my siblings were not at home at the time. The older ones had already left the coop. And there was couple older siblings that are still in the homestead with me and my 3 younger siblings being raised as a Inuk, but thriving into the white society, going to school. And in the community of 300, small community of Apex, where the language was mostly Inuktitut, but in the class setting, we would be speaking in English. During the summer... spring, summer, fall months, my parents would take us down to our camping grounds for fishing, hunting, and to live out on the land. Hunting animals, sea animals, and hunting caribou or polar bear on the land. And we'd loved our lifestyle back then, But there was one part that we had to put that aside when we go back to school and to learn the... what society's education. Which I am very grateful for the... I am now living in Toronto, Ontario. There's a little community inner community here in Toronto that is just setting up. Although there's about 1300 Inuit in the whole GTA, but they're outside, some who comes into Toronto to get together, gather for feast that Inuit had been having for number of years, especially when the springtime comes. Inuit would celebrate the spring, the awakening of the land, and to go out hunting, the migratory mammals that comes up so we can... during those spring, summer, fall months, Inuit had to go hunting if they're hunting for mammals. Because it's a short period of time that mammals are up there, or birds. So we had to hunt as much as we can to collect our food for the winter months. Because although the seal and the polar bear are yearly thing, but they were very scarce. So polar bear, to this day, still do come into camps and to the communities, but are told not to be shot because it is not the time to hunt those animals. But the seal is all year long. You can hunt them during the waters... When you're on the water, you can hunt them while you're on the ice, the sea ice. But during the wintertime, it's much harder to hunt the seal because they have a lot of breathing hole that they go to that one hunter can probably wait for the seal to come to this certain breathing hole. Would take about couple days maybe, maybe less. It depends on the vibrations of the ice. Like, they can feel the vibrations of your steps, of your foot going on top of the sea ice. So that alerts them not to come to that certain hole. So they go to another one. And hunting caribou, there are certain months that you can hunt caribou because of... well, we don't hunt for pleasure. We hunt for survival. We hunt for food. And caribou, they do migrate, and they come up north to their birthing

grounds where they can birth their calves, so they migrate up. And then the hunters people were told not to shoot the female caribou because it provides the calves to be born at certain time. So mainly, it was a bull caribou that we were hunting with, hunting for. And before the white society settled up north, We had no rifles to shoot with. We had harpoons, spears, bow and arrows, but bow and arrows weren't really known, but mostly it was spears. And because there's so many... I don't know. There were not enough people in the camp. They would then observe caribou where they roam. And when they do migrate, they would kill the caribou to a certain area. Killing them would mean a lot of people in one area. We did not have a lot of people, so they start making what they call Inukshuk, landmarks. Some are landmarks, and some are depicted to be human beings from afar. And the caribou cannot really tell if it's a real human being or if it's just a standing structure. But to fool the Caribou, they actually put, a scarf or material above above the top. And when it's windy, it would start fluttering, and the caribou would not real... would not tell the difference if it's moving or not. So they would line up Inukshuks along the paths that Inuit were taking. Growing up in Apex, the community of Apex, it was not all about family. It was also about friends, friendships. That the whole community would be like a huge family. The whole community would actually be taking care of children, even if they're not even your relatives, to make sure the children were well fed, well dressed. Teaching them our ways of life was being a good human, being lovable, being respectful. That's where I grew up in, in that sort of community.

(13:39 – 13:54) Doris Peltier:

Wow. You've got a lot of knowledge, Naulaq. Despite the fact that you've been living in a city for quite a number of years, I believe you told me it was about 30 years you've been, living in, in the South.

(13:55 – 14:22) Naulaq LeDrew:

Yes. I've been living here in Toronto, basically, about 33 years now, and I am still very much into my culture. There's still much eating raw meat. But I have to get it sent down from the north for me to acquire that meat.

(14:22 – 15:06) Doris Peltier:

That's probably why you look so healthy, Naulaq. So I've only in the last few years, since I've been living in Montreal, that's where I live. And I've been living here almost for about 14 years now. And I've gotten to know that there is a large Inuit population here in Montreal in this French speaking city. And I've often wondered, you know, I've met many of the women that I've worked with and... but I've never asked them what brought you to Montreal. What brings Inuit into the south, into urban centers? What do you think?

(15:06 – 16:50) Naulaq LeDrew:

Well, way of life, wanting to have a nice way of life. This day is very expensive to live up north. Your food that you buy from the stores, northern stores, are either shipped or flown in, and it is very costly for them to ship it up north. And I believe that's why the prices are so expensive. And to live like... most in our family up north do not go out camping or out hunting anymore because of the cost of the gas, cost of the bullets, ammunition, cost of food, cost of material things that they need to go out to the land like Ski-Doos, outboard motors, boats, these stuff. They are very expensive to

have, and some Inuit cannot afford those because their life kind of... their working hours are ridiculous. They don't have just 2 days to be out on the land is ridiculous. Because being out on the land, it requires, well, to my satisfactory would be about a week to 2 weeks.

(16:51 – 17:32) Doris Peltier:

You know... yeah. Wow. Yeah. I lived in the north for a bit myself, way back. Probably close to 40 years ago, I lived in a remote, northern fly-in community. The only way that you could get there was by airplane. But getting back to, like, the migration to the south, like some of the women I've met here in Montreal, I've heard stories of people coming to Montreal or to Ottawa for a doctor's appointment and then getting stuck here and then having to survive in the urban, you know, city.

(17:33 – 19:05) Naulaq LeDrew:

Yeah. I believe that would be lack of... something lack... is lacking there in the medical fields. They well, back in the day, my father was transported to Hamilton for TB. And he was there for about a year, maybe a little over a year. And I think it was because well, TB is a very contagious disease. He was supposed to be isolated and all that. So he was kept there for a year, and sometimes people coming down, way back then, people coming down with health issues, lack of knowledge of Inuit, especially where they were from. Some Inuit were dropped off into a community that they didn't come from. And I don't know. The the price, the cost, and the price of flying a patient from there and back would cost government 1,000s more 1,000s of dollars.

(19:05 – 19:32) Doris Peltier:

Mhmm. I've done a bit of research on Inuit because I was working with Inuit women here in Montreal. And, so I read up a little bit, but there's no way I could say, I know it. That's just what's on paper. Right? And, some of the women I've worked with are living with HIV, and perhaps that's a reason why they stay in the South too, I was thinking. Do you think so?

(19:33 – 20:36) Naulaq LeDrew:

Yes. When HIV, AIDS, first come out, the only thing that they really focused on was contagious. So everybody start being so scared of people that who were infected by it. Before. I'm uneducated about it, though. And, yes, contagious is being scared because you yourself do not want to catch it. But it isolated the person much more physically, emotionally, spiritually. And because of people of lack of knowledge of the disease.

(20:36 – 21:40) Doris Peltier:

Right. Yeah. I met I think one of the first Inuk women living with HIV, was before my own diagnosis. Because as you know, I live with HIV and I'm, and I am publicly disclosed about it. But she was a real warrior, I think, and kind of led the way. But I think even today, like, the women I know here rarely go home and they're caught up in this cycle. But when they connect to their community here in the city, there's that strong Inuit family. They have that good connection. Right? And I see it as a good connection for them to have, you know, even in the urban areas. What about STBBIs? Like, do you have any knowledge about what people's attitudes might be around STBBIs, like sexually transmitted blood borne infections?

(21:41 – 22:13) Naulaq LeDrew:

That's a very good question because I... for sure, it was something like syphilis. Venereal disease. That was, in my growing up years, that was a very big thing. If one had it, people would be talking about it, but they would be voicing who has it and to stay away from that person.

(22:13 – 22:16) Doris Peltier:

Wow. So there was stigma there too.

(22:16 – 22:42) Naulaq LeDrew:

Yes. There was. And there was a lot of talking about... Yes, a huge stigma on it. Right. Maybe sexual advantages, it wasn't really talked about. It was more or less a joke to them.

(22:42 – 22:53) Doris Peltier:

So is that still the attitude today? Like, are people talking about these things in a more kind of positive way than the other way that you described?

(22:53 – 23:12) Naulaq LeDrew:

I couldn't answer that because I don't live in the community anymore. I live here in Toronto. And with the little time that we gather as Inuit here, we don't focus on that. We focus on our happiness instead.

(23:12 – 23:44) Doris Peltier:

Okay. So you were saying and I know this about you ever since I've known you now, Naulaq, you you told me right off when I first met you that I'm very proud of my culture and I like to share my culture. And I would... I'm thinking about that little story you told me about your dad sitting you on his lap and looking at your hands. And could you tell that story a little bit of you as a little girl?

(23:45 – 25:12) Naulaq LeDrew:

Yes. I am proud to be who I am. I am an Inuk. I am very proud of my father. He was the eldest of his siblings. He was a very good hunter. He was a very good provider. He was also a teacher in one of my schools. He was an outfitter. He used to sit me on his lap and look at my small hands and telling me that these small hands will do lots of wonderful things. It... they'll create amazing things that nobody would even think of as I am an artist. I love working. Anything with my hands. Anything to do with my culture. I love sewing and outfits that represents Inuit. I actually had designed my own outfits for me to use while I was, performing throat singing and drum dancing. And I believe Inuit culture should be well known globally.

(25:13 – 25:26) Doris Peltier:

It's right. I agree. So you feel like that's why you do what you do. You wanna share about your culture. Even globally, you've gone outside of Canada. Right?

(25:27 – 25:47) Naulaq LeDrew:

Yes. I have. I've been in Europe collaborating with a Spanish woman who lives in London, England. We collaborated about colonization of my culture of Inuit and of her culture with Spanish people.

(25:47 – 25:55) Doris Peltier:

Wow. Can you tell me a story about that you maybe performed about colonization in that collaboration?

(25:56 – 27:40) Naulaq LeDrew:

Yes. We did performance in Germany, just in Germany. I was their first Inuk to perform on stage dancing. Well, Tanya Tagaq had performed there, her throat singing, but I was I was performing at a different level and doing, play with the Spanish one, we mixed the 2 cultures together. I was from up north, and she is originally from Mallorca where it's extremely hot, and I am from the north where it's extremely cold. And those 2 fusing together. And we both shared, although we're in different places, but we both shared something together with colonization. And that play was it was about that. And also performed in London, England a year later. Same thing. I... kind of the European culture to me was new insight to my knowledge because it was totally different to me. But being there only for 2, 3 weeks, I almost adopted their accent. I had to cut it.

(27:42 – 28:27) Doris Peltier:

So we were together the other day, Naulaq, and I called on you to bring your drum with you to a meeting that we were both at, and you demonstrated a little bit about the drum. And I just love that. And you gave some history and context about the Inuit drum, and you gave some history and context about throat singing. I... and you told me later that you used to be a throat singer as well. And I loved how you shared that bit of a history about what throat singing is. Maybe our listeners would like to hear a little bit, about what throat singing is.

(28:28 – 31:57) Naulaq LeDrew:

Throat singing is being practiced by Inuit women for 1000 of years, mainly to soothe their babies on the back out on the land and to mimic what they hear out on the land: animals, rivers, mosquitoes, whatever they hear, they would mimic that. And then there was a time that 2 throat singers would be lip locked together and make maybe 6 or 7 different sounds while doing throat singing. And that was originally sexual experiencing, actually. When a man and a woman will be coming together and they're... they just got together. They... there was no actual marriage that they performed. They were picked from the time that they were babies or a young child to be with this certain person. So they would put aside, like, a bedroom in a igloo or a tent. And 2 women, mainly the mothers of the bride and the groom, they will be lip locked and start throat singing right in front of their doors, which mainly meant embarrassment for both couples knowing that they are having sex in there. And throat singing alone out in the wilderness, was to soothe your baby back to sleep. Because in the north, there's a lot of predators like wolves and polar bears mostly. And they have very keen eyesight and very keen hearing. And to soothe the baby, to put them back to sleep, or they're doing chores out there on the land like, picking berries or picking our cotton for the *quilliq* or doing a water run. It depends what the woman needed from the land. And they would do soft throat singing, like, the baby's ear is pressed against mother's back. And the mother... kind of, the baby can hear the

mother's breathing in there. And she would start throat singing like it comes from your diaphragm. And it moves up to your throat, and the vibration of it, it can be felt. So [throat singing] similar to that

(31:57 – 31:59) Doris Peltier:

Wow, Naulaq!

(31:59 – 33:00) Naulaq LeDrew:

Then they would start making songs. One would be a high note, the other one would be a low note. When I'm with a partner, I'm usually the low note because I can do much lower note than a high note. A high note would be [throat singing]. Inuit are the only one that does throat singing. Mongolian also do throat singing. I believe we migrated. Yes. Mongolian more or less would be more or less like this [throat singing]. That would be the Mongolian sound.

(33:00 – 33:10) Doris Peltier:

I have heard a group called Hu, "H-U," and I'm a big fan. I'm a big fan of their music.

(33:11 – 33:29) Naulaq LeDrew:

Yes. I love other people throat singing. I love hearing. I have put up my drum dancing and my throat singing. I have hang them up, and I rather talk about them and stop performing them now.

(33:30 – 34:20) Doris Peltier:

Well, you know, it's interesting because I was thinking about that, and I heard you say something about your drum dancing the other day. And you said, I do my own thing. And then I was thinking about that before we got on this podcast together. And I was thinking about it, and I thought, there's perhaps 2 types of drum dancing that I've seen. I've seen the performance drum dancing because I used to study with the Greenlandic Inuit in a theatre school, and they used it in performance. And then you have your ceremonial drum dancers as well. So there's 2 two types. Am I off when I think about it that way? That there's performance drum dance and there's ceremonial drum dance.

(34:20 – 34:46) Naulaq LeDrew:

I believe there is. Yes. Ceremonial drum dancing will be more of entertainment and spiritual thing. The... yes, I... they're both entertaining. Performance entertaining... performance drumming would also be entertaining. They're both... they're both... wow.

(34:47 – 34:51) Doris Peltier:

They do it, they do it when people gather. Right?

(34:51) Naulaq LeDrew:

Yes.

(34:52 – 35:29) Doris Peltier:

So, yeah, I think you're on to something there. And so I just want to begin to wind up our storytelling here, and I want to ask you about Inuit storytelling. Like, whether there's ever any kind of scenes in

the storytelling about sex or sexuality. You know, there there must be aspects of it about love and maybe revenge and all those, you know, those things that make a story interesting. But I'm just wondering if there was any kind of teachings or any kind of sexuality woven into Inuit stories.

(35:29 – 36:29) Naulaq LeDrew:

I don't really remember anything sexual about storytelling. Not in my time. I mean, they... maybe they have, but maybe I have not heard about them. But more or less, what I heard were more or less to teach me about being near the water, teach me respect, teach me to love people, and to teach me harmony. These were the storytelling that I'd like to tell too because I've heard them being told by my Elders and my parents, and it was to guide us throughout our lives. For instance, Sedna. Sedna is...

(36:29 – 36:31) Doris Peltier:

How do you say her name and Inuktitut?

(36:32 – 32:35) Naulaq LeDrew:

Well, yes. You know her as Sedna.

(32:35 – 32:36) Doris Peltier:

I do, yeah.

(32:36 – 42:19) Naulaq LeDrew:

I know her as *Nuliajuk*. And *Nuliajuk* meaning without a husband. And *Nuliajuk* was actually a loner who was more into her dogs. And... because dogs cannot... well, they will not argue back verbally. I mean, they will argue with you in some of their own form. They have their own... they have their own language. Some of it that we know, but so, *Nuliajuk*, she was getting age of to get married. And the father was getting tired, because she's of age, the father was getting tired of providing for her. So one day, he spoke to he spoke to *Nuliajuk* and say, hey, we're going out to this island to go pick up some berries or to pick up some arctic cottons or whatever the father was planning on. But he left the daughter and her dog on the island, and she knew something was up because he... his boat was slowly going away. And so she got a hold of his boat and, on the rim of the boat trying to get back into the boat, but the father does not want her in the boat. So he uses, *pana*, a knife, a long knife, looks like a machete, cuts her fingers off into the sea. And while she's going down into the sea, her fingers started becoming seals, walrus, belugas, different kinds of whales, fish, anything anything that lives in the water. And before she went down underwater, she had cursed her father that they will never get any food from the water. So his camp, his people were nearly starving. No food to catch. So the shaman, well, their shaman went out near the water and contacting Sedna, contacting *Nuliajuk* and wanting her to release the mammals from her, from her cages, from her grips. *Nuliajuk* had asked, why would I want to do that? You guys banned me from that camp. Why would I want to make amends with you? And the shaman had graciously asking for forgiveness. So in her heart, she did forgive the camp. And... but she made a deal with the shaman. I want you to get all the women in the camp to make me an *amauti*. Well, she's very, very big woman now. Very big. She has... she looks like a mermaid. She had fins instead of legs. So she's huge. So she asked the shaman to get the woman to make her an *amauti*. An *amauti* is a baby carrier that Inuit woman uses

when a baby is born. So okay. But *amauti* was made out of Caribou mostly because she hasn't released the seals yet to use her furs. And the women made the *amauti*, and he tossed it into the water. And he asked her, why do you want the *amauti* anyways? You don't have babies. And how are you gonna get babies? And her answer was, you have naughty children in the camp. And if those naughty children come near the water, I'm going to snatch them. And they come back to my cave, and they will become my slaves.

(42:21 – 42:30) Doris Peltier:

Wow. Wow. That's a powerful story.

(42:30 – 43:00) Naulaq LeDrew:

Yes. What I learned about this story is do not go near the water all by yourself because if you fall into the water, you will not be able to be saved. Nobody there to witness what is happening to you. And you sink to the bottom because you have very heavy layers of clothing on.

(43:00 – 43:12) Doris Peltier:

Oh my goodness. Well, thank you, Naulaq. Wow. This is such a rich conversation we had, And I wanna thank you. *Nakurmiik!*

(43:08 – 43:12) Naulaq LeDrew:

Thank you Doris! *Ilaali!*

(43:13 – 45:52) Doris Peltier:

Nakurmiik, to you Naulaq. That was amazing storytelling and was so rich in Inuit knowledges and on Inuit ways of being on the land and in the world. There is so much that you shared with us today. And to end your storytelling with the story of Sedna was a powerful closure. You leave us with a lot to reflect on. For instance, the power of storytelling is that each of us take what we need from story. I still use aspects of what I learned from the skilled storytellers I have had the privilege to listen to over the years. There are parts of story that still has resonance for me to today. My biggest takeaway from Naulaq storytelling is this. After all these years of being away from her homelands and being an urban-based Inuk woman, she still carries the power of her upbringing with her in her heart and in her spirit. Naulaq knows who she is and takes pride in her Inuit culture and is so willing to share her knowledges through her artistry and storytelling. Another takeaway for me was what she shared about hunting and understanding the vibrations of the land from what she described about seal hunting. Lastly, when she talked about throat singing, it was like, wow. All of it for me was about vibrations and being attuned to the land and the sounds emanating from the land. To be honest, I would have loved to hear her do more of the throat singing. Listeners, I wanna thank you too for tuning in to this podcast. I hope that, like me, you took what you needed in the moment from what Naulaq shared with us. *Miigwech* to you too. This wraps up episode 7. I hope you enjoyed it as much as I loved hosting up this special dish of storytelling for our feast today. 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!*

[Outro] (45:54 – 46:11):

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 for ourselves and everybody else that walks with us equally.