



Webinar: Pathways to Indigenous Health - *Cold war uranium mining and its impact on land, water, and Anishinaabe wellness*

This webinar examines treaty relations and the politics of life, including:

- Learn about Indigenous views of wellness and connections to territory
- Understand how extractive practices compromised Anishinaabe land and water
- Consider the ways Anishinaabe leaders confronted and resisted extractive processes
- Learn about Indigenous historical methods

Presenter



Lianne Leddy is a member of Serpent River First Nation and Associate Professor of History at Wilfrid Laurier University. Her research focuses on land, extraction, and gender, as well as historical methods. Leddy's award-winning book, *Serpent River Resurgence: Confronting Uranium Mining at Elliot Lake*, was published by University of Toronto Press in 2022.

Transcript

Nicole Halbauer: Good morning. Good day. Hello, everyone. Welcome to our amazing Webinar, “Cold War uranium mining and its impact on land, water and the Anishinaabe Wellness,” with presenter, the amazing Dr. Lianne Leddy.

[Introduction in Smalgyax]: X’staam Hana’ax diwaayu, Gnahada d Pte’egu, Kitsumkalum diwil waatgu waaps K’oom. Hello. My name is Nicole Halbauer. I am from the Raven clan of Kitsumkalum in the Tsimshian Nation. I am currently situated in my own traditional unceded territory, commonly known as Terrace, British Columbia, and I am here to guide you through our webinar this morning. I appreciate everybody taking the time to come today. That’s amazing.

For those of you that are not familiar with the NCCIH (National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health), we are one of six national Collaborating Centres for public health. Our sister NCC’s are focused on specific topic areas, including infectious diseases, environmental health, healthy public policy, determinants of health, and methods and tools for knowledge translation. The NCCIH is unique in that it is the only NCC focused on the health of a population. Our Centre supports healthy equity for a First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples by promoting the use of indigenous informed evidence to transform practice, policy, and program decision-making across all sectors of public health.

A few webinar housekeeping notes that you can see up on the screen here: All questions for panelists as well as technical questions can be submitted in the Q&A window. Links to resources mentioned by speakers will be posted in the chat window. Today’s webinar is being recorded and will be available on the NCCIH website. Just to note, there might be some brief pauses as we switch between presenters.

And also here is our trigger warning: The content may be triggering for some participants and we really, really want to make sure everyone takes care of their own wellness during this process. Please reach out to the Hope for Wellness Hotline or call 1-855-242-3310. The 24-hour Residential School Crisis Line is also available: 1-866-925-4419, if you require emotional support.

The NCCIH is located at the University of Northern British Columbia, Prince George campus, situated on the unceded traditional territory of the Lheidli T’enneh First Nation, part of the Dakelh (Carrier) peoples’ territory.

And this brings us to today’s presenter. Today’s presenter is Dr. Lianne Leddy. Dr. Leddy is a member of Serpent River First Nation and Associate Professor of History at Wilfrid Laurier University. Her research focuses on land, extraction, and gender, as well as historical

methods. Leddy's award-winning book, "Serpent River Resurgence: Confronting Uranium Mining at Elliot Lake", was published by University of Toronto Press in 2022.

This webinar's learning objectives include: 1) learn about indigenous views of wellness and connections to territory, 2) understand how extractive practices compromised Anishinaabe land and water, 3) consider the ways Anishinaabe leaders confronted and resisted extractive processes, and 4) learn about some indigenous historical methods.

I'd just like to thank everyone for joining us today. These webinars are so informative and I just feel so honored and privileged to be here to introduce Dr. Lianne Leddy. Dr. Leddy?

Dr. Lianne Leddy: Aanii, Lianne Leddy n'dishinkaaz, Genabaajing n'donjiba, Waterloo endayaan.

My name is Lianne Leddy. I'm a member of Serpent River First Nation. I grew up in Elliot Lake, ON, which is on Robinson-Huron Treaty Territory. And I'm coming to you today from the Haldimand Tract, Waterloo, Ontario. The Haldimand Tract was 6 miles on each side of the Grand River, promised to the Haudenosaunee after the American Revolutionary War. I'm also on Dish With One Spoon Treaty Territory, which reminds us to share our lands and resources, and keeping in mind our responsibilities to each other and to future generations.

So, I'd like to start by thanking Nicole Halbauer for moderating, for that very kind introduction, for taking the time here today, as well as to Dr. Daniel Simms for the invitation to speak here today. Thank you to Sarah, and Lesa, and Stephan of the National Collaborating Centre for Indigenous Health for all of your tech support and for keeping all of this organized and for making this happen here today, so Miigwetch for that.

So today I'll be sharing my research from my book "Serpent River Resurgence". It revealed how settler extractive forces compromised Anishinaabe wellness, land and water in the Cold War period. And at the same time, I wanted to use this space to emphasize how our political leaders contended with uranium mining and its legacy is over a 40-year period. The book itself relied on a blend of archival, newspaper, and oral history methods, and I'm grateful to the staff at Library and Archives Canada, the Archives of Ontario, Laurentian University Archives, the Serpent River First Nation Library, as well as the Elliott Lake Public Library, and Wilfrid Laurier University's interlibrary loan system for their assistance throughout the research process.

And most of all, I want to thank Serpent River First Nation and the Elders who shared their knowledge with me. So Valerie Kamanda, Arnelda Jacobs, Betty Jacobs, Terry Jacobs, my late grandmother, Gertrude Lewis, Frank Lewis and Peter Johnson. Many of these Elders have passed on since I interviewed them years ago for my dissertation in an earlier project, and I will always be grateful for the generosity of their time and their patience with me as I learned.

I want to take a moment also to address terminology here. The term “Indian” as we know is a misnomer and an outdated term, and I will use it only when discussing Indian Affairs or Status, or on very isolated occasions when quoting directly from historical sources. I recognize it's a very jarring term, and I wanted to address that here at the beginning before we got started.

Briefly, I'd like to begin with an overall synopsis of the story itself and how I came to it. So, I am the daughter of a miner from a mining family and Anishinaabekwe from Serpent River First Nation. My father's family came to the newly established town at Elliot Lake, situated on an Anishinaabe Territory during the Cold War Uranium boom in the 1950s. Extractive activities brought destruction to land and water, so waste from the mines was held in what my grandmother called Dead Lakes or Tailings Management Areas, as they're called now, which sometimes leaked into the Serpent River Watershed. At the same time, a sulfuric acid plant was established on the reserve itself, which was meant to employ men in the community. Instead, these jobs were fleeting, but the plant had long lasting effects on the air, trees, land, and water. My late grandmother, Gertrude, was one of several strong community leaders who worked to bring attention to the effects of mining, and to have the acid plant area cleaned up. And this is how I first came to this story, as a little kid listening or as I often joke, eavesdropping, as she was telling me stories at her kitchen table.

And here, this slide you can see Elliot Lake and the proximity of Elliot Lake to Serpent River First Nation, as well as some of the lakes and parts of the watershed that lead into Lake Huron, so I wanted to situate us here today. And I also wanted to take a moment to situate us in the Robinson-Huron Treaty Territory. So, Serpent River First Nation is located on the north shore of Lake Huron, and while I'm careful about which stories I share publicly, the community is named for the serpent that shares their territory and is said to have a den where the mouth of the Serpent River meets Lake Huron.

According to the Elders of Serpent River First Nation, who formed a group called Elder Tea, they published a book called “Connected to the Land,” and I want to thank Marella Schofield for permission to quote this book in my book, and they wrote, “The reason the river is so twisted is that it was formed by the serpent as it moved, wiggling its body as it traveled.” So that is the reason why the river is shaped in the way it is in that that big S kind of shape. The importance of the serpent continues with Elders and community members sharing sightings from time to time.

And so, stories such as these demonstrate the importance of land and water to us. And the Robinson-Huron Treaty Territory of 1850 guaranteed the reserve on the Serpent River Peninsula that was formed by this really important river, demonstrating these connections of our ancestors throughout our territory and what would become the village site later on in the 19th century. And these connections and reciprocal relationships were characterized by traditional uses of land, such as families making maple syrup. My family and others continued trapping at certain parts of the year well into the 20th century. And families also

practiced agriculture, kept gardens to produce food as well. From our perspective, our Anishinaabek ancestors continued to live their lives as they had, incorporating change that served their needs. As more settled, the settlers moved into Northern Ontario to participate in timber extraction.

In the 1980s, community Elders linked the timber industry to the reasons why families came to settle more permanently in the present village site, which was named after one of the Cutler and Savage Mill Lumber owners. So, the town site was called Cutler, and this happened in the late 19th century. The development of the lumber industry and the arrival of the CPR Railway started a pattern of extraction and land leasing on our homeland that facilitated devastating mid-20th century events once uranium was discovered. And while settler reports described the habitual lifestyle of North Shore Anishinaabek in dismissive terms, they also affirmed the continued traditional land use practices. So one 1858 report noted that, Anishinaabek on the north shore of Lake Huron were hunting, fishing, and growing potatoes and corn, as well as trading furs, while also noting that, “They are quite nomadic in their habits, seldom living or remaining long in one spot.” Throughout the latter part of the 19th century, state officials would continue to document, however disparagingly, what they called the “nomadic nature” of the Anishinaabek on the north shore and their traditional connections to territory.

Yet, given the remoteness of the community from larger settler population centres, the community was largely left alone. As was the case in decades past, the people known as the Serpent's Band participated in a seasonal round focusing on the river and the north shore, along which they typically lived in the summer months. Hunting, fishing, gathering, limited farming, and trapping remain the most important activities, especially in families.

While many people continue to engage in traditional seasonal movement throughout our territory, those who settled in the area were subjected to growing surveillance by officials from what was then the new Department of Indian Affairs. And this is a term I will use throughout the talk, despite its name changes throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, even up to the current day where we have Indigenous Services Canada and Crown-Indigenous Relations, and so I'm doing that also just to keep it consistent throughout this time period. I also sometimes shorten that to DIA.

In his 1874 annual report, J.C. Phipps, who was a visiting Superintendent of Indian Affairs, echoed the concerns from 1858 about the daily lives of people at Serpent River. They said they raise only a small quantity of corn and potatoes, and they maintain themselves by hunting and fishing. As late as 1884, Phipps recorded that there were still several families who chose to remain on the land, at least for part of the year, rather than to settle on the reserve along the north shore and those who were still, as he put it, for the most part nomadic in their habits, did not raise crops, but came to the reserve area in the summer. And we can see that these kinds of descriptions in the record that indicate Indian Affairs' views of Anishinaabe ways of life at this time period.

By the 1950s, uranium was needed for nuclear weapons during the Cold War and Canada signed a \$1.6 billion contract with the United States for uranium. By the end of the 1950s, twelve mines had been established around the Serpent River Watershed and a tripartite relationship that included federal interests and provincial and mining company leadership established what they saw as a more family friendly town site. Like many miners and their families, my father's family moved to the newly established town of Elliot Lake, and in the context of few environmental regulations, however, it was not long before people, settlers and Anishinabek alike, noticed a decline in the health of the Serpent River watershed. And here you can see a map of the watershed in relationship to the mines and the tailings ponds, or tailings management areas here.

And so tellingly, the documentary evidence deals a lot with tourism, which was an important secondary industry in this time period and along the North Shore, as many communities were easily accessible via the Trans Canada Railway. And the management of waterways and water safety off reserve fell to the province of Ontario. Provincial employees raised concerns about the health of fish species in the Serpent River Watershed and along the North Shore. J.S. Ball, who was a district forester, outlined questions about fish quality in his letter to C.F. Schenk, a supervisor at the Biology Branch of the Ontario Water Resources Commission, and he wrote, "For your interest, we have had many reports that lake trout caught in Elliot Lake and Big Quirke Lake are not fit for consumption, and have a very distinctive odor associated with them when cooked. One of our commercial fishermen was in Big Quirke Lake in 1961 and caught fair poundages of lake trout. However, trout under 5 lbs were very rare. One of our officers observed that even in late October and November, female trout apparently had not released their eggs."

The local employees of the Fish and Wildlife Branch of the Ontario Department of Lands and Forests were also aware of the problems of fish in the area. George Vozech of the Department of Lands and Forests reported that there were trout in Quirke Lake that had three-year old eggs still in them, a significant indication of spawning problems, and put simply, "if the number of young fish was in decline and females were not spawning as they should, ministry employees feared that the health of the population would be threatened."

Some government officials continued to downplay these threats to human health, despite the findings of their own internal studies. One October 1964 memo from G.D. Clark of the Fish and Wildlife Branch was tellingly entitled "Radioactive Pollution," and it contained contradictory statements made about radioactivity in the area and the health of fish and their suitability for consumption. He wrote, "I have checked with the Ontario Water Resources Commission and find that, in their opinion, the level of radioactivity in lakes such as Quirke and Whiskey, and as far down as Lauzon is 10 times what is considered tolerable for lifetime exposure. They do not consider that there is any risk in casual contact by persons coming from low hazard areas. Levels found in fish are lower than those in other organisms, vegetation, and the lake generally. Fish are scarce in some lakes with

high hazard, but no objection can be seen for tourists fishing in these lakes now extensively used for that purpose. Consequently, they do not advise that we should close any lakes to angling.”

So, we can see that the government officials didn't account though for the possibility of continued pollution through dam failures at tailing sites, not to mention the impact of traditional Anishinabek uses of fish, wildlife, and water. The failure to acknowledge that people depended on the resources connected to these lakes and rivers, or indeed to understand the existence of a traditional worldview that emphasizes the connectivity of creation was a significant way that the government officials compromised Serpent River First Nation community wellness in the name of promoting economic success.

In the community, Elders that I interviewed had long memories that emphasized family ties to the land and to the river system. Terry Jacobs recalled that his father had made his living hunting and trapping near Black Creek, which was part of this watershed. But this livelihood was compromised by the river pollution as more and more Elders of his generation realized that the animal population had diminished and those that remained, the beaver in particular, had been affected to the point where it threatened the community's ability to harvest. Betty Jacobs recalled that her father-in-law had to stop trapping altogether due to the poor quality of his pelts and the difficulty in obtaining them, describing that the fur was of poor quality and would break off when harvested. Terry described a generational shift in dependence on the land as a result of this pollution and the loss of rich resources. The Elders before him had been able to hunt and trap as before, but that pollution related to mining meant that they could no longer do that because “the meat might be contaminated.”

This personal history not only contains important information about changes in the community's access to resources over time, but it also underlines one of the main concerns of Serpent River First Nation members have had about uranium and its effects on our well-being. It was more than the disturbing fact that the traditional ways of life were disrupted, but that they could also make one sick. The connectivity that had always been a part of life and understandings of wellness was now threatening it. River contamination continued to pose a hazard to daily living in the community.

In 1976, Health and Welfare Canada finally sent a letter to Chief Lorena Lewis explicitly advising that residents not drink water from the river. They wrote, “According to the latest studies by the provincial government, radioactive contamination of the Serpent River is above acceptable levels for drinking water standards. If any of the Serpent River Band members are obtaining drinking water from the source, they should stop immediately.” However, this warning letter was written a full 12 years after the 1964 report on water contamination was first released and at least 14 years after the Ontario Water Resources Commission first learned of this problem.

And this brings us to a jurisdictional issue that emphasizes the systemic nature of ill health and health disparities. Indeed, the Province of Ontario had a safety standard of three picocuries per liter, so, this was the unit of measurement for radioactivity. And samples from the river at the reserve, measured as high as 6.2 picocuries per liter. However, the federal government did not consider that level of radioactivity to be significantly dangerous as its safe level, at the federal level, was defined as being 10 picocuries per liter. And while settler communities could be protected by these provincial standards, despite being vulnerable to river pollution stemming from mining operations at Elliot Lake, Serpent River First Nation was governed by federal standards, because Status Indians and lands reserved for us fall under federal jurisdiction.

In an article in the Globe and Mail, which called attention to this inequality on the basis of indigeneity, the National Indian Brotherhood's representative, Lloyd Tataryn, was paraphrased as saying, "It is wrong to have different standards for whites and Indians. Indians at Serpent River Reserve were allowed to ingest up to 10 picocuries per liter, while upstream white cottagers were protected by the more stringent 3 picocurie standard." It was not until the 1970s that attention was called to the fact that federal standards for radioactivity in drinking water differed from those of the provincial government, but it took lobbying on the part of Serpent River First Nation and the National Indian Brotherhood to address the systemic disparity.

And now I want to turn to discussing the Noranda Acid Plant. Today, many people look to the acid plant and the river pollution as a cause of significant sickness and overall poor health in the community. The plant operated from 1957 to 1963 and once the uranium industry went bust after the American contract was not renewed, it closed.

In 1987, my grandmother reflected on the plant's establishment and more than 30 years of struggles with the federal government, and she wrote, "As a band member of Serpent River Band, I attended meetings in 1955 with representatives of Noranda Mines and DIA. I can still hear Indian Affairs people telling us we had nothing to worry about. The band tried to request their own lawyer but were told Indian Affairs would look after our interests very well. We've had sulphur fires flare up at any time during the summer months. On a hot, windy day, the red calcium dust can be seen blowing across Hwy. 17 and can be smelled as you drive through our community. The health of our people is a concern to us." And it was clear to community members that the mining industry had caused harm to them and to their families, both in terms of health and traditional lands. Gertrude Lewis saw these two concepts as being intimately linked, and in her mind the health of the community was tied together with the fires, the dust, the smells, and the larger history of the community and its colonial relationship with DIA.

The plant closed in 1963 and at that time most of it was simply abandoned in the middle of the community, so, you can see from this photo here some of the refuse. A first attempt at clearing the buildings took place in 1969 through Exercise Powder Serpent after Chief Bill

Meawasige lobbied the media and the government. This is a photo taken from the report of that operation, which was done by the military in conjunction with Indian Affairs permission. But what happened is it just blew the refuse over a larger area in the middle of the community. It wasn't until the late 1980s that more work was done to clean up the site, and again it was due to the work of our community leaders.

In the meantime, numerous studies were conducted to ascertain the health of the land and water in the community, and community leadership continued to lobby the government for a proper cleanup. While this process was ongoing, Serpent River First Nation leadership commissioned a professional study to quantify the human cost of pollution to further support their claims. Dr. Rosalie Bertell, a Grey Nun and a distinguished public health activist who had worked with the United Nations projects around the world, began to study the health effects that the harsh sulphur had on residents of the area. Serpent River First Nation leadership had asked Bertell, then as a public health specialist at the Jesuit Centre for Social Faith and Justice, to conduct a preliminary comparative health study between Serpent River First Nation, Mississauga First Nation, and Sagamok First Nation, so these are three neighboring communities.

Bertell designed a questionnaire which was, thanks to the help of two trained community members, administered to most families living on the Serpent River Reserve. Bertell also conducted questionnaires with community members and visited the site herself, speaking with members as well as healthcare staff, and importantly, Bertell and her team were interested in a community-based study that not only examined the health of male workers, either as plant or mine workers, but also the health of women and children in the community.

The resulting reports linked pollution on the reserve from uranium and the acid plant to severe long term health problems among reserve members. Most significant was the unusual incidents of chronic and serious diseases in the community. In her first report, which was a joint health report, Serpent River, Mississauga, and Spanish River – which is now the Sagamok reserve – released in January 1984, the total percentage of residents reporting some type of disease was 50% on Serpent River First Nation as compared to 45% at Mississauga, and 39% at Sagamok. This report explains the reason behind this discrepancy: “Conditions favoring health are not the same as on the three reserves with the Spanish River - the Sagamok – being the most conducive to health. Since both males and females at Serpent River are reporting chronic diseases at a higher rate than other reserves, the problems may be environmental. Generally, males are reporting more chronic diseases than females, which may indicate differences related to occupation.”

According to Bertell's study, the toxic effects of the acid plant compromised the overall health of the community. She had also concluded that, “just as chronic diseases were more frequent at Serpent River, so are pregnancies ending in fetal death. The loss of these pregnancies appears to be related to maternal ill health, some occupational exposures,

and perhaps environmental pollution.” The higher rate of these incidences among the residents of Serpent River First Nation, in conjunction with the pattern of chronic illness in higher numbers than on neighboring First Nations, gave a strong indication that there was a pattern of health concerns attributable to the location of Serpent River First Nation. The biggest difference between Serpent River Reserve and the other similar First Nations in the area was the existence of the acid plant, which was a known source of environmental pollution.

Bertell's second comparative study, which took place the following year, listed several health problems that were common among the male workers in the community and categorized them by men who worked in the acid plant, those who worked at the uranium mines at Elliot Lake, and those who were from other communities and therefore had a lower degree of exposure. The study was based on a questionnaire sent to every household in the three communities, with 68% of responses coming from the Serpent River community. The data points to a higher incidence of sickness and disease on Serpent River First Nation than in the neighboring two communities. Bertell found that 14.3% of acid plant workers suffered from chronic bronchitis, while 9.1% of males in other occupations also reported the condition. The respiratory problems indicated that exposure to the irritants described by Bertell were substantial and far reaching within the community, regardless of the occupation of the male of these particular households. Bertell's study also concluded that 16.2% of men on the reserve who did not work at the acid plant and were therefore classified as having medium exposure to emissions, reported eye problems defined as blindness or poor eyesight, and this is in comparison to the 2.8% of males from other First Nations who did not work at the site, classified as having had low exposure. And indeed, eye problems reported by residents of the First Nation were so numerous that in 1974, the Algoma Health Unit requested special assistance in dealing with them.

In addition to respiratory and eye problems, skin disorders were common among community member residents, particularly among children who swam in Aird Bay. The acid plants, I don't know if you can see it so much in the picture, but it's right near Aird Bay on the North Shore of Lake Huron. According to the report, “as early as 1974, these rashes had been reported. Government officials at times discounted them as probably due to a parasite common on the North Shore, which caused swimmer's itch.” The rashes, however, did not appear when children swam in other areas. And while one rash was characterized as “red blotches on arms and legs after swimming, which disappeared in half an hour or an hour and a half, the other type included more serious red spots with blisters.”

Bertell reported that one child's condition was so difficult to diagnose that they were sent to Toronto for testing. Bertell's report, which was undertaken with the cooperation of Serpent River First Nation members, highlighted the health consequences that uranium mining and the sulfuric acid plant had had on the community in the type of quantifiable

western terms which would be understood by government officials and the settler public. In cooperating with external experts independent of DIA oversight, Serpent River First Nation community members succeeded in not only drawing attention to what was going on, but also in obtaining the type of third party outside advice that the community leadership had desired, that had been denied when the original acid plant was established.

And one important example of community mobilization in this story is of the second acid plant cleanup in the late 1980s. By this time, community leadership was still calling for a proper cleanup of the site and had undergone several studies and rounds of negotiations. Experience had taught community leaders that the government was not protecting their interests, and so they entered into their own negotiations. Indian Affairs was no benevolent protector. It continued to block the community's goals and as a result, community members grew weary of endless meetings and promises of studies. Serpent River First Nation leadership increasingly looked to harness public opinion to both draw attention to the problems on the reserve, as well as to put pressure on the government to meet its demands for reclamation and for compensation.

In February 1986, Chief Earl Commanda first threatened to block the Trans-Canada Highway, which runs through the community. The Band Council passed a resolution in January stating, "if we don't get a meeting with the Minister, the possibility of this type of action will exist," he told the Elliot Lake Standard. "We've talked about this type of action as a protest against the lack of response from Indian Affairs." And while Chief Commanda described the companies as well as the Provincial Ministry of the Environment, federal bodies, Environment Canada, and Health Canada as being willing to cooperate and support the cleanup, he blamed Indian Affairs for the delay: "Our own Indian Affairs Ministry is where the thing gets bogged down," he said. DIA had wanted to stall discussions and action in order to find out who was really responsible for the cleanup via the Department of Justice. Chief Commanda recalled the original involvement of DIA and laid blame with the ministry: "They are in breach of trust. They broke our trust by allowing the plant to be built there." Commanda was more explicit the following week: "I'm told a 24-hour blockage of Hwy. 17 would bring the uranium industry to its knees. In a lot of ways, we could gain negative attention. You reach a point where you just don't care. We also had the CPR line running through the reserve and an Ontario hydro line."

By the end of September, community leadership was growing increasingly impatient. Keith Lewis, the planner for Serpent River First Nation, told the press, "Quiet negotiation has brought us along to where we are now, but it's getting us nowhere and we're forced to consider other options." These other options included blocking the highway and the main East West CPR line, cutting Ontario Hydro North Shore transmission line, and moving the toxic waste to the edge of the highway itself.

In October, Chief Commanda held a press conference, announcing that the community would move the actual waste to areas outside the reserve if there was no immediate

response from the government. That fall before the snow fell, the community moved approximately 26 truckloads of waste from the acid plant to the edge of the Trans-Canada Highway and directed a sign outlining DIA's role in the establishment of the plant and its hesitation to provide funding for waste removal. That sign read, "A tribute to the Government of Canada, here lie the remains of what was once the Cutler Acid Plant. 9000 truckloads of contaminated waste, owned and operated in consecutive eras by Noranda Mines and CIL. The plant shut down in 1963, leaving us with this great legacy. DIA negotiated the lease on behalf of the band and settled it without including us. The people of the Serpent River Indian Band dedicate the site to them in recognition of their relentless pursuit of good on our behalf. God save the Queen."

The tongue-in-cheek dedication to the federal government revealed a community memory of betrayal and the long-standing sense of bitterness about the three decades it was taking for DIA to correct the situation. The words "relentless pursuit of good on our behalf" was an especially cutting commentary. And of course, "God save the Queen" not only referred to a colonial past, but also the continuing colonial patterns that defined the community's relationship to the state and sovereign. The community entered into the 1850 Robinson-Huron Treaty as a partner in negotiation, but the resulting pollution and slow action exposed the erosion of such promises and the nation-to-nation relationship.

The waste sat at the edge of the Trans-Canada Highway for more than a year as Serpent River First Nation continued to pursue other means of negotiation and protest. Just before the Canada Day long weekend on 29th of June 1988, the community set fire to the pile of toxic waste: "The pile of waste dedicated to the federal government is now alight and Commanda said it could burn for days or months," reported the Toronto Star. "Although there are no flames or sparks, the smoke can be seen for miles and a rotten egg smell permeates the area, irritating the noses and throats of residents and Trans-Canada travelers. The burning material contains sulfur, pyrite, calcite, and cement."

When asked to describe the protests and other actions that were taken to call attention to the issues of land reclamation, Peter Johnson, one of the Elders who I interviewed, did not differentiate between political meetings in downtown Toronto and the type of visible public protest that occurred in 1988. In fact, he remembered them as being intimately linked as a coordinated effort in one instance. The community scheduled a day of protest in the First Nation to coincide with a larger meeting in Toronto involving several government departments and community leadership. As Peter shared with me in our interview, they lit the fires on purpose, closing down the Trans-Canada Highway where it ran through the reserve while the community leaders were in that Toronto meeting. And as he said, "We used that to its full advantage and we went into that meeting in Toronto. We told them, we said, 'if you turn your TV on tonight or you turn it on right now, you'll find out how just what our people at the community level feel about this. You're not just talking to us here as

leaders of our community, we're representing people at the community level and things are getting out of hand.”

And this direct action worked. Less than a month after setting the pile of toxic waste on fire, the federal government caved. On July 20th, 1988, it was reported that the Treasury Board authorized a \$5.7 million funding package, and it was anticipated that waste removal would begin in February.

And so ended the second attempt to restore the acid plant grounds to the community, but there still remains problems, as you can see with this this photo here, which I took a bit more than 10 years ago now. There still remains problems with the rocks which remain orange as well as the sulfur smell.

And I wanted to close with a photo over the river, one that is so deeply tied to our history and to our well-being. After decades of struggle with both the river pollution and the threat of disaster from tailing spills, as well as the legacy of the acid plant, Serpent River First Nation had a long-awaited solution to one of the problems caused by the uranium industry. Its leaders had tirelessly advocated for community interests and became increasingly vocal in negotiations with various departments, as well as the press. The acid plant cleanup in 1988-89 was due in no small part to the efforts of our leadership and the rest of the community. Our savvy use of media continued the tradition of Chief Bill Meawasige, who started the trend in the 1960s. But 20 years later, leaders were also threatening to block the highway with the plant waste in an effort to put pressure on the federal government to remediate the site.

The plant had been established to facilitate the mining industry, but it left behind damaging health and environmental effects that the community had to live with for decades. The political consciousness of the community, although not a new development in and of itself, was made more apparent to settlers and the government as they fought to reclaim the land. Community leaders were able to appeal to a widespread public environmental consciousness and health concerns to successfully lobby for the 1988-89 reclamation process. When this was not enough, they resorted to forcing the federal government into action. By referring to DIA's direct involvement in the origins of the plant, community leaders made it very clear that it was up to the federal government to clean it up. After decades of relentless work, Serpent River First Nation members succeeded in drawing attention to the environmental and health devastation that plagued both the reserve itself as well as our traditional territory.

So, I'll end here. Miigwetch for your time today, miigwetch for coming out and making time during your busy days. And I'd also like to thank SSHRC for sponsoring this research as well.

Nicole Halbauer: Thanks, Lianne. That was very informative, but also very inspiring. I love the “God save the Queen” and the tongue in cheek sign. My nation is right next door to the

Gitksan/Wet'suwet'en, which are famous across our country for their resistance, and I just feel like, the concept of the tongue in cheek sign and blocking the highway and everything, that speaks to my soul.

Participants, now is your turn to ask questions of Dr. Leddy in the Q&A section. One of our behind-the-scenes tech people will put it in our chat for me to read and ask Dr. Leddy, and we can have a wonderful conversation with her. So, yeah, please submit your questions there.

It really resonated with the beginning of your talk about how connected to the land and how it was represented as a nomadic lifestyle versus one of harvesting because as Tsimshian people, we had multiple homes in multiple territories and we're often framed as being nomadic, but we were going to the same places every season and we had homes. We also had, like you said, agriculture, and often when you frame someone as nomadic, then that's an easy way to dismiss their agriculture, and their economy, and their sense of place. I really appreciated those comments.

We have some questions: Do you think there is a middle ground where mining can take place in indigenous communities and can still be protected in terms of health and land?

Dr. Lianne Leddy: You know, I'm mindful of the UN Declaration in this case for free, prior and informed consent. I'm also mindful that some communities are willing to look at mining on their territories, whereas many are not, and so there's a diversity between communities and even within communities about how this is going to work. But personally, or if it is even possible, personally, I don't know how we could have mining processes on territories that are connected to waterways and to lands, and to be able to protect our connectivity to that as well.

And so that's where I go back to again, looking at the long view and our connections to land – that is well documented in our oral history and also even through Indian Affairs records. Even though they're disparaging about it, you can see that, you know, people are connected to land and homeland and have a sense of that. I don't see how mining can be compatible with that idea of wellness as it is connected to land and water.

Nicole Halbauer: To be clear, there are nations that do have agreements with mining companies, but I am of the mind that as soon as you start creating harm, then you lose the opportunity to create wellness, but that's just my opinion though. And \$1.6 billion in 1950 must have been a lot of money for the Canadian government. But none of that, to be clear, none of that benefited your community, except in some tertiary income that wasn't even stabilized over decades.

I have another question, Dr. Leddy: how do you think that those working in public health can advocate for, or work toward, protecting people most negatively impacted by

extractive industries? That's a great question because these processes still happen today. So, what do you think, Dr. Leddy?

Dr. Lianne Leddy: I think that, I mean, being aware of the, again, going back to those connections that health is a holistic way of presenting, right? So being aware that there can be also negative mental health results from being, you know, alienated from territory or being alienated from traditional relationships with land and water, as well as some of the more physical aspects that I described as well, you know with eye problems and bronchitis and so on.

And so, in terms of public health, being aware of the holistic ways that we understand, you know, being human beings and our connections to each other and to the territory I think is really important, and also being willing to, if you're capable of doing that in your particular position, to name that ill health as being tied to that as well. I mean I think there are also long histories of being told, you know, well there might be other reasons why that particular disease or what have you, or condition, might be arising. We don't know that it's tied to mining or, you know, whatever that is. So, working against that – what we might call gaslighting – and actually being willing to name that, I think, would also be important. And looking at some of the systemic ways through the *Indian Act* or through systemic racism in healthcare that Indigenous people still have worse outcomes than the rest of Canada.

Nicole Halbauer: I think that's really important to realize that systemic racism still exists in our healthcare system. And then also like you said about being the one to name it and not be deferred from that because the gaslighting, as you called it, is so prevalent. I know in my work in the 80s and the 90s, it was just so terrible to be trying to be saying, yes, but maybe the most obvious and simplest answer is the correct answer rather than trying to always have to prove through a back door in 16 different studies, only to arrive at the first conclusion to begin with and have wasted years, decades, and time doing research that was only to alleviate the burden of guilt on a different entity, right? But the systemic part is the way our government and our systems all protect that, right? So that's great.

Another question: Was there a rise in autism in children during the years of mining and acid production, and is the prevalence changed now that it is partially cleaned up and mining and acid production are gone?

Dr. Lianne Leddy: That is an excellent question. I don't know about autism, in particular, in this instance. It was not part of what I had seen in the historical documentation and so I wish I had a better answer for you, but I don't know. It would be an interesting, and I think important thing, to be able to again name and be able to address.

Nicole Halbauer: So, Dr. Roberta Bertell, did you say she was a nun?

Dr. Lianne Leddy: Yes, Rosalie Bertell. Yeah.

Nicole Halbauer: Oh Rosalie Bertell. She may not have even been checking for autism during that time frame because would they have even known how to diagnose that, given what she was looking for? So that's an excellent question.

In the case of mining on the territories, do the First Nations land people obtain a royalty for the resources of their land if mining takes place on their land. A farmer can have mineral rights on their land. Do the same regulations apply to the Nations? Would you like to answer Lianne?

Dr. Lianne Leddy: Yeah, this is a ... no, is the quick answer. But in all seriousness, no. I mean I think this is where we also have reserve territory that legally is being different from our traditional territories, and so no, that 1.6 billion did not go to Serpent River First Nation. I mean, there were people who could obtain jobs if they wanted to as individuals, but not in a royalty sense, no.

Nicole Halbauer: Yeah, and I think a lot of nations nowadays are negotiating on their own behalf to ensure – but when it was DIA doing the dirty deed, the funding – if it went to DIA, it all went to DIA, which is why there are huge disparities on reserve. And thinking about what is a reserve, which is a very, very small piece of territory, given what is a territory. My reserve is small. I can walk my reserve in an hour, whereas my territory is so large that it takes me three hours to drive from one end to the other in a car. So, determining that piece is also important to remember because DIA would only be negotiating for the on-reserve portions during those years. OK, so –

Dr. Lianne Leddy: I did want to go back that the lease for the acid plant did go to the community but held again by DIA – all of that kind of thing, and also didn't have the same kinds of cleanup clauses or anything that we would expect now, which is why the inability to hire our own lawyers in the 1950s became really, really problematic later on. Sorry I just wanted to make ... as we were talking about the difference between on reserve and traditional territory, I did want to clarify that, yeah.

Nicole Halbauer: Well, and even to be clear that even if there was a deal negotiated that the community was to receive any of the funding, that funding would not go to the community in any way. It would go to DIA to administer as they saw fit and when they saw fit. That's very, very similar to the way our timber has been, our forests have been extracted and our communities didn't really benefit during that time period either.

OK. Another question about fertility, or a question about fertility: I wonder about fertility in women and men. Was it affected and was there an increase in pregnancy losses? You address that in children with congenital defects?

Dr. Lianne Leddy: I can't speak to the fertility in men, but the way it was framed in the study was fetal death, and at Serpent River there were, especially as compared to Sagamok First Nation and Mississauga First Nation, there was an increase of fetal death as

it was described in that report. So, that would have an impact fertility as well or is, I think, an indicator, obviously of fertility, and certainly that ties to reproductive justice and things that we have as Indigenous women and families, and the ability to give life.

As for congenital defects, I don't recall in the report itself if it looked at that in terms of the children themselves who were born, I do remember the aspect of fertility being covered.

Nicole Halbauer: Yeah, that's really huge. If you're impacting next generation so deeply, and oh my heart. What is the current – okay first off, I want to say it's wild that the provincial standard was like three, and then federally it was 10. These kinds of things, they raise anger in me and I don't know if you saw me on the screen, but I was just like ready to blockade myself. What is the current level of radiation in the Serpent River? How long did it exceed provincial standards?

Dr. Lianne Leddy: That is an excellent question. How long it exceeded ... I know that they have done a lot of work to reclaim the Serpent River, especially after the mines closed in the 1990s. There's a lot of work for reclamation along the watershed. So, in terms of... I know that it's still being perpetually monitored – off the top of my head, I don't know what the current level is in the Serpent River, but certainly it is something that will always have to be monitored and they do release reports, I think on an annual basis, to look at that.

So, it's something that speaks to – oh, you got coffee delivered – it speaks to the importance of, I think, perpetual care in this area that uranium, in particular, as a resource that was being mined has tremendously a long legacy that it's going to leave on our lands and in the watershed. And so that's something that will continuously have to be monitored.

Nicole Halbauer: Yeah, that's crazy. When you said that they were finding fish that had eggs that were three years old, I was just like through your whole presentation, I was getting smacked with these facts. Like, how do you be – well, first off, as a mother, how do you be pregnant for three years? But just how unhealthy? And then the next cycle of fish stock – it just is flabbergasting to me that this was allowed to go on for so long. That's really amazing. I really appreciate you doing this work and making it so cohesive so that it's This presentation has really opened my eyes. Being from the western provinces here, we have a lot of very different issues, but the same system that created them, right? Uranium mining is not one of them in my particular territory, but it was the logging that caused a lot of this and then just the whole situation that we have here with some of our First Nations being accepting of the LNG plant and some not being and it going through all of our territories, but that brought up the real fact that through your community that hydro – it was hydro in your?

Dr. Lianne Leddy: Yeah.

Nicole Halbauer: ... the highway and the railroad and that's like what they did across the entire country. Just your leadership being so willing to take action on that is so, so inspiring

and I just wish for all leaders to be so dedicated to here and to partner with their community members in that way. That's just amazing.

I have another question: with mining ramping up in Northern Ontario and this being a priority for government to the transition of electric vehicles, how do you propose safety measures so that history will not continue to repeat itself? And, how do you find the middle ground with competing priorities? That's a really good question.

Dr. Lianne Leddy: Thank you very much for that question. If you look at the government's critical mineral strategy, it has a lot of different pieces in it that I don't see how they could possibly be actioned in the way that it's written in that, you know, protecting treaty rights, free, prior and informed consent, but on the other hand needing these minerals for you know... well, we're all meeting over zoom, like this kind of technology that's required for our electronics and electric vehicles as well. So this is, you know, something that I think about a lot and I think it goes hand in hand with I think one of the first questions, which was, "Can mining be done safely?" And again, I'm speaking sort of in this Q&A on my own behalf, but I don't see how all of these things fit together, how we can mine for these critical minerals and at the same time have wellness in our communities.

And I see sort of this particular situation that I'm describing from my own homeland as being a cautionary tale. A lot of my Elders would talk about the fact that we couldn't hire lawyers, we didn't know what was going to happen in the 1950s and, you know, maybe we would have done something differently had we known. Here we know now what happens with mining and different types of mining, and we have another kind of urgency. The Cold War brought urgency for uranium. We have other kinds of urgency now for critical minerals, and we know what happens. So, let's use that knowledge and make sure that that is, you know, truly free prior and informed consent as we enter into these discussions.

Nicole Halbauer: Yeah, that free, prior and informed consent and UNDRIP are really important when we're going forward with these kinds of conversations. And then there needs to also be the conversation within the Nation itself, amongst the community members, to come to some form of decision because we also see that.... We may not have been able to hire lawyers and a lot of people don't even realize that in modern Canada that it was decades and decades that these extractive processes were happening in our communities – one, our communities were not benefiting from them in any feasible way and two, we weren't even allowed to hire a lawyer to defend us or ask questions. So that's super important to remember too. But going forward, I think there will be places where history does repeat itself, but it's also really important to have the knowledge so that we can see the warning signs going forward.

We have another question, and I like this question too. It's really great. You talked about the impact on health for Anishinaabe women, how would you describe their participation as women (I assume in the studies), and did it differ from Anishinaabe men? So, this is a

gender participation question because we know in the 50s, only men were asked their opinion.

Dr. Lianne Leddy: And I'll say I have the privilege of having been, you know, tied to a community with such strong women in it as well, that we had Chief Lorena Lewis, who was our first female chief elected under the *Indian Act* in the 1970s, so not too long actually after women could be chiefs under the *Indian Act*, and several women chiefs after that as well. And Lorena in the in the 1970s had an all women council, so, you know, the participation, I would say, is actually quite strong in our community at the political level for both men and women working together on this.

There was another situation about making this same kind of case to environmental assessment board hearings in the late 1970s when they talked about expanding uranium mining at Elliot Lake, and men and women from our community went up to Elliot Lake and went to those hearings. And you know, they weren't originally supposed to even go there or be there but they went and they made this case. So, this was men and women working together at that political level and it's just so tremendously important. So, thank you for that question as well.

Nicole Halbauer: That's wonderful. I know our community embraced the DIA version of the Band Council, but we continuously elect our hereditary chiefs to be our band chiefs, and our Band Council is kind of set up according to our hereditary system. So, we're just ... and it seems to be working.

So, here's a good question, Dr. Leddy: are there any existing supports for individuals navigating these lifelong effects or coming to terms with possible diagnosis connected to these systemic atrocities?

Dr. Lianne Leddy: The community does have a health centre that is owned for on-reserve members, so there is programming and things like that that exists there. I don't know any... I'm not aware of anything that targets this particular case, but I mean it would be about wellness and it would be about looking at the kinds of programs that are needed in Indigenous communities and our First Nation. So, that's a really important question and I think part of it is also just keeping the knowledge about these systems alive too, and to be able to continuously be looking at the ways that we can support wellness, reclaim some of our knowledge about ties to territory and land, as well, as being key to that.

Nicole Halbauer: Yeah, the line is there ... so that when we need to be well, we can go back to it and we can become well with it, and if our land is unwell, where else do we go, right? So that's fantastic. I think it's like all of us across this country, you know, we have some of the – all from different harms but facing the same system.

Anyway, next question. Haha, sorry, sometimes Dr. Leddy, I go off on my own little memories of what this country is. So, I'll ask the next question: Have the First Nations of

the region been involved with ongoing environmental monitoring assessment and oversight of the reclamation activities in more recent periods?

Dr. Lianne Leddy: So, the water report that I had been mentioning, the continuous water monitoring reports that happened on an annual basis, there is communication to leadership about that. There was, I don't know.... I know about 15 years ago there had been connections between Denison Environmental Services, which is the body, I guess, the organization, the company that used to be Denison Mines, and this branch is Denison Environmental, which monitors the tailings ponds, and there had been connections between the former chief and in the community, and Denison Environmental. I don't know about the present day right now about what that relationship looks like, but certainly that is something that sort of needs to continue to happen in that monitoring.

Nicole Halbauer: Yeah, that's a really key aspect – making sure that it's our community members that are involved in the environmental assessments and the impact studies and everything, and that's really key. I know in Haida Gwaii, they have their Guardian Watchmen ... the Guardians actually, sorry. They're not called Watchmen anymore. They train them and that's all done by Haida Gwaii people themselves. And so, it's possible across the country.

In your experience and travels, have you seen differences between treaty-based territories and unceded territory when dealing with mining?

Dr. Lianne Leddy: That is an excellent question, because I'm thinking of other territories where ... because mining is happening across what is now Canada. And you know, I think that I don't see a lot of evidence even from my homeland, which is under Treaty, of being treated any differently or anything like that than any other when they – you know, I don't see that the treaty provided any kind of protection, is what I'm trying to say, when it came time to establish the mines. And so, I'm not sure actually, based on other territories, what that difference might be or what that would look like. I think maybe the bigger difference I'm seeing now is time period. So, this is happening in the 1950s versus today, where those discussions, hopefully, are far more robust about whether or not a community decides to go forward versus what was happening in the 1950s, where nobody was coming from any of the mining companies or the province to talk to Serpent River about what people thought about, you know, mining in the Cold War period. That was just something that sprung up. There was certainly a little bit more discussion about the acid plant itself, but not about the existence of the mines, no.

Nicole Halbauer: Yeah. And I think overall in that era, it was such a toxic paternal relationship between First Nations, it wouldn't matter if you had a Treaty or not, because “God save the Queen” meant that the Queen ultimately did what she wanted because she was our mother and we were her wards, and that's the way we were dealt with – as children

that didn't know what was best for them. Meanwhile, we were being poisoned, having, you know, all of the toxic things that have happened to us since colonization.

So, I would like to invite more questions. If you have any more questions, please send them in. Our team is diligently working to send them out to us. I'm really enjoying this conversation, Dr. Leddy, is there like one thing that really stood out in your research and gave you such hope to keep going, because this must have been a hard process. This is your community; these are your family members. This must have been so difficult to have known in the back of your head, but then to have seen the facts laid out in front of you, the way they were so unjustly treated. Is there one thing that inspired you?

Dr. Lianne Leddy: I think the relationship with my grandmother was the whole inspiration for this project in the first place. So, we were very close and that is the whole reason why I knew about this, and being able to honor her through this work as well and then being able to learn from Elders. I think one of the things that I keep in my mind is listening to them talk about some of their activism, because I was interviewing them in, you know, 2008, 2009, and then one person in 2014, and they were talking about actions that they were taking in the 70s and 80s and watching their faces light up as they talked about this incredibly important work that they were doing really was heartening, especially compared to having to sit in an archive and read like... whether it was a water report or what, you know, learning about those trout in Quirke Lake, and all of those kinds of things that were, you know, very difficult to read, learning about pregnancy loss in that report and having that be so difficult to read – but at the same time being able to interview Elders who had done so much work to call attention to these issues, and the fire in their voices and, you know, just pushing me. You know, when as researchers, we all come up against different challenges, too, that come with the peer review process and all kinds of things, and it was like, no, no, you come from people who've gone through much worse, right? And that, you know, pushed me forward in all of that.

Nicole Halbauer: It's so beautiful, I almost cried there.

Dr. Lianne Leddy: So did I.

Nicole Halbauer: I often think it's so important when talking with the next generation – because I'm getting to that point now where my grandkids are coming up and I can just be like, “Oh back in the day when I chained myself to a tree,” or whatever – and just to remember the stories of those before us are so powerful because what they faced, they cleared the path for us to start where they stopped. We truly do stand on the shoulders of giants because without them, who knows where we would be.

Ok, here's a fish question which is my huge thing given that my Nation is so dependent, my whole culture is dependent on sockeye and eulachon: Are there limitations on fish, fish consumption and consuming water from the Serpent River today?

Dr. Lianne Leddy: Yeah. So, in terms of the consuming fish, in Ontario we have a system where the MN&R [Ministry of Natural Resources] tells you how much fish you can eat and it breaks it down to about like whether or not you're expecting either, as well. And so yeah, there are still limits. Now, I haven't done a comparison to look at what that looks like in other areas or anything like that, so I can't speak to the specifics of that, but there are people who do still fish in the lakes and the watersheds. Certainly, there are even cottages that are starting to develop there too, but it's something, again, they're continuing to monitor it to make sure that... I mean my concern is also that the dams that are still there and that are keeping those tailings management areas contained. And so, when some of the Elders I had interviewed, they had talked about, you know, that's what worries them. They wanted the story to continue because they understood that they were Elders, but they also were concerned about, you know, that those dams can break. They are, you know, constructed by human beings and monitored by human beings, and what happens to the watershed if there is something that happens there, you know, and the concerns that what that would do, then, with the disaster, if that would happen, if that continued.

Nicole Halbauer: Well, that is a scary thing, right? Not only are they built by humans, but they're built by humans in the 1950s, long before we had all sorts of standards, and technology, and materials that we have access to now to monitor and maintain and, you know, nothing lasts forever, so that's important. And that's something that we always consider when an industry is wanting to come into our territory is, "Ok, but that's you today. What about the guy that's sitting in your seat 50-75 years from now when my great grandchildren want to go fish, something you or one of your... or someone in your seat does impacts whether or not my children can eat fish," right? So, it's really important to consider.

I have a question here about what is being taught to the children about this. Woops, sorry, I've flipped up. What is being taught to the children of Serpent River about this experience with mining companies, DIA, and how to go forward? That's the next generation question, we're just going full circle.

Dr. Lianne Leddy: Full circle. Yeah.

Nicole Halbauer: How are you arming the next generation?

Dr. Lianne Leddy: No, there are ... there's a youth group that does work just north of what is now Elliott Lake to connect to land, but also to learn about this project as well. So, I've been, you know – I did a community report, so that's available to folks. Being able to send the copies of the books and so on so that the youth do have an understanding of our history and what happened in our territory. I did a presentation at Elliot Lake Secondary School, which is the high school in Elliot Lake, to tell students there – but that's also where some of our students from Serpent River First Nation go to school. They either go to Elliot Lake or Blind River. So, that story is there even for settler students too, to be aware of that history

of the land that they're on as well. And I think I see the power in that, in making sure that youth have an understanding of that history and how to move forward, to understand the importance of protecting territory and the work of their ancestors in doing that, you know their grandparents, their great grandparents, in that as well. I think that becomes really important.

Nicole Halbauer: Yes, I think that's really important as well. I think it's absolutely vital because as an oral people, in my community we often share, in the feast hall, our stories and our history, but there was some documentation that seems boring at the time, so nobody thinks – like it's administrative, so.

I once wrote an article for our newsletter about our Elders' resistance in negotiations with CN and framed it as a children's story, and it had a huge success and impact on their understanding of how and when and why they need to be able to negotiate on these levels and talk about these things in terms of their cultural territories.

Somebody has shared a resource guide for eating fish in Ontario. That's fantastic. Are you still there, Dr. Leddy? Hello? Everybody is frozen. Is it just me that's frozen? Did you come back? You came back to me.

Dr. Lianne Leddy: I am so sorry. My computer just started to shut down. I don't know what happened. I didn't touch anything.

Nicole Halbauer: It's telling – you know what, I think you and I could probably talk all day – but I think that was a warning. So, we'll do one more question and then we'll do our wrap up conversation and comments because I think technology has had enough of us.

I wonder if this is an effort others would be interested in. I lived in Nunavut for many years and resistance continues, successfully thus far, to keep uranium mining out (good!). The new treaty prohibits nuclear weapons. The United Nations has explicitly noted that Indigenous peoples globally – your computer, my voice! - that Indigenous peoples globally are more greatly negatively impacted by nuclear testing, but uranium mining's impact is not yet included. Do you think it should be included, uranium mining testing?

Dr. Lianne Leddy: Sorry, I don't see the question there. Yes, I think that it should be included in any kinds of studies that we're looking at to ascertain the impacts that it's having on our territories and our peoples. I think it's something again that we're talking about in terms of, you know, any kind of mining also, in terms of the impacts that it can have on individuals and communities. Thank you, on wider mining activities and health to Indigenous peoples – yes, I would like to see that happen and to be able to also, again, have a sense of monitoring as well, right? Sometimes we have to make an effort to talk to each other from different territories to see what's going on. I think we have lots of similarities in terms of our experiences and I think to be able to have that knowledge about

the impacts of health on our communities becomes – I think it's critical, for moving forward.

Nicole Halbauer: That's fantastic. I really enjoyed our conversation, Lianne. I just feel like I could sit here and drink tea and talk to you all day long about the similarities and my Nation, your Nation, and across Canada, and the systemic history that we've all endured and are now coming to our children and our youth with the knowledge of, you know, what they need to do to ensure future generations and the health of our land, and I really appreciate that. Do you have any closing comments that you'd like to make?

Dr. Lianne Leddy: I just I would like to thank you, Nicole. This was a lovely conversation that we had and I love connecting with people from different territories and getting a sense of the similarities that we have and the commonalities. I mean, even though our cultures and our histories can be quite different, many times we have encountered and contended with the same kinds of struggles, and certainly the same kinds of systems – colonial systems – and so, I want to thank you for this discussion. I'd like to thank everybody else, too, today for making the time to come in, to learn and to discuss your fabulous questions at the end. I'm really grateful for this experience. So, Miigwetch.

Nicole Halbauer: Well, thank you very much to you Lianne, but also to everyone who took the time to join us today and take the time to ask such great questions. My mind is percolating right now, and I just have so much more to think about, and I'd really like to give a huge shout out to the team from NCCIH for inviting me to sit with Dr. Lianne Leddy and have this amazing conversation. I feel so inspired, I feel invigorated, and I feel like the rest of my day is just going to be great because I'm going to be thinking about the ways to resist and “God save the Queen,” and all of that. Oh, I guess it's King now.

If everyone can remember to please take our webinar survey. It's in the chat there for you to hit the link, and we'll see you all next time. Thanks everybody.

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