

Transcript of Manny Jules' Interview on *Black and White*

Stephen Dorsey: Hello. Welcome back to Black and White, a rallying place where we come together to learn and hold everyone gently to account, a podcast to the ally in all of us. I'm your host, Stephen Dorsey. Black and White is recorded in Toronto, Canada on the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishinaabe, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples, and now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Metis peoples. My guest today is Manny Jules, the Chief Commissioner of First Nations Tax Commission, the organization that supports and advances First Nations taxation under the FMA and the Indian Act. Manny Jules is also the former Chief of the Tk'emlups te Secwepemc First Nation where the former Kamloops Residential School is located, and where in May 2021 215 unmarked graves were discovered. The school was closed in 1969 after 80 years and most tragically after thousands upon thousands of young Indigenous children, loved ones, were taken and mistreated at the residential school by government and religious institution representatives who were supposed to take care and educate them. We'll get into that and more later. Manny Jules is a respected champion for rights of Indigenous people and I'm thrilled he could join us today. Welcome to Black and White, Manny Jules.

Manny Jules: Thanks for this opportunity, Stephen. Looking forward to the discussion.

SD: I want to thank you for accepting my invitation. I saw you on the Fifth Estate, which is a show on the CBC. It was a program, a documentary on the Kamloops Residential School, and I remember listening to you, and I mean there was so many emotional testimonies in that program, uh, but one of the things that really struck me was your focus on reconciliation, and uh, that really had an impact on me. And as uh we were just talking before we started recording, but. So I, I'm from BC, and I spent a lot of time in Kamloops and have

MJ: Ah.

SD: many memorable moments of you know, Spoolmak Days, right?

[Laughter]

SD: By the way, that's Kamloops spelled backwards for those uh who don't [know]. And Kamloops is in British Columbia in the Interior. So let's start at the beginning here, and just kind of in your current role as the Chief Commissioner of the FNTC, and more specifically why that work is so important in terms of First Nation jurisdiction and governance. So maybe tell us a little bit more about the First Nations Taxation Commission and why it's critical for Indigenous people in this country.

MJ: [inaudible] I've been doing this work now uh for about 48 years, and really when you take into account how long I've been attending meetings since I've been about 15 years old with my Dad, and really I, I view this as a continuation of my Dad's work which he started in the early 1960s. Uh, the reason taxation's so important is that we need independent uh resourcing outside of the federal and provincial governments,

and this is uh the very foundation of government. So you need two foundational institutions, if you will, one regards land. Uh, if you don't have land and if you don't have tax, uh you're not a government. You're a dependant. And I want to move away from dependence. I want my people to be able to stand up on their own two feet, make contributions to our own betterment, uh so that we can be successful partners in the federation.

SD: It's interesting you mention land and taxes, and you know when I went to Australia, and I'm there as a proud Canadian, and talking about what all the great things we're doing for Indigenous people in Canada, and Australia should learn from us, you know, and cause they were notorious for mistreating their Aborigine people is what they called

MJ: Yes.

SD: And, you know, I used to say, 'What are you talking, you know, we gave them land, they don't have to pay taxes, and we pay for them to university, right. A bunch of nonsense, obviously, as I came to understand. So, you know, it's so interesting how there's a complete disconnect. But you're looking at this in terms of land and taxation and the management of that as a necessity for Indigenous people, but as a way to have a nation to nation relationship with the governments.

MJ: Well, it's absolutely foundational. Uh, you know, all of this was taken away from us. Uh, when you mention Australia, you and I couldn't go to Australia and settle until after 1972.

SD: Crazy.

MJ: And so that's, yeah, it's a crazy world we live in. But uh you know, this goes right back to how we were colonized, how our rights were taken away, particularly our ability to be able to look after ourselves. And this goes back to one individual. His name is Duncan Campbell Scott. He was the author of uh, really of uh the residential school system, and he also took away our fiscal powers. And by that I mean the, our ability to be able to raise taxes. And we spell it t a k s i s, and uh that's a Chinook spelling, and so we had a trade language that we spoke here

SD: OK.

MJ: in the Pacific Northwest, and so we understood the concept of taxation, and an incredibly important part of our governance structure. And he took that away in 1927 after 15 hours of Parliamentary discussions. He was the principal. Our leader at the time, Andy Paull from the Squamish First Nation in British Columbia, had 15 minutes.

SD: Wow.

MJ: And uh so they took away our ability to be able to tax. That meant that we couldn't look after ourselves. We had to be completely dependent on the federal government uh for any infrastructure. Up until that point if we needed to have a building built, we built it ourselves. If we needed an irrigation system, we built it

ourselves. After that, because we couldn't raise money on our own, it meant we have to have our hand out to the federal government. And then, when you look at the creation of Indian reserves, an Indian reserve is simply, 'Whose title is vested in Her Majesty'. We have the use and benefit of, of that land, and that means to this day uh, we have got what I consider a huge deficit, a hundred and seventy-five billion dollar credit deficit because we can't utilize our land as collateral, our members can't be bonded, and if you can't be bonded, uh you can't get into small business. Uh, so it has those kind of implications even to this day, and the, and even additions to reserves take upwards of a dozen years.

SD: It's interesting, Manny, that you touch on that. We've been talking with other guests, and [inaudible] about generational wealth, you know, of the wealth gap between black people and white people and people of colour, of course Indigenous people. But, you know there is inherent in the value of land that is passed on from generation to generation, and the ability to leverage that value that grows over time to uh benefit the community, right, individuals, business. It's so interesting that the parallels, and I think this is why I love this podcast is I'm sure most people don't know this.

MJ: It's repeated over and over again. You know when a lot of the people look at our reserve, they wonder, 'Why is there substandard housing? You know, why are there so many proliferation of trailers? I just attended a meeting in uh Minneapolis St Paul, and if you ever drive through the tribes' reservations in the United States, the biggest housing developments are trailers, and it's because you can get a loan for something that is mobile.

SD: It's on wheels.

MJ: It's on wheels, and you can take it away, whereas if you build it on a foundation you can't borrow money.

SD: Unbelievable. It's actually what I want to say here is, you have been a champion really for Indigenous people in securing rights for First Nations people in Canada, especially when it comes to financial matters in regards to taxation, things we're just talking about. And correct me if I'm wrong, Manny, but weren't you one of the leaders that really pushed for amendments to the Indian Act in 1988 so that you could exercise your jurisdiction and, on the lands that were traditionally yours.

MJ: It was the first, uh First Nations-led amendment to the Indian Act in its history, and I led that uh movement uh from, it started with my Dad about 1965 and I finalized that in 1988. And it allowed us to have for the first time independent governmental revenues. You know we, we leased land, so we got the benefit of that, and then you could have benefits from oil or gravel or timber, but as far as a governmental revenue which is taxation, that was the first time since traditional times that we had that independent source of revenue. And so uh what I consider all of this is economic reconciliation, because if you don't have economic reconciliation you're going to be dependent on somebody else to build you a house, uh to educate you, and I'm not for that. I stand for people being able to stand up on their own. But it's also in our case also a collective struggle because without the collective you don't have, you know, the power as an individual. So it's incredible.

SD: It's amazing. Uh, let's go back. You've mentioned your father twice, and

MJ: Yes.

SD: I feel that he was probably a bit of a hero for you, and I'm always super interested in meeting amazing leaders like yourself who inspire others and have moved the ball down the field, if you will, from, throughout their lives and careers. So maybe take us back, Manny, to the beginning. Where did you grow up and what was that experience like in terms of community, in terms of dealing with you know, racism, and systemic racism as well that you experienced, and where did that fire inside you propel you to see things differently so that you could move forward and become the person that's been leading for decades now.

MJ: I think it comes from, really it comes from love. I visited my Mom over the weekend. Fortunately got her fourth booster shot, and then got, right after that got covid. And I went to visit her and I said, 'Mom, uh you're tougher than covid. You're going to beat this'. And she started laughing, and uh we started, you know, every time I visit my Mom I like to incite memories that we shared, and uh so she always reminds me of the love that our family had for my grandparents and my uncles and aunties and our whole family, our extended family. And so it is because of the strength of my community, of my family. And my Dad and Mom, my Mom in particular, always told me the story of when they first got together. My Mom had the horse and my Dad had the saddle and then we had, and then they had me.

[Laughter]

SD: In that order.

MJ: In that order. And uh so I grew up with my Dad horse logging, spent time with my grandparents, you know my grandparents were of course brought up in the Shuswap language. I'm born and raised here on the Kamloops Reserve, spent all my life here, and my inspiration is, is my people. The reason I chose public service is really because of my Mom and Dad. And that all goes back to my attending the formation of the Union of BC Indian Chiefs in November of 1969. I started attending meetings with my Dad when he was Chief of my community here, going through what they called the consultation process on the White Paper policy, and which was a Trudeau the elder, an assimilationist approach, and of course my community and every other one across the country completely rejected that. We said we didn't want to be assimilated. We wanted to be able to have our governments, uh be able to stand up. And so attending a meeting when I was 17 years old where you had virtually 99% of the communities here in my own community of Kamloops. It was part of the residential school where they met. It was the gymnasium. We now call the gymnasium Moccasin Square Gardens,

[Laughter]

MJ: and so I, you know, skipped out a week with my Mom and Dad's permission, and listened to incredible leaders from around the province which was echoed uh you know, right across the country. And so that was my inspiration. That's what really

led me to, to uh seek public office. I was elected as a council member in November of 1974. I, I along with a number of my friends wanted to go down to Santa Fe Indian Art School

SD: OK.

MJ: And so I got side-tracked, and my Mom and Dad said, 'Pursue your education', but I got side-tracked into political life, and that's really usurped everything else, uh you know, and all of my time. It's been an incredible challenge but at the same time so rewarding. I've worked with communities right across the country. I'm now working with tribes in the United States both on land tenure and uh taxation issues. I work with individuals, and the Nitahoo from the South Island of New Zealand. Yeah, so it's always inspiring to me to get to know Indigenous people, get to know how common our histories are. And really I'm also not only a student of art, but also a student of history. I just, with us here in Kamloops, of course, history came back to hit us on the head last year.

SD: Of course.

MJ: And, and you know during this time, and especially during covid, you know, it became a reflective time, thinking about, you know, what we've gone through in the past, and in particular, you know, a tip of the hat to my, my ancestor leaders, Chief Louie, Johnnie Chilleheetsa, who were chiefs from the late 1800s until they passed away. Chief Louie and Johnnie Chilleheetsa in 1910 they were submitting petitions to the federal and provincial government saying, 'We want our own land. We want our own doctors. We want our own, you know, education', and I was thinking, 'This is after 30 years of a residential school. Why would they say that?' And then I realized what they were asking for was our people not to be servitude but to be professionals. And so at that period of history the residential school started out as an industrial school, and then it went up to Grade Three, and by the time my Dad finished his Grade Nine education, that's in 1942, it was you know, three or four generations. And so I realized that our ancestor leaders wanted professionals. They wanted our own doctors. They wanted our own lawyers. They wanted our own professionals, but what was happening at residential schools is you were taught to be a seamstress, you were taught to repair harnesses. In other words, you were going to be spending the rest of your life working for somebody else, not yourself.

SD: I love the fact that you're looking back at the own history of your people to reaffirm in some ways what the future is going to look like. And it's so interesting you talk about education. I was talking last week with Wes Hall. We were talking about streaming right here in Toronto schools. Kids get to Grade Nine and go, 'You know what, you are going to not be going to university, and we're deciding for that today for you'. Right?

MJ: Yeah.

SD: And of course it just leads to generational issues in regards to opportunity, right? And I want to go back to you becoming Chief of your community. Uh, you were the Chief from 1984 to 2000, so you know, actually that's an interesting time because the early 80s I lived in Victoria and it was, let's just say not as progressive as it is today

even though there's still a lot of work to do. But, you know, knowing Kamloops, so what would you say was your, what did you want to do as Chief of your community when you started, and what do you think is your biggest accomplishment that you see that you were able to uh lead, you know, your community and people to get to the next step, if you will?

MJ: I'll back up a couple of steps. When, when we first started going into town, you know, into the city, uh, we didn't have running water, and my Dad would go over. We'd get a haircut, and I, I always like to acknowledge the Beatles in allowing us to grow our hair long again, and uh you know, but at that time when we were young the only restaurants that would take us were Chinese restaurants. That's in Kamloops and a lot of other places. And so when I first was elected to Council uh in 1974 I asked my Dad what I should say, cause I was elected. They told me not to run, I was elected, I topped to polls. And my Dad wrote on a piece of paper that I still have to this day. He said, 'Promise to treat everyone fairly'. And so when I became Chief I wanted to make sure that everyone was treated fairly, that we had proper housing, that we dealt with the land question, we dealt with the taxation issue. And that was my first focus, was to get taxation jurisdiction, and also begin to deal with what I call the Douglas Reserves of the Trutch Cutoffs, and I was able to uh, add about 45,000 deeded acres uh to our land base. It isn't part of our reserve, but we, we have it.

SD: Wow.

MJ: And I think the other significant thing was our, just the economic strides we've made as a result of taxation, and you know, the fundamentals of tax really are, coming from our history, is to help each other, you know. It's to make sure, that's one of our fundamental core beliefs. Let's, you know, we're here to help one another to be better, and we can't do that individually. It's a collective strength that we've got. Uh, we have to look after each other. That means we have to be able to look after our little ones through our elders, and that again reinforces this notion that we're a community. One of the funny aspects is we can't be stingy with each other. And remember during the first part of covid everybody started to hoard all kinds of stuff.

SD: Toilet paper.

MJ: Yeah, exactly, exactly, you know

[Laughter]

MJ: And you could never get all of the other wipes and everything else that were important to clean everything back then. And you know, so you can't be stingy with one another. And then the other thing is you can't be jealous of one another. And those were the kinds of formal things that I was taught from the time I was young, and so I carried them through as Chief. We dealt with, in the large part with uh, with the Douglas Reserve Trutch Cutoffs. That still is an outstanding issue, but we were able to purchase a major piece of real estate as a result of us working together as a community to resolve it. We've made incredible strides. We formed the Shuswap Nation Tribal Council in the 1970s. Uh, but I would say that those are the two major things that I'm absolutely proud of is the taxation jurisdiction and the purchase of Harper Ranch which is now Speolo, which is Eagle's Nest Ranch.

SD: Amazing. But Manny, you touched on it, obviously in May 2021 was quite a day of global reckoning, with the announcement of the 215 unmarked graves that were found on the former land of the residential schools. I want to take a little break and come back, and there's a lot wrapped up in that, a lot of emotion, a lot of sadness, but hopefully a lot of hope as well. So we'll be right back.

[Minute 23:24]

SD: Welcome back to Black and White with my amazing guest, Manny Jules. Thanks for joining us. As I mentioned before the break, May 2021 it was reported that 215 unmarked graves were located on the former Kamloops residential school in Kamloops, British Columbia, in Canada. It really kind of shook the world, and I know in my circles here in Toronto non-Indigenous people, what was written, what we heard was devastating information about these young children who had been essentially forced to go, taken from their families and sent to residential schools, supposedly to be educated and cared for, but that's not really what happened for thousands and thousands of them. Manny, maybe you can, I'd like to hear from you what that day was like hearing this. And I know obviously for you and your community this wasn't really news. So maybe you can share with us your experience and the impact that it had.

MJ: I attended the KIRS uh from Grade 1 to Grade 7, and then in, in 1968 we had what was called the integration, and of course '68 was a pivotal year for all of us who were uh, you know, racial, if you will, uh right across North America. Uh, and so, for me it was absolutely personal. Uh, I got a phone call uh from my sister [Jeanette Jules] who was on Council. I was having what we called 'cowboy coffee'. So because of covid we were having coffee outside around a campfire. And I, my sister said, 'The Chief and Council want to meet with you and the other former Chiefs'. And I said, 'Well, jeez I'm having cowboy coffee. I'd sooner do this than attend a meeting'. And she said, 'No, it's really important that you come here'. And I said, 'Well, what's the reason?' And she said, 'It's been confirmed. We've got uh 215 possible unmarked graves'. And I knew immediately that this was really important so I dropped what I was doing and went over, met with the Chief and Council. And I knew immediately it was going to be global news uh, and that it was going to really impact the rest of our lives, what had happened, but also what *had* happened, and why it happened. And that's when I really was reflecting on, my emotion was, 'All of these things that we've known about and talked about for many years uh are now at the forefront, and people can no longer deny what had happened'. Yeah, up until that point I always had the feeling that people thought it was our fault that we lived in substandard housing, that we were economically, you know, oppressed, that it was our fault because you know we didn't work hard enough, we didn't

SD: Irresponsible. All of those things.

MJ: all of those adjectives that describe living conditions. And so from that point, and I also started to reflect on uh you know, the role of the Church and the role of the government. The role of the Church uh is incredibly important here, uh particularly because of the visit of our leaders uh to Rome in the last couple of weeks, the Inuit, the Metis and the First Nations. Some of the first Papal Bulls, of course, in the 1500s

had these really fundamental questions about whether or not Indigenous people of the Americas were indeed human, and if we were human did we have a soul, and if we were human and had a soul did we have property rights, and could we be enslaved. The first Papal Bull recognized yes, we are human, yes, we have a soul, and yes, we have property rights, and we shouldn't be enslaved. And then Cortez of course, two years later, all of that was overturned. It just fundamentally changed how we lived in the Americas. And then the role of the government, you know again, Duncan Campbell Scott saying, 'Even though these children live, habitat so closely together and they may die in higher numbers than in their villages, that isn't enough for us to change our policy'. And it was because of his policy that these children couldn't be sent home because the government didn't want to spend the money to send them home. And then the other thing that was striking to me and, is all of those kids, and it goes right back to the apology of uh Prime Minister Harper in uh 2008, I always think about us at that time as being kids. We're kind of frozen in that, in that time period.

SD: Yes.

MJ: And uh for many years I denied that, that I really had, you know, the kind of physical abuse that a lot of the other kids did. I didn't have a lot of the abuse that the others did, and I, you know, it's so sad. But I always remember this one time we, you know, I always said that I prayed enough to get to heaven for me and every one of my ancestors. We skipped out of High Mass uh about four or five of us, and this brother who came in and caught us in a [toilet] cubicle, and he started beating us on the head with his knuckles. And it was right on top of the, the head so that you couldn't see any bruising or it wouldn't, you know, and I was thinking, 'Oh, it's my fault because I skipped out'. And then I realized later on, 'God, we were like nine, ten years old', the, you know, we were just little kids. And so I thought immediately about all of the ones I went to school with. And then I started getting calls from all of the people that I still remain friends with. And a lot of them were just, 'This is how they treated us. They treated us no better than, than animals, you know, they didn't care for us'. And it was all of those emotions about who they were, who, who I went to the school with. It was just a traumatic, traumatic day. And it still is, you know, because there's so many unresolved issues uh, and now that, you know, we've got visitors coming up from Guatemala talking about their horrendous situation that they went through during their turbulent times. And of course Pope Francis himself, he had to deal with 'The Missing' in, in uh Argentina, you know, and

SD: Of course. I remember that as well.

MJ: Yeah, yeah. So this isn't, we're not strangers to this. But what happened is that people kind of just compartmentalize it and put it aside, saying, you know, 'This is something that happened in the past, it isn't of the present'. But it is very much in the present.

SD: So it's back to 2008. I went to the Yukon, part of the Governor General's Leadership Conference. I write about it in my book. And we had all these amazing leaders coming to speak to us uh at the plenary. And Phil Fontaine, who was then the Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, he was supposed to speak to us about leadership and community. He said, 'I'm not going to talk to you about that today. I'm going to talk to you about my residential school story'. And I'm going,

'Residential school story?' Like I know there's an apology happening in a few days in Ottawa. You know, I'd paid a little bit of attention. But I wasn't 100% sure. I remember him starting the story and of course you could hear a pin drop, and then you could hear people crying, as I was. I had to actually step outside in the cold damp air filled with so much shame and the fact that I didn't understand, I never knew anything about this, and that this had happened. So back to Chief Fontaine, I remember, you know, he's said this many times in the reports, but you know, that he did that too, as you described, put things in compartments, right?

MJ: Um hum.

SD: Even amongst his own friends who were also Survivors, they used to tell jokes about what happened to them as a way to partially deal with the trauma. You know, it's amazing what the human mind will do, right, to get people through these kinds of horrible moments in their lives.

MJ: Well, it's, it's a coping mechanism, you know, because otherwise you could never deal with that kind of reality. You have to accept that it happened, and you have to, and that's what reconciliation's all about. And that's one of the things that, you know, I'd mentioned, is that reconciliation, you can never do just by talking to yourself. Reconciliation for us as Canadians means dialogue. It means uh learning in essence what had happened over a very traumatic past, but also never forgetting it but finding a way to move forward, because if we don't as a society we'll never be able to truly reconcile with each other. And that's why the visit of Pope Francis was important. But it's only the beginning. What has to happen is reconciliation has to happen here.

SD: Let's get into this because this is actually the number one reason I wanted to have a conversation with you today, Manny. I, I like your perspective on that, and I think we need to go further and try to explain to people, so let me take one moment to orient the audience a little, little bit here. Uh starting in 2007 the Canadian government in collaboration with Indigenous people in Canada created the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that actually lasted six years, there was 75 million dollars invested, 6500 witnesses spoke in front of the Commission, which resulted in a Call to Action, 94 Calls to Action that covered child welfare, education, language and culture, health, justice, equity in the legal system and more. And even today now, all these years later, you can correct me if I'm wrong, but the vast majority have yet to be fully implemented, if my research is correct. Here's where I'd like your guidance. I've spoken to many people, uh non-Indigenous people, and talked about truth and reconciliation. They're unclear as to what we mean by reconciliation. And just last week I was speaking with a number of Indigenous people, and they couldn't seem to fully agree on what reconciliation should be, or what it was. So from your perspective give us a sense of what reconciliation actually means and what does it look like in practice.

MJ: Well, uh let me start by again reiterating, reconciliation doesn't happen by talking to yourself. It can only happen as a society. And in order to do that there has to be a recognition by the society that yes, there were wrongs done as a result, direct result of colonization, that there was an approach taken by government and church to take away our language, history and culture, and there has to be a concerted effort to work

together to try to bring back as much as possible that. And in order to do that, that doesn't mean you carry on with the colonial way of doing things through programs, uh through trying to do what's right, but recognizing that we had land rights, that we had a language, that we were a unique people, and that uniqueness is important in this world of diversity. It's incredibly important that we recognize that we live in a diverse world and that it's important to carry on that diversity of, of humanity and uh those traditions because that's what makes us special as human beings.

SD: Great.

MJ: And, and we also have to look at the fundamental, from my perspective, that means dealing with the land question once and for all, but more importantly it's economic reconciliation because we have to be able to be empowered, as my ancestors always talked about, to be able to look after ourselves. And when we can look after ourselves, that means we can be more productive in Canada, in the global uh every sense of the word globally. We only have to look at what's happening now in Ukraine and Russia, what that absolutely meant. I can sympathize completely with the Ukrainian people. They've got the fight of their lives for democracy, for their land rights, for their history, for their culture.

SD: Freedom of choice.

MJ: freedom of choice, all of those things that we say we want for ourselves. And that means supporting them, but at the same time for us here domestically that means working with Indigenous people. And we have to reach out, uh like what we had to do to get our vote. And I recognize every time it was because of the veterans who fought in the Boer War, the First World War, the Second World War that gave us what we've got, because when they came back they realized, 'Hey, we're not even considered a citizen of Canada'. We weren't citizens until 1958.

SD: Exactly.

MJ: And couldn't exercise a vote here in the province of British Columbia until after the Second World War. Quebec was the last province that allowed Indigenous people to vote in 1967. And that didn't take place until all of us, the black, the yellow and the red people worked together to get that done.

SD: By the way, that's 1967. I was born in 1966. When I speak to my friends, and I say, 'This is like, not really history in a book. It's like, you know, I was born'.

MJ: Yeah, that's right.

[Laughter]

MJ: It's like, it's like my son said when I was talking about the end of residential schools and the move towards a residential school, like where you, a residence, he said, 'That's when Star Wars came out'.

[Laughter]

SD: Exactly. I attended a vigil in my neighbourhood, you know, that were happening all over the country in regards to the news of the residential schools and the unmarked graves. And it's mostly a white neighbourhood. Good people, progressive, you know, and like I say in my book, you know, I'm a glass half full kind of guy. So if someone's taking a little step forward I want to encourage them to take more steps, right? But I, I heard people going, 'Oh yeah, everyone felt good. They went to a vigil. I took my children. I thought it was really a well organized, it was very respectful'. But then I heard people say, 'Yeah, now everyone's going to go home and feel good that they went to a vigil'. And I said, 'Well, I think the organizer had listed out some actions that people could take, right?' Some of them you've mentioned here. What do you say to people who are afraid to say something or make a mistake just because they want to learn and maybe they're going to stumble over their words, or not saying, you know, like I've done a lot of learnings myself about Indigenous people and luckily I've had some amazing people to lead me and guide me. But you know, I used to say, for example, 'Our Indigenous people'.

MJ: Mm hmm.

SD: I know it's a little thing, but language is very important, right? And I remember my friend Lisa Wilcox in Vancouver who was an advisor on my book who's Indigenous, and she said uh, 'We're not your people'.

[Laughter]

SD: She gently scolded me along the way, right? And with the Black Lives Matter movement people go, 'Stephen, should I put a black box on my Facebook post to show solidarity?' And you know. So what do you say to people about just doing, and taking some steps forward to help with reconciliation?

MJ: Well again, to quote Bob, you have to free yourself from mental slavery, and that's the key here, is once you begin to make those steps it forever changes your life, and so much of it is just about that. You know, you have to begin that education process. A lot of it is your own self awareness, your own self journey, and through that we'll all be better people. Uh, but don't be afraid to make mistakes. I've made so many mistakes over my life, and that's, you know, hell on earth is regret.

SD: Exactly. I'm with you. I agree. I love that. So we had First Nation, Metis, Inuit leaders and representative delegates who travelled to the Vatican. I believe they were there for a week and they had audiences with uh with Pope Francis. There were many testimonies of residential school stories, there was uh exchange of culture through music and story-telling, which was amazing. And then to, at least my, I was surprised that the Pope actually, you know, he didn't apologize on behalf of the Church but he did apologize for the deplorable abuses at residential schools that Catholic priests and others had committed. What do you make of that monumental moment? What does it represent to you? What do you think it represents to Indigenous people?

MJ: I grew up in a family, my Mom is, is very strongly Catholic to this day, and uh my grandmother always insisted I go to church, and she was unilingual, uh just a Shuswap speaker. And so we have a long tradition of Catholicism here in my community. Uh but the, but the relationship started with Father Demers in the 1850s.

It was strengthened with Father Lejeune in the 19, yeah, the 1870s, uh until he passed away. And it was through Father Lejeune uh that we developed the written Chinook language, which is an important aspect of our teachings uh to this day because it, he was from Brittany in France, and he raised, we raised money for a visit for Johnnie Chilleheetsa and Chief Louie to visit the Pope in 1904 to talk about the land question, to talk about our jurisdiction. And uh that was brought about through uh Father Lejeune, uh and so that the working relationship back then was about our land rights, was about our jurisdiction. And that's one of the responsibilities that I believe the Catholic Church still has, and has got to follow up on. It, it's going back to the original Papal Bulls where they recognized that we had a soul,

SD: Yeah.

MJ: that we had land rights. All of those aspects of the Church are incredibly important. And you also have to remember the context of the Church has been around for getting on to 2000 years, and you know they were writing about Genghis Khan, you know, in 1100. Uh in, you know, they, Michelangelo helped design St Peter's Basilica where, where he was buried, St Peter. And so the Church has got a very very important responsibility in terms of reconciliation, in terms of moving us forward as a people, as a nation, and internationally as well. And so I took the words of Pope Francis very seriously. I took him as his word. But it's only the beginning of the process. That process has to be followed up with 50 different diocese here in Canada. Uh the Catholic Church isn't one monolith. It's made up of many many cells, and I found through my discussions with the Church that there are 50 different diocese. Some of them support what we're doing and some of them don't because they don't want the liability, you know. It all comes back to liability.

SD: Of course.

MJ: And we have to put that in the past. We have to find our way to move forward. I was very heartened by hearing the words, 'I'm sorry', but also, you know, his words saying that we have to be able to reconcile the past with the future. And I look forward to his visit here. I understand he's going to go up to Lac St Anne, close to Edmonton, which is a spiritual centre for the Metis and the Catholics. And he'll visit Inuit territory and Quebec City. And Quebec of course is important because of, you know, it was the centre for Catholicism uh here since Jacques Cartier. Yeah, so I, I look forward to that but I also, you know, remember that every day there are four of my people who went to the residential school are passing, and I don't want to, you know, have more people that I went to the residential school pass on without seeing true reconciliation happen between First Nations and the Church, and just as importantly, with the government, who has to take responsibility for what happened because it was their legislation, their laws that the Church enforced. If, if I've got a little bit of time here, Stephen, I'd like to read a little bit of a poem from a good friend of mine.

SD: Please.

MJ: I was at a meeting a number of years ago at one of my neighbouring communities called Spahkmun where Johnnie Chilleheetsa was from, Chief Johnnie Chilleheetsa. And we were talking about the whole issue of overlapped territories. And so I went

up to talk to them about the peace and friendship treaty we had with them called the Fish Lake Accord. And we were living through an arms race, yeah, between Indigenous people, and whoever had the better arms was more in control. And we were killing one another at a rate that our elders said that has to stop. And so there was an exchange of children so that they would be raised by one another's communities, and we put down the arms. We said, 'From this day forward we're going to be allies'. And I reinforced that, and we had a ceremony after that to reinforce the Fish Lake Accord. And I was driving back home after the meeting and the engine on my truck blew, and so I was stranded on the side of the road, and I started hitchhiking. A couple of cars went by, and then another car picked me up. And I was looking at this guy and I was thinking, 'God, he looks familiar'. And uh we were talking, and I said, 'Jeez, do you know Dennis Saddleman?' And he looked at me, giving me kind of a toothless grin, saying, 'That's me'.

[Laughter]

MJ: And he became what he calls a word warrior, a poet. And I'll just read the last little bit of me [sic?].

*I stood up and I told the Monster I must go.
 Ahead of me is my life. My people are waiting for me.
 I was at the door of my Chevy pony.
 The Monster spoke, 'Hey, you forgot something'.
 I turned around and I saw a ghost child running down the cement steps.
 It ran towards me and it entered my body.
 I looked over to the Monster and I was surprised.
 I wasn't looking at a Monster any more.
 I was looking at an old school.
 In my heart I thought, 'This is where I earned my diploma of survival'.
 I was looking at an old residential school who became my elder of my memories.
 I was looking at a tall building with four storeys,
 Stories of hope, stories of dreams, stories of renewal, and stories of tomorrow.*

That's by my good friend, Dennis Saddleman

SD: Wow. Thank you for sharing, Manny. Really beautiful. Beautiful. I just was visualizing it all. It's amazing how words are so powerful.

MJ: Oh, it's uh, well, that's how we communicate, you know.

SD: Amazing. I like what you said before about, you know, 'We're at the end of the beginning'.

MJ: Yes.

SD: Right? And we have much work to do. I always try to end my podcasts, and I, 'Are you hopeful for what's to come?'

MJ: Yeah, I'm cursed with being an optimist.

[Laughter]

SD: Me, too. Me, too.

MJ: And I, you know, it's always a joy to me to visit with somebody who's also an optimist, who shares life's passions, but also life's challenges. And uh as we begin to walk this path together uh, I look forward to the day where we will actually meet in person, and I look forward to the day where all of us uh in this country will walk the same path towards reconciliation.

SD: Amazing. I can't tell you how delighted it's been to spend this time with you. We'll have to figure out where we are on this planet and make sure we're in the same place. Manny Jules, thank you so much for being with us. Thank you for your time, and uh Meegwetch.

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