



Library podcast

Brooke Williams reads and discusses 'Open Midnight'

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[00:00:37] Thank you for coming here tonight. I'm Marion Scichilone. One of the managers here at the Central Library and Heather Marker's in the back of the room. She's in our History, Travel and Maps group. We are really excited to have Mr. Williams with us and we certainly have given him a wonderful Seattle evening to come here and without further ado here's Rick from Elliott Bay Book Company for more information.

[00:01:05] Thank you. Thanks for the safety warning. But there is that part where they do start trying to chase you out. But we're glad to Bill to stay here until midnight if need be. No I don't think that's the plan. But to say for Elliott Bay Book Company and for the people here at the library we would like to welcome you and we are totally delighted. Brooke Williams here someone who's made many visits as part of the country and in various guises some for study in education if not edification over on Bainbridge family reasons he's often been as recently as I think the last time at least I know it was a year ago when his partner in much of life and work and purpose and Terry James Williams was here for her book. In fact it was here I think downstairs the Arab land book on the national parks and Brook himself has been here not as often as we'd like. I think it's almost 20 years 1999 at Elliott Bay when he read for a wonderful book entitled half lives. And he is here tonight for this remarkable book which you will hear more of shortly called Open midnight where ancestors and wilderness meet a book that sort of dovetails two threads one is his spending some very intense time in Southern Utah in the presence of that landscape. I think he's in the landscape's presence more than the other way around almost. And but but very much part of this is a beloved dog Rio who is very much a character in this book and then interposed with that and is deep reflection is an ancestor who of great great great grandfather William Williams who came over from Shrewsbury England part of the Mormon migration to this country and at a time when when things were beginning to happen and old in Utah or what eventually would result in that and obviously as a result in some significant way and Brooke being here I mean as anywhere although all of us are here because of these kind of you know ancestral things that happened and this is a particular ancestor who who's moving he he does this deep rumination on and to powerful ends and you'll hear more of that.

[00:03:32] It's a book doing that is really significant I think because it would apply to imagination but it's got it comes very much from a home place or a place of his own self. So he will read from and talk about this and then we will they'll take questions and discussion and then we'll have him sign books also to say you know he's so often the writers who come here on traveling around are doing so in some you know we had our daddy Roy a few weeks ago you know in two weeks in the US and it was literally on a plane every night and in moving far and fast. But to have someone who was coming here from the yak valley of Montana is a decidedly different way of getting here so we're delighted that this is this is the way that Brooke is cotton here tonight. So with that we all again for Ellie banned the sale of public library. Thank you for being here.

[00:04:28] And now Ashley Judd please welcome Brooke Williams.

[00:04:37] Oh thanks Rick. In this libraries like my favorite place ever I've been I've been I've spent like six hours here in the past two or three hours at a time I really think that in these times that we're living in libraries and bookstores are really not only the heart but the mind of communities.

[00:04:59] And I was thinking about the other day how it's easy to our son from Africa calls him Mr. Google whenever he has a question he goes to ask Mr. Google but Mr. Google you have to sort of know what you're looking for whereas you go into a library or a bookstore and you kind of know where you want to go and what you want to look for. But then there's all these other things that are spread out next to them and on either side and above them and below them and you start to think that the thing that you wanted to learn about or to read is only a little teeny piece of what's right there. And I feel like we can never spend enough time in bookstores and in libraries and nowadays it's those the place where we can go and find out not only information but I also feel like more than anything we are desperate to find out more about who we are and what that means in these strange times most of what I value in the world has its roots in some people in this room. I care deeply about wild places and about wilderness and you know Tom and Sonia. I don't know where. No I don't know who I would be had I not met you two and had I not been introduced to the Arctic and it's just deep deep deep all of deep connections. And Tim the work that you've done at Wilberforce with the and the conversations we've had about that and there's many here it's like this must be the most important place on the planet when it comes to taking care of wild places because we have what the bullet Foundation also and the cons guard and yeah Brainerd.

[00:06:47] Excuse me for forgetting that but it's it's really an important place and that you've created all of you big happy. Well we're not so happy this right at this moment but big happy engaged families and it's really given me the opportunity and the inspiration and the incentive to really think deeply about why we care about these places because it's it's a kind of a moving target and it's something that we're going to need more than we can imagine in the future. And I think it's it's flexible here and it's exciting and inspiring and I always come away feeling that the world is full of hope. I stay.

[00:07:36] I'm staying with with David and Marjorie and they're such old friends. We met in Moab many what 20 years ago 30 years ago. But they are from here and they came back here and they've sort of become the umbilical cord I have with Seattle. They own their part owns of a bookstore in

Moab and again bookstores are I mean where wherever we go we search out the bookstore are sort of the center of our universe. And Andy and David and Marjorie and and his wife Marci own this great little bookstore in Moab called the back of beyond the other day was a lot more than the other day but was last winter there was a kind of a national thing called Read and resist was sort of a big event that was happening I forget where we were in Castle Valley where we live outside of Moab and Terry and I started to think Boy I wish we could be at a read and resist event and we called Andy who was not there at the time we called an employee at the bookstore and said Why don't we read and resist this afternoon.

[00:08:45] And they said well and he's not here. He's out of town and we'd probably need his permission and they said well let's figure it out. And before we knew it like 300 people showed up at the bookstore to read and resist. Everybody had something to read and it really made me feel like this is like the pulse of this town. And I think that bookstores and libraries are the pulse of every town and I think we really need to give them our support. And then my friends from BGR I can't believe it. What was it. How long ago did we do that. Three or four oh three or four years. Oh 2003. Yeah.

[00:09:22] Huh. Time flies.

[00:09:25] But we all studied together. Sustainable Business. And what's really amazing is the thing. We did a lot of statistics. We did a lot of marketing. We did all the things that business people are supposed to do but we took one class called Creativity and right livelihood.

[00:09:46] And I think that is the one that has stayed with me because that was where I first got a sense that there is this legitimate inner world that we live in. And it's a huge source of information that I think most of the world sort of ignores or doesn't believe in. In fact my final project was the proposal for this book and it was a lot different than it turned out but it was sort of the beginning of me thinking that you know there's a lot going on and I feel like I have what it takes to tell about some of it. And so that was kind of the beginning PGI 2004 I'm back two weeks from a month in China.

[00:10:37] And what's really weird about a book is when you read a book you don't get the sense that this book took almost forever to write and then it almost took forever to sell it to get somebody to say they want to publish it and then it took almost forever to actually have it published. And then you go to China and you come back and I know I was gonna be coming here to talk about it.

[00:10:59] So I thought I better pick up that book again and see what's in it. And I started to read it and I was thought wow who wrote this. Because it's been a long time in China really I think of China now. All right I think of my life is B.S. meaning before China and AC meaning after China. Because it kind of turned me upside down. So this book was written and thought out B.C. before China.

[00:11:29] But in reading back through it I felt like there were themes in it that sort of were foreshadowing some of the stuff that that really impacted me while I was there. We were there for a couple of reasons one was to talk to scholars and graduate students about American environmental literature which sounds strange and it did sound strange. We went to symposiums and heard in very

broken English brilliant Chinese students and scholars talking about Ed Abbey talking about the row talking about Robertson Jeffers. I mentioned to our friends that we saw a PowerPoint where a woman had diagrammed the different events in my wife Terry's book Refuge and we saw we saw it from a completely different perspective and I saw the look on her face as if this person felt like oh she must have planned this and have to have her say well you know I don't really think I thought about that at all.

[00:12:31] But these people were able to start to really get into the depth of these writers and this landscape and we were like treated like rock stars because we were actually from these places that inspired a lot of this literature. So that was really exciting.

[00:12:45] And then we spent two weeks wandering around and trying to get a sense of more rural China. But looking back my perspective really shifted and I think that emblematic of that shift is this young man that I met and he was that state that he was working at one of the guesthouses that we stayed at and he had this gigantic smile and he was wearing a hat that was bright blue and it said make China great again.

[00:13:17] And he said and that's exactly what I did when I saw it. And he knew he couldn't speak any English but he knew what his had said and he knew what his had meant and he just gave me the biggest hug because we couldn't communicate.

[00:13:31] And then afterwards I thought Why is that such a great hat.

[00:13:35] And and the reason is because in America we have such a short history at least that those of us who are from European descent we have such a short history. And so when something like November 8th happens and surprises us all we get like freak out because we can't really compare it to much.

[00:13:56] We're in China they would go. You know that's bad but ran back in the 9th century that was really serious. And and we and we got through that didn't we. OK. So there's this sort of passivity plus the fact that activism is not really acceptable. It's really like suppressed. I asked some people about that. I have this picture. We all have seen it of the man standing in front of the line of tanks during Tiananmen Square. A lot of people will not even acknowledge that Tiananmen Square happened one and two. When I ask about this guy they say well I said What's he up to now is he written anything. I would love to like know and they go no one's heard from him since that day. So this is the kind of thing that is going on. My my favorite example is that you know the government is real concerned about climate change mainly because of pollution and what it's doing to people's families. But if they want they could put 50 million electric vehicles out into China in the next 10 years if they wanted to.

[00:15:01] They don't have to go through everything that we go through because there they have this long term vision.

[00:15:06] It's not just four or eight year cycles and they can just kind of try to deal with it. My my example of that is when you write a cab in New York to your hotel the cab driver will say will you please get out on the right side because the left side if you open the door it's really dangerous traffic. Well in Beijing or Shanghai there's a billion cabs none of them have a door on the left side that will open. So they just eliminate that possibility. And I think that happens all across the board so I'm thinking time deep past that China has I think about that. And I also think about what happened in the past that might help us understand the future or the present a little better. So I've got some things that I found that I actually wrote about that. So as far as this book's concerned I loved what Rick said about it. He he almost made it so that I didn't have to get up and talk but the idea that there's a lot going on in this book.

[00:16:14] And when I heard Barbara Ross is the editor she just retired from Trinity University Press she's amazing woman. And as I was working on this book I kept saying I want you two to look at this. And she kept saying I don't want to see it till it's finished. And one thing leads to another finally I feel like like I've finished it and I send it to her and she's really fast. She gets back to me within about ten days.

[00:16:44] And she said Brooke there's a lot of little strands in this book. There's a lot going on. And she said I was worried that you weren't gonna be able to pull it all together in the end. But I think you did. And I said wow I didn't think of it that way.

[00:16:57] But those strands for for any of you are thinking that you might want to read it.

[00:17:03] There are a lot of strands but there is nothing in there that is not just me trying to make sense of my own experience. So what I would what would happen to me is I'd have some experience and then I would wonder am I going a little crazy or that would look out look to find some support in the literature in people that I consider heroes of mine.

[00:17:30] And I would find ways to to sort of explain to me what was actually happening. And yeah there are some I made up a lot of stuff in the book. And what would happen is I would find parts of this different stories but only parts and then I had to fill in different parts between them. So if I had points along the way the parts that if it was on a line the spaces between the points. No one knows or and I had to make it up and be as accurate as possible. So I was worried I said to Barbara I'm not sure that I can call this nonfiction because I made up a lot of it and I'm worried about that because if I have to call it a novel I have I have a problem with that. I just don't want to be a person who thinks he can write a novel because I have read so many amazing novels and I have such respect for novelists and I just did not want to call myself a novel but a novelist. But there's a lot of fiction in that book. And she said Relax I'm fine with that. She said just because you imagined it doesn't make it fiction. And I thought yeah that's exactly right. And I'm so happy about that and it completely freed me up.

[00:18:51] The main thing is that I think we're reaching a point in our politics. I mean I know how many of you were like this but my head's gonna get a bruise on it from hitting my palm against it and I feel like we have we're we're creating so many more questions than we are answers. And this is

something I thought about a long time even before the election. But the big question I have is where does our inspiration come from. Where do the new answers come from. As long as we're thinking in the same like dimensions all the time we're hope we're hoping that all the answers and all the questions exist in the same box but they don't anymore. So how do we find new answers how do we get inspired and what is the fuel for our imagination. Because that's what we need right now more than anything and I would be willing to bet that most of the people who are in power now they don't get out much. I mean Trump goes golfing on occasion but I mean in terms of seeing really wild places and being exposed to the natural system and we're hearing more and more about that the truth doesn't really matter anymore.

[00:19:57] And when the truth doesn't matter I think there's one reason and that's because there's really no foundational basis of belief or truth. And to me the one thing that is all around us all the time is the natural world. The system it's in place and we are in this room many of us fortunate enough to be able to see that and experience on a maybe daily or weekly or at least a monthly basis and we get a sense that yes this is real no matter what anybody in Washington says to us you know the way this works is real. And my job and my hobby and my desire my love is to discover more and more about how it works. And I feel like that's the main thing that we can pass on to the next generation is that this is the foundation that we stand on this wild system that is in place has been for a billion years and hopefully will always be.

[00:20:51] Yeah Rick mentioned that my book has a subtitle it's where our ancestors and wilderness meet.

[00:20:57] It's got a subtitle and those are two sub themes and there's a few other sub themes that I want to talk about in terms of wilderness. I've been an advocate for maybe three decades and it was right before that that I discovered outdoors as a place that I love to be. I love the run. I love to wander around. I love to ski. I love to go backpacking any moment. I had free I wanted to spend out in wild places.

[00:21:22] And if you're like me you don't spend much time out in wild places before you think Wow this place is threatened. This could be this place could be harmed by development and then you become sort of an activist and you want to protect those places at the same time plus you surround yourself with people who feel the same way you do and it's a great way to live a life. So I spent a long time a lot of those three decades doing traditional conservation but also thinking about why it really matters and why we need to protect it and are there other ways that we can talk about it so that those who are opposed to it might see things a little bit differently. So I've done that for 30 years and along those along during those years I forget when exactly it was but I noticed you know I had a poster hanging on my wall and it was the rose famous saying in wildness is the preservation of the world. And I'd seen it a thousand times I've seen it on coffee cups and T-shirts and I'd read the essay walking that it came from but I'd never really thought what did it mean. And I started to wonder if we could figure out what that phrase means and wildness is the preservation of the world. And if we could say it in a way that people even like Orrin Hatch our senator would understand it wouldn't wilderness be something that everyone would want to protect.

[00:22:52] I thought that was a worthy question and then soon after that I I don't know what I was thinking but is that same idea.

[00:23:05] Why do we really want to protect wolves. I took sort of the devil's advocate approach and I said to myself you know I can. I want to see what goes on in their minds. These people that want to develop everything and if they asked me the question why should we protect this. I mean there's a million different answers. So I went around to many of my friends and I asked them what they thought how they might answer that question. And I got a lot of great answers but a lot of them had to do with one simple phrase. We saved the wilderness because it saves us. And I just felt like that was a door that opened to me and that I could spend the rest of my life trying to figure out what what why and how that that is true.

[00:23:47] So that's sort of that that that's all built into this book in terms of ancestors. I saw a movie back in 1997 Amistad. Did any of you see this movie it's about a slave ship and on that slave ship some of the slaves rebelled and the rebel was suppressed. They well made it to America. They were put on trial and if you remember there was a man named Cinque who's going to represent all the slaves in this trial and there's a scene there that just really got to me I could never get it out of my mind in fact like I wrote it down. And I recently was able to go back and find it but in that scene there already he's got a suit and tie on as I recall and they're all ready to go to trial and C.K. says we won't be going in there alone.

[00:24:42] And his attorney who happens to be John Quincy Adams says alone. Indeed not. We have righteousness on our side. We have Mr. Baldwin over there helping us and C.K. says no no no I meant my ancestors. I will call into the past far back to the beginning of time and beg them to come and help me at this judgment. I will reach back and draw them into me and they must come for at this moment I am the whole reason they have existed at all.

[00:25:13] And I thought about that because I grew up as a mormon kid. In fact the other day somebody wrote something about my book and they called it post Mormon perspective and I was quite proud of that.

[00:25:25] Terry and I have sort of called ourselves expat Mormons and our families make most of our families are very active and sort of wonder what happened to us and what will happen to us.

[00:25:39] But this post Mormon perspective is something I'm quite I'm quite excited about.

[00:25:44] And we had this we learned about ancestors and that are the people that came before us that died. We would stay dead for a while and then at some moment all of us would rise up from the dead and then we would go off into our different kingdoms and live happily ever after. But there was no as far as I could tell. Connection to the dead on a daily basis as if they weren't really active in our lives. And I thought when I heard when I went to that movie I thought if if Sinclair thinks that and there are so many cultures to whom their ancestors are alive and active in their lives. So what's wrong with

us. So I started to think about that and about that time we Terry and I moved to Southern Utah a place that we had gone on weekends and for two or three or four days at a time and really loved the adventure of but moving there was a completely different experience. We still got the only recreation but what I didn't expect was this on a daily basis. The animals that moved through the shadows the light the colors. In fact my friends are getting sick now that now that you can do Facebook I seem to post the same photo on Facebook almost every day and they think it's the same because it's the same formations. But for me it's different. Everyone is different the clouds are different. Like I don't know how many saw that movie smoke with Harvey Keitel a few years ago Harvey Keitel is this owns the smoke shop and he takes a picture of the front of his shop everyday and he puts them on an album and his friends come and he falls through and says Well wasn't that a great day and they go No it's the same as the other day.

[00:27:31] So my friends are accusing me of sort of being Harvey Keitel because every day is magnificent and incredible and beautiful and the smells and the way you start to pay attention to which plants come up at which time of the year in which order. And it was just a spectacular decision that we made to move there and one day I was thinking I can't imagine feeling any closer to a place than I do to this place. But I didn't even come from here. There's no ancestral connection to this place. So then the next part of my thinking was what if I found a place that my ancestors really did come from. And I went there and I compared I thought was a great idea. What do you think I mean to compare this place that I love to where my ancestors came from so I didn't know where I came from my news. England and Wales and so on. And as a kid as a pre post mormon kid I was required to do genealogy. We all were we had to find we had to make a chart with our four generations. I had long since forgotten that. So I called my dad who was very excited to see me expressing any interest at all in my in my history. And I think for the first time in his life I sent a FedEx package from his office for personal use. I'm sure he had to get like a lot of signatures to allow that to happen. But two days later not one day but two days.

[00:29:04] You can only get FedEx second day in Castle Valley. I got a little box with stories of photocopies of stories with charts. With all kinds of stuff in it. And the first thing I found was my pedigree chart and maybe you've seen them. It's like this big and there's me and my parents and my grandparents great grandparents great great great great great grandparents on this one sheet and the first thing I noticed was that I hadn't really I didn't know any of these people I maybe I knew my grandparents and I knew the names of some of my great grandparents but the rest of them I didn't know.

[00:29:46] And then I realized I want to know where I came from but these people all came from some different place. There were 62 people on that list on that church on that chart and no two of them really came from the same place. So that sort of scuttled me for a little while and then I realized that I did a little research I realized that I contained genetic material from every one of those people. So they all count. I just need to go find one. And I really had this vision that I would follow one person back to the homeland and I would have this like a pit Forney of WoW. There is a genetic connection to a place that we have and this is my place and my ancestors came from this place. So I created some criteria to pick one person and the criteria where I wanted to find a person whose name was

Williams said we shared the last name. I wanted to find a person who made the decision to leave Europe and come to America and I wanted to find one whose story I had never heard and I realized that most of those people on that on that shit I had never heard their story. And in fact I wasn't even sure their stories existed. And in fact if you assume that then it's like oh look at all the people that just die with no story. So I really felt responsible to one person whose story had sort of just died with them. I want to uncover that story even if I had to make some of it up.

[00:31:11] So once I decide on three criteria I pulled out my pedigree chart and in the upper right hand corner it was as if the name William Williams was highlighted and he was the guy his name was William Williams which he had. We shared the last name but he also he he had it twice. That's perfect. He was born in Shrewsbury England died in Wyoming. And I had never heard of him before. So his journey from there to from the from England to America sort of became my journey. And I went back there. I tried to discover as much as I could about him. Now there are some minor themes in the book too. There's the theme of the inner world and the outer world that we have both.

[00:32:07] And I'd grown up to believe that we just have this outer world that world that you know catches the bus and eats dinner and takes your child takes our children to soccer games and saves for retirement. And that's all outer world and the outer world can be so busy and so all encompassing that we forget that there's this inner world.

[00:32:27] So that was something that I really wanted to look into.

[00:32:31] And I realized early on that I didn't make it up.

[00:32:38] I'm just going to read a little bit about that I wasn't the only one that thought this and that. Actually there's a quite quite a literature on this in our world and I'll read some of them see a Maya gave a speech at the 1984 World wilderness conference called wilderness and the search for the soul of modern man.

[00:33:02] These sentences stood out as you've highlighted the wilderness within would really go wild if we should badly damaged the outer wilderness. So let's keep the balance as best we can in order to maintain sanity. I came of age in the wilderness movement among many people who believe that wild places needed protection whether or not people ever got to see them. I knew what wandering around in wild places did for me mentally physically emotionally. But reading Maya was a major step toward seeing the connection between the wilderness and the direct role it plays in our modern lives. Maya was a student of Carl Jung In memories dreams and reflections. Carl Jung said that while he loved the outer world exploring the inner world was more exciting and gave his life more meaning. Jung held that the outer everyday world is the conscious world while the unconscious rules of dream and shadow an archetype is the inner world. And I'd coupled that with the idea that Paul Shepard made in his classic book nature and madness about civilization being a veneer within which is the core human we all evolved to be. This connection became clearer once I realized that Jung's collective unconscious was not a mystical but a biological phenomenon and that its archetypes are biological entities subject to natural selection and inherited just as genes are inherited. To me

Shepard and you were saying the same thing although from the different perspectives of biology and psychology.

[00:34:34] Another theme minor theme is evolution. I graduated from college in biology and I was one of the only one of my classmates that took biology just for biology.

[00:34:48] Everyone else was a premed student or a dental student and I realized that not only could I get credit for camping out but I could learn from some of the great naturalists about the natural world which I just loved so it was exciting when I started to look into William Williams and how I would go find out more about him that Mr. Google told me that not only was Charles Darwin also born in Shrewsbury England but within a year of William Williams and Charles Darwin was a real hero of mine during biology and natural selection was what I really wanted to go see and I spent months in the deserts of California and Arizona and Utah with really amazing instructors seen daily examples of that natural selection and how it worked. I thought the voyage of the Beagle Darwin's journals of his voyage was the greatest adventure story that ever was ever written just to see what unfolded in front of that guy and not only that but what he was able to imagine was going on. The guy had an amazingly creative mind and was able to like sort out things that no one ever before had in his books. The Origin of Species and the descent of man really changed the world. So Darwin's a real hero of mine. So the fact that my great great great grandfather could have been his friend in Shrewsbury was just more than I could take. It was a short circuit of my project for at least three years and I went to Shrewsbury and spent six weeks when I had all these questions that I wanted to answer. But the main question I had was were these guys buddies and I never found out that they were. But I didn't find out they weren't either. So that's where some of the my imagination comes in. So what I did. I mentioned. These lifelines and what I did was I created two lifelines.

[00:36:47] One was William Williams and I knew only a certain points along those lines. Like when he was born when he died when he got on the ship when he got off of his ship where the point of on his geneology when his different the different Mormon rituals were done for him even though he never really joined and then Darwin I did the same thing but his his line was much he had many more dots on it because he's a well-known figure and there were many biographies that have been written about him.

[00:37:18] So I discovered a lot of points along his line life. So where those two points were like together where William Williams may have been in the same place at the same time as Charles Darwin I made up a story it was really weird and you can get you know you can like roll your eyes back if you want but I swear that when I tried to write some of those stories some of them didn't work at all.

[00:37:41] Some of them just was like pulling teeth. It's like I needed a seat belt from my office chair because I just kept getting up and wandering around. I could not write but when I was onto a story which I think was the right story I felt like maybe William Williams was back there going Yeah that's the story I have some unfinished work that needs to be done and you need to do it for me.

[00:38:01] And that those stories seem to come out much easier the also that the two men became sort of a metaphor for for history where Darwin he represents this knowledge that we now have that we go back to the beginning of life. And William Williams is sort of my personal history.

[00:38:30] But they were the two of them together were sort of more of a complete history in England.

[00:38:39] I made one I had one simple epiphany. I'd gone thousands of miles to visit the place where my ancestors were born only to realize that just because my genealogy showed my earliest ancestors showing up there in the late 17th hundreds they didn't just fall out of the sky. My ancestors had ancestors who had ancestors who had ancestors going back to those first cells coming alive in that steamy swamp for the first time I said I saw my family tree as a small branch connected to the entire massive tree of life. And that was a real big moment for me another theme is the relationship between this inner world that I mentioned earlier and evolution and evolution.

[00:39:24] I've found out is not improvement. It's not happy something that happened a long time ago like I learned in biology. It's something that is ongoing all the time all around us. And it's simply adaptation to changing conditions it seems to me that we have some really serious changing conditions going on all around us now. And the question is how are we. Are we able to evolve and if biological evolution which most of us are familiar with isn't fast enough what kind of evolution will work and how do we how do we work on that. How do we make that happen.

[00:40:04] Evolution I believe is still at work in these inner worlds. I had real help understanding this from a woman named Meredith Savini. She wrote a great book called The Earth has a soul the nature writing of Carl Jung Terry's grandmother was amazing. She lived to be eighty seven. She read herself. She was post Mormon too.

[00:40:28] She read herself out of the Mormon Church reading people like Carl Jung like Alan Watts like Krishnamurti and she left her entire library to Terry and I before she died. And these books are all annotated. They're they're amazing they have her name and her phone number and the date that she bought that. And then it all throughout are her notes about what she thought about what she was reading. So you get a real good sense of what she was thinking what phase of her life she was in. And I just feel like when I read them it's like she's sitting down next to me so I never knew during all those. I mean she has the full set of Jung's collected works their block and it's like this. This I think there's life forget 12 or 13 volumes among other books too. But I read those sporadically but I never got a sense that you had this great connection to the to the wild world until I've found this book of Meredith's beanies so in her book The Earth has a soul.

[00:41:34] Meredith's being a union psychologist from Berkeley has compiled pieces of Jung's work and written a brilliant essay to go with them. I inhaled that book. I talked to Dr. Sabina about the connection I imagined between biology and psychology and she said that the core or inner world is biological it holds the entire evolutionary history of our species. It's evolutionary material is in there. She believes that within the collective unconscious can be found all the tools our species ever needed to save itself. It made sense to Sabina that our inner world aligns perfectly with the Earth's

inner world the core the wild places civilization has yet to cover or seal off. And while psychologists yogis and poets are getting better at finding access to that unconscious evolutionary material the wilderness the quiet wild places where natural systems are still intact and obvious can be a portal between those worlds. We we got in touch with each other actually visitor a few times and one day she said to me Brooke my colleagues and I've been talking about you and I said well why. She said We think that you are a great example of this new theory that we have. And I said wow great What's that. And she said we think that when people as naive as you are thinking about these issues that the collective unconscious is rising in unexpected places as it does when our species is in trouble. In other words when people like you care about this stuff we must really be in trouble.

[00:43:13] I took that as a compliment.

[00:43:18] The surfacing of the collective unconscious when we're in trouble suggests that if we were more comfortable with the collective unconscious and better at accessing it we would more likely be engaged in efforts to save our species rather than in those that threatened us.

[00:43:33] Since China I mentioned earlier that time has really sort of become a subject. And it's it's something as I was reading through my book I realized that I'd written a little bit about time and it became more important because of China as I was preparing for China a friend of ours Mary Evelyn Tucker who's a religious scholar at Yale.

[00:43:56] Of a scholar of eastern religions sent me a PDA of a book that she had just written the introduction for for the English translation. It's it's a book called ecological Earth the classic Chinese naturalism a case study of the poet Dao one Ming and this is by a Chinese scholar named Professor Lu.

[00:44:19] I love this book. I could go on and on about it. I've I've read it a couple times now because the way Professor Lu writes about this poet in comparison to Gary Snyder or somebody I care deeply about compares him to the row and Rousseau and even Wendell Berry and I think that that for me that put this whole Chinese adventure into such a great context. But what really woke me up was to realize that Dao Yang one meaning was born in the year 365 which is like sixteen hundred years ago if I did my math correctly and he wrote poems about the relationship to nature 700 years before Mesa Verde a place I love was even inhabited. So we're talking about a completely different context of time and the most interesting part of it is we know the little bit about the prehistory of southern Utah we know kind of who these people were based on their the artifacts that can be found. They didn't write anything that we can read let alone hundreds of poems that people still use every day of the week in China. So this this was such a I mean it's mentally it really makes sense. But to really it's to get a sense of that was really powerful to me. Let me read you a poem of his I think Oh here it is unsettled a bird lost from the flock keeps flying by itself in the dusk back and forth it has no resting place night after night more anguished cries anguished it cries its shrill sound yearns for the pure and the distant coming from afar how anxiously it flutters it chances to find a pine tree growing all apart from folding its wings it has come home at last in the gusty wind there is no dense growth this canopy alone does not decay having found a perch to roost on in a thousand years it will not depart so I was reading

through my book again and I realized that there is a few parts that referred to time and one of them let me set it up right now we're really worried about whether Secretary of Interior zinc will rescind the Bears there is national monument which was created by President Obama on Dec.

[00:46:48] 28 and the actual creation of this national monument the signing into law was the last in a series of many events many hundreds of meetings lots of discussions and it started back. I want to say in 2010 or eleven Actually no it started back in 1930s and that was when the secretary of interior Ickes created a map in southern Utah that he called Eskil any national monument it was four point seven million acres of the place that he felt and many other people felt was worthy of protection and also under serious threats mainly from coal and oil and gas development and due to the same forces that we're experiencing today. This shrunk shrunk shrunk until finally in the 60s. I think it was 67 Udall National Park canyon lands National Park was declared three hundred thirty thousand acres less than 10 percent of the original map.

[00:47:56] So for years people have been thinking how do we expand canyon lands. Is this this 330000 acres all right angles political boundaries not geo geological or geographical boundaries. So the question was What would an expansion or a completion of of canyon lands look like. And I was involved with a group one of that created one of I think five different proposals. The proposal that any everybody started to realize was the only one that was really really important and the only one at work was was from the Native Indian community. And this was the Bears Ears National Monument. But the canyon lands greater canyon lands idea was much broader and it included that. But it was much more ethereal. And it took a while to focus and one day I was out on a field trip at a dead horse point have any of you been to Dead Horse Point. It's a great spot and it's it's a national I mean excuse me it's a state park not a national park but it's a great place to see what we're talking about where you can stand up there and you can look out and you can say there's the boundary as it is. But look what about all the rims over there and what about all of that. That's the natural boundary so you could see it you could pointed out and we were there with you know five or six people from the government a few environmentalists and a couple of members of the press and I wandered off by myself. And this happened

[00:49:31] We all talked and pointed rude and odd. And then I wandered off toward one of the overlooks. I was leaning up against the stone wall built to keep us from falling. A woman stood to my left between me and the educational sign describing the geological epics associated with the rock layers that could be seen from that vantage. We stood quietly for a few minutes before I began wondering if she was OK. She seemed to be in a trance. She stared out toward the horizon without moving not blinking not turning her head or shifting her weight. I couldn't tell if she was breathing. I didn't know what to do. Think she might be having a seizure. I waited another minute before deciding against waving my hand in front of her eyes and I spoke to her incredible view isn't it without turning her head to see who had just spoken to her. She added words to what she'd obviously been thinking. I can see it. She said. I can finally see forever she said forever as if it were something real a thing a noun and not the adverb it usually is the way she said forever change the way I think about the future. Sure she may have been referring only to the view and the immense distance but it is possible that she was having an epiphany about time seeing 300 million years of time defined by the exposed rock

layers stretching out before her may have freed up her mind in a way that allowed her to see further into the future than ever before below her the Colorado River was still carving down through those layers something that it began. One hundred and fifty million years ago seeing new vast distances back into the past and forward into the future created a new definition of forever the full spectrum of time. I wonder if many of the ecological and social problems we face today are rooted in how we personally interpret that word forever.

[00:51:26] I just came up with a formula which I think is really great that length of the past is equal to the length of the future. And think about it. There are people out there who believe the earth was created in seven days and they're the same people that believe it's going to come to an end anytime soon. So if you believe that life started. If our past goes back to the beginning of time. Think what that but the potential is for the future.

[00:51:54] So the other part is that there may be parts of the past that are really helpful and understanding the present and the future so I was able to.

[00:52:10] It was like a giant Magical Mystery Tour discovering more and more about William Williams how he got to America. You can you can put his name into a website that the Mormon church has and his birth date and it will tell you what should be came on. And then it will link you to all the journals that were kept of that voyage and you can learn you so the story just continues to unravel. I found out that they got off the ship in New York City the day after the New York riot. Remember Gangs of New York. That movie that was a terribly violent movie it was. It was all about so many people being killed in the civil war that they had to have a draft and a lot of people didn't like that so these massive riot. So here a bunch of people mainly poor people. Their only chance out of England out of the lowest possible class system. They were they on their way to the promised land and they get to New York and it's just destroyed by this riot. I just think about that. I find out I know exactly when they got on a steam shift on the river and then they got all the way to Nebraska that's where they purchased their wagons and oxen and started to Utah.

[00:53:23] So I knew all this William and his family and the souls they traveled with from England were part of the Mormon migration. He couldn't have known that when it ended 30 years later. Eighty five thousand Saints would have made similar journeys from Europe to America. While he might have guessed that he and his family and the Mormon migration would change history he couldn't have known that the role they played would be seen as a major factor in America's manifest destiny or that the phrase Manifest Destiny refers to much more than a plan for moving people from West moving people west to take advantage of the bundle of resources to be found there. Although the term manifest destiny was first used in an 1845 article describing the God given responsibility of white Christians to occupy the North American continent south of Canada the idea can be traced to the 17th century English settlers were told by their Christian clergy that they'd been charged by God to make an errand into the wilderness of America which key God had chosen for special destiny. They were to continue converting New World natives to Christianity a process that began with the discovery of Christopher Columbus of America. God pronounced America exceptional. The end times

would usher Christ back to Earth. It would begin in America tame the wilderness subdue the native people spread God's word prepare for the end.

[00:54:53] When I reread that I did this again because it's the first time what's going on really makes any sense. I think most of the people in power now still think manifest destiny is their duty and every indication is that makes that makes that makes sense.

[00:55:14] You add to that the climate change and we all were aware that the G 20 meeting that was held in Hamburg two weeks ago there was 19 of the countries got together to talk about climate change. One person was absent. Our president and I'm not sure that it's that these white American men don't believe really really do deny climate change. Maybe they know it's there but because of manifest destiny they still believe that it will never happen to us. God will take care of us. This is the chosen place. So how do we get. I mean it makes I feel so much better now because I feel like that's what's going on. But the question is what do we do about it. Tom. What should we do about it. Yeah.

[00:55:59] Huh.

[00:56:04] That would be good. So in summary I believe that being out in the wilderness in a contemplative way is a great way to access this inner world and that the deeper we go into this inner world the more likely we are as individuals to find how the planet might make the best use of us. Lastly William Williams never made it to Utah. I know from the genealogy that he died at a place called the sweet crossing of the Sweetwater.

[00:56:38] But when my father and I went there to find the crossing of the Sweetwater we discovered that there the Mormon Trail which at the time at that place is also the Oregon Trail cross the Sweetwater River nine times in a hundred and twenty miles so our chances of finding his body were even less than before but then not one of the magical things happened which occurred many times during the during the writing of this book where you think you're just stuck and then something happens you get some kind of insight and the insight I got was that I'd only looked at the genealogy that was my line. In other words back through my grandfather and his father and his father to William Williams. But I realized that William Williams had like eight children and it turns out that once I started looking into it I found that he had a daughter that married a guy named Schwinn demon and I called my dad and I said didn't we have neighbors named Schwinn demon.

[00:57:38] And he said Yeah. You grew up down the road from some people named wonderment. I said wasn't the one of the kids a little older than me named David. Yeah. He was a Dave. He's David he's a judge now. And I said turns out we're related. I told him wine. And he said well that's pretty amazing. Let me make a few phone calls since you're interested.

[00:57:57] And the next thing I know I got a crate of stuff on my doorstep and it included a book that was all spiral bound. This thick with it was photocopy pages of handwriting and it turns out that William Williams his wife and his youngest son made this journey and that his youngest son was 17 at the time. It's

[00:58:25] Made it to Salt Lake ended up in Ogden and when he was 84 his children and grandchildren sat him down and said we want to know your history write down your history. So they gave him a pencil and a piece of paper. He started writing before he was done it was this thick and I got a photocopy of it including in that is like six pages of what happened to his father to William William's father.

[00:58:46] And it turns out David the judge is like a fanatic geneology guy and he had collected all this stuff and it turns out like he was.

[00:58:55] We knew each other.

[00:58:56] And so what I discovered is that ten days before he died at a place called three crossings of the Sweetwater which is on the map and I've been there camped out with my dogs they he was really sick with what they called Mountain fever but it's probably typhoid fever which many people got. It was they were very they were starving. They were there were not clean conditions all those things contribute to typhoid fever. Many people got it. And for ten days he suffered in the back of the wagon. But they kept going there on a schedule I had to get to Utah. And one day they had the Sweetwater River makes these big curves up against this cliff and that's all I can tell and that they had to cross it three times in a very short space from now you don't have to because the river has moved but you can still see from Google Earth you can see how once it was up against these cliffs and it would require three crossings. So they stopped and pulled him out of the wagon think that thinking that a little fresh air might help him. Well it didn't. He died and they dug him a shallow grave.

[01:00:06] And then I like this detail they took off the tailgate of the wagon and they put it on top of them and covered with big boulders because they knew if they didn't wolves would pull his body out and then they were on to Utah.

[01:00:19] I think they got there within a week. So I went.

[01:00:26] I wrote this about what happened there this son who's was with them is named John George. John.

[01:00:37] George's Journal makes no mention of any ceremony marker or a prayer for God to protect and watch over William's body assuming it's not too late I find a rock longer than wide and light colored. I tilt it upright pressing it into the soft ground until it will stand on its own a few feet away. I find a good spot to sit on the ground and lean against the down tree. I have a clear view of the wide plain and the stone I just placed upright. I'm too low to see the river but from where I sit. It sounds like a huge snake moving across the land. I watch the clouds and I wonder what birds rustle in the bush behind me. I try dissolving a small pain in my left hip by attacking it with my full attention. I doze and then wake up mid dream in which goes like Mormons surround me and oxen pulling wagons still dripping from this crossing the Sweetwater River move silently past. Their clothes are worn and ragged somewhat barefooted many limp they are thin and they are listless transparent children and

dogs move past me silent. A woman turns toward me nodding acknowledgement through her dark and vacant eyes. William is buried nearby. Of the thousands of weary saints that pass by here I'll bet that not one turn to the next and said Too bad we weren't born one hundred years from now we could have flown no one. Imagine flying someone in the distance is singing. Come come ye Saints.

[01:02:15] No to the labor of fear but with you when you're away would I have imagined flying out in the future is something we have not yet imagined. Something that could save us. How can we begin to imagine what might save us this could be what William Williams has come back to tell me.

[01:02:39] Thank you I'd love any questions or comments or ideas or complaints. Yes O K.

[01:03:03] Yes can I talk about the dogs. Yes there were. There were two at the end Winslow who is a rescued Chihuahua rat terrier mix. I think he's a half pit bull but Terry doesn't believe that. And then REO was a passenger who was who died in 2015 and he spent he did most of this with me and he was a very interesting beautiful complicated dog.

[01:03:36] He bit people people said that's all I was just an ax and I said No I wasn't.

[01:03:45] There were no accidents with that dog. And we got along just fine as long as we traded off.

[01:03:51] In other words one day we did what I needed to do and the next day we did what he needed to do and we were almost together constantly for 14 years and when he died it's really sad but it was time.

[01:04:19] That's a really good question. The inner landscape as Jung said is just just as real but much more detailed and expansive. And I feel like there are many ways to find it and they're more contemplative. People who meditate. I feel like ten thousand years ago or fifteen thousand years ago there may have been no boundary between those. I feel like wild animals there's no boundary between them that your whole life is part of this gigantic amazing field of of wild life force and I really feel like we are so limited in thinking that we have all the answers. If just everyone would agree with us we could solve all the problems. But basically I think that there's no there's some answer out there that none of us have. And the question is how to find it. How to get beyond all the rhetoric and everything we've learned up to now and realize there's still tons more to learn. So I feel like people who are into mindfulness I think going out in the wilderness is a good way. I feel like there's a lot of ways to to be imaginative to dream people some people dream and they think of it as like that must have been that spaghetti sauce. Other people really pay close attention to it. I one things I love to do is what you referred to as active imagination. He and his colleagues were always astounded at how valuable it was when one of their clients came and said I had this amazing dream and here's what happened.

[01:05:53] And but but then realizing that not everyone dreams or if they do not everyone remembers their dreams. You can do active imagination and used to sort of set yourself off on this kind of a lucid

dream and you can use the symbols and the archetypes in the same way that you can talk about your dreams and I think it's really valuable.

[01:06:17] So dreams mindfulness just wandering around outside without having some hard goal or I like all too I think is a real is a real source of access to the inner world work I did at Dartmouth for five years was to sort of find a way to quantify this. The anecdotes that we all know about and that is that I think we all know it. People who spend more time contemplative fully out in wild places are more likely to want to contribute to the greater good. I mean there's plenty of people that have foundations that are not into really the greater good. But I think those that spend a lot of time outside there's something's connection to that. So I did a lot of research for years.

[01:07:05] I went to a long conference on my brain. What happens to your brain during mindfulness meditation. I know a guy who's does brain scans of people who spend time out in the wilderness and the brain scans of those people on the brain scans of people who are meditating are almost the same.

[01:07:26] So there are all these connections to this but the thing that really got me was about two years ago I forget what I was reading exactly but I found out about this guy named Dacher Keltner who's a professor at Berkeley a psychologist and he's written papers and books with others and basically made the connection between experiencing R and pro social behavior so a lot of what what happens I mean when I started going outside I learned how to skiing climb because it could get me places where I might have a shot at getting some are some having some view or something just happened where it's like well well that the idea is that you're yourself shrinks and it opens you up to this massive possibility and you also want to be a better person as a result.

[01:08:22] So that's been really interesting to me and I think about on many different ways I might write some. I've been writing a little bit about it. I might write more about it because one of the things that I think up for me is awesome is seeing some amazing event occur in the natural world you know where it's like alright I can explain exactly what's happening I know what that animal is or what that creature is but did you see it as it's supposed to happen. It just kind of it's amazing you know what I'm talking about. So a while ago the one that comes to mind right now I hope it's not boring but we were watching birds in Florida and there was like a river and we were watching birds and I noticed that there was a big dead tree that was coming out kind of at an angle like this and there were three turtles on that tree and I don't know turtles but I like turtles and I thought they're just sitting on that tree and I notice on the far shore there was another turtle just like it. And that turtle gets in the water and start swimming toward the tree and without signaling without anything visible that I could see those three turtles moved up the tree to make room for the four turtle. I loved it. Huh. No I was too wet but stuff like that that happens to answer your question things. Yes.

[01:09:53] Barbara so I guess the question and that is to say that you know I'm from here.

[01:10:08] Wave goodbye to my sons who are stickers on their canoes this upon which to me is not the confusion and six grandchildren and nieces and nephews and all that who are on their way. They

now live in one of the islands of the same lands on their way to but not in the it's called Campbell River. But with a tribe up there has their own name for that place where they're all the canoe nations are coming together and they do this every year every year Well every year for the last twenty five. Years or so they've been doing this. More than 25 years and it's not unlike you I mean our our ancestors were on canoes for a reason to find food

[01:10:54] To make alliances. Have wars made peace. Your ancestors were travelling to get somewhere. On this journey. Whenever my kids or my grandkids or nieces and nephews come back from being out there today to say that they're tiny in this big giant world and what they see the way it was the dolphins that whatever happens to them and what comes to them. Songs and dances and they find they find relatives that know of. Previous journeys and previous alliances and so your imagination is that we call it we call it.

[01:11:41] Yeah yeah yeah yeah.

[01:11:45] Thank you. And what you just described makes me wonder you know you have it as an Indian person have. That's part of your culture. That's part I mean happens every year. I didn't know what happened every year. I knew what happened I didn't know happened every year and this. This happens every year and this the same reactions happen every year.

[01:12:08] I just like lucked out and happened into this stuff and it's and again I had to spend so much time sort of validating myself like you mentioned because no one ever prepared me for it. No one ever gave it any validation. The people that had visions we were supposed to like emulate but we had no personal power to do that you know and that's kind of why I'm post Mormon it's because I don't have anything against it like Joseph Smith but I don't need his vision to help me with mine.

[01:12:43] And you and you're given to your children and grandchildren constantly and you know this. This canoe ritual is only a piece of that. I think we have so much to learn from native people and this whole business of bears is to me the one. There's many reasons that it needs to be protected because it's beautiful because it's under constant threat from oil and gas and coal. But the main thing is Indian people are finally standing up and saying this is a sacred place to us and we are willing to share with you. And you need to understand what a sacred place is all about. And it seems like once I heard that I thought you know that just makes so much more sense than almost anything else. So it's I think it's really powerful times. This whole thing that happened at the Dakota Access Pipeline I was at a meeting in California in March and there was a Native man from from the what are the islands coming off of Alaska the Aleutian. He was from Aleutian Islands. He was a holy person and he gave this amazing speech and he said he goes all over the world talking to other holy people from other tribes and what he's realized is that everyone seems to have a piece of the story. And they weren't even sure it was only a piece of this story.

[01:14:08] But when they all get together they realize that it's like a big puzzle and that pieces of the story all coming together into into one picture one puzzle one and it's now it's time. And how many

times Joan a yellow man who's this guy we really have gotten to know well a native holy man another holy man has said it is time it's time.

[01:14:29] So who knows. I get chills thinking about its time. Yeah thank you so much.

[01:14:37] I really appreciate it. Applause

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