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REBECCA ADAMSON INTERVIEW
MAKERS: WOMEN WHO MAKE AMERICA
KUNHARDT FILM FOUNDATION

Rebecca Adamson
Businesswoman & Advocate
12/10/2011
Interviewed by Nancy Armstrong
Total Running Time: 39 minutes and 27 seconds

START TC: 00:00:00:00

ON SCREEN TEXT:

Makers: Women Who Make America
Kunhardt Film Foundation

ON SCREEN TEXT:

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NANCY ARMSTRONG:

Can you tell me about where you grew up and what it was like to grow up in your family?

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REBECCA ADAMSON:

I was born in Akron, Ohio in 1949, and traditionally, with many native families, you are raised by your grandparents. And so, while I was born in Akron, my father was Swedish and from a Swedish community in Akron, my mother was Cherokee from North Carolina, and so most of my growing up was actually in North Carolina, in towns called Darby and Blowing Rock, up in the mountains.

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NANCY ARMSTRONG:

Can you talk a little bit about growing up with those two distinct cultures under the same roof, and how that influenced your world view?

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REBECCA ADAMSON:

I really think I was very fortunate. Probably at the time, when I was an adolescent, I didn't look at it as fortunate. I was testing all the boundaries. My mother used to have a saying. She would go, "Oh my God, Bob," and my dad would go, "Jesus Christ, Becky," and I would basically be out there just trying to test those boundaries. But I had three different world views I think, and so, I was very busy exploring what was normal and what was acceptable in society.

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I had my father's first generation Swedish so it was, "ja, [speaks in Swedish]," and my mother Cherokee, and the way they met- the family legend is that he was down in North Carolina in boot camp and there was a baseball game, and Mom and her girlfriends got in a car and went over to the boot camp to see all the soldiers. And my dad has blond hair, green eyes, had a headband on though 'cause he was playing baseball. He was very good at sports, and he was a very good ball player.

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My mom and her girlfriends were all in the stands watching and everything. And she turned to her girlfriends and said, "I think he's part Indian." Now my mom had coal black hair, brown eyes, but she's sitting there looking at this guy, and his green eyes just determined he was part Indian. But they started talking and kind of the rest is history in that sense. But here I was, definitely raised from the Swedish sort of cold, reserved, has to be logical, and my mother and her family who were very much- I remember long, long walks with my grandfather.

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We used to walk in the woods for hours, and he would never talk. We just didn't have to really talk at all. We were companions. We'd somehow magically come to a spot and sit, and sometimes, he'd take out his knife and he'd whittle away on a piece of wood, never say anything, and then pretty soon, we'd walk on home. And what I learned was the ability to really, really listen. Listen to the wind coming through the grasses, listen to the branches

as they rustle and birds land on them, listening to how a bird sounds when it takes off.

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And watching. Watching the tracks and knowing which animals had been there before me, watching the clouds and the clouds pass by. It was really a profound time for me. A centering time. A time for understanding my connection with all that was around me and all of the life that was- Sometimes, the woods would be so full of life, it was probably what a lot of city people would hear with the horns honking. You'd hear the locusts and the bullfrogs and the birds. This was a cacophony of these incredible sounds in nature.

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And that's what the walks were about. So I had this balancing, with my mother and and growing up- most of my early childhood in North Carolina with my grandparents, and then coming into a world that was really- I remember my father, in the parenting, it had to be logical. You had to be able to explain it from a logical point of view. And yet, I also remember this rich, rich sense of feeling and intuition, and then we were in a public school that was in an affluent part of Akron, so that it was very much the American dream.

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Going to high school, the question was, what college are you going to? It wasn't whether you were going to college, it was, what college were you going to? And back in those days, when I look at it now, it might have been

misunderstood, but I remember thinking, well, what if you were not going to college? What about the kids that aren't going to college? So, I took a t-shirt or a sweatshirt out—and I was going to college— but instead, I stenciled on the name of the home for unwed mothers, was Florence Crittenton.

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And I wore that on our college day, and immediately was sent up to the principal's office and whisked out of school. But my thinking was more that wasn't shame or stigma but it was a different path, and it seemed like we weren't thinking about a different path for different people and understanding that in any way. So it was really much that American dream of this is what you were doing and this is how you had to... operate. These had to be your goals. And I mean, I went to school and I'm glad of it, but they weren't really my goals.

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NANCY ARMSTRONG:

So, you went to college but you dropped out. What happened there?

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REBECCA ADAMSON:

I was majoring in philosophy, and I liked philosophy because it was easy and it just taught you about different ways people thought of the world and they put the whole world in that one way and tried to then make that case, which was interesting. But it was towards the last year, and I lost interest. I just

basically lost interest, and got into hitchhiking again, which is not my mother's favorite idea. But then I started hitchhiking coast to coast.

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I hitchhiked out to California, and then I hitchhiked back to the East Coast, and then I hitchhiked back to California. My first real one- I mean, I think I got hooked because the time when I was a junior in high school, I hitchhiked to New York. And I went down to the East Village and The Fugs were playing, that was the precursor of Mothers of Invention and Frank Zappa. It was Allen Ginsberg and Tuli Kupferberg, and they would sing these songs like, "Saran wrap, saran wrap, saran wrap," and I had my bottle of rum and my six pack of Coke, and I was sitting in the park listening to these songs.

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And then The Blues Project came on afterwards, and they actually went on to become—most of them—the Chicago band. But they were playing these incredible songs, and here I was, just in New York, drinking my rum and Coke listening to this great music. And Tuli Kupferberg, who was an incredible man, thought I was a runaway, and he had these apartments that he kept all over New York city for runaways, and he gave me an apartment. I stayed up there for a month, walked all over New York city. It just was amazing. Then got back for my senior year, and the principal said I wasn't allowed to graduate in the ceremony 'cause I was a bad influence on the rest of the kids.

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And I had never done anything, I was getting my Cs and Bs, was minding my own business, but I had one heck of an adventure. And so, out of college, I

started hitchhiking again, and ended up in Seattle, Washington. Asked if I wanted to work for these two tribes, because I was Indian, I had excellent writing skills—I really did, probably, have the basis of a college degree. Became hired by the Spokane tribe, which was in Wellpinit, Washington, and then the Nez Perce tribe, which was over in Idaho, and was trained as an apprentice to be a 701 planner.

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I was the first female, first Indian, ever to be the 701 planner in the states of Idaho or Washington, which is kind of just a government term for the kind of government planning and grant writing that we did. I had the opportunity to write some brilliant ideas of the Nez Perce tribe. We were the originators of the Appaloosa horse, and they wanted to reintroduce and they wanted to bring the breed back, and I remember just getting so excited about that project.

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And yet, the government said, “No, that was never going to work.” Instead, they wanted us to do a motel. So, I wrote the proposal for a motel, which when we took it to the tribal council, the thinking was, “Well, let’s put it out and open it where there isn’t anything.” Rather than you need a motel where there’s going to be tourists, we were putting it where in the community that didn’t have anything. It didn’t have a gas station. I mean, it’s like, why you would go out there as a tourist would be a question in and of itself.

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But anyway, the government regs was more about rooms and the buildings, since I knew how to do that so I wrote it up and we got it. We got the motel, but then they wouldn't give us any funding to do marketing. We couldn't get into the tourist markets and advertise, ee had no money to do admin and run a motel. Needless to say, the end of the story, the motel got closed down in about 4 years, couldn't keep it open. It was deemed an Indian failure. The tribe- they got this motel and they can't even keep it open, they can't do business.

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And I started then, thinking that something was really wrong with the picture. The horse ranch, the appaloosa horse ranch, would have absolutely worked. I had already done the research. I looked at the demographics and did the threshold analysis, and I knew that this could be done. And that wasn't going to be funded. And the whole time I was writing up the motel plan, I'm like, "I don't know, I just don't get this, I don't think it's really going to work, but okay."

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And we went through about 120, 140- back then, you could build it cheaper, but we went through hundreds and thousands of dollars on that idea, and then we got blamed for the failure, and so that, that was kind of an early- I did that for a couple of years, and then went into what I think was my real job which was the Coalition of Indian-Controlled Schools. And that was the history repeating itself, where just so many things that we encountered didn't make sense.

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NANCY ARMSTRONG:

Can you talk about the incident in the 8th grade classroom?

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REBECCA ADAMSON:

Again, go back to my wonderful mother. She was so happy that I was not hitchhiking any more and now working. But my first five years working in the Indian schools, I was in and out of jail. I was constantly thrown in jail because it was considered a radical idea for Indian parents to have a say in their school. This is at the same time you had PTAs, parental teacher associations, where it was a democratic right for parents to be on their school boards, it was considered highly unlawful for Indian people to have a say in the schools.

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So I remember part of the attorneys' phone numbers like 505-623, to have to call them and say, "Mike, it's me, I'm in jail again," and get bailed out, because it was considered just such an unheard of situation that Indians would want to have a say in their children's future, in anything about their own life. So this one was Hammon, Oklahoma. First, there was five Indian controlled schools in the country, and they formed a coalition and they had sued President Nixon, because Senator Kennedy had gotten the The Indian Education Act through Congress but Nixon had impounded the funding.

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And so the Coalition of Indian-Controlled Schools, these five schools, sued President Nixon and got the monies released. And then they hired me as the very first staff person to just like, 22 years old, and they're like, "Go start schools." I'm like, "Okay. Sure." Had no idea how you do it, none, and so I taught myself to go into the counties, and get the budgets and analyze the budgeting, understand how the money flowed, look at the Indian money.

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And it was Johnson-O'Malley, 874, Title IV monies, all going into these public schools, that weren't- In the case of Hammon, had been open since 1943 and never graduated an Indian student, which was the first thing the principal told me when I walked into Hammon, Oklahoma. And then they took me on a tour of the school, and I saw all these beautiful, little Indian kids just shining and bright, and there was a small amount of non-Indians.

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And in the early grades, everybody comes in excited, and by 8th grade, I walked by this teacher's room and I look in the door and the principal is with me, and all of the Indian kids had this white adhesive- the surgical tape, over their mouth. And I just stopped cold. And I said, "What's going on in here?" And he said, "Well, we can go in and talk to the teacher." And I go in, and I go up to the teacher and I said, "What are you doing?" She said, "Well." She said, "Everyone knows the Indians are savages." She said, "They disrupt the class."

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And she said, "So they have to come in, in the morning, line up at her desk, and get their mouths taped shut. They can take the tape off for lunch, then

they have to put the tape back on.” And is it any wonder that these kids were dropping out? By the time they got to 9th grade, they were out of there. They were out of that school. So I went in and did the analysis of the budget, it was a public school, and 75% of the funding was Indian monies.

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So I pulled every one of those kids out of school and we started our own Indian school. And I’d come in right after AIM, the American Indian Movement. And AIM had gone into the community, a bunch of guys shooting their guns up, and feeling really good and riding off into the sunset, having told, what for, to the local community, which the community absolutely did need to be told off. However, as far as anything constructive, it created an atmosphere that was extremely violent. And like the way a lot of these situations unfold, there was this darling, darling old man who had been the local sort of entrepreneur.

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He had his liquor store. He had his little grocery store. And he was a White guy that basically dedicated his old liquor store to us for a school. So we opened the school up, and I had K through 12, 55 kids with no curriculum, no teachers, nothing. And every night, I would go back to my boarding room and I would come up with a curriculum, and then that next day, we would start class. And what I realized was that by 8th and 9th grade, these kids were still block printing, and some were better than others.

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So I did this whole peer tutoring, where the kids that were better were teaching the younger kids, or sometimes, it was the younger kids teaching the older kids. But I teamed us up that way, so I'd have one class that was a two room liquor store, and I had them working so that they really were- And they were learning so much from each other that it actually worked. And then we had the old ranchers, the redneck ranchers, driving by in their pick up shooting their rifles at it, over the top of the school house, and I had to really watch the kids to make sure that everybody was safe.

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And started writing the proposals, and we got some church funding and we got some church teachers, and we built The Institute of the Southern Plains, and that's just one story of the whole school movement. It was an amazing, amazing time. And it's fascinating because we had Sylvester Knowshisgun, Virgil Killstreet, Ted Risingsun, Dorothy Small, Fanny LeMay. We had incredible leaders that everybody has heard of, Martin Luther King and Rosa Parks, and nobody has heard of the leaders that were really- This was the civil rights movement for Indian people.

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This was what it was about. I remember flying into DC to prepare testimony for what became legislation in 1975. And I'd be flying overhead when the African Americans were being arrested for wanting desegregated schools, and they were going to the bussing and all that. And I'd see them from the airplane, and the police coming in and the arrests being made. In the meantime, I'm being arrested for wanting segregated schools. We wanted our

own schools, where we could have our culture and our language and the tribal controlled schools.

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So there was a point in time in the country, where Blacks were getting arrested for wanting to go to school with White kids and I was being arrested for wanting to have Indian schools. And it was just this point of well, what does this country really want? What are the values? What's the understanding within this country about its people? And we were successful in getting the most profound piece of legislation since the 1930s. In 1975, we got the Public Law 638 passed, which was the Indian Education Self-Determination Act.

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And self determination has become the rallying call for indigenous peoples globally. It's about the right to determine our own future, our own values, our own way of living, and our own destinies.

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NANCY ARMSTRONG:

What was the difference between sovereignty and self-determination? They sound similar.

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REBECCA ADAMSON:

Sovereignty has a political division to it where you can raise your own army, print your own money, but it also contains the elements of- being sovereign is self determination, and that you have your own culture, you have your own language, you have your own history. So within a self determination sense, tribes are completely defined within that framework, legal framework of self determination.

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When you go into the global arena, there are many nations and countries that just, to this day, would refuse the concept of sovereignty with indigenous peoples. It was a battle, in the International Labour Organization, working on the treaty, the one international treaty on indigenous peoples, to get the word “peoples” into the treaty, because “peoples” infers a sovereignty, versus “the population.”

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So, I was there for two years on the fight of indigenous population or indigenous peoples, and it was a two year battle that comes from an understanding of “peoples” having a sovereignty, “populations” are just aggregate groups, but we got “peoples” in. It was a major, major victory.

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NANCY ARMSTRONG:

What was the broader impact or the greater implications of the 1975 act?

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REBECCA ADAMSON:

It was the first time legally- Well, I didn't have to go to jail any more. That's probably maybe not a broad implication, but it was an important one because it set in place the legal framework for Indian people to have a say over their lives. It wasn't just the schools. It put everything in motion. Any bureau of Indian affairs or Indian health program, any governmental service that was going to impact indigenous peoples, in this case tribal people in the United States, they had the legal right to control it and run it themselves.

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And that was huge. It put the whole office infrastructures in place. Since 1975, we had now typewriters, we had file cabinets, we had phones, things that we didn't have before. Building the administrative management infrastructure to run our own programs. Like I said, it was fundamentally the most important piece of legislation since the turn of the century in the 1900s, by way of giving Indian people the empowerment and the control that can-

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It has become the rallying call globally. Indigenous people in all these other countries, which we're in 90 countries around the world, it's the same fear, it's the same political dynamic. "We can't let them be peoples. They can't have their own sovereignty." But self determination has been a concept, and is embodied in the UN declaration of rights on indigenous peoples, which has now been endorsed by 140 different countries. So, it's major.

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NANCY ARMSTRONG:

And how did it feel for you personally- first, when you got that loan to start your work? What did that feel like for you? And also, when you started to see your work paying off.

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REBECCA ADAMSON:

I was driven by a vision, but it didn't seem to have any checkpoints, where I focused more on, "What else, what next," than probably now, I'm a whole lot older and I probably would say, "Let's slow down and celebrate those successes," because there was many, many successes. The successes that came out of the community were just enriching, and I was always then going into the next and I think now, I would spend more time actually being in the communities where I was working, just doing nothing but enjoying.

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The Lakota fund was profound in what it did in Pine Ridge, but we worked with the Hopi Foundation that created a radio station in getting the Hopi language out, getting it documented. That was extremely profound. The moment with the shareholders, with the Calvert social investment funds, was incredibly profound to see them stand up, and see people take a hold of their future, in the sense of living their values and bringing that into society to change institutions.

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Those have all been incredibly rich times, but I seem to always then go to where there was more to do, and we're sitting in a time today where there's just so much to do. Nancy, I'm frightened by how much there is to do now. 'Cause those pockets of success seem to be overshadowed by a backwards trend that requires women to really come into touch with their powers again, and to really go back to that sacred state, and understand what our purpose is in being here.

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So, I look at what happened and what came out of First Nations and those moments, and I spend a lot of my work in finance, which I think is the sort of males' domain, and have come full circle to understanding that the real work is in a consciousness. And it's a consciousness that women have and carry, and not much is going to change until we change our consciousness.

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So, it comes full circle to being a woman, and being a woman with power. But for instance, in my probably turning part with First Nations was, we'd started a grant making program. So we were the very first Indian organization to have our own money to make grants. And we wanted to understand making grants within culture. We didn't want to have these reduced program focus. Foundations are all about strategic planning now, which means they think focus means reductionism, but focus can be an enlarging understanding of strategy.

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And a couple of reporters called and asked, “Well, how does it feel to have power now?” And at first, I didn’t understand the question, but they meant because I had money to give away, I now had power. And I hadn’t thought of money as power, in any way shape or form. So, it was through those first early interviews that I was like, “Well, what do you mean?” They said, “Well, now you’re going to be making grants.” And I said, “Well, yes, and we want to understand how money can actually facilitate and enhance culture.”

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They said, “And so you have power.” And I said, “Well, but I’ve always had power.” And they said, “Well, now you can tell people what to do.” And I said, “Well, no, I can’t.” I said, “I can’t tell people what to do any more than they can tell me what to do.” And we had these insane interviews which never made it into any newspapers. I understand why now, “There was no hook,” but it forced me to start thinking more about money and about power.

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And here I was, and I got deeper and deeper into finance, which I understand it now. I get it. These guys actually think money is power. Okay. I don’t think so, but okay.

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NANCY ARMSTRONG:

Can you describe to me exactly what happens when you go into an indigenous community, what is the process there and how does that transformation evolve?

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REBECCA ADAMSON:

So we basically through first peoples now have two efforts underway. One of them is our grant making. We have an unbelievable mechanism that we've built up, that allows us to make grants directly to grassroots indigenous communities. We're going straight into communities. Two thirds of our grant making portfolio are in communities that have never ever received funding. Never had money before. So we're having to really push the boundaries.

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We take grant applications by You Tube. Because if we're looking at a culture that is holistic, the grant proposals are usually pretty linear. We're looking at non-literate cultures and communities. So the written word puts another layer on- So our ability to reach into the most traditional parts of indigenous territories and communities is through *Keepers of the Earth*. And what we are seeing come out of there is fundamental understandings around the role of women, the balancing of societies, traditional ecological knowledge, a spirituality.

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One of the questions we ask in the grant process is, "How do your values and spiritual beliefs strengthen you, and will carry you forward in this project?" Because we really are backing up and understanding again, and looking at this piece of consciousness. This is the work, I think, that has to go forward. And so we wanted to understand that better. Talked about juxtaposition, the

other side of what we do in First Peoples now is corporate engagement strategy. So we're working with these huge corporations.

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We have Shell, which is like, the second largest company in the world. We're working with Vale, which is the third largest mining company in the world. In addition to working directly with the company, we're actually working with like, the social investment community, because I did the first investment screen. So investors can actually look at the corporate behavior with indigenous peoples and in indigenous people's territory, and the database is now in the market so that you can say, "I want to invest only in companies that uphold indigenous' people's rights."

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So we have this huge, sort of, advocacy platform that an indigenous community can use to drive a company out if they do not want the company in the territories, or they can use it for better negotiations if they decide they want to partner with a corporation. We've never felt it's our decision. We felt the fundamental role for us is to make sure the community makes the decision, and then to have the best information and the best tools with regards to that decision.

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NANCY ARMSTRONG:

What did you think of the women's movement? Did the women's movement resonate with you at all during the time when it really kicked up in the late 60s and early 70s?

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REBECCA ADAMSON:

It was fascinating for me to become more and more aware of the women's movement. Because I could see the politics to it and I understand that kind of discrimination, I didn't understand the basis of it for a long time, because I came from a culture that really held women in high regard and assumed women as powerful. Coming from a matrilineal society, we were organized, again, in a way of values so that- see, I talked about the balancing, and to have a women's council really running the nation during most of the time.

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We also socially- You could marry a Cherokee woman. There was no stigma to divorce. And so if you divorced a Cherokee woman, first, all the children took the woman's name, because it was matrilineal, so it was passed on through the woman. And you could divorce a Cherokee woman—no stigma whatsoever—but all the properties stayed with the children, which is a stark contrast to our social organization where children are property, and the divorce proceedings fight over the children, and many times they fight over the alimony and the child support.

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There was no question about paying child support. The children owned all the property, by their existence, by the fact they were born. So you had these kind of organizations that were... Imagine that today. Just imagine for a moment, if we really understood and valued children, how differently the court systems would work. So I came from a culture, where I was very comfortable and assumed that there was power in being a woman. I didn't understand the politics of it. I didn't have an awareness.

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I thought all that discrimination was because I was Indian, and when the sort of blinders came off and I began understanding it was about women, and that the same thing was happening to women, that was really an awakening for me. And to understand, wealthy women and poor women, it didn't matter. And I went on a rafting trip where I saw- Most of them were White women and it was a very- I broke my jaw and there was all this- women ended up in the hospital. It was a tough rafting trip.

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But each one of those women came into their own place of power, and to see that awakening happen, and I realized that, here was a culture that denied women their own power. That very deliberately, you are the weaker sex, you are the, "We are taking care of you." That's insidious, because that power is so forceful, and I think that's what the fear is. I think there's a fear in this society, and that fear has grown stronger as we have chipped away at the discrimination. However, we haven't chipped away at the fear, and you see it in the violence that plays out day in and day out against women.

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NANCY ARMSTRONG:

So was that your click moment when you started identifying, when you sort of, had that epiphany?

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REBECCA ADAMSON:

Absolutely. And I think it came because I think a lot of women came into the women's movement, like I said politically, and I came into it spiritually. I just had this spiritual understanding of the women, of the sacredness—the womb of the universe where all life springs forth. That understanding of women is that understanding of life. And so I had such a spiritual... belief in women, that it took my understanding of that power and seeing that power being destroyed, that was my awakening moment.

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That's where I could understand that it wasn't just for me, and it wasn't even just for women, it was for everyone. It was for life, that we had to come to grips with the power of being a woman. We had to call women together. I have an incredible opportunity, having met a woman from the Bear Clan up at St. Regis Mohawk. The Bear Clan at St. Regis Mohawk was the Indian women that adopted the suffragettes, and you can go back through the memoirs of Joslyn Gage and read about her adoption into the Bear Clan at St. Regis.

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And it was through that understanding and the power of those women who ran the Mohawk nation, that the whole suffragette movement grew out of. And in that understanding, those women have, as a fundamental purpose of how they understand who they are, a requirement and the obligation and responsibility to bring women of all nations together, to bring that power back into being, to bring that balance back into life, because what's the most dangerous part is to tip that life that much out of balance.

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You can't have just one source in life. You need two. You need two to make life. You need two to continue life. Within that is the very different energies and power. Men are powerful, women are powerful. It's that balance. And so, what we have taking place up at- And again, Gloria Steinem has been a key figure in it—come to the first ceremony. We just finished the first four years. You do the ceremonies in four years. We just finished the first four years this year of bringing back the women's ceremony. We had called it "Sisters in Spirit" because there is this belief that it's through a consciousness that we will get to the next place we need to be as human beings.

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NANCY ARMSTRONG:

Why do you think so many American women do not identify as feminist?

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REBECCA ADAMSON:

I think the young women today are incredible. I see a vibrancy and a radiance to them. But I think what they are being told is they have to be like men. You see a lot of the violence that women now are playing out in order to get in touch with their own power. But what they are doing is imitating men's power, and not finding women's power. They come at a time when there were many advantages that we have already fought for that they're assumed-

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Like, I don't know of any woman coming out of college that wouldn't assume a credit card, that would just think she would be floored to have someone have to cosign to get a credit card. I also think that one of the fundamental battles over controlling our own body is really at stake, and it's what we're facing today. And I'm not sure that the younger women- they didn't come from the same kind of illegal backroom abortions that I know and that I can remember.

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My friends and the horror of all of that—the danger. So yet, coming from a society that traditionally had family planning- traditionally, you took control of your body. Conditionally, you decided whether you wanted to be pregnant or not, as an Indian woman. So these were things that go way, way back for women, and understanding women. I'm not sure where the younger girls are going to get this knowledge. I think part of it is so spiritual that life can bring that lesson. You can find that just through life.

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But we've got a society now that seems set in keeping that from us. A society that's going to tell us that strong women are like men. That's not being a woman. Strong women have a unique power, the gift of life. That is the fundamental most sacred place we can be. That's our source of power. It's definitely not in corporate America, it's not in money, it's not in our bank account, it's not in being able to handle a gun.

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I can shoot, I can go hunting. I've had money, I've made grants. I've walked the corporate halls, met in the corporate board rooms. The source of power is being connected to that womb of the universe. It's being that complete place, where we are the source of life. We can't give that up. We give that up, we lose everything. And I don't know today where women can go to gain that understanding. I feel like there's a deliberateness in trying to keep it buried. There's a deliberateness.

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You can see it between science and intuition. I mean, science is now backing itself up to some ancient wisdom. When you look at the way the theory of relativity, you look at Higgins laws, you look at this understanding of wavelets and particles in a way that the minute you look at a wavelet, it affects the particles—it's like all things are related. These are carried within the DNA of women. These understandings are there. It's for us to find, and it's for us to be much more deliberate, in our use of our power. We need to take it back. We need to relish it. We need to have it robustly celebrated. I think we're afraid of it.

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NANCY ARMSTRONG:

Is that the challenge ahead? Is that what the women's movement has yet to accomplish moving forward?

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REBECCA ADAMSON:

Absolutely. I think the biggest challenge for the women's movement is celebrating our power, celebrating the power of women and not being afraid of it. And bringing it back to center stage of life, and bringing it in a way that the younger women can join in and sing and celebrate and have ceremony that is about recognizing that power. Bringing that power back into Mother Earth, bringing that power into our sisters, into the next generation. I'm a grandmother. I have two grandsons, and I have a third grandson on the way. Those boys are going to understand love and relish women's power.

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NANCY ARMSTRONG:

And what can Western culture learn from indigenous cultures that would really be healing, this time, in our history?

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REBECCA ADAMSON:

I think Western culture has been wonderful in its scientific discoveries, in its technological advances, but they have been technologies mostly in the field of weapons and business. And what we have in indigenous societies is a technology around social and welfare kinds of issues.

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We have ways to structure our societies that bring a richness for decisions, that bring the best of the decisions to the forefront for society, not a small group that are making the decisions. There's not an elitism and a power source located anywhere in indigenous society. It's diffused. The society itself is the power, and it's the whole, not a part of it, that must be taken into all consideration because it's the whole that must survive.

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I think when you look at the technological advances in an indigenous society, you look at like, foods. We are the ones who created 3000 kinds of potatoes. We are the ones that invented the cocoa, tomato, three-fifths of the food produces that we know today were Indian agricultural products. This was real technology. So our technology needs to be brought in, and what we have in the western societies, with the traditional societies, can really bring an incredible blend for how we go forward. I would call it like an ancient futures.

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Bringing the really, really old, and understanding where we come from, is how we're going to be a people who move forward. And Western society is afraid of that right now. They are denying their very sense of who they are,

and their role among this life. So, they're not going to get too much further without going back to that point.

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NANCY ARMSTRONG:

What's the most meaningful or useful piece of advice you've ever received?

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REBECCA ADAMSON:

Silence, from my grandfather, was the best advice I ever got. Being able to live in that moment with total presence, surrounded with silence, is beautiful.

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NANCY ARMSTRONG:

What's the one piece of advice you would give to a young woman on work-life balance, having a child and trying to have a career?

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REBECCA ADAMSON:

I think if you first stop and find your own sense of power, that power will take you forward. And it's not a decision or an equation, it's a river that you flow in.

END TC: 00:39:27:00