



## **Personal Reflections on Blackfoot Men and Matriculture: Transcript**

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*[lightly edited; please cite using time signatures]*

I am Douglas Cardinal. I'm an architect, born in southern Alberta, actually in Calgary. My father was, he had Blackfoot heritage and my mother had German heritage. So she was very concerned, being a nurse, that the women were respected as nurses by the doctors. And they were always doing so much, but never respected by the men. And so, she looked for, she was an age where they were courting her, particularly the doctors. But she said, "I want somebody that respects women." And she had, my dad's sister was working as a nurse at the time, as well in the Pinoka Mental Hospital, where she was a supervisor. And she encouraged my mother to come with her to meet my father. And when they met, my mother discovered how much he respected women. And that was because he was taught by his grandmother, and of course, his mother, who had a Blackfoot heritage.

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Actually, his grandmother was head of the Good Striker clan. Now, the Good Strikers were actually led by a woman, my grandmother. They were the warriors, but she was the clan mother. And so, as a clan mother, she had a relationship with the Sioux grandmothers.



And the Siouxs were always come to extend their land and their resources on Blackfoot territory. And the Blackfoot people were doing the same with the Siouxs. So they're continually fighting each other. And so, my grandmother also had Sioux heritage, because the grandmothers got together centuries before and they came into an agreement that their young men, their young studs, their strong men were all being killed in the wars between them. And the grandmothers decided that that was not right for both tribes to do that, because Mother Nature didn't have the males killing each other for territory. Mother Nature, particularly the wolves, did not kill each other for territory or females.

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So they decided that they would learn from the wolves about battling their male battles for territory. And so, what they decided to do would be that the first warriors that would come out would have nothing but a coup stick. It's a stick that's straight with a hook on the end. And they'd ride into battle with just nothing but a coup stick. And then, they would wrestle with the other tribe that had coup sticks with each other until they could take the coup stick from the other person and then ride back. And so, then the chiefs would get together in a separate meeting and they would count the coup sticks. And whoever had the most coup sticks would negotiate the territory without killing anybody. And so that was my grandmother's tribe [*clan*], the Good Strikers, because they respected life. And that was the grandmothers' doing. And so she was the clan mother of the Good Strikers, my grandmother, my father's grandmother.

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So I, I, my father took me to meet her when I was, when I was about five years old, because he felt that as a child I should meet my grandmother, whom he loved very much. My grandmother, when she saw that her people were starving, and particularly her clan, what she did was say, "I am going to seduce and marry the richest rancher in southern Alberta to feed my clan and my people." And so what she did was got on her horse and went hunting. And she found William Samuel Lee with thousands of head of cattle. And she seduced him and married him and adopted him into the tribe. And he became a member of the tribe. And so, she fed her people with, and she turned her tribe, her Good Strikers, into cowboys. So, they became cattle ranchers instead of warriors. And you will notice that the Good Strikers are always winning in the Calgary Stampede, because they're better cowboys than the cowboys [*laughter*].

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When I was a five-year-old child, my father took me to meet my, to meet his grandmother. And she was living in a cabin at Rocky Mountain House with a, ah, he was actually, I believe, he was an Ojibwe elder. I'm not sure, but he was a Native elder. And when I was there, being just a child, I was tired from the long trip. And so she put me in a room, a private room, where it was sort of off limits. And that's where her husband had prayed and had his medicine bundle and all his pictures and all his tribal regalia was there. So, when I was there, I saw this medicine bundle in a, way back in a shelf. And just being a curious five-year-old, I took the medicine bundle out and I didn't know I was not to touch it, but I took the medicine bundle out and put it on the floor, which was a buffalo skin I was sitting on. And I opened it up and I saw all these art of really beautiful carvings, pipes, pipestones, and images carved out of pipestone, red pipestone and, and other tobacco pouches and things. And I took them all out, and I unwrapped every one of them and put them all around me. And, because I was so curious at a five-year-old about these objects, they were quite beautiful objects. And I was very curious.

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And then he came in the room, he says, "No one touches my medicine bundle, no one!" And he came to his, his wife and said, "Look at what your grandson is doing!" And she says, "Yes, I'm looking. When was the last time you opened up your medicine bundle? And when have you aired out your medicine bundle and prayed with all those souls?" And he said, "Well, it's been a while." And she says, "Right, it's been a while, and now it's opened. And now we should, we should have a prayer. We should share our prayers to all those little souls." And he says, "But he touched them all! No one touches my bag!" And she says to him, "Now you have to understand he's doing what is natural to him because my blood flows in his veins, and it's natural for him to do that. I would have done the same. It's time you opened your medicine bundle and said a prayer and said your prayers. It's time you should have done that. Shouldn't you?" And he said, "Yes, I should have." And he said, "But this is just a child." And she said, "Yes, he's not looking for anything, but it's just that his blood is flowing through my, through his veins. My blood is flowing through his veins, and he's doing something very natural to him. And one day, he's going to have his own medicine bundle. I predict that." And so she said, "Let us pray together on each one of these little souls you have here." And she said to me, "All of these are sacred little souls. They mean something very important, and I want you to listen to every word that I'm saying to you. I will speak in English because you don't know the language yet. I will speak in my language, and I'll speak in English, so you'll understand what I'm saying."

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And so she made a prayer for each one because she knew the prayers for each one. And he, he would, after each prayer, he would say, "Aha, aha," saying, "Yes, that's the prayer." So, she was praying to each one. And then, she took the pipe out, the female pipe out, and she lit it. And then she sang, she sang a song in prayer. And then she gave the pipe to me to hold and to smoke. And she says, "You are now praying to our creator. And I'll say it in my language. You listen to my language. That's your language, too." And so, she had my father and me pray with her with one of the pipes that she had. Then she turned the pipe in the four directions and sat it in front of me. And she said, "That's the way we do it. And I want to be able to teach you one day about your culture in the way I taught your dad."

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