

Christine

This podcast is produced on the ancestral homeland of the Nooksack and Lummi people. They have been its stewards since time immemorial, respecting the land, river and ocean with the understanding that everything is connected, related and alive. We acknowledge the elders and their collective and individual plights and achievements. We consider the legacies of violence, displacement, migration and settlement that bring us together today. And we pursue ongoing action to build lasting relationships and grow together so that all may prosper.

(Interlude music plays)

Neil

WCLS in Whatcom County presents Library stories, a podcast to open your eyes to all the ways your local public libraries matter. Join us as we reveal the power of sharing at the library. I'm your host, Neil McKay, Online Experience Coordinator for the Whatcom County Library system and today...

Welcome friends, it's Whatcom READS season and there are events going on this week and next, culminating in our author's visit when Sasha Taqʷšəblu LaPointe will speak at five events, 4 in person and 1 online.

Today we are excited to feature an interview with Sasha, the author of this year's Whatcom READS book, *Red Paint, The Ancestral Autobiography of a Coast Salish Punk*. But here's the kicker: I didn't interview her. Our friends at Children of the Setting Sun Productions have a podcast that is produced by tribal youth leaders. It's called YAI Podcast and YAI, Y A I, stands for Young and Indigenous. They have been producing episodes since January 2020 and each episode is an amazing window into the young and indigenous experience.

Children of the Setting Suns productions has graciously allowed us to showcase their latest episode and we are grateful for the opportunity to bring this powerful, sweet, podcast to our listeners. We want to encourage you all to go search for Young and Indigenous Podcast or YAI Podcast and subscribe on your podcast platform. You won't be sorry, I promise.

We're going to sit back and listen as the YAI hosts, Cyrus James and Wykeklyaa (Why Key Kyaa) Curleybear talk with Sasha Taqʷšəblu LaPointe about her book *Red Paint* and about life and everything else. So join us.

(interlude music plays)

Speaker 1

Young and Indigenous Podcasts is an outlet for people to know about indigenous knowledge, storytelling, and history through our youthful journeys as indigenous people, young people and elders share their experiences with us. Without them, we wouldn't be able to do this.

Speaker 1

About to tell some bread stories. Stay tuned.

Speaker 2

YAI podcast.

(Interlude music plays)

Cyrus

Hello, my name is Cyrus James. I am a Tulalip tribal member, but I grew up in East Wenatchee with my non-native family.

Wykeklyaa

Nugwitu əns jək Wykeklyaa Curleybear čitul Kwinaył xelamał YAI podcast.

Greetings. My name is Wykeklyaa Curlybear. My English name is Denise. I come from Queen Isle or the Quinault Indian nation. I live in Bellingham and I work for the YAI podcast.

Cyrus

Yeah. Welcome to Young and Indigenous. Could you introduce yourself?

Sasha

Yeah, of course. Sasha taqʷšəblu Seed Stat 12 Nooksack qual Skagit. Hi, I'm Sasha taqʷšəblu Lapointe, I'm from Nooksack and Upper Skagit. Thanks so much for having me.

Cyrus

Sweet. Thank you.

Wykeklyaa

Thank you.

Cyrus

So, I think we figured we'd start by like talking about the book a little bit and our impressions from the book. Did you want to start with anything?

Wykeklyaa

UM, I'll let you go first.

Cyrus

OK, one thing was your relationship with you... what was your great grandmother's name again?

Sasha

Vi taq^wšəblu Hilbert.

Cyrus

And then who was the one? Was it your great, great grandma? The one that got married to the pirate?

Sasha

I love the pirate, yeah. He was, he was a bootlegging pirate ***** . Comptia Koholowish would have been my great, great, great. Is there another great in there grandmother? Great, great, great grandmother.

Cyrus

So is that 5 generations?

Sasha

I think so. Lois Kia, Mama Kia and then Percy Woodcock was her dad. Myrtle Woodcock was her grandmother. Comptia was Myrtle Woodcock's mother. Wow. When I was writing this book, I had the like my mom had given me all of these like family histories and the family tree, and you could like trace it back. But when I was writing, I have that and like newspaper clippings and photographs and old letters like pasted all over my like writing studio wall with little highlighters and stickers that looked like one of those scenes in the crime like movie where they're hot on the case or like red thread going everywhere and just like it was, it was wild.

Cyrus

It almost felt like that way in the book too, because like, it was so much of your experience and like the raw, the rawness of it, and then it was like something about Comptia like a either a dream or a vision or just like an out or like anecdotal piece of her. So, it like, that was kind of the through line, I think of the culture in it cause a lot of it was your life and then I wondered like how the red paint would be tied in and like the connection of culture and that really wrapped together in the end. And I think Comptia was like the through line coming to that.

Sasha

Absolutely.

Cyrus

And like you going to the, I forget the name of the place.

Sasha

Ilwaco

Cyrus

Ilwaco, Yeah, where the house was. Yeah.

Cyrus

But your story with her, I think related to me because like all of our trauma is different but like you, her being like a mysterious figure that you've learned about more and more, both through your parents and through your own digging. So, I grew up with like my non-native family. And my father's the reason I'm indigenous, but I didn't grow up with him around so he was always like a mysterious figure to me and I like when I was a little guy, I read the Percy Jackson books, so I was like, "Is my father a God?"

Sasha

I love that.

Cyrus

Maybe not, but yeah.

Sasha

Am I a demigod?

Cyrus

And then he passed away when I was 18 but again, like I didn't really know him so it wasn't like, he was still mysterious to me, but then I was invited to his funeral of course at Tulip and I got to learn more about him through the people there that knew him, and the stories about him. Um.

Sasha

That's a powerful story. You should write a book. Like I don't know if you're a writer, but wow.

Cyrus

Yeah. I'm trying to figure out how to connect it, but that was like the beginning of my, that was the first real experience I had with the culture and like with the drums and everything. Like a part of it, we were walking and there was like the drums were playing and I remember like feeling like really hard to stand like it was like, like we were walking and like my shoulders, felt really heavy. But I felt like powerful because I was still standing during that and. I mean the terms always bring up something in you that's like that you're not always ready for.

Sasha

Mhmm.

Cyrus

And I think in particular like near the end of the book, you talk about being with like the ceremonial drums and stuff and what comes up there. Yeah.

Sasha

Yeah, absolutely. I think that connection comes from my Uncle, Ron Vadesqidab, whose paintings these are. Whenever I felt his spirit, like, present, whenever I felt his presence around me, like the drums definitely came, like, so it was really intense and powerful, grounding, yeah.

Cyrus

Yeah.

Sasha

Like, I recognize that feeling you're talking about.

Wykeklyaa

What stuck out to me, I mean, like the whole book stuck out to me. But like what, really, what I feel connected to more is like I want to say your youth and kind of like you getting married. I, so I grew up in foster care and like I was on my Res sometimes, but I wasn't all the time. And I'm getting married now and I kind of just. It's like I feel lost. Like I told my mate, I don't feel 100% at peace unless I'm on the beach at my Res. But I think that's what's stuck out. Yeah, that's, what's stuck out to me the most.

Sasha

That's really beautiful. I can relate so hard to the don't feel at peace unless you're there in that like ancestral space. I feel the same way. That's so real. And I think a lot of my friends right now are like, "Wow, how do you, how do you and your like long term partner like do this long distance thing?" You know. My partner lives in San Diego. I live here but it's that very reason like I'm like I can't uproot myself and it's like if I go away too long I feel like I start to wilt and I'm like I need to go home. I need to go back to the land, back to the water and recharge. So that's really, yeah, that's important.

Cyrus

When I read the parts that mentioned Quinault, I thought about blanks because I don't know if I know anyone else from Quinault.

Wykeklyaa

What is the process of writing like for you?

Sasha

The process. I think...Res dogs. It changes from book to book, for *Red Paint*. It was almost like I had to, not in a bad way, but like felt, really called to do it in order to kind of begin this journey of like healing because I feel like I can answer this more from a craft perspective and not get like super in the feels but.

The process of writing that book was half like being guided by ancestors like Comptia and like this research and like digging into them and then half was like just sitting up alone until, like, you know, two or three in the morning, sometimes kind of surrounded by these photographs and stories and like my great grandmother's books. And I remember one time sitting in a hotel. Well, I had gotten a grant to go down to El Waco and do some of this research. And I was sitting in the hotel room just writing and writing cause I'd been researching all day and I was like, wrapped in her shawl. And so it's like, I don't know it varies, like, that was a really intense writing process for me because I was learning more about the women I come from and sometimes, especially as native people, that's not always easy for us, right? Like digging into like settler colonial trauma and like these texts that are basically traumatizing to like to engage with, right, like reading about the smallpox epidemic, reading about Lewis and Clark. And so it was intense. And then I would have to like deeply self soothe. And so I would surround myself with these not only like the information I was researching, but like photographs of my ancestors wearing my grandmother's shawl. And just like, so it's like half intense work and then half like what do you need to take care of yourself? It's so important to like, take care of yourself in the writing process when you're writing hard stories.

Cyrus

That's one thing we have to we have to remind ourselves in our workplace sometimes is like we're all coming from different places. So, like we're all on a different level of healing with it, and sometimes that means you know we can't perform 100% all the time.

Sasha

Yeah.

Cyrus

So, it's like we talk about, I think, frequently, I think, yeah. And you saying that reminds, like the process of doing the research and what that brings up. That reminds me of like when you visited that place and some of the ignorance there, of like, when the one guy described it as a...

Sasha

The wagon house, outside the coach house where they kept the wagons.

Cyrus

The wagon. Yeah. And where it's like you're wrong. Damn it.

Sasha

I had to work so hard in that moment to channel like my great grandmother. She really moved through the world and navigated the world with a lot of grace and compassion. And there's like a little rage-y like fiery, you know, little gremlin in me that wanted to, like, scream at him and be like, no, that wasn't where they kept wagon wheels. My like, ancestor lived there. That's where she slept and cooked and ate and had a life. But I tried to channel great grandma and I was like, I just smiled and, you know, responded, took deep breaths and counted back from ten. And I said, "well, actually." And then, you know, politely corrected him.

Cyrus

Yeah. It's probably best he left after that, yeah.

Sasha

Yeah.

Sasha

In the poison garden. You said of my family, we we're cursed. Specifically, the women, sick. Unable to be in my body, I got into the bath instead. Blood red, with herbs and medicines. I am trying to fix it. I am trying to wash off the sickness. You said of my ancestry affliction. You've said broken. Like our wedding night I am trying to fight it, I am drowning in it. This need to fix it. To make myself more white, not just pale, but Lily. That delicate shade of maiden. Less red. You said it was my mother and grandmothers doing said it was them who made the men in my family death hungry. It's true. You knew the stories. My grandfather. How he wandered the wood and some said seeking ghosts. A generation later my father wanderers Tacoma. Reaches the hospital, pleading to them I'm dying at my wife's broken heart. That sad part of her that is killing me.

Cyrus

How does your culture influence you still today?

Sasha

I think that in everything that I do, whether it's writing or teaching, creating like music when I do or anything that I engage with, I think that my culture influences me in the way that like growing up with my great grandmother's language revitalization work from a very early age, kind of installed in me this like great respect for language and culture and also not to take things for granted because to see in my early years, how hard she worked to keep a language from going extinct, like it taught me really young that our stories, our songs, our culture is like, so important and like, faced erasure, you know. So, I feel like that influences me in most things that I do. To not take things for granted to, always listen and learn and like I don't know, I feel like I'm not answering that right, but that's my intuitive answer is that just moving through the world as a Co-Salish person, realizing that, like our ancestors like were faced with like, you know, being punished for speaking their language and being punished for engaging in their culture. So that's with me. Every day I try to respect that and feel a gratitude that we have the things that we do like.

Cyrus

Do you have any recent examples or experiences?

Sasha

I'm trying to think of the right one. Well, for example, on Saturday I'm going up to, my uncle does culture classes with the Puyallup tribe and so whenever he invites me, even if I'm busy, you know, even if I'm like, I have a lot of papers to grade or I'm going to California, I've got stuff to do. Whenever he tells me, "hey, we have this thing going on, you should come." I, whenever I can stop and go like this Saturday, I'm going up to his class to finish a paddle that he's teaching me how to make. So, we've been making, we

started making a paddle last summer during canoe journeys and it's not finished yet. But, I'm going to be going to do that on Saturday morning, even though it's like a really busy day. I'm like, I'm going to carve out time for that, like that's important.

What else? I think every time you know as, I didn't start learning the language until or attempting to learn the language until I was in my 30s and so. Anytime I try to push myself to incorporate Lushootseed into a poem or a piece, an essay, I feel like that is engaging with my culture. I've been doing that lately. I've been researching different stories that my grandma used to tell, and it's scary sometimes to be a grown *** adult and standing up there with like fluent speakers, elders and fluent speakers like my nieces and nephews speak Lushootseed better than me I feel like. I have cousins that speak it better, you know, could like full sentences because there's full immersion programs now and that's so awesome. But, when I get up there and I'm like I have a couple of Lushootseed words in this poem and I get, like, really intimidated. But the point is to, like, try, I think and like, you know, be like, OK, I'm not a fluent speaker. This is not my, that's not my wheelhouse, but –oh, I don't like that I just used wheelhouse so close to that story. Let's cut that out. But I think that is something I push myself to do, like bringing the language into my work when I can.

Yeah, I also teach at the Native Pathways program at Evergreen and I feel really lucky to be able to teach at a program, you know, sort of built for native students. And every quarter we have a long house gathering. And to come be with students and be in community feels really important. I feel like I went off on a tangent there. I don't know if I answered your question.

Cyrus

Yeah, you did. Yeah. And it's great to go on tangents here.

Sasha

Ok, good.

Cyrus

We used to have Lummi language lessons, Xwlemi' Chosen with someone from Lummi and a big part of it was like our introductions. That's what we were learning all the time. That was kind of like our grounding in it and part of our introductions was in the Lummi language saying, "I don't know the language and I'm still learning how to speak it." And I feel like that's going to, like, apply forever. It's like we're always going to be learning, even though, like, I've, I've come away from those. And I've haven't retained a lot of it. Even if I was like consistently practicing, it's like I'm always going to be learning.

Sasha

That's a beautiful sentiment too, because of course so many of us are in that stage because of settler colonialism, because of erasure or attempted erasure, I think so many of us are in a stage of learning a traditional language because it was like we were taught not to speak it or the generations before us, we're taught not to speak it so it wasn't passed down to us.

Cyrus

And speaking of you getting to carve a paddle with your uncle, my dad was a carver. He was a carver and a fisherman as far as I know. Those are some of his things he did.

Wykeklyaa

Mine too.

Cyrus

Nice. Yeah, buddy. And one of his, I met one of his carving buddies at the, when they were celebrating his life. And yeah, we got connected and then later on, I think a year or so later, he invited me to like come carve with him and he taught me how to carve a paddle.

Sasha

So you carved a paddle?

Cyrus

With like one of my dad's carving buddies and he said that my dad taught him how to a paddle because like the carving masters, were like, would take their time with like teaching and like passing on that stuff. But my dad was like, I'll teach it. I'll teach how to do it, so that was a pretty, like powerful experience.

Sasha

That's really beautiful too, to have the person who learned from your dad teach you. That's really beautiful.

Cyrus

Hmm. Yeah, I'm really grateful for that guy.

Wykeklyaa

How do you ground yourself when you're far away from home?

Sasha

Oh. Oh my gosh, I love this question because it's a lot. For example, when I go stay with my partner in San Diego, I loaded up like I had, like grandma's cedar baskets. I brought cedar from home. I feel like I travel with this like, you know, massive mountain of shells and cedar and baskets and like, these are my things. This is like where I. I can set up camp wherever I am, right, and I think of.

Cyrus

Like a first aid kit.

Sasha

Yeah, it. Oh, my God. Yeah, it's a spiritual first aid kit. But, I do get really homesick. Right. Like we were talking about, and I try to think of, I think that chapter in *Red Paint* 'Linoleum', when my great grandmother used to tell me the story of traveling around from place to place because they traveled up and down the river a lot for work, her parents. And she said her mom would roll up that piece of linoleum and, like, lay it down on the beach, lay it down in dirt, wherever they were, wherever their, you know, temporary accommodations were. And she said that just that little one material like made them. It was the idea that you can bring home wherever you are. Mine certainly isn't a rolled up piece of

linoleum. It is a trunk of, you know, shells and cedar and baskets and photographs. But I carry that with me. Yeah.

Wykeklyaa

I love that. One of the ways that help me because before I moved up to Bellingham I was weaving every day from like the time I'd get up to, this was after I graduated high school. Was not skipping school, but yeah, I was weaving every day. Just like all day and my mom would just come and bring me snacks. And "Are you almost done yet, babe?" And stuff like that. So like stuff that helps me is definitely cedar rolls. I have a big bin of cedar in the garage just sitting there.

Sasha

I love that. I also think that skipping class to weave is OK in my book. Like don't put me on the record for that or do. That's really cool.

Sasha

Of the women I come from, you said, damaged said historically, said intergenerationally from the red bath, I am remembering raccoons. They're small, paws curled into fists. How my mother must have seen but didn't miss, didn't hit the brakes, didn't even try to. Instead, my brothers heard the thuds of their bodies beneath tires. As my mother said nothing but continued driving. You said of my family. We were sick. Specifically, the women suffered something unnamable. Quiet sickness. Opiate numb. My mother was only trying to dull the pain that had been gifted to her by blood. Red, I am less white beneath my skin. Unforgiven by you, who was fooled into thinking I was something else. Of my face, your mother said didn't look Indian. What then? Where do I keep it if not on the skin? Slice me open. Like a Persimmon, watch blood pour out in red ribbons. Here is where I keep it in my DNA. You'll find a catalog, a bouquet of heirlooms, courasing. Written inside my body. A history.

Wykeklyaa

How do you take care of your spirit?

Sasha

Hmm. I try to. I love your questions. Yours are just like, go straight to the heart. I try to be really mindful ever since the sort of experience of early on in my writing, I think when I was just sort of recklessly going into memory, I wasn't taking care of my spirit. I didn't know that at the time, but the process of writing *Red Paint* sort of taught me that, and I had to confront like that I was not being careful with myself and careful with my spirit and so that process taught me a lot. And so now I try to just make sure that, I think it's important to when speaking about trauma and speaking about moving through things to understand that it's not finished work. It's never like, "oh, well, I'm done with that now let's wrap it up in a tiny little bow and I'm good now." I think that one part of taking care of my spirit is just the realization that you engage with that healing every day. Like you wake up and you're like, these are the things I'm going to do for myself. Do I need to go, you know, down to my altar and burn cedar and be quiet with myself for a while? Do I need to not make these decisions that are going to drain me or make me feel unsafe, it's just sort of like an act of healing that I engage with every day.

Cyrus

I'm glad. I'm glad you're so intentional with it. Sometimes I forget to be intentional with like giving myself space and then it sneaks up on you and.

Sasha

Yeah.

Cyrus

Then you're just like.

Sasha

Yeah.

Cyrus

A wreck.

Sasha

Yeah, I was experiencing that a lot where it was just like kind of go, go going and when you don't listen to your spirit, it's like that would happen to me too, where all of a sudden I would just be just so drained and be like I can't do anything. What's going on? I was like "ohh, you need to rest. You need to be quiet. You need to." Yeah, ou know. So yeah, the same thing happens to me if I don't listen.

Cyrus

Yeah, I'm sure a lot of us these days can relate with like like distracting yourself a lot with like your phone or just having I have something playing like a lot. Like if I'm have to do the dishes or fold my laundry, I'm like I'm gonna listen to a podcast and sometimes that's fine, but sometimes it's like I need. I need some quiet time in my day.

Sasha

MHM.

Cyrus

And I need to remember that sometimes.

Sasha

Yeah. And to go back to you know what you were saying about having to go when you feel at peace by the water, that's a big one for me, too. Sometimes I just know I have to go either to the woods or to the ocean and just sit there. Even just touch the water that really like by yourself being quiet like with that.

Wykeklyaa

Yeah, my mates always like "why don't you just go to the Samish grounds, to the water." And I'm like "I'm an ocean girl. That's not the same. At all."

Cyrus

I really feel soothed when it's like windy and stormy outside.

Sasha

Hmm.

Cyrus

Or, like thunder, we don't get a lot of thunder around here. On the east side we get I think more thunder. I'm sure there's different differences in the pressure and stuff there, but like that was always really soothing.

Sasha

I also feel soothed by storms and rain. And like, yeah. I love that.

Cyrus

Yeah. I feel like had something else. Ohh I was yeah. With, you mentioned you were reckless with your trauma. During the book, I was curious if you like had tried like therapy during that time and if that had any success for you.

Sasha

Yeah. I feel like there were two kind of phases of the journey of *Red Paint*, the first one was, I don't think I would have gotten to *Red Paint* had I not epically failed at *Little Boats*. And during that time, I guess what I mean when I say reckless with like my trauma is that I just dove into those memories and was like I need to tell my story. I want to write it all down. Like, you know, this could maybe, people will relate to this, but...I wasn't taking care of my spirit. I wasn't in therapy. I wasn't kind of. I was just like, you know, head on charging through these memories that were retraumatizing and you know. A year into that was diagnosed with PTSD. And it wasn't until I took a huge break after that from writing, because again, like when you're quiet enough to listen, like ancestors will tell you, they're like, "girl, you're sick. Your spirit is sick. Like you need to calm down. You need to like." So I listened and took a huge break from writing and just kind of did my thing, worked at a little punk rock pizza joint in Georgetown, in Seattle and, you know, waited tables, bartended, joined a band. Kind of did that instead. And I needed that break from engaging in those memories and stories. And it was during that time that I got into therapy and that absolutely helped. I think the break plus therapy helped, you know, and after about a year of not writing, that's when I started to feel stronger and was able to come to *Red Paint* and it honestly was therapy at the break, but then learning more about these women, letting kind of, you know, the story of Comptia and her strength and who she was sort of guide me and ground me. And so, it was like a culmination of all those things.

Cyrus

I haven't gotten into therapy myself. I would like to try someday, but I do, when thinking of like my past and stuff I do like think of like the inner child, like the younger version of me. And I do consider myself like in terms of community role or my role in like my household or with my partner, I feel like obligated as a protector in a way that I feel proud of. So like when I think of the little guy like I'm like I could protect

him now. He's safe with me now. So that's instead of, I wouldn't call it in lieu of like thinking of my spirit, but I think like adjacent to.

Sasha

Mhm.

Cyrus

That's why I, is helpful for me to consider as like the little guy you know, he didn't. It wasn't fair what happened to him. He didn't have, like, control of that. But I've got him now.

Sasha

Yeah. And I like the duality of like both can exist, right? The little guy and the protector, you know?

Cyrus

Mm-hmm.

Cyrus

In the book, dreams are really prevalent and the imagery of like your family and your experiences. Do your dreams still come into play in your life today?

Sasha

Absolutely, absolutely. In fact, I was just a couple weeks ago at Longhouse gathering, my mom and I presented together, which was really cool. She was presenting the film about our grandma, the Symphony at Benaroya Hall, *The Healing Heart of Lushootseed*. And we were in a conversation. It was cool to present with her, but then afterwards, like we're just chatting and I brought up a dream that I had recently had and I've had several dreams kind of similar in nature. And my mom's eyes got kind of big and she was like, oh, and then she shared a dream with me that she had when she was younger that was similar and it's. It was kind of a cryptic way to answer, but yes, dreams absolutely play a huge role in my life and my process right now.

Cyrus

That's so cool. I feel like a lot of people. I mean, a lot of people, I think everyone dreams is what I've heard, but not everyone remembers their dreams cause like, once you wake up, there's like a, you know, a high chance you'll forget it right away. But even if a lot of people remember their dreams, they like they mean like nothing. Like it's like very confusing. It's not like cultural or for family stuff, it's like I don't know. I was chased by a lamp.

Sasha

Ohh, I hate to chase by a lamp dreams. What do those mean? No, I know what you mean though. Like, I'll wake up and share a dream, you know, with someone like "ohh this happened" and it's like, deeply, like culturally significant to me. Right. Or like spiritually significant. It's fun when you get the like the person was just like, "Oh, yeah. Well, I was driving a Ferrari, but also like slaying Dragons. And then" it's

like, "OK, we don't dream the same." Yeah, like, no shade. But you know what I mean? Yeah. Cool. Slay those Dragons with your Ferrari.

Wykeklyaa

I don't have those dreams too often, but when I do they're pretty crazy. But like recently, my dreams have been more of like designs, weaving designs, so I have like a whole thing in my phone, my note phone designs that I have to do when I get to it.

Sasha

Oh, you're getting assignments from ancestors through your dreams.

Wykeklyaa

Yeah.

Cyrus

Dude, that's so cool, what the heck.

Sasha

That's amazing.

Cyrus

Do you have a photo of the of the of the YAI mendelian that you did?

Wykeklyaa

Oh yeah.

Cyrus

She beaded a YAI like our logo.

Sasha

I'm like, oh, do you have an Instagram I might need to follow?

Sasha

Oh my god, that's so beautiful.

Wykeklyaa

Thank you.

Sasha

That's amazing.

Cyrus

And you pointed out the hat has like a weaving pattern with the beads in there.

Sasha

And I'm like, let me take a closer look.

Cyrus

I was, I was stunned.

Wykeklyaa

Here's a better picture.

Sasha

Wow. That's gorgeous.

Wykeklyaa

Thank you.

Sasha

I'm gonna have to follow you.

Cyrus

We brought you some things.

Sasha

Ohh my goodness.

Cyrus

Did you make that one?

Wykeklyaa

Yeah, I made that one.

Sasha

Oh my gosh, thank you.

Wykeklyaa

You're welcome.

Sasha

Take me feed. Thank you. It's gorgeous. I'm gonna put it on right now and have 1,000,000 necklaces like some kind of indigenous Mr. T. Thank you so much. That's really beautiful.

Cyrus

Some first aid. Some spiritual first aid.

Sasha

Yeah, my first aid kit. See, now this one is mobile. It can travel on me.

Cyrus

Maybe the plane will let you. TSA. Yeah. Still thinking about dreams. The only dreams that are significant that I've had involved snakes. I had like one when I was younger. And it was like the one of my childhood homes. And there was like a big snake in the backyard. Like I was hanging out with cousins or something. And then a big snake appeared and we're like, OK, we got to go inside. And it wasn't like the snake was out to kill us or anything, but like we could tell it was really powerful. Like, every time you look at it there's like tunnel vision and you see it, so that was that one. And then I had one later, I think in my later teens of a smaller snake, and it was like a really cluttered space. And it was also like I was close to it, but it was like if you touch it like your limb would become deformed. I don't know. So snakes, I guess for me.

Sasha

Yeah, snakes are showing up here. Yeah, I don't want to go off on a total dream tangent, but orcas are coming to me. I mean, I've dreamt oceanic and water since I can remember, but recently, like it's just always orcas and it's wild, they're intense. They're powerful. Sometimes they're scary, like, not scared. Kind of the way you were describing the snake, where it's not necessarily like a threat or like fear, but it's, there's something powerful and like, not ominous, but.

Cyrus

I know when you're in your dream, it feels so real. Yeah, like it could be something that's like when I wake up from a dream, it's like "ohh wait, that wasn't happening." But when you're in the dream it's like it's really hard to tell that it's not actually happening, it's all-encompassing.

Sasha

100%. I like keep dreaming that I'm sleeping on the back of an orca. Like it's been reoccurring and in the moment it's not terrifying, but it's also like, "ohh." It's so vivid that I'm like accepting it and it's not like I don't know. I'm not now I'm like and then I was in a hallway, but the hallway was made of cheese. It's always hard to describe, but like the reoccurring thing is definitely the back of an orca. And it's really, really beautiful and intense.

Cyrus

That's wild, you're like a powerhouse of Coast Salish dreams.

Sasha

The orca ones are coming, like later in life. I don't know. I'm trying to figure that out right now and talk to the folks about it.

Sasha

Drink me and see the morning and my grandmother walked into the sea. Drink and see me beneath a stranger and thrashing. See red party cups ringing my head in halo. See me bent over white powder and smiling. Fist full of pills. Metallic on my tongue and see how I turn off like clockwork. This numb is what

we gather now, what we hold in our baskets now, how we keep coming back for it. Like canned fish, thimble berries and hops picked in summer.

Sasha

It's funny, I think my boss was like "you have roommates?" I was like, "yeah, I live with, like, some really great friends." And then it was funny that that was odd, you know, or maybe it wasn't my boss. It was someone recently, like "you have roommates?" And I was like, yeah. But like I'm just living like my ancestors did. You know, sometimes there's, like, three to four families to one long house. Like it's just, I'm living communally. I actually really love it.

Cyrus

That's my goal is to like. I want the land. I want some houses, but I want to live with my friends. I don't want to live isolated at all.

Sasha

Same. Yeah. Oh, like even I'm also getting married, which is wild. But I'm like, I don't think we're ever going to do the like completely, you know regular heteronormative, like nuclear family. No, I was like we're going to be living communally til we're like 80 or whenever, you know like so. Yeah. That's the vibe.

Wykeklyaa

I love it.

Cyrus

I might have missed what you do for work, are you a teacher?

Sasha

Yeah. I teach at the Native Pathways program down at Evergreen. I teach Creative Writing, and yeah, it's a really beautiful. I really love that program. It's really, really special. Like we have our long house weekend coming up next weekend. Yeah, it's just such a special program. Yeah.

Cyrus

That's so cool. I wish more people like I didn't know about any of that kind of stuff in high school, like when I was going to signing up for colleges I didn't know, and even at Western I didn't know about like native groups and stuff there. So, I don't know. We gotta get the message out for those kids.

Sasha

Yeah, well, definitely, if you can get the message out about Native Pathways at Evergreen, it's because I could totally relate. When I was younger, I thought I hated school and didn't really love moving through academic spaces. I, you know, was a teen runaway, dropped out of alternative high school. Like who does that? But later, when I was in my 20s, I learned of the Institute of American Indian Arts and being in, sure, an academic space but like also in community with other indigenous artists and writers, like I was like "ohh, this is just what I needed" and so something like Native Pathways, it's just important, I

think, to be in community, whether it's like a student like Indigenous student group or just finding your people, it's important.

Cyrus

Totally.

Wykeklyaa

Maybe that's what I need in school.

Cyrus

Yeah.

Sasha

Are you in school right now?

Wykeklyaa

No, I dropped out.

Sasha

Ooh.

Cyrus

Well, when you go back..

Wykeklyaa

If I go back.

Sasha

Come check out NPP. I'll give you a brochure.

Wykeklyaa

OK.

Sasha

So cool.

Cyrus

Do you have any projects coming up?

Sasha

I do. Well, *Thunder Song*. The book of Essays comes out March 5th, which is really exciting and surreal.

Cyrus

And next week.

Sasha

Oh my God, that is like that actually is next week. Like. Wow, that's crazy. So that comes out and we'll be doing some readings and events for that, going to Bellingham for four days, which I'm excited about. And I'm also working on, I feel like I'm always as a true Gemini, I'm like always juggling a different, a couple different things. I'm writing a lot of poems right now, a lot of poems about orcas and water, and the beach, a lot different from *Rose Quartz*. That collection was so focused on, like, personal healing and stuff, as was *Red Paint*, but with these poems, I'm just sort of being called to like, you're getting patterns in your dreams, I'm getting water and beaches and whales. And so that's sort of driving my poetry currently.

Cyrus

Word. What else do you do in your free time? When you have free time.

Sasha

Oh gosh, I'm like when do I have free time?

Cyrus

I like to ask that question to people, but I'm like I shouldn't assume they have that much free time. A lot of people like I don't know.

Sasha

No, but that's, it's a good question. And when I'm not writing or working, I really love to be in the woods. My partner and I go on a lot of hikes. I like to, we go swimming a lot. I like to spend time in the woods and the water. I also love to go to shows. Up until recently, my bandmate and I were playing weird music in her basement a lot and recorded a demo, and like we've taken a big break, but we might start up again. I think we just released a single. Just a song that we recorded last summer called "Tulips" because I have an essay called "Tulips" in *Thunder Song*, and we're talking about it and she was like "we should actually put that song out because we recorded it, but never did anything with it." And so yeah, that's what I like to do. I like to swim. I like to be in the woods. I like to like play bad punk music.

Cyrus

So yeah, so you are very punk. Are there any like runner up genres?

Sasha

Oh for sure. Like definitely anything dark wave gothy like synth dancey, shoegazey like, you know, sad girl music. Also, yeah, just been really listening to a lot of Snotty Nose Rez Kids.

Cyrus

That's cool. Yeah. Do you know who the OC's are?

Sasha

No, no.

Cyrus

OK, that's fine. Always curious.

Sasha

Of the women of family. You said addiction, said submission from the red bath I wrap a towel around my nakedness, bergamot and rose petal and still clinging to my breasts. I set the cedar down carefully and step to the mirror. To the face, looking back as it says, shape shift. Says shake this off or wilt a pale tulip tossed at his feet.

Wykeklyaa

What advice do you have for native youth?

Sasha

Hmm. I think kind of what we were just talking about, to like find your people like find community. That was so important to me and I think that when we feel less alone we can kind of let our communities like, be our chosen family. So, I would say like finding like your people, finding community and just doing, finding what you love to do as well and like just deep diving hard into it because that's really important to like, move through this world as an indigenous person, we like carry a lot of, we carry a lot of stuff. We carry a lot of trauma, generational trauma, all of these things, but we also carry a lot of strength and resilience. And I think that that comes forward and comes like more powerfully through when we are with people that love us and care about us and want to see us thrive.

Cyrus

Like giving youth cultural roles, so like filling the cultural void that they may have.

Sasha

Yeah.

Cyrus

And that, like can take away the temptation or like the void to be filled with like substance abuse or whatever it might be. So yeah, I would echo that like find, find your place, find your community.

Sasha

Absolutely.

Cyrus

Yeah. Do you have any questions for us?

Sasha

Hmm. Yeah, I do, actually. So how do you, like you guys have shared a little bit, but like. Oh wait, I thought about asking this before we even got started, outside of this podcast and knowing the work you

guys do with the Children of the Setting Sun, what else do you do? Like, what do you guys do for fun and?

Wykeklyaa

Do you wanna go first?

Cyrus

Like outside of work?

Sasha

Mhm.

Cyrus

Yeah. Well, I go to the gym and that's been helping me out this winter a lot. So like weight training specifically, I find a lot of fulfillment in that and like seeing progress and like engaging with it like the like, mind to muscle connection. I feel like as you get stronger, that connection gets stronger and it becomes like more and more enjoyable. I'm a gamer, so I play video games and I play Magic The Gathering a lot which is like, you know, the card game.

Sasha

Oh, I know it. Yeah, I learned how to play it a few years ago. I freaking love it.

Cyrus

Yeah, it's a deep, it's a deep pit, a lot to get into. Those are the main things that I, yeah, love being with friends and stuff.

Sasha

Very cool.

Wykeklyaa

I weave a lot. I also just picked up beading. And other than that, I'm just, I'm a newly mom.

Sasha

Congratulations.

Wykeklyaa

I'm in the process of adopting my niece so.

Sasha

Oh my gosh, congratulations. Thank you.

Cyrus

Shout out, Nicole.

Wykeklyaa

Shout out, Cole.

Cyrus

I also do get cold plunges when I can.

Christine

Yeah.

Cyrus

I always want to go through the winter because, like, I feel like when it starts getting colder in like August, I'm like if I just keep doing it, I'll get used to it and I can do it through the winter, but then something always stops me. Like I get sick or I like get a new tattoo, so I have to, like, stay out of water.

Sasha

I feel like there's something deeply healing or something about cold water for because like I. When I meet other people that enjoy cold plunges, I'm like, yeah, there's something about it, right? Like, I think even just this last, it was not warm, it was summer, but it was freezing water. And, you know, I was out in Port Townsend with a bunch of poets, and we went down to the beach at night and there were bioluminescence. Like, you could see the water kind of twinkling like blue and purple like it looked like the cosmos in there. And so I was like, well, I'm getting in and note like I was with like four other people on the beach and they were like, it's like 10:00 at night. And I was like "don't care." And I just dove in and swam and, like, I'm usually the only person in the group that does that. But so clearly we need to hang out more if you guys are into that so I won't be the only one.

Cyrus

Yeah. I resonate with that some, but like a lot of people are like, "no, you're crazy" but then when someone does, you're like, "you get it."

Sasha

Yeah. Yeah.

Cyrus

Yeah.

Sasha

We're on to something, they're the ones that.

Cyrus

And you feel great the rest of the day. And I swear when I'm doing it consistently I don't get sick.

Sasha

Yeah.

Cyrus

Like I'm good. I'm solid.

Sasha

I feel like there are spiritual health benefits and like physical health benefits to it, that there's got to be.

Cyrus

Yeah.

Wykeklyaa

I don't do it often, but when I do, it just makes me so happy. Like I only like to do it when I'm at home. And I don't know, I might be biased, but home water is the best water to me. But it just makes me... it soothes me. And then it just makes me so happy. Like nothing's wrong in the world.

Sasha

Yeah. For that moment underwater, nothing is wrong in the world, agreed.

Cyrus

Yeah. I think I got turned on to it because it was like a day or two after a leg day. So my, you know, your legs get most sore like 2 days afterwards and my partner and I were like going through the Whatcom trails and we couldn't quite find the way, like the bridge, to get like back across like to the side that we lived. So, we had to like, I was like let's just go across right here across this part of the stream and it was like waist deep water. So, we like, took our shoes off and we were kind of wading through it. And you had to be, like, really careful because it was, it was flowing pretty hard and you didn't want to lose, like, your gripping or anything and fall. So, it was like you'd be really slow. So, our legs were just in there for, like a while. It was like, there's like the, like, numbing level and then you get used to it and it's nice. And then afterwards you're just like glowing.

Sasha

And it does something to circulation, right? So, if you just worked out and were sore from it, probably did good things for your muscles. OK, well, I feel like when I'm up in Bellingham soon, we should, let's commit, let's commit to a cold plunge when I'm there.

Cyrus

Yeah. Yeah. I haven't done it this year, so that be good. I've only done my legs this year so it'd good to jump in.

Sasha

I'm going to look at my schedule and find some free time and pencil in a "you're jumping into cold water hour."

Do you still, you know, you mentioned that really special moment being taught to carve the paddle by the person who was taught by your dad. Do you still engage with that, or do you? Are you still able to go there? And is that part of your life right now?

Cyrus

I'm able to like I'm still in contact with them. But. I haven't. I haven't yet, so I would like to, but yeah, we're still, we're still connected on Facebook.

Sasha

That's awesome.

Cyrus

Yeah, cool guy.

Sasha

Hmm.

Cyrus

We recently learned a couple of our fellow youths are like into like drawing and stuff and they do a little bit of carving and we had like a little workshop recently, just like learning the basics of Co-Salish drawings.

Sasha

Oh rad.

Cyrus

And like differentiating like what's northern art and like what basically like, what's not Co-Salish and like, what's is Co-Salish? And just working on those and then yeah.

Sasha

That's very cool.

Cyrus

Yeah. So that was like pretty cool and like found honestly, found like a new way to doodle.

Sasha

Yeah.

Cyrus

Doodling in Co-Salish, that was pretty cool.

Sasha

Yeah. Doodling in Co-Salish, a new memoir. And then I have a question for you because you said you just picked up beading, but you are a baller at it like that design is beautiful. Do you have a page or do you, can I follow you and like?

Wykeklyaa

Thank you. Uh, yeah, I have a page I don't, I haven't posted like a lot of my artwork on there. I'd say more of my artwork's on Facebook.

Sasha

OK. Good to know.

Wykeklyaa

Forsure.

Sasha

I'm like you have a gift. I just want to know that you're out there.

Wykeklyaa

Thank you.

Cyrus

Well, thank you, Sasha, so much for joining us. It's been a pleasure getting to know you.

Wykeklyaa

Yeah. Thank you so much.

Sasha

Thank you so much for having me. This was really beautiful.

Cyrus

Hi.

Wykeklyaa

Bi

Sasha

Hoit

(Interlude music)

Cyrus

Thank you to our funder, the [REDACTED] foundation. This episode is produced by Wykeklyaa, Cyrus, Roy and Elliott. Music by Keith Jefferson, Adam Lawrence and Mark Nichols. Poetry by Sasha LaPointe and her band, who produces [REDACTED]. YAI is a part of Children of the Setting Sun Productions.

Neil

I hope you enjoyed this special episode. This interview of Sasha Taqʷšəblu LaPointe is from the Young and Indigenous podcast, The YAI podcast from Children of the Setting Sun Productions. Please look them up on your podcast platform and subscribe or visit them on the settingsunsproduction.org website. They are doing amazing work in capturing some important voices for all of us to listen to. We want to thank Sasha Taqʷšəblu LaPointe for her incredible memoir, *Red Paint, the Ancestral Autobiography of A Coast Salish Punk*, and then also for her upcoming Whatcom READS appearances. Check thewhatcomreads.org website to see where Sasha will be presenting. You don't want to miss the opportunity to see her. Finally, as always, a shout out to my boss, Mary Vermillion. Podcasts are the work of the team and Mary is my team's captain. Oh, captain, my captain. Rise up and hear the bells. Until next time this is Neil McKay for the Whatcom County Library System.