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Episode 1: The Mystery of Spirit with guest, Tina Lopes

[Opening Quote] [00:00:00] **Tina Lopes:** There's one aspect of Spirit for me that is a mystery beyond comprehension, and yet it's one that I can't stop myself asking about. So I feel like Spirit is that immense, eternal, endless mystery that is out there.

[Static Intro] [00:01:00] **Ain B.:** Welcome to the [We Outside Podcast](#), where we explore leadership through the lens of spirit restoration and transformation. I'm your host, Ain B., a restoration practitioner and founder of New Seneca Village.



In each We Outside episode, we engage in generative conversations with guests who are redefining what it means to live and work outside of the dominant imagination.

Join us as we move beyond the confines of conventional thinking and into other realms of possibility. Now let's dive into today's conversation.

Ain B.: [00:02:00] So welcome back. I'm so excited to be talking to you, Tina. I think of you so often because you are my cosmic twin. We both have a deep, deep love of space, and in particular the James Webb telescope. And we also have a deep heart for healing and supporting community to be more resilient and more restored in the work that they do.

And I feel very happy to be connected with you that way across fake borders, as you are in Canada. So as we begin, I would just love to invite you to share where are you in the world, what are your pronouns? How should we address you, and what's your internal weather right now? And why?

Tina Lopes: Ain I feel such joy seeing your face being in presence with you. I am just gonna grin for a long time.

Ain B.: Excellent. Let's do that. Let's hurt our cheeks.

Tina Lopes: [00:03:00] And we are cosmic twins. In this wild, wild cosmos that we're in and the particular land that I get to make home and find belonging is land that has for thousands of years been the lands of the Mississaugas of the

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Credit. Only recently has it been called Toronto, in Canada, as you said. It is land that I came to as a teenager. I have grown to love it deeply. And whenever I think about the depth of gratitude I have to the Mississaugas for letting me be an uninvited guest, they had no say in my arrival.

I also want to say that where I happen to have my home is not far from one of the first residential schools that were built here and to which the Mississaugas who are part of the Anishnabe peoples and the Mohawks who are from the Haudenosaunee Nation, many first Nations children were harmed and hurt there and yesterday we had our national day of marking the responsibility, we have to take to be accountable for that. And so I still carry some of the sorrow and the learning from that and hope to continue to do that. That was a long answer, but that's a bit about where I am.

Ain B.: Yes. It's beautiful.

Tina Lopes: Thank you. My pronouns are she and her and I'm learning so much about how important that question is, so thank you for inviting that.

Tina Lopes: [00:05:00] And my internal weather is turbulent. Though I find myself settling, the winds are calming a little bit. As I sit with you, I'm internally appropriately turbulent because as I said, you know, listening to and learning from survivors of residential schools and also in this moment, being really aware of the summit flotilla that's trying to make its way to Gaza and approaching.

So, my internal weather is deep awe for folks that are showing up in this time and dedication, commitment to finding out who I am and where I'm supposed to be.

Ain B.: [00:06:00] Lovely. Yes. Thank you so much for grounding us in your place, in a number of ways. Thank you for having a robust intro. I appreciate it. Very grounding.

My name is Ain B.. I use the pronouns she/they. I'm located on ancestral and unseated land of the Coosata and Muskogee people, which is colonially known as Alabama. And my internal weather right now is - so yesterday, as soon as I went to take the trash out, the sun was shining, and then buckets of rain just came out of the sky and it was so good.

The rain was cold. It felt like fall, but the sun shining felt really, bright. And so I just love the juxtaposition of heavy, heavy, almost torrential rain with the sun,

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like still doing its thing. So that's sort of how I feel like yes, the world is world-ing or should I say society is society-ing. And the sun is shining as it always does, whether we can see it or not. So I'm grateful for that.

So Tina, I would love to begin our conversation today with the question, what is spirit and how does it move through you?

Tina Lopes: That is such a wild question.

Ain B.: Changes every second. Let's see what it is now.

Tina Lopes: [00:08:00] I love that you are the person asking me this question in this moment because you and I have walked into each other's lives wondering that and some of my favorite moments where, as you said in your introduction, the absolute awe, but also delight, like grinning, giggling, delight at this James Webb telescope that is floating far out in this universe and I didn't know I was going to begin there.

Ain B.: Mm-hmm.

Tina Lopes: [00:09:00] Why am I speaking about that telescope? When I think about spirit, it's mostly because of the magnanimity, magnificence. That wasn't even a word, but you know we need to find more words because how do we express the ways in which something that was created by beings, human beings on this tiny, tiny planet is actually so many millions of miles far out in the universe trying to find out how this universe began. And the immensity that us, the tiny beings, would have that question and go to the lengths that we're going to, to answer that question.

So there's one aspect of spirit for me that is a mystery beyond comprehension and yet it's one that I can't stop myself asking about. So I feel like spirit is that immense, eternal, endless mystery that is out there. And yet it, I know in my stomach lining and in the marrow, in my bones and you know, in the taste buds on my tongue, that spirit is also right within my cells and is in my imagination. And is as much of me and in me as it seems to be completely other.

So in this moment I feel like Spirit has, you know, that awesome, incomprehensible aspect to it. And I feel as I'm tuning into you and the question that we're inviting here, it's everything to me.

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Tina Lopes: It's [spirit] been the compass for how I've tried to live my life and it's the only thing giving me courage right now to accept that I know nothing about where I wanna be and who I am and what I wanna be when I grow up.

Ain B.: [00:11:00] Mm-hmm. Beautiful, beautiful. I so appreciate you leaning into and lifting up the mystery, this great mystery that we're all a part of whether we're attuned to it or not. And I'm so delighted to be with you as someone who is attuned to the magnificence, you know, the... whatever word we make up.

I mean, all the words are made up, so let's make up some other ones to try to capture not only the - as you're naming the magnificence of what is this what is this whole thing, but also the audacity, curiosity, determination, commitment, refinement and exploration of folks who have decided that it's ours to explore. I'm just so grateful that there are people in the world who are delving into the mystery, even though it will always be a mystery.

There's no way to know the intricacies of this existence that we've been given, as much as we can know some of the quote unquote laws of it.

Tina Lopes: [00:12:00] I love that you have this facility with language and you could list all those aspects. And because I want to also, you know, come away from that galaxy and come right down to earth in this conversation with you.

When you talked about the dedication and the commitment when [New Seneca Village](#) invites leaders and healers to come, you do so recognizing that many of us are bone weary. And in some ways, not knowing, unknowing about what is being asked of us next. And Spirit has been one of the reasons that I've entered into the work that I do.



I was raised in a very traditionally Catholic household and so my introduction to spirit was narrow and confining and reinforced many of the things that I return, reject, refuse. And nonetheless, um, you know, there was still enough of life-giving spirit in there that one of the things I learned about was how to question, how to not settle. And it wasn't a cognitive thing, it wasn't something my brain was doing. It was something that would happen in the times that we gathered in stillness and quiet or in the midst of something happening that I found to be gravely unjust and that would make me fiercely mad.

So I wanted to study this experience I was having. That was called religion and that you and I are calling Spirit because I knew that there was a lot of human

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made crap covering what was a deeply creative, powerful, wildly imaginative experience of spirit.

Ain B.: Yes.

Tina Lopes: [00:15:00] And I wanted to understand how do I not lose my connection to that while also being appropriately fiercely critical of the ways in which we as human beings and in the particular tradition that I'm in, mostly men, were making it harder and harder. Were obfuscating unnecessarily.

And one of the most amazing things I'm discovering about Spirit is that every time I think I am being fiercely critical, spirit blows up things even more than I would, which is phenomenal. Such a phenomenal thing.

You know, I am in this body that's identified as female and a woman and racialized. You know, I come from ancestors who have been colonized every time we'd moved. So the Portuguese came to where my ancestors were minding their own business.

Ain B.: Hello.

Tina Lopes: And as part of that colonizing process gave us a choice of converting to Catholicism or dying. And my ancestors were practical people.

Ain B.: Yes, yes. We choose life.

Tina Lopes: And also could see that there was no way to confine the mystery.

Ain B.: Yeah.

Tina Lopes: So, sure. You know the subversive, the phenomenal way in which we managed to keep true to what we understand.

And so colonized by the Portuguese [family] left there, colonized by the British in Kenya and East Africa where I was born just before the independence movement there and come here to another land, colonized. And spirit has made me unwilling to accept the relationships, the dynamics, the power over, even though it was weaponized by the colonizers.

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For me, it's been such a tremendous implosion and explosion of the boxes. The categories, and even when I feel most confident about, well, this is true and that isn't, then it says, ha!

Ain B.: Directly in your face. Yeah.

Tina Lopes: I can hear this immense laughter.

Ain B.: Mm-hmm.

Tina Lopes: Oh my God. Okay. Give you, you know, have little patience. She's getting it

Ain B.: [00:18:00] Right, right. We're waiting. Yes.

You know, first of all, thank you so much for sharing your relationship with Spirit over time. And, a thing that you're really pointing to is what I call the illusion. You know this, the manmade crap that gets layered on top of what is really wondrous and awe inspiring. And how that does a lot of things actually, but also serves to separate us continuously from a real source of power if we allow it.

And what I'm hearing is that your spirit in particular, the spirit that's embedded in your heart similar to mine, is like, no. No. First of all, I can see what you're trying to do here. Even if I don't understand all of the ways, and I know that I deserve better and I deserve a more intimate and more one-to-one relationship with this energy. It doesn't have to be mitigated or mediated by others, in particular others of other identity, colonizing identity, in order for me to be in relationship with this energy that is ours, the collective ours.

Can you share a bit about how that energy is holding you in this time, in this fulsome time in life as you named as you came in, but also in the uncertainty that you shared in your intro.

Tina Lopes: [00:20:00] So thank you for letting me hear back that this journey is unfolding. You know, one of the things that struck me in my twenties when I went to Peru to work with communities that were organizing there was that the people organizing in Lima and some of the outskirts knew that their organizing work would likely get them killed.

It wasn't a theory, it wasn't a possibility. It was almost a certainty because at that time there was a guerrilla movement called Luminoso that wanted people to hit

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as much despair as possible so that they would join the guerilla movement, and then there was the military acting to oppress.

And they had this conviction, they had this kind of anchor that made it seem the most ordinary thing that they would choose nonetheless to leave their homes every day and go out and help to organize for water and for food in communities that had very little.

And that has driven me for a long time. I have been working in a particular way that was shaped by that experience for about 30 years, because they very lovingly said to me - it's lovely that you are here, we like you, we enjoy having you here, but if you really wanna help, you need to go back to Canada and shift the way people live and decide and use power there.

Our conditions here are because of how people live there. And I took that deeply to heart and came back to Canada and, very earnestly with all my might went into this work of trying to be faithful to that, to being sent that way by those people to make as much change as I could in child welfare, in school boards, in social housing, you know, where the same families were being harmed through systems.

[00:23:00] And now I am all of a sudden. Perhaps not all of a sudden, but, you know, walking slowly towards this realization that perhaps that was appropriate for a certain phase of my life. But I think Spirit has often shaken and rattled and, you know, thrown me out of any sense of certainty and belief that I had a grip on things and could actually do something that would remain a permanent change.

So, you know, coming to terms with the fact that even though I made immense change, sometimes successfully in some places, spirit made sure that I would find out that, you know, a few years later when a new CEO came in or a new executive director. Everything that I had done to change systems for the better and they were for the better, would be dismantled like that.

And if I didn't have an anchor, a relationship with cosmic spiritual presence to understand that that doesn't define my life, that I know how wonderful it is that we get these opportunities to put our shoulders to the yoke and to give it our all.

I was missing something the whole time. And that was that I was leaving myself out of the picture. I was so focused on holding myself accountable to whether or how the most vulnerable communities around me would benefit or not from the work that I was doing, that I remember twice losing my health, not just

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physically, but mentally. And when I say that I'm not - I don't wanna diminish it in any way. I really lost health, mentally and physically.

And the first time, picked myself back up and tried again with a bit more compassion, a little less rigidity, a little more understanding that this was spiritual work as well as emotional and cognitive work. This effort to change how we share resources, how we allocate, how we choose to engage with each other, what's the power dynamic in any moment and had much more humility that came out of the particular path.

I owe so much to Ojibwe and Anishanabe knowledge keepers and elders who invited me so generously to participate in sweat lodge and ceremony, so certain ways of being that I'd internalized in North America. Ways of trying to change fell away and I still though, left myself out.

[00:27:00] It's taken spirit really like knocking, shaking, kind of just pulling the round out from under my feet for me to stop a second time. You know, what we call illness, what we call disease, what we call burnout, what we call falling apart, what we call collapse. I think is our spirit's way of getting us to slow and be still.

It took all of that for me to finally, you know, I realized I'd hit so far bottom. There was a moment when I was just like touching the soil in the pot of a plant and just inhaling the fragrance of this soil. It was mysterious and amazing to me, and that's all I could do was just touch it and feel it.

And that was happening outside of me and inside of me, this understanding that spirit was waiting for me to know the depth and extent to which I am loved. A creation of great mystery and worth.

And that anything that I would do, if it didn't start from there would be a little disappointing, a little less effective, a little uncentered. And so, when you're saying, what is it that Spirit is inviting me to now? 'cause I know that's what you asked me. I'm making my way there, my friends.

Ain B.: Beautifully.

Tina Lopes: [00:29:00] Thank you. So now I think so many of us, right? I'm not alone in this and I'm so grateful that New Seneca Village was one of the places that was actually holding this up as not just something to invite for a little while, but as a threshold, a portal into a whole new dimension of being.

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And so I'm learning what Spirit is opening me to is this choosing of heart for myself, choosing a wisdom that includes me.

And you know, I'm realizing now the most revelatory, poignant moments for me is when I'm just standing still and I realize those trees you mentioned, they're just like flooding me with oxygen and this earth is holding me up and these beetles are crawling along the floor so that the soil can be softened so I can have this delicious strawberry.

And then, if that's from where I moved, I find that there's, in my commitment that hasn't changed, to change power over. Let me be really clear. I'm not saying that I replaced that. It's simply that that tiny river has now opened to a much more magnificent waterway where there's so much more possibility than what I understood 20 years ago or 30 years ago.

So spirit, as I think I said earlier, is just blowing open my mind, my heart, my body, my imagination, my heart, mostly my heart. In its willingness to show up and be present and move with, into something when I am still doing my work in the world.

Ain B.: [00:31:00] Oh, Tina, there's so much beauty there and so much I just wanna honor.

Your listening to the folks in Peru and really hearing what they were saying and then coming back to be causing that in change in your local place.

But then also hearing what I think is an opportunity inside of disease. I thought it was an opportunity inside of COVID that it's always an invitation that we get to listen newly, look out of a different window in our mind about what's actually happening and being present to what can be shifted for our benefit and the benefit of that to which we are committed.

Which I know deeply well, intimately well, that spirit will continue to come back until you get the message clearly. I'm always like, spirit, you know me, okay? You know, I love you and I'm gonna do what you say, but you're gonna have to put up a billboard with flashing lights and some like, you know, bouncy animation or something, because I don't take the notes that you slip to me in class.

I don't see them. I can't read them. They're too small. I'm gonna need right off the highway, the big flashing lights.

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Tina Lopes: I'm so with you. It's like, and by the way, could you underscore and highlight,

Ain B.: Right? Like, gimme some signs leading up to that sign, telling me that that's the sign. Okay. This is how dense I can be sometimes.

But what I'm loving about what you're sharing is I think encapsulated in you saying, what I could do was just smell the soil. And really what I heard is to be deeply in devotion to the soil, as I believe the soil is in devotion to us. To your point, I'm like, you know, all these gorgeous trees that I love and my hummingbirds that I love and talk to, and the tomatoes that I eat off the vine that tastes like sunshine.

None of that happens, none of it, without the soil and the complexity of what that soil is and the way that we ignore it, frankly. So for you to share that, coming back to yourself and coming into a new understanding of yourself and your relationship with spirit, through the soil, through the looking and listening, and listening with the heart, with your energy field, you know, beyond just the noise is so deeply present in how you show up in the world and just so a, a loving testament to what is often can be a rocky journey with spirit.

To say, you know, we talked about this a bit before, that there's a way that spirit talk can go into the magic of it - which a hundred percent magic. And it's hard. It can be hard to be in relationship with spirit and to be continuing to hold the stance that I hear you of taking, of being of service, wanting to be a contribution and wanting to be in alignment with that creation energy.

So can you say a bit more about that part of the relationship?

Tina Lopes: [00:35:00] Well, for me to become permeable enough to understand the miracle of soil I had to be broken open by spirit. So I'm so glad that you said let's talk about that because that is such an essential part of this relationship that we have, that I have with spirit.

Often I would say that ruthlessness is an aspect of spirit and part of what makes Spirit unnameable, often a mystery is because even as much as spirit is absolutely ruthless in my experience, you know, there are times when I say, Hey, look, spirit creator, being. You gotta understand that I am in this human body.

Ain B.: Right?

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Tina Lopes: I get that there's something you want me to understand and you need to remember that this is really hard. This is - you're asking a lot of a finite being. That's on a good day.

When I do that and scold and wrestle and yell at this immensely loving presence. And when I say that twice, I've lost my physical, mental, emotional health, also my spiritual understanding has had to be crushed.

And there's nothing pretty or easy. Let me be clear. Those moments, I didn't know if there was another side, if there would be a coming back to or unto myself. So with great humility and awe, I would say that spirit has shaken me to the point of unbearing. But not past it. And that to me is why I think my heart has been able to open. I don't think my heart would be able to open if I wasn't shaken to my core.

As a little kid, I was really drawn to Egyptian teachings and art and didn't have much understanding. But, I was a young kid and being taught Egyptian history and I remembered it.

How rare is it?

Ain B.: Right.

Tina Lopes: Clearly it had some relevance.

Ain B.: Yes.

Tina Lopes: And then I spent, I had the deep honor of being able to go to Egypt a little while after the Arab Spring had failed. And I went for many reasons and was taught again about the Egyptian teaching, that when a being dies, when a human, but I would say all beings die, our hearts are weighed against a feather.

I was, my jaw, I was in, it was one of those moments. And in this other scale, it was weighed against a feather.

And I suddenly understood, oh, that's, that's why the hollowing out. That's why Spirit hollows. Requires us to keep emptying of certainties, of things we latch onto because, you know, it costs everything.

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Tina Lopes: [00:40:00] There's a beautiful Rumi poem that, you know, the way a flute is made is that it gets hollowed out and we are like that piece of wood being hollowed out and then it's only when the wind blows through.

I mean, I'm worrying that I'm going too far out there, but I'm just wanting to really acknowledge because so, you know, so much of our work when we're in the world is in response to the suffering. Not just our work. I mean, for many of us who are in bodies of indigenous first nations and black bodies and brown bodies and queer bodies, and all the bodies that we're in suffering is from before we're born.

Suffering happens in the womb and it continues into the end, and it's been that suffering in and around me, ancestrally. And now that has meant that. That's why I've chosen to show up where I've shown up and chosen to do the hard things that I've chosen to do. And so much of that is quote unquote failure.

Ain B.: Hmm.

Tina Lopes: So much of it ends up being so hurtful because we turn on each other at the slightest provocation, we turn on each other and for some reason, this is what's showing up in me to say. That spirit has to be ruthless because we find it so easy to lose center and to lose this lightness of being.

The willingness to be as light as a feather to, to not hold grudges, to not hold righteousness and judgment of each other, to show - you know, when we've been taught about beloved community and we've been taught about showing up to create belonging. It is the hardest work. This is not fun. This is not easy, not like some park. Some of the most devastating, excruciating, hardest moments of my life have happened when I've shown up in a community where I am yearning for belonging and solidarity and moving forward together.

And just the eruptions that happen among and between those of us who expect not to be betrayed.

Ain B.: Yes, yes, yes.

Tina Lopes: We expect there, but not here. And how, how in this cosmic universe would we ever know how to find our way back to each other and try again, if not for spirit.

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Ain B.: [00:43:00] Yeah.

Oh my goodness. What you're ending with here is really a large part of the impetus for the Village. As part of my spiritual assignment, how do we care for our spirits such that we are in alignment and in the rigor as you're naming of creating the future that we wanna see. Right? And this piece around its not fun, although it can be and it should be.

What I heard is a continuous committed intention to be centered and grounded in oneself so that you can show up in the way that you want to be and want to become. And for me, I think of it as the way that is going to cause the liberated world to come towards us, in as much as we're coming towards it.

And, you know, I so appreciate broadening this conversation about spirit. I always think of and alternate between spirit, universe, God, all the things. But you know, the universe does not care about our comfort, but it wants me to have everything I want, right? Like it put it in me to want it.

It gifted me the wanting of freedom and liberation and transformation and infinite possibility. In the way that you resonated with the Egyptian - where did that come from? Spirit put that in you to know that this could be a source of wisdom for you. So Spirit has gifted me these desires and yearnings and the things that I've been seeking for my whole life.

And it's gonna give it to me whether I like it or not, or whether I like the way that it delivers it or not, I should say. I sometimes think as we're in society, you're naming what often happens is that we see in organization, in movement and also obviously writ large in our society.

And you know, one of the things I think often is. This very moment is because we didn't take that opportunity or the invitation of COVID to be in the solitude, in the regression from the world in many ways, to sort of be in the alchemy of our souls and spirits during that time. The fear, the questioning, the relationship, the expectation, the obligation.

What do I owe my neighbors? What do I owe the people in my society? How do I care for myself? How do I tend to myself inside of this? And because we're not taught in our societies to be present to those deeper questions, those expansive, universal questions, now we get to see all of that anger and confusion and uncertainty coming out sideways. Tale as old as time, right? We're not seeing anything new that we haven't already seen. As much as it's shocking in its urgency and consistency.

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So my question here is, how do you now hold this relationship with Spirit as you're newly discovering, 'Oh, the me has to be in my contribution to the world' and this continued deepening that Spirit is inviting you into.

Tina Lopes: [00:48:00] I am resonating so much with where you were putting your finger on things. So you know, as you related back to me, the connections between what happened during COVID and what we may have missed. What came up for me was that one of the things that happened in COVID was hoarding. And what I'm grappling with most, and by grappling I mean I feel like I am wrestling with the angels as an image that might be relevant to some, or wrestling with, you know, the tricksters, whoever, wrestling with ancestors who are trying to bring me to something.

And the wrestle is this, as you've said, this is an experience that has come from, from my feet and into my belly and into my understanding, and lastly into my consciousness that I am abundantly provided for in ways that are beyond comprehension. Yes. The thing that has most got in the way, I think, is that sometimes in our grief and in our hurt and in our recounting and in our experiencing of being othered and harmed and beaten down simply because of the bodies that we're in, that we've sometimes turned to spirit as a way of shoring us up.

And we've turned it into a type of hoarding of experience that is affirming of who we are. And, you know, there's so much happening now that is wonderful and good. About understanding our trauma, about coming back into our bodies, about using all the ways in which Spirit has taught us wisdom practices to return to wholeness.

That is all available to us. I want to not lose sight of what we talked about as the ruthlessness of spirit, which is that in order to fully receive that abundance, we can't hold onto it or try to package it in ways that make us comfortable. And what I am learning into is that spirit is asking me to reckon with the parts of myself that I want to enclose, that I want to hold apart, that I wanna justify in othering in someone else. So what I want, what I am pointing to for myself and for us is the importance of spiritual practices that are teaching us about how much we miss, misunderstand and miss the mark and misrepresent to ourselves.

Ain B.: Mm-hmm.

Tina Lopes: [00:52:00] I'm so humbled, like really, I'm not just saying it as a virtue, it doesn't feel like that. Humbled in ways that are not pleasant in my noticing, in my relationship with my mother, my brother, my children, my cousins, my colleagues, my beloveds. And not even talking out in the world, the ease with which we miss each other. Where our perceptions are shaped by our hardwired brain that's looking for the negative and we forget the positive. And why am I saying all this?

To say that in that process that you were pointing to, of finding solitude, of attending to ourselves, of trying to be in Right Relationship from a place that is grounded and steady, that also I don't know how to do that without a practice, whether it is, you know, mindfully pouring water or a walking meditation, or sitting beside a tree or praying in a temple or, or you know, whatever the practice is that I don't. I'm feeling like in this moment right now, we need to draw on practices that shake us out of our tendency to choose rightness, to choose comfort and to be willing to reckon with ourselves and to accept the much more difficult work of constantly having to empty out from the temptation of naming offense and injury and positioning.

Ain B.: Yes.

Tina Lopes: Of having the right position on something and to not lash out, to not actually retreat behind the wall, but to actually have practices that help us to expand and hold space.

Ain B.: Yes.

Tina Lopes: Not to betray ourselves, but also to be less afraid that others need to keep us safe.

Ain B.: [00:54:00] Yeah. I just, I'm so appreciative of this conversation, Tina, because sometimes in conversation with leaders, for all the reasons that you named, there's not a lot of time, in a society that in itself is not reflective, to be in a curious stance of what are the ways to be more intimately connected with spirit.

I so appreciate you sharing some of the very simple ways, mindfully pouring water. Sitting by a tree, you know, thinking about what's accessible. And I just want to add also what's accessible in the moment. You know, maybe in the

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moment I can't get outside to my tree, but I can breathe into my palms and just smell my skin and know that I'm in a body, in a safe place, et cetera.

And so I am just, so grateful that we are connected intimately and so thankful for your reflection and your honesty in what it takes to be in relationship, period. Right? Relationship with spirit. But then also as you're naming, just in relationship with the people that we know that are in our close-in circle and the intention and the work that that takes.

One of my spiritual leaders who is so brilliant. Orland Bishop says, the only thing left to achieve is deeper intimacy.

Tina Lopes: Yes.

Ain B.: I mean,

Tina Lopes: Wow.

Ain B.: What an invitation and also what hard work ahead.

Tina Lopes: Yeah.

Ain B.: [00:56:00] So thank you for being with us during this time. I do wanna say, is there anything you would like to share as we close? Anything I didn't ask? Anything you wanna make sure to say?

Tina Lopes: I'm looking forward to your next question. Sweet. Thank you.

Ain B.: So I would love to know, as part of our sacred shout out, I would love to hear what is inspiring you or filling you with gratitude or awe these days.

Tina Lopes: I was so appreciative that you asked me that question 'cause I realized there are so many. And then I thought for the purposes of this time, one of my teachers about deepening intimacy is Alexis Pauline Gumbs and her book *Undrowned*. I wanted to hold that up for all the awe and joy. So you are nodding. You may have read it.

This book moves me because there's, you know, you and I have fallen in love with stars and galaxies and supernovas. And Alexis has invited me to look into the ocean. And the wisdom that comes from the immense beings that are there. So, talking about learning how to loosen our understanding of intimacy and how

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can I hold on to thinking I know the right position to take on anything when I am beginning to understand that whales have been longing and waiting for us to listen to them, and that they have words and revelations from divinity, from spirit that we need to hear, and are just in time. So, I'm just forehead to the earth, to Alexis Pauline Gumbs for this form of revelation. Right.

For, she writes about this in a way that honors her ancestors, particularly the lineage of extraordinary women, and also our ocean ancestors. And the mammals and other beings who know about what it means to be alive on this beautiful pearl of an earth.

Ain B.: Yes, of course. And just to say Undrowned. A hundred thumbs up. And the only reason we're here is because of the Pacific Ocean, who is my spiritual mom. Definitely told me what to do, has been telling me what to do for at least a decade, and I'm so grateful.

We've never talked about my love of the ocean, but I'm so glad that you're turning your eye and heart there.

Tina Lopes: One day. because my maternal ancestral ocean is the Indian ocean and my ancestors are crossing back and forth. Yes, we will have another conversation.

Ain B.: Yes. Hopefully by the ocean. Let's do that. That'd be even more fun. Yes.

Tina Lopes: It's a date. I'll see you there. And that's one. May I offer one more?

Ain B.: Yes, please. Share with us another one.

Tina Lopes: [01:00:00] You know, a prostration of my entire being on the earth, my forehead, but my entire being to [Ahmed Abu Amsha](#), who's the music teacher in Gaza who has been teaching music to children while Israeli bombs and drones have been falling.

And he speaks about how the children gathered in this tent for a music lesson with him were saying, this, the drones, the constant sound of the drones. They're sapping. 'Oh, we, how can we sing the song of drones? And he said, as only a mystic beautiful soul would, if you listen to the notes of the drones, there's an A, there's an E and he wrote a song for the children to sing, to turn the sound of the drones into their own anthem of courage.

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Ain B.: Mmmm.

Tina Lopes: That's a spirit. And that is spirit in the center of a being who I just bow to.

Ain B.: Oh, beautiful, Tina, thank you. Thank you for sharing that. I did not know that was happening. And what magic, what magic. Whew.

Tina Lopes: That's this heart of spirit.

Ain B.: We make music with what is.

Tina Lopes: That is Ahmed Abu Amsha spirit.

Ain B.: Thank you. Thank you. And thank you to his spirit. Yeah. Who's preserving the spirits of these children, giving them room for expression.

Tina Lopes: Yeah.

Ain B.: Oh, my sacred shout out is from the [astronomy picture of the day](#), which I love so much. This is a picture from August 20th, 2025, and it is the Perseid Meteor shower. But a time-release video obviously of the Milky Way over Durdle Door, which is somewhere in Dorset, England. And I mean, there's a thousand pictures of nebula that I love so much.

Those are the ones that I'm deeply like, just take me there. But I love this one because it's also of the earth and it's just a reminder to me that the earth is a place of magic. I mean, as far as we know, conclusively, but not spiritually. This is the only magic place or life-giving place in this way that we know of.

Now, I believe there's many more places, but I, just in this conversation with spirit, just being reminded of all the times that I wished I was on some other planet or in another world. And this is the other world and so just deep gratitude to these photographers, first of all, who stand out for three days to get to one picture.

For us to be able to see the magnitude and the magnificence visually of this universe that surrounds us and then reminds us that we are part of it. And I know that the earth is magic. In knowing, I have to believe that everything on

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the earth is also magic, and so it just reminds me to be more expansive in and with my love. So, thank you. Is there a question that you're holding now that you would like to offer our folks or a prompt or action that you would like to invite our listeners in to until next time?

Tina Lopes: [01:05:00] Perhaps, what might be preventing me from receiving the abundance that's right at my doorstep.

Ain B.: Beautiful. Thank you. What a lovely invitation for us all to consider and maybe consider opening the door.

Thank you again, Tina, for being with me during this time, for being with and of the Village for all time and just for being so brilliant.

Tina Lopes: I thank my lucky stars and spirit for placing you in my life.

Ain B.: mm-hmm.

Tina Lopes: I look forward to many, many conversations with you, and I'm grateful for them.

Ain B.: Aw, thank you so much.

[Guest shares their bio] [Tina Lopes: [01:06:00] So, who am I for 34 years now, I've leaned into human rights, justice, and collective liberation work inside organizations. So I began this work as a spiritual calling, but also as very much a political, economic personal commitment and I wanted to work in public sector organizations where generations of families were being harmed.

So from child welfare to education, in school boards, to social housing, to the prison system, and have worked both in the belly of the beast of those organizations and also with senior leaders. And every time I've walked into organizations, my hope has been that the work that we would do together would not just be systemic, though that is essential to look at how power is embedded in policy and decision making, but also interpersonally how we as people and as leaders, leverage appropriately the power that we have been given.

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And also individually in some of the ways we talked about in this podcast, what's my work to become aware of how I use the fullness of who I am, but also have the discipline to draw on spiritual practices, to stay steady in challenging

and difficult situations. So I've been doing that in organizations and in community groups, and also personally in extended and chosen families.

And as many of you would find that, you know, in many of the communities where people are most vulnerable, we are stretched thin. And I have now, in recent years, decided to focus on finding ways to work from a more radical place of rooting in self worth, relying on the natural flow of wisdom that comes from trusting our own bodies, the wisdom of our bodies and our hearts.

The heart is such an organ of knowing. And to learn more about that and about how our hearts help us to attune to the collective knowing and the mutual healing, an innate brilliance that comes when we gather and reclaim our abundance as our birthright.

[Static Outro]Ain B.: The We Outside Podcast is produced and hosted by Ain B., and produced and edited by Aisha Jordan. For access to resources mentioned in the episode, check out the show notes.

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