

InHotWater_Plansowes.mp3

Julie Kuchepatov [00:00:13] Three generations hit the road to explore key seafood producing regions across the U.S. And hear from people working at the intersections of fisheries, aquaculture, seafood, and conservation. While grappling with the effects of the global climate crisis. We may represent three generations, but we have a lot in common, namely a love of seafood and a dedication to contribute to the community driven generational effort and movement towards climate justice.

Cameron Moore [00:00:37] The results of these travels? Welcome to In Hot Water, the Climate and Seafood Podcast series. Join us.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:00:42] Julie Kuchepatov, Gen X.

Crystal Sanders-Alvarado [00:00:44] Crystal Sanders-Alvarado, Xennial.

Cameron Moore [00:00:45] And Cameron Moore, Gen Z, as we travel the country and chat with people who share the challenges facing their regions and their personal stories. Along the way, we experience some moments that make us ask "What the fish?" as we try to understand why we are in hot water and what we can do about it.

Crystal Sanders-Alvarado [00:01:01] We started the series in the Lone Star State, Texas, with a visit to the Coastal Bend along the Gulf of Mexico, one of the most important offshore petroleum production regions in the world, making up one sixth of the United States total production and a critically important source of seafood, supplying more than 40% of the U.S. domestic seafood. In the second series, we traveled to Maine, where we crisscrossed the state, starting with the bustling hub of Portland, making our way Downeast, and ending with a visit to the Passamaquoddy Tribal lands. Fishing in the Gulf of Maine generates nearly \$4 billion annually and supports up to 100,000 jobs and also there's a growing aquaculture sector. Maine's identity is intricately tied to the lobster fishery and with the Gulf of Maine warming faster than 99% of the ocean, this way of life is in jeopardy.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:01:46] We end our travels around Maine with a trip to Pleasant Point, one of the three reservation communities of the Passamaquoddy tribe on a Saint Croix River, which serves as the U.S. - Canada International boundary.

Plansowes Dana [00:01:57] My name is Plansowes Dana, and I'm a member of the Peskotomuhkati Tribe and Peskotomuhkati means the people who spear the pollock. And I live here in Sipayik, which means along the edge. We're on the edge of the Passamaquoddy Bay in the eastern part of the state. I work for the Gulf Maine Research Institute, and I am Indigenous Partnerships Manager and I started just this past October. So my goal is to build relationships with the Wabanaki communities and the Gulf of Maine, GMRI, and to incorporate Indigenous knowledge with Western science. And my main focus so far has been in the school system so far. And I am trying to help with food security and food sovereignty.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:02:49] Our conversation took place on the clam flats next to the empty lot where Plansowes' childhood home once stood. The ancestral home of the Passamaquoddy Tribe, an area in excess of 3 million acres, covered the entire Saint Croix River watershed and adjacent New Brunswick, Canada, which we could see across the river from where we were standing.

Plansowes Dana [00:03:07] Peskotomuhkati has been here, they say, 15,000 years, or time immemorial. So our people were here even when the ice was here and the climate has changed so much in my time and when I was younger, our winters are longer and we had more ice. So my great aunt, who was about 100 when I was 12 years old, so that was that was 30 some years ago. 33 years ago? Yes. 33 years ago. I used to go visit her and I used to go visit a lot of storytellers because I liked to listen to the old stories.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:03:49] When you were 12ish, around then.

Plansowes Dana [00:03:51] Yeah. And even younger, I used to seek out storytellers. So when I would visit her she would tell me stories about when she was the young girl. So she said that when she was a young girl, this bay would freeze over in the wintertime.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:04:06] This one right here.

Plansowes Dana [00:04:07] This one right here. And you could walk from here to Saint Andrews.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:04:11] Which is where? Right there. Or.

Plansowes Dana [00:04:14] That way.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:04:14] What?

Plansowes Dana [00:04:15] Yep. It's over that way.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:04:17] You could. So when she was little, this would freeze, and she could walk over there.

Plansowes Dana [00:04:21] Yeah. They would walk back and forth.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:04:24] And that doesn't happen now.?

Plansowes Dana [00:04:26] That doesn't happen now. You don't even get an iceberg in the water anymore.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:04:30] Really? Wait, so they used to be icebergs, too?

Plansowes Dana [00:04:32] Yeah.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:04:33] My gosh. And did you see the icebergs, or is that, like, right before your time when you were born?

Plansowes Dana [00:04:38] Well, I seen small ones. Not like great big icebergs, but when I was a kid, the ice would pile up on the beach and now you don't see it. Yeah.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:04:50] So I'm seeing a couple of people out here in the low. Yeah. I guess, or what are these called? Tidal flats?

Plansowes Dana [00:04:56] Yes, these are clam flats.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:04:57] Clam flats. And they're digging for?

Plansowes Dana [00:04:59] Clams.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:05:00] Clams.

Plansowes Dana [00:05:00] They're digging clams. Yep.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:05:02] And what kind of clams are they? Do you know?

Plansowes Dana [00:05:03] Mud clams.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:05:05] Mud clams, yeah I don't know. I don't even know. Are they, and periwinkles, you've mentioned, which I actually just heard about.

Plansowes Dana [00:05:11] Yeah, they're little wrinkles. If we want to walk, we can walk along this way if you want and that's where the fish weir is being built. We could pick up a few and I'll show you.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:05:19] Let's look. Yeah, I want to see.

Plansowes Dana [00:05:20] And this is going to be probably really mush. Mushy.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:05:23] It's mushy.

Plansowes Dana [00:05:25] Maybe not so bad. It's kind of dried out.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:05:28] So what else? Let's get out of this crunchy part and I'll ask you about your, you said it was your great. No, your grandma?

Plansowes Dana [00:05:37] My great, great, aunt.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:05:39] Great, great aunt. That's right.

Plansowes Dana [00:05:41] So, the Passamaquoddy people, or we call ourselves Peskotomuhkati, we were migratory people, so we moved along the coastline, inland, depending on the season for hunting and gathering. And she said in the wintertime, that's how they crossed. And then people used canoes as vehicles to get around, move around the waterways.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:06:04] So you mentioned the Wabanaki people. And that's kind of part of your job is to create partnerships or steward partnerships with GMRI.

Plansowes Dana [00:06:13] Yes.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:06:13] And so can you explain the Wabanaki? Is that a Confederated tribe or.

Plansowes Dana [00:06:18] It's a Confederacy that's based off of five different tribes. And it's Passamaquoddy, or Peskotomuhkati, Mi'kmaq, Penobscot, and Maliseet.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:06:29] And so are some of these people on the river here up in what is now Canada?

Plansowes Dana [00:06:34] Yes. Yeah. Most of the Mi'kmaq people live in Canada through the Maritimes, New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, Quebec. But they also live on this side, too. Okay. Up in, like, Presque Isle and Caribou area. But the majority of their people are on that side. So when the border came through our territory, it kind of cut us off.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:06:56] Right. And I read that you got together to fight that. So because you had freedom of movement before those boundaries came, right?

Plansowes Dana [00:07:04] Yeah. So anybody. So there's a Jay Treaty that is supposed to be recognized by the Canadian, the U.S. Government, while the Canadian government doesn't recognize our Jay Treaty, but the U.S. does recognize it, so any time our relatives in Canada want to come across, they can come across without much hassle, without I shouldn't say any hassle because they still get hassled. Right. But they are considered dual citizens. Okay. Now, when we cross, we're not considered dual citizens. They don't want to recognize our Jay Treaty over there and there's still a fight with the Canadian government trying to get our people recognized over there. We do have a small community in St Andrews where the Chief Hugh Akagi that runs that small community and they've been fighting for years for sovereignty and recognition over there.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:08:04] Your focus is food security and sovereignty, so can you tell me a little bit about what that is and what does it mean to you and your community?

Plansowes Dana [00:08:14] Sure. So food sovereignty is, to me, means growing my own food. And I, like I said this, I grew up here, right here. My house was here.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:08:26] Right there.

Plansowes Dana [00:08:26] Right there. My house was there growing up. And then the trees are kind of grown in. But my garden was there, so I grew up with a garden. So food sovereignty is about growing your own food, harvesting your own game or seafood. And so growing up right here, you know, the tide comes in and out twice a day so any time the tide is out, it's like your your table is set.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:08:55] That it.

Plansowes Dana [00:08:55] You can go out. You can pick wrinkles, you can dig clams. And back before my time, lobsters were so plentiful that when the tide was out you could pick them off the beach. And back then, they considered them kind of like a garbage food. So what they would do is they would pick them and throw them onto gardens and stuff like that. My people ate them, of course, but before they were viewed as like bottom feeders. And they are, they're bottom feeders, but they're delicious bottom feeders. So when I was younger, me and my siblings would go down and pick periwinkles right off the beach and bring them home and cook them up. And sometimes even little fire on the beach but my parents preferred us to cook them in the house.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:09:41] So I read, I did some reading before we came here and I saw that there's several. Danas in and your last name is Dana. Is that, you have a big family?

Plansowes Dana [00:09:49] We have a huge, huge family. Yeah, My grandmother had 15 children.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:09:56] Whoa.

Plansowes Dana [00:09:57] Yes.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:09:58] What a champion.

Plansowes Dana [00:09:59] That's my father's mother. Wow. And my father is 13. Number 13 out of 15.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:10:05] Wow. Yeah. So and then, of course, they had kids. Yeah. And then they had kids.

Plansowes Dana [00:10:10] Yeah, lots and lots. I have hundreds and hundreds of cousins. Yes, on this side of the border and across, I had an aunt that moved across.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:10:19] Wow. And so let's go back to your great, great aunt. Like, what did she talk about other than the ice? Because this is our whole purpose of these discussions that we're having up and down Maine is to talk about the coast, to talk about climate change and what people have noticed and, and what are some of the solutions? And I'm just interested in capturing maybe some of the the things that you remember from your aunt.

Plansowes Dana [00:10:45] So what she talked about is that, you know, when she was a kid, she seen a lot of change. Like they didn't have running water. They didn't have electricity. So she's seen electricity come in. She's seen the automobile come in. You know, she seen boats come in. I mean,.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:11:03] Motors.

Plansowes Dana [00:11:03] Motors come in and run on water come in. Like she's seen all those changes come in. Because, see, my mom's grandfather was her brother. So my mom remembers growing up with her grandparents, and they said they lived in, like, a tar paper shack and, you know, they had wood heat. They didn't have running water. They didn't have electricity. You know, they had to lug all their water in. And she said that her grandparents, when she was little, got the first TV on the reservation and that was a big deal. Everybody would pile into the house and they'd be like floor space. And they would all come in and watch TV. And we used to have this bell that used to go off at 9:00, the home bell. It was like a curfew for people in the community.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:11:51] Get the go home bell.

Plansowes Dana [00:11:52] So on that rang, my grandfather would shut the TV off and tell everybody goodnight and that they were welcome back the next night. So it's like the hang out. And the reason that they got a TV was that their son, Kenneth Bassett, he was in the war, the Korean War, and he was a POW. for like three and a half years. So he was in this prison camp.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:12:24] Oh my God.

Plansowes Dana [00:12:24] And so his money for being in the military was just banked this whole time. So when he was found, he had all this money, so he bought his parents a TV. So that's not even the most interesting part of the story. My other great uncle, which was one of his younger brothers, joined the military just so he could go over there and search for his brother. So like he was in the search party that found his brother.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:12:56] No way.

Plansowes Dana [00:12:56] And he said his brother was almost beyond recognizable when he found him.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:13:02] So that was in the Korean War. That was in the 50s or early 50s.

Plansowes Dana [00:13:05] Yeah.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:13:07] He found his brother?

Plansowes Dana [00:13:08] He found his brother in a prison camp.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:13:11] There's a boat off in the distance. Is that your dad and someone else?

Plansowes Dana [00:13:15] My dad and my son.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:13:16] Okay. Your father and son are out there fixing the weir. And they were driving the piles. Yeah, which are these things right here?

Plansowes Dana [00:13:24] See those little stakes? Yes. Yeah.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:13:26] And so I definitely want to try to get closer, but we don't have to go all the way. But, so they're driving it all the way out there?

Plansowes Dana [00:13:32] Yeah, they'll drive it out there, So they'll drive the stake so far and then they'll make, like, two circle type things, right. And then once they're done driving the stake, then they'll put ribbons along the like rib. And it's all used from trees.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:13:49] Okay.

Plansowes Dana [00:13:50] And then after that, they'll hang nets down and so the herring will swim in, right? And then they'll get trapped.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:13:57] They can't get out.

Plansowes Dana [00:13:58] They can't get out. And then when they got a big school in there, they'll take a purse seine which is a big net and the boat will haul them up.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:14:06] When is the herring run?

Plansowes Dana [00:14:08] The herring. They're out there now. My dad says they're out there right now. There's a lot of fish out there. They run in the spring and they run then the

fall. He's got a weir that catches them good in the spring and in the fall. Okay. I can hear a dog barking.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:14:23] Is that is there a difference between the spring in the fall runs? No.

Plansowes Dana [00:14:26] No.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:14:27] And what do you do?

Plansowes Dana [00:14:30] I don't think so.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:14:30] What do you do with the herring?

Plansowes Dana [00:14:31] Well, he usually sells them to commercial fishermen. They use them for lobster bait.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:14:35] Right. Okay. I knew that now.

Plansowes Dana [00:14:38] People do eat herring, but they're pretty bony and pretty fishy.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:14:42] Tell us about this method. This is a weir, right?

Plansowes Dana [00:14:46] Yeah, it's a fish weir being constructed.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:14:46] Is this. This is unusual or, meant, not unusual, but it's, there's, there's not many of these around, right?

Plansowes Dana [00:14:54] No, there's not. My godfather has gone up a little further, and my dad helped him drive that. And you were talking about climate change. So our waters are starting to rise some. And my dad, they haven't built weirs in probably over 20 years. So the last 4 or 5 years they started constructing them again. They've come out of retirement.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:15:18] I see. I see.

Plansowes Dana [00:15:20] So they decided, they, my godfather wanted to build his first and they spent quite a few years trying to construct it and fish it but he said with the rise of the water, he said the current is so powerful in there that it's it's been making the fishing there harder.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:15:35] And now he can tell.

Plansowes Dana [00:15:38] My dad can tell. So he said that the current is less in this part so they abandoned that fish weir and if the weir is up, it's pretty much fully constructed. It's go some damage because of the weather. Okay. And the current, of course. Right. So they're constructing this one and they hope to have this one, all the stakes driven and dressed by the end of the month.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:16:02] Wow. And dressed you mean that's with the.

Plansowes Dana [00:16:04] With the net, nets. The dressing is nets, federally permitted sites on the reserve.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:16:11] Wow.

Plansowes Dana [00:16:12] And my dad owned one and my godfather owns the other one. But weir fishing isn't something new to the Passamaquoddy. Our people have always weir fished in a different, you know, not so much here, but there was old fish weirs on the other side of the bay where the water was a lot shallower and when the tide went out, you could walk out and scoop the fish out. He's been fishing since the 70s. Wow. So what he's noticed from then until now is that a lot of the fishery stocks have depleted a lot. Like I think in the early 80s, they brought in ground trawlers and he said it was devastating.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:16:52] Out here. In just here.

Plansowes Dana [00:16:54] Yeah. Yeah. And they came in and wiped out the groundfish. And he said a lot of the fish was small and they only took certain fish and just the other ones died off and since then the groundfish haven't come back yet. But we still have herring and there's hope with the Alewife being able to go up into the streams now and spawn. There's been a lot of effort, yeah, throughout the state of Maine to open up waterways for our Alewife.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:17:21] So your dad has noticed in these 25 years that the water has changed?

Plansowes Dana [00:17:27] Yeah.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:17:27] And then that combined with your childhood recollection of your great, great, great, great,.

Plansowes Dana [00:17:34] Great, great.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:17:35] I keep getting that wrong. Great, great aunt. And seeing the icebergs go through. And so there's a lot of changes happening.

Plansowes Dana [00:17:41] Yeah.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:17:42] What do people think about that? Like, how are they or are they are they. You know what I mean?

Plansowes Dana [00:17:46] People are thinking about it, you know, because we have a lot of coastal erosion here. When I was a kid, really, this was my yard and the yard was out further away.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:17:57] Right.

Plansowes Dana [00:17:59] You know, there's probably 20ft or so that they've lost and that's why you see this rock wall here.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:18:04] These rocks. Yeah.

Plansowes Dana [00:18:06] So the Army Corps of Engineers came in to reconstruct it because they put one in, I want to say it was early 70s, late 60s or maybe even before, to help, but the construction of it failed. Okay. So they have recently come in and reconstructed the rock wall and there's concerns here because the projected water rise. Right. We have people right along the shore here and they've lost land and this right here is our sewage treatment facility here. Right. And the woman in our emergency management has a projected like 300 year map which means it could happen from now to the 300 years. They don't know when it could happen. Okay. But all of this can be underwater. Yeah. So there's a real urgency to try to figure out where they're going to move this. How they're going to move it or what they're going to do because we have so much erosion.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:19:12] So they are thinking about it and someone's gonna do something.

Plansowes Dana [00:19:15] They are, it's on the radar.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:19:17] The tribe received a \$5 million grant for climate resiliency. That's helpful?

Plansowes Dana [00:19:21] That won't quite solve the whole issue here, because it's not just the <unintelligible> that are in danger. It's the <unintelligible> and all the houses along the shore, all along the shoreline. And I think they said there's like 36 units. And that includes an elderly complex that has like 16 units. We have elders that live in there.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:19:41] Right. Yeah. So, so they're going to have to potentially be moved.

Plansowes Dana [00:19:46] Yeah. And even one of.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:19:48] Which is not, not fun.

Plansowes Dana [00:19:49] No, I one of my relatives I have a lot of relatives that.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:19:53] You have a lot of relatives here.

Plansowes Dana [00:19:55] Yeah. So my uncle lives in this blue house here. Okay. And they said they've lost a lot. And my aunt owns the house next to it, and my cousin owns the house next to that.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:20:07] So they can tell.

Plansowes Dana [00:20:07] And they've lost a lot of land there. And one of my relatives a little ways further down, he said that he, in big storm surges, he's had the waves come up and crash into his windows and crack some of his windows. Yup.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:20:23] Yeah. And those are becoming noticeably more frequent.

Plansowes Dana [00:20:26] Yeah. And then they're becoming stronger.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:20:28] How does your work on food sovereignty connect with climate change and do you have any advice?

Plansowes Dana [00:20:33] Roll with the punches. Yeah. I mean,.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:20:35] That's true.

Plansowes Dana [00:20:36] You have to just adapt and go with that. I mean, I've seen frost in June in my lifetime, and it's been a few years since I've seen us get frost in June. And yeah, we've had a lot of drought like weather and. You know, So it's just you have to just kind of go with what we get. And I do a lot of praying for rain when we have drought weather.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:21:02] Are droughts become becoming more frequent?

Plansowes Dana [00:21:03] Not this year, but definitely not this year. But the past know probably 5 or 6 years before this summer, we've had a lot of drought like weather where the, the waters have gone low and we've got less rain and we've had to try to irrigate our gardens more. Our people hunt, mainly moose and deer, rabbit, muskrats.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:21:28] Muskrats.

Plansowes Dana [00:21:29] And before our people and the seal and porpoise. I grew up eating porpoise, but probably in the last 20 years or so, the, the scientists say that the porpoise aren't safe to eat anymore because of the mercury in the water and when I was a kid, they told my dad not to eat the liver that.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:21:49] Really don't eat that.

[00:21:51] Really don't eat the liver and now they're really saying all porpoise.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:21:54] Not only are the restrictions placed on the harvest of traditional foods like porpoises due to the high levels of mercury caused by pollution from neighboring paper mills, there are other harvest restrictions placed on tribal members. While we were walking along the clam flats, we ran into another Passamaquoddy tribal member, Joseph, who was harvesting soft shell clams. He recounted how tribal members are now restricted to harvesting clams only on their land. To be able to harvest elsewhere with a permit, they must live in a town or put their name in a lottery where the odds aren't good. He told us how he sells clams to make ends meet, but he's seen less and less clams over the years and declines in other species as well. Back in the day, he said, you could catch up to 20 flounder a day, but the trawlers came and fished them out of the water. So I also read that there's some freshwater issues here.

Plansowes Dana [00:22:43] The drinking water is not drinkable.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:22:45] Right. What's going on there?

Plansowes Dana [00:22:46] Well, so the water comes from Boyden lake.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:22:50] Boyden.

Plansowes Dana [00:22:52] Boyden lake. And it's a lake that people live around and very close to. And people swim in the lake, drive boats on the lake, fish in the lake and even in the wintertime, you know, people ice fish, but they also go on the ice to clean their salt off

their vehicles. And anyways, because of the conditions of the water, when it comes up into the water district, they have to treat it and it gets treated with more chemicals that are not good for your house.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:23:25] So you can't drink it.

Plansowes Dana [00:23:25] No. We don't drink it now. It's not good for you to drink. And my dad, since I was very young, he always said, don't drink tap water. And so. I've been lugging water my whole life, drinking water, and so have my children and my parents have and their parents and I never really thought of it as being so much of an issue as when I had my own children. You know, when my son was a toddler, I remember him holding up the water jug. We need water. And it really hit me like a ton of bricks. This is really just a real big issue here.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:24:01] Yeah. And there's springs that, natural springs that you can go and get your water from.

Plansowes Dana [00:24:06] Yeah, we get our water from but the tribe has drilled a well right on the main drag. We went by it. Okay. So they test it monthly and it's good drinking water and now the community can go to that and get their drinking water. It's part of a solution. Yeah.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:24:25] Is there are larger solution in the.

Plansowes Dana [00:24:26] Well the larger solution and would be to have better drinking water piped in than then what's being piped in off the lake.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:24:32] Right. But. And that might not happen?

Plansowes Dana [00:24:35] Hopefully, but who knows? So who is fed off of the drinking water is the reservation and the city of Eastport. So it's just us and them. And they have to.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:24:47] They also have to do something.

Plansowes Dana [00:24:48] Because they're connected to us. And they were actually, Eastport was originally Island. yeah. So. what you went across to get into Eastport is a manmade causeway.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:25:00] Right, right, right, right.

Plansowes Dana [00:25:01] So that causeway was put in and that cut off like the natural lobster breeding grounds. So that cut off that connection to the bay so when the time comes in, like before the tide would come in and a lot of the pressure went into that part. So where that's closed off, you know, the pressure of the bay has the ripple around here. And I know that has a lot to do with part of the erosion.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:25:30] Yeah. It sounds like there's some challenges again with the erosion, water, yep, you know, rising waters. What is this called, the bay?

Plansowes Dana [00:25:39] This is Passamaquoddy Bay.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:25:42] Passamaquoddy Bay, thank you. And all the challenges. So that's what we're trying to draw attention to.

Plansowes Dana [00:25:48] Yeah. So the drinking water, I want to say during the pandemic really put a spotlight on our drinking water issue and I work for our Wabanaki Public Health and we came up with a, I put it together called the Paper Project. I don't know if I told you about that? So I put together this colored paper project for elders to signal to us how they were doing daily. So if they all just had a green color in their window, then that they're good, they're fine. And then if they had a yellow paper in their window, it signaled they needed supplies, you know, if they needed food or any cleaning supplies or water. But mainly it was water. So I was running daily filling up water for elders. So we came up with the colored paper project and the water project, and that really put a spotlight on the water issue here in the community. And the elders would also signal red if they wasn't feeling well or blue. I only seen a couple blue like blue, I need someone to talk to, sad and depressed or whatnot. I need a connection. But I came with that up with that in the beginning of the pandemic, and I based it off of a sister community in New Brunswick, and they were doing that for their community, and I modified it to work in this community. And the main request was water.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:27:07] Wow.

Plansowes Dana [00:27:08] So once people heard that I was doing water and they started calling me the water taxi or the water goddess, and they had all these different names for me. So I was stuck. I was serving not just elders, but I was serving families without vehicles because transportation is another issue here. I mean, there's not a lot of, there's a lot of families without a vehicle. And the closest place for good water was like ten miles up the way and some families were paying people like \$10 to drive 'em over there and fill up their stuff. And, you know, so that was hard on families. Yeah. You know, and then during a pandemic, nobody wanted to drive anybody around.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:27:51] And nobody knew what was happening.

Plansowes Dana [00:27:53] Right. So I ended up taxing a lot of water.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:27:58] So aside from that, which is incredibly important service, the water, right, that you supported, like I think your food sovereignty and those ideas around having a lot of food available was probably really, really good, right during the pandemic, I would imagine, because that's something that people were thinking about, like, my gosh, how am I going to get food. What am I going to do?

Plansowes Dana [00:28:17] Yeah, that was a real, people were really scared about that because, you know, as everybody all knows, when the pandemic hit, the shelves empty, emptied out, and, you know, toilet paper was a mystery to me because if you don't have food to eat, I mean.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:28:32] It was weird.

Plansowes Dana [00:28:33] It was weird. The toilet paper thing.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:28:35] It was really weird.

Plansowes Dana [00:28:36] People have a feeling they're going to shit themselves.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:28:38] Well, that's the thing. I told my kids. I said, Here, I've got a bag of mismatched socks and this is what we're going to use when we're going to get something. They're like, No, well we can't get toilet paper right now so get ready. We didn't have to resort to that. Well, it was yeah,.

Plansowes Dana [00:28:56] It was strange, but it did. It put a focus on and like people were like, What are we going to do? And then I've been growing food all my life, and I had a program here from 2013 to 18 with food sovereignty, getting people going. And at that point, we had like 105 families growing gardens in like raised by gardens and a few inground gardens. But we put out 105 raised bed gardens and we helped people do in-ground gardens and then that program went away but then when the pandemic hit, tribal government was like, we need to help. There's people that want to grow, how can you help us? And I'll help you in any way I can. Yeah. So it kind of like kick started people again, like food is important because, you know, if anything happens to the supermarkets, you got 3 or 4 days, five tops in the supermarket worth of food and then what do you do next?

Julie Kuchepatov [00:29:53] Tell us more about your work at the Gulf of Maine Research Institute.

Plansowes Dana [00:29:56] Well, my focus really, because I'm more immersed, more familiar with food security and food sovereignty. Like, that's part of like my main focus and my main goal. Yeah. But also climate change and impact and how can we connect the tribe with GMRI on funding aspects or how to help each other resolve some of these issues along the coastline and other things or like inland tribes with access to waterways for fishery, for saltwater fisheries. And there's other things, you know, like the green crab is invasive and another invasive species that we're kind of looking at, well, not kind of, but definitely looking at it is Emerald Ash Borer.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:30:38] I'm sorry, the.

Plansowes Dana [00:30:39] Emerald ash borer.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:30:41] Is that a tree?

Plansowes Dana [00:30:41] It's an ash tree. And there's four types, white, brown, green, and black ash. And our people make baskets from the brown ash tree so that Emerald ash borer has come in and then destroying the ash tree. And so they're really monitoring that.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:31:00] What is the challenge you faced in this work?

Plansowes Dana [00:31:02] It definitely takes time building partnerships especially with the Wabanaki communities, because a lot of people have come in and, you know, promised a lot of things and it's been really an extractive relationship where they come in and take what they need and go and then.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:31:18] Right, right.

Plansowes Dana [00:31:19] You know, so it takes time to build trust. There's this one quote that I really like since I started working at GMRI, it's "move at the speed of trust."

Julie Kuchepatov [00:31:29] "Moving at the speed of trust" is a principle from Adrienne Maree Brown's Principles of Emergent Strategy, which we will link to in the show notes.

Plansowes Dana [00:31:37] So I really like that because you can't rush that relationship.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:31:41] No.

Plansowes Dana [00:31:41] Especially with people who have historically been just taken from and taken from and taken from without any give back.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:31:52] What's your hope for the future?

Plansowes Dana [00:31:53] We're having to adapt to climate change now. How are we going to adapt? How are people going to adapt? How are we going to grow food? How are we going to fish? How is it going to affect and how do we make the changes?

Julie Kuchepatov [00:32:05] I think that's the question everyone's struggling with, right?

Plansowes Dana [00:32:08] Yeah.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:32:08] How are we going to adapt?

Plansowes Dana [00:32:10] You know, and that's a big question and it's not something that can be solved in a day or maybe not even in our lifetime, but something needs to change.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:32:20] When I've asked this question of others, some have said that they have hope in the children that they will solve these problems.

Plansowes Dana [00:32:27] That's a real heavy burden to put on kids, you know.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:32:30] You're absolutely right.

Plansowes Dana [00:32:32] Like, why does it have to be the children? Why isn't it the adults? Right. Why are adults putting it on the children? Well, you know, it has to be us now. Yeah. You know, yes, it's their future, but.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:32:47] Why do we put the burden on them?

Plansowes Dana [00:32:48] Why do we put the burden on them when the burden's ours?

Julie Kuchepatov [00:32:50] Right.

Plansowes Dana [00:32:51] So there's a saying that, you know, we didn't inherit the land from our ancestors, that we borrowed it from our children.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:33:00] Yeah. No. Yeah, that's a good one.

Plansowes Dana [00:33:03] So what can we do now?

Julie Kuchepatov [00:33:05] Yeah. And I think that's part of what this whole conversation that we're trying to have with people is about is what's happening now and what are people doing now? Because, you know, we can't wait.

Plansowes Dana [00:33:18] Right. And I think growing your own food in your backyard is a good start. Is a good start. You're not having.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:33:26] I agree.

Plansowes Dana [00:33:27] Food shipped from God knows from where and what kind of chemicals are on it. And how long long's it been sitting there and ,you know, right now I can walk out of the garden and eat fresh strawberries, fresh herbs, lettuce, peas. Carrots are a little small, but if I needed to, I could pull them.

Cameron Moore [00:33:47] Throughout our conversations in Maine for this podcast series, several recurring themes emerged. A significant one was the social license granted to predominantly white older lobstermen who historically have had access to Maine's commercial fisheries. This privilege stands in stark contrast to the experience of women of color who are trying to break into the state's growing aquaculture industry. People also talked about the gentrification of coastal communities and the lack of affordable housing and NIMBYism, which prohibits access to working waterfronts and waterways. This sits in stark contrast to a conversation with Plansowes and Joseph, members of the Passamaquoddy tribe, whose ancestors were forced off their ancestral land. According to Passamaquoddypeople.com, "Within 200 years after the establishment of the first non-Indian settlements in the region, the Passamaquoddy Tribe had been reduced by war and disease to a fraction of its former size, and a census taken in 1812 enumerated only 360 persons. By the mid 1830s, the Passamaquoddy Tribe had been deprived of almost all its Aboriginal territory." End quote. These acts of violence, along with the reservation system, are clear tools of colonial oppression and genocide against native tribes. So how do these historical injustices tie into the climate change conversations we've been having?

Crystal Sanders-Alvarado [00:35:07] Colonialism has long been a driver of environmental exploitation and degradation, both in Maine and across the globe. According to The Guardian in an article coauthored by Benjamin Neimark, a senior lecturer at Queen Mary, University of London, in the first months of the Palestinian genocide, quote, "more planet warming gases were produced than 20 climate vulnerable nations do in a year," end quote. According to the study, which is "based on only a handful of carbon intensive activities and is therefore probably a significant underestimate and was equivalent to burning at least 150,000 tons of coal." End quote. These effects of violence on the environment reflect a pattern seen throughout history. Wherever colonialism thrives, the Earth and its marginalized people suffer most. To build a future capable of withstanding the immense challenges posed by the climate crisis, we must first acknowledge and address our colonial, genocidal, white supremacist, and patriarchal past and present. It is only by confronting these intertwined forces of oppression that we can create a more just, equitable, and sustainable world where we are capable of addressing the global climate emergency we are already experiencing.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:36:13] What do you love about living in this area?

Plansowes Dana [00:36:17] Bay. The best. The bay. The ocean. There's something that is just so healing about living on the water like we are part of the water. You know this is just a part of who we are. We. Our people are named for people who spear the pollack. And I,

like I grew up right here and I didn't realize how soothing the bay was to me as this was my playground where I played, where I swam. This is where I harvested some of my food and I went to boarding school in high school. And when I went to high school, I had insomnia. Couldn't sleep in high school. And I couldn't figure it out while I was in high school. But in my early 20s, you know, after I was home and I was, you know, back here and it was the bay. It was the crashing of the waves. It was listening to that bell buoy that put me to sleep every night. And I was like, just, you know, that was my white noise that helped me sleep. And there's just so much healing power in salt water. And when I was probably 15, there are called <unintelligible>, medicine people from South America came up to do peyote ceremonies with the people, and they had never seen the ocean before when they came in they were just rubbing it all over their body because they said it was just so healing for them. And they sat here and watched the tide for hours. And, you know, they even took some of the water back with them. But they said there's a lot of medicinal purposes of salt water. And, and we've always known that, too. Like I said, the tide comes in and out twice a day, you know, the dinner table was set, you know.

Julie Kuchepatov [00:38:03] Exactly.

Plansowes Dana [00:38:04] It's just it's so beautiful here and pristine. Like, I can't imagine living without the ocean. Like, there's a lot of things I could live without, but I can't live without the ocean.

Cameron Moore [00:38:14] If you like what you heard here, we encourage you to head over to our website linked in the show notes to listen to the companion piece to this podcast called Out of Hot Water, where we further our conversations into access, Land Back, and social license.

Crystal Sanders-Alvarado [00:38:27] Thank you for joining us for In Hot Water, a Climate and Seafood podcast by Seaworthy and SAGE. Let us know what you think by leaving us a review on your favorite podcast platforms. And don't forget to share with your seafaring friends. In Hot Water is a production of Seaworthy and Seafood and Gender Equality, or SAGE. Soundtrack generously provided by Mia Pixley. Audio Production, editing, and sound design by Crystal Sanders-Alvarado and the team at Seaworthy.