

Smokii Sumac (interviewer) ([00:08](#)):

This is the ʔasqanaki Podcast where we tell two versions of the same story. Here on ʔasqanaki, we understand that colonisation is the breaking of relationships. It is our original instructions to hold relationships at the centre of everything. Whether that be relationships to our lands, waters, children, plants, animals, or to each other. In the spirit of respect for our relations, I send out a prayer for ʔa-kxaṁis qapi qapsin , all living things. I hope that you, our listeners, are finding space to breathe, rest, and find joy and pleasure today. May this episode bring you something needed.

Greyson Gritt ([01:01](#)):

This episode contains conversations about birth. Babies. Bundle-keeping. Adoption. Indigenous futurism. The Sixties Scoop. Foster care. Mother-child relationships. Grief. Loss. Kinship. Umbilical cords. Parenting. Agency. Afro-Indigenous identity. Cultural appropriation. Homecoming. The Indigenous Voices Awards. Therapy. Ceremony. Indigenous aunties. Cultural teachings. Challenging traditions, and the gender binary. Two-spirit teachings. Liberation, love and power. If you are impacted by any of the following content, please be gentle with yourself and reach out to someone safe for support. You are not alone. Thank you for listening to the ʔasqanaki Podcast.

Tasha Spillett-Sumner ([01:45](#)):

I loved you before I met you. Before I held you in my arms, I sang you down from the stars. As I search for your eyes in the sky I saw a shooting star. I followed it to a fluffy, white, eagle plume. I held onto it, the first gift in a bundle that will be yours. Summer was fading into fall, on the day I found out you had chosen to make my body your first home.

([02:17](#)):

We went together, cedar and sage, medicines that will keep our spirits strong through the winter. When you are old enough, I will teach you how to use them. Into your bundle they go. As the north wind blew, you grew bigger and stronger. Waiting for you taught me about patience and love. With care in my hands, I sewed you your first star blanket. With each stitch I whispered a prayer for you and thought about wrapping you up warm and safe just like you are now in my belly. Into your bundle it goes.

Smokii Sumac (interviewer) ([03:01](#)):

Today's episode means a lot to me as an adoptee. You just heard our guest, Tasha Spillett-Sumner, reading from her children's book, I Send You Down from the Stars. This book is an incredible gift to this world, and I hope that after listening you go out and get a few copies for the children and babies in your life. I Sing You Down From The Stars offers us teachings about indigenous birth, babies and bundle-keeping.

([03:25](#)):

What strikes me is that Tasha honours the birth of her child in this book, in such a way that I can see both future and past. I believe this is how we as indigenous peoples have always honoured birth, since the time of our emergence stories tell us that we came to the earth. I also see this as a moment leading to futures where our births will be honoured in the same ways.

([03:47](#)):

This is important to me, as my birth mother was taken during the Sixties Scoop and when she became pregnant with me, was put into a home for unwed mothers. There she had the traumatic experience of

placing me up for adoption. In recent years, my adoptive family has given me my adoption papers, and I learned that I was in foster care for those early days, weeks, and months of my life as a newborn.

[\(04:10\)](#):

Tasha's book is important because it reminds us that despite the numerous stories of loss and devastation in an indigenous country, when it comes to birth, there is love and power in that space between pregnancy and a child coming earth side. There is love and power between a mother and child. And in many of our teachings, we are told that when we are still spirits in the stars, we look down and choose our paths. I Sing You Down From The Stars reminds me of that power and love, and for that I am deeply grateful to Tasha and her work.

[\(04:48\)](#):

I met Tasha at the Indigenous Voices Awards or IVAS ceremony in 2019, where we were both recognised for our work. Tasha won an IVA in the alternative-format category for her graphic novel, Surviving the City. For those unfamiliar with the IVAS, they're an important award born out of conversations around cultural appropriation. Quite a few years ago there was a Twitter debate about cultural appropriation. And some high-profile Canadians, including journalists from McLean's and the National Post, started supporting this idea of a cultural appropriation award, which would essentially honour white writers for appropriating BIPOC stories. Of course, they were called out quickly and there were a few apologies made. I believe at least one resignation happened as well.

[\(05:33\)](#):

All of that said, this is the climate that the Indigenous Voices Awards was born from. Rather than keeping in honouring appropriation, there were crowdfunders that set out to uphold indigenous voices, and the first awards were sponsored by a campaign that raised over \$25,000. I share this story because it connects to the heart of our podcast.

[\(05:54\)](#):

Dr. Adrian Keen, who now co-hosts her own podcasts, All My Relations with Matika Wilber, was one of the first to teach me in her blog, NativeAppropriations.com that, "Representation matters." We see this honoured through the Indigenous Voices Awards. And before I move on to my discussion with Tasha, I want to let you know that if you're looking for the latest indigenous literature, this is a great place to start. Check out IndigenousVoicesAwards.org for more.

[\(06:24\)](#):

I Sing You Down From The Stars spoke to something that came up in my episode with Richard Van Camp as well. I've been doing work with my inner children as so many of us in therapy do. And as Richard asked me about, I had once been asked by a therapist to, "Pick up the crying, angry baby inside me." At the time I felt like I couldn't do this. I was sure babies shouldn't be so angry.

[\(06:49\)](#):

Richard gifted me with a sweater to wear when I need to feel held. That's what Tasha's book has also given me, a story to read to my inner baby. A baby the foster mother noted was always hungry. A story for me to be held by, surrounded by. To know that when I chose to come earth side from the stars that my spirit knew what it was doing.

[\(07:15\)](#):

The story I want to tell you today is about adapting our practises. Tasha told me that she once had someone ask her about this book, "What if we adopted our Children?" Now in my beliefs, we can still sing adopted children down from the stars and into our families. In my teachings, we can honour each

other as family regardless of blood, kinship ties and the medicine of mothering and parenting, and praying for our babies can look all kinds of ways.

(07:46):

Years ago as I was just beginning to ask these questions as an indigenous adoptee, I was learning about umbilical-cord practises. One thing I want to say here is that I was once in a conversation about this, where a few aunties and older folks kept saying, "That's not how we do things." And yet they were also not quite teaching us how we should do things.

(08:08):

At the time I spoke up to say that, "I believe whatever a mother does for their child in love is a strong practise. Whether it's a specific teaching from your own nation, or whether it was something you were taught by someone in another territory because your family was removed." For the soon to be mothers and parents out there, I see you and I believe that whatever practise you bring into your child's life, whatever small action or song you can gift them, there is no wrong in that prayer. Thank you for bringing us new beings to love and protect. Thank you for choosing to become a parent to parents of all genders and of course to our mothers.

Tasha Spillett-Sumner (08:58):

As the ice began to melt, we visited the river. When our people travel the waterways, the song of the rushing rapids calls us home. I picked up a small stone for you, so that you always remember you belong to this place. Into your bundle it goes. You arrived in the spring, with the waters that come when the ice breaks and the rivers flow again. For the first time after our long wait, I looked down at you and found stars in your eyes. Our hearts danced together. I honoured your journey from the sky, by passing on the gifts I had gathered for you. This my baby, is your sacred-medicine bundle.

Smokii Sumac (interviewer) (09:45):

Hello and welcome to the ʔasqanaki Podcast. So grateful to have you here, Tasha. In the intro, I mentioned that we met at the Indigenous Voices Awards. I wanted to start by asking what that award has meant to you as an Afro-Indigenous writer?

Tasha Spillett-Sumner (10:00):

I'm so glad that we met that evening. And I'm so glad that you've been a part of my life since and thank you for having me on your podcast. And so when I think of the time that we met, I have to acknowledge that I was pregnant at that award ceremony and didn't realise it. I laugh thinking back because I definitely finished that night with a drive-through McDonald's visit in the cab. If that was not my first sign that I was pregnant, I guess that was my first sign.

(10:37):

But definitely being at that event, more so I would say than winning, is being at that event surrounded by other indigenous authors really felt like a homecoming to me. Or when you first find you're like, "These are my people." I think there's something about storytellers and storykeepers that we just understand each other. We understand the process that takes to bring a story into being and how that process can be beautiful. I think that's what others outside might see, but we know that it can be messy and it can be a painful process too.

(11:28):

And so definitely I think especially as an Afro-Indigenous author who has sometimes felt like an outsider insider in a lot of ways as I navigate different parts of our communities, that I didn't feel at all as an outsider there. I definitely felt as a deeply-woven part of that community, which was new for me. And something that I continue to recognise either that I feel it or that I don't feel it in the different spaces that I've gone in after that.

Smokii Sumac (interviewer) ([12:08](#)):

Thank you for sharing that. I think I can completely agree with finding a home in indigenous literature, and that's part of why I'm focusing so much on storytellers and writers in this podcast, as well as musicians. I think when I first went to the Native American Literature Symposium in New Mexico actually was when I sort of had that moment of, oh, if I mention indigenous writers, people know who I'm talking about here and that connection.

([12:39](#)):

I think that the Indigenous Voices Words, I like that you said, "Just being there more so than winning." Because I think that the IVAS really allows space for that where we all got to read. It wasn't just about the winner is, and so there's this celebration of everybody there and it does feel like a family.

([12:57](#)):

That homecoming is so important to me and it's such a theme of this work, because as I've shared on many of these episodes, I am an indigenous adoptee. I chose this book because I'm often looking for what it means to be connected to our indigeneity from birth. As an example, I remember being at a ceremony with Potawatomi relations in what we now know as Wisconsin. I saw this young baby, like a little baby where his mom was holding him up and letting him look into the sweat lodge. I remember being like, "Wow, what is that baby going to be like? How is that connection so young when I had not been around ceremony until my mid, late twenties.

([13:41](#)):

And so I think about this connection to the medicine and how long it took me and for myself, I just imagine a beautiful future for that child and beautiful futures for all Afro-Indigenous children. I am wondering if you can speak to what it's like to honour the babies and children in this way in your story from even before birth. Just that reconnection to these understandings.

Tasha Spillett-Sumner ([14:08](#)):

I was very intentional in becoming a mother. I knew that I wanted this baby, and so I took that intention into ceremony to ask for her to come forward. My pregnancy came at a very tender time in our lives. I became pregnant a little bit over a month after my partner lost his mother, for whom my daughter is the namesake of.

([14:40](#)):

And he says, "Creator never leaves an empty space." While we were swirling in that grief, we found out that we were pregnant with our girl, Izzy. I feel like in the book what I try to convey most, is that those connections are strong and they are long and expansive. I truly believe that when children come into this world, that they come with their agency and their sovereignty fully intact, that they've chosen to step forward into this life. Then it's our job here on the receiving end, to do what we can do to make their walk here the most gentle and most fulfilling for them.

([15:30](#)):

I wrote from my position as a mother who chose to have a child, and then I had a child and I wrote from that experience. I'm blessed to have a healthy, happy baby, but I also know those parts don't fit like puzzle pieces in every story. Where a mother, a person wants to have a child. They get pregnant. They have the baby, and then they live this life together.

[\(15:55\)](#):

And so after writing this story, I was then asked by different community members to think about how this understanding, that children choose to come into this world in an active agency, works when the story is not so A, B, C, D and there is different juncture points in a person's life. I'm grateful for the ways that this story has asked me and required of me, to open my brain and my heart in different ways to think of other people's experiences.

[\(16:34\)](#):

I'm just thinking of this time when I was caught off guard. I was on a Zoom reading of the book, and somebody popped up in the Q&A and they asked like, "Well, how does this story relate if a child is an adopted child?" And I had to think about it. I was like, "Oh, okay. Well how does this teaching that this story carries about how children come to be in this world, how does that connect with people who have been adopted?"

[\(17:01\)](#):

I feel a shame, I guess, that I hadn't pre-thought of that, but I'm glad that I did because I do know that our teachings are not singular. They're so diverse and fluid and can change and mould to accept people as they come to the teaching, including children who have been adopted, children who come home to their families in different ways. And so I do still believe that it is still an act of sovereignty for every child to choose their life path.

[\(17:36\)](#):

It's the adults on this and it's us who have to just work harder and do better to ensure that we're that soft place to land for the guides that we have to be for children. It's a tough role to be in, that role of parent to caregiver. But I do think that that was my intention in writing the book is to think about parenting. To think about caregiving in a way that supports children to grow in the love that we know they entered the world with.

Smokii Sumac (interviewer) [\(18:10\)](#):

Thank you. I think there's so much there. What I love about the book, when I think about that idea of the sacred-baby bundle, first of all, for us to honour that bundle and take care of that baby is our original instructions. I like that you challenge us to be better in the ways that we hold that space. But I also think that when I think about you gathering that bundle, I think and I will share a story later on in this episode, where I think that adoptive families can do that as well. I think that there's a space to create that bundle for a child and I think there's ways to honour.

[\(18:49\)](#):

One of the amazing things happening in my community is my ceremony leader has been opening the invites to non-indigenous foster parents to come to ceremony with their kids or on their own even to help connect. That's not maybe right for every space there is, but I think there's a space there to say that because you're raising our children, we want you to learn and we want you to be connected to our community.

[\(19:17\)](#):

I really appreciate that these teachings about bundles in there. I guess I wanted to ask, I've been taught a lot about different things about bundles, and I wanted to ask because when I share indigenous knowledge, I'm always nervous and thinking of aunties and all of this kind of thing. And so can you share a bit more about how you've learned these teachings? Also, what it's like to become the teacher and gifting it through this book and how did you make some of those choices?

Tasha Spillett-Sumner ([19:45](#)):

It all starts with my mother. But my mom did the heavy lifting in terms of returning our family back to understandings of who we are. And so because of her work, my sister and I grew up pretty steeped in our cultural teachings. I'm grateful for that because I don't know different. I don't have a different experience. This is just how my core information was received to me and it comes through many, many different people.

[\(20:21\)](#):

I think about sitting in ceremony as a little person like my daughter's age and just kind of playing around, but you're still learning because you're still hearing. I think that knowledge is the seeds that we drop into the ground in the spring. We kind of don't know when it's going to pop up, but when it pops up, it's something great and something to be celebrated.

[\(20:48\)](#):

The specific teaching around how children come into the world was shared with me under the mentorship of aunties, which we know can be loving and gentle but can also be stern. And so you mentioned the sharing of indigenous knowledge. I have aunties for whom I would think that the sharing of these teachings in this book is not completely appropriate. And it can be a very uncomfortable and difficult space to go in an alternate direction than the people who you've received instruction from. It's something that I've done carefully and a little bit cautiously in this book and my other books as well.

[\(21:31\)](#):

I do remember hearing this person say about connecting ceremonies with technology, like the sharing of parts of different ceremonies online or in social media. I remember this person saying, "How are the young people supposed to find it if we continue to hide in the bush?" For me, it's most important that the knowledge be accessible, that it be at people's fingertips. That it require personal work, but it not be withheld and it not be hidden.

[\(22:07\)](#):

Because young people who are just being born, but people who are still making their way home, desperately need it. And so we need to make it as easy as possible for them to be able to reach for it, to help them through the times that we're in and it's their birthright. Like you said, the foster parents, the non-indigenous foster parents who are caring for indigenous children, it's their responsibility to do that work. To make it easier or more accessible for the children in their care, to access understandings of who they are and where they come from.

Smokii Sumac (interviewer) ([22:41](#)):

Thank you. I agree with all of that. I think even in this podcast, I've started to share stories that need to be shared, and I recognise that conversation about technology has happened in my community as well. I think one of the things that I'm learning, is that for our elders, they were taught that in order to protect the sacred it had to be secret. It had to go underground.

[\(23:07\)](#):

And so there's still these remnants of that happening, but I have many leaders in my community now and in my life that are saying, "It's now at this moment that if we keep it secret, it won't continue. We have to start sharing it to allow that knowledge to grow and come out of that space." I'm really grateful to hear you talk about these teachings, and I think many of the people I have on this series are doing the same thing.

[\(23:36\)](#):

I mean, Richard Van Camp is sharing teachings, and I'm grateful that we're stepping into this space of allowing these teachings to come however they'll come. I think for me, knowing that your book is going out there and connecting to these children, it's such a gift. Well, I want to say that many of my siblings, it's their favourite book.

[\(23:58\)](#):

I also wanted to ask, so you did mention your other work and I wanted to let you know that Richard Van Camp, who I've just mentioned, speaks so highly of the graphic novels. He was like, "Have you read the second one yet?" And he was just pushing it and I said, "Okay, I'm so grateful to pick it up." And so I wanted to just say while we're on here, to let the listeners know a bit more about your other works and anything upcoming that you'd like them to know about.

Tasha Spillett-Sumner [\(24:22\)](#):

Oh, that's so nice to hear. I will say that my own child would rather read a Richard Van Camp book than one of mine. Richard is quite popular at bedtime in our house, so that's really lovely to hear. I do have a couple more picture books coming out. One that was just released called Beautiful You, Beautiful Me, which explores the different dynamics of families, especially when children start to notice that they might not match or present the same as their parents. Which was huge for me growing up as an Afro-Indigenous child with an indigenous and mixed settler mom raised outside of the community that some people might code me more as. That's a big one and the main character is named for my daughter.

[\(25:11\)](#):

I also have another one called Ravens Ribbons coming out, which I haven't spoken about very much. But it is about pushing back against gender protocols in our spaces, and ensuring that people are welcomed and celebrated, and their own body sovereignty is respected in those spaces. It's a children's book about what happens when our young people push back or challenge those protocols that have been entrenched in not forever, but have been entrenched in our communities for quite some time.

[\(25:50\)](#):

That one is a little bit more attached to my doctoral work on understanding how gender operates with an indigenous, land-based education. I wanted to find a way to mobilise that knowledge and those conversations that I had with the research participants, in ways outside of my dissertation, which I realised that very limited people will read. Then the graphic novels that Richard spoke about. So the Surviving the City series, it's a three-part series. Two are on the market right now, and the third is near completion. It's written. It's just being illustrated right now.

[\(26:27\)](#):

That one is the one, I'm not sure if you feel this Smokii, but when you put something out there and you're like, "Oh, small, what are people going to say?" Because in that one I went a little bit more, I didn't mince words around the harm that happens when we refuse to challenge gender binaries within our cultural ceremonies in our communities.

[\(26:56\)](#):

I was a little bit nervous about what the conversation would be after the release of especially the second volume of the Surviving the City series. It's been really positive. Either really traditionalist people and elders, stricter elders have not read it, or they think that it's time. It's time to really liberate ourselves from the colonial-gender binary, which has taken so many and taken so much from our communities.

Smokii Sumac (interviewer) ([27:33](#)):

Thank you for that work. I feel privileged often to be Ktunaxa, to come from a nation where when I went home, I had spent some time out east with Nahiow and Anishinaabe people. And so I came home and went, "Fo we have to wear certain things?"

([27:48](#)):

I started to ask questions about this gender binary, and we're a very small nation. What I learned was essentially when we show up at ceremony and they're like, "We never judge anyone in what they're wearing. People come and they come and wear whatever they want. We don't ask that." There are specific roles that usually men and women held, but my chief said to me that he's never... How did he put it? He said, "It's not our place to tell someone what their role is. So if a woman wanted to go to war, she was allowed to go to war. Not even allowed, she told them she was going and she went." And we have some very, very strong people in our stories that did go to war and do that.

([28:35](#)):

Then also, if a man wanted to cook or if wanted to be part of a different society, we call them, then that was welcome. I think this work is so important to challenge those conversations. Then the other favourite story for me about that is that when I started to ask about what being two-spirit meant in [inaudible 00:28:52] understandings, the late Herman Alpine, he started speaking and he sort of said to me, "Well," he said, "I used to think I was that way because of what happened to me in those schools." I remember it was pretty hard to hear and hear him talk about this. And then he said he went to a conference in Vancouver and he heard someone talking about two-spirit people and how they used to be leaders and how they lived next to chiefs. And they were all these sort of things that we hear about two-spirit people and he said, "When I walked out of there, I felt like it was okay."

([29:25](#)):

I thought it was so powerful in this moment. And as he was talking, one of the aunties was like, "Ugh." And I was like, "Oh no." They have a rule in our elders group that everyone gets to finish talking. He finished talking. I was very emotional listening to this, and then I gestured over and said, "auntie, do you have something to add?" And she went, "Yeah. It's not like that. You're not special, you're just Ktunaxa."

([29:51](#)):

I have to just hold that space of what a gift that was from both of them. But this idea of two-spirit people, I think we are doing this balancing by recognising the medicines of two-spirit people again. Yet I always tell two-spirit youth that our aunties tell us, "We're not anything until we do something. How are we upholding our responsibilities to community?" I do love that you're not special, you're just Ktunaxa. I hope that your work is allowing for that space in your world and in your communities, and I think in all of our communities to push against those conversations because I know in some nations it's more difficult than others.

Tasha Spillet-Sumner ([30:37](#)):

Nobody can humble you like an indigenous hand tasting. Geez.

Smokii Sumac (interviewer) ([30:42](#)):

Exactly. I'm like, "Okay, not special." Yeah, you might talk all over the nation but we don't care here. That's the one I get, which is good.

Tasha Spillett-Sumner ([30:53](#)):

I think it's how I was raised it's like you've got to do the work, and it's not... I think we both came up in the generation of that first indigenous activists. I can think of people from across coast to coast who were the same age as me and like, "Oh, that person is doing this work over there." And it was just that one person.

([31:18](#)):

I think that that was an archetype that was created during that generation of this is the, I know, early renditions of the influencer, I guess. it's a dangerous thing because it really promotes this really ego-based work. I remember my mom always says, "It's your responsibility to do the work. It's your responsibility to serve the people. It's not like a status symbol." Again, indigenous moms also great at humbling you.

Smokii Sumac (interviewer) ([31:51](#)):

Yeah. No, I completely agree with that. I think my ceremony mom was very wary of fame, and so I mean, not that we're authors. We are famous in some circles.

Tasha Spillett-Sumner ([32:03](#)):

We're famous to each other.

Smokii Sumac (interviewer) ([32:05](#)):

We're famous to each other and maybe to a couple of kids out there, your books, you're famous. But I think there was this understanding again, that it's about what you do and how you contribute to community, and that you don't brag about that or you don't walk around, I've always been told that, "We don't say we're elders." I always talk about this with settlers, that you don't say you're an ally or you don't just walk around and say who we are or what we've done in those ways because it's recognised in our community.

([32:42](#)):

Even in Ktunaxa we have people who speak for us. We don't speak for ourselves if we're being recognised. And so I think that that's such an interesting teaching and understanding in this world where we're experts now. I mean, you just submitted the dissertation. Is this right?

Tasha Spillett-Sumner ([32:59](#)):

It's in there.

Smokii Sumac (interviewer) ([33:01](#)):

Wow. Congratulations.

Tasha Spillett-Sumner ([33:02](#)):

It's submitted to committees. Thank you. I mean, it's not done. The thing is not done but the bulk of the writing, it's written. right? Now it just goes to defence or that conversation.

Smokii Sumac (interviewer) ([33:15](#)):

Well, I hope by the time it comes out we can call you doctor.

Tasha Spillett-Sumner ([33:18](#)):

Oh, I hope so too.

Smokii Sumac (interviewer) ([33:21](#)):

Awesome. Awesome. Well, it's been lovely talking to you. Is there anything else you want to share with us or say today?

Tasha Spillett-Sumner ([33:26](#)):

No. I just want to thank you for inviting me to have this conversation. I think about all the people who will be listening, and I hope that the words that I've shared today find them well and that they land gently, and to take what you need and to leave what you don't.

Smokii Sumac (interviewer) ([33:43](#)):

Thank you. I have to say to listeners, go out and get these books for the children in your lives, the youth in your lives. I am so grateful to Tasha for writing children's books and books for young people because I don't, and so it's good to have books to give. My poetry book, when they get a little older we get to pass that one on, so thank you. Hu suki-ᑕᑦᑕᑦᑕᑦ My heart is happy and I look forward to when we get to see each other again.

Tasha Spillett-Sumner ([34:10](#)):

Great. Thank you, friend.

Smokii Sumac (interviewer) ([34:11](#)):

Take care.

Tasha Spillett-Sumner ([34:24](#)):

The fluffy plume I found when I followed the shooting star, is a reminder that there is beauty all around us. We just have to look and see. Medicines of cedar and sage are for you to keep your spirit strong. When you hold the stone from the river, remember that the land carry stories and so do you. Family and friends came from near and far to welcome you. One by one they held you and greeted you. You brought them so much love and joy. I saw that you my baby are also a sacred bundle. You are my baby bundle.

Smokii Sumac (interviewer) ([35:02](#)):

The story I want to share is about umbilical-cord practises. ᑭᑦᑕᑦᑕᑦᑕᑦᑕᑦ. The word for umbilical cord in Ktunaxa, I'm told the word translates to our connection to our mother. For some nations, they bury the umbilical cord. For some, they put it on the roof. I've heard a few funny stories about this, as we have moved to cities and urban living.

[\(35:35\)](#):

For Ktunaxa, it is wrapped and beaded and made into a bundle that we are given when we are old enough so that we always have it with us. I was taught once that if we don't have this honoured, we may always be looking for home. There are ways to find home though. And if you are feeling lost, I can tell you from experience, keep praying. Keep asking. Keep going. You will find family. You will find home.

[\(36:06\)](#):

When I was asking about umbilical cords, my birth mother called me. She told me a funny story about my little sister. She told me that, of course, this question was traumatic because when I was a newborn, I went into foster care and she had no idea what happened to my umbilical cord. She told me that years later when my little sister came, well, first she goes, "You know how we're really smart, but sometimes that means we don't have common sense?" She goes, "You know, I grew up in a British family. We never talked about the body."

[\(36:39\)](#):

And then she tells me one day that she's changing my little sister's diaper and she goes, "What's this, a raisin? Why was somebody trying to feed my baby a raisin?" And she thinks nothing else of it and throws it out with the diaper. Well, my sister's father who is also Ktunaxa comes home. And when my birth mom tells this story, she says, "This is how I knew there was love." Which I love because I think of this all the time. How even if our parents separate down the road at one time, there was love, and that love holds us, creates us, brings us here. In any case, he went digging through the dirty diapers in the garbage to find my little sister's umbilical cord and honour it the Ktunaxa way. I still laugh about that.

[\(37:24\)](#):

In that phone call, I also got to tell my birth mom that my mom I grew up with, my adoptive mom, had found her own way to honour this practise. I share this for all the parents out there who are wondering, how do I honour these practises if I didn't birth my child?

[\(37:42\)](#):

While my mom had honoured this practise with my older sister and she had wanted to honour it with me, but of course didn't have my umbilical cord. It wasn't until I was a little older that she realised she could help with my bundle. When I was a teenager, my mom came to me and gifted me a small, beaded bundle, and she told me that it held my baby teeth.

[\(38:04\)](#):

During this time of asking questions about it, later on I asked her, "How did you know how to do that? Did an elder tell you?" She said, "No. I just thought, what else is part of you that falls off your body like your umbilical cord? And that's when I thought of your baby teeth." And so I got to tell my birth mom that this practise was honoured. Today I honour the wisdom of moms and parents everywhere, whether they be digging through dirty diapers or finding new ways to honour tradition in a world that wants us to forget. Hu sukiꞑꞑukni. Thank you. Our mothers. Thank you, Tasha.

Greyson Gritt [\(38:47\)](#):

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