

# A Conversation with Peter Michael Bauer on Tangentially Speaking

Experimental Anthropologist & Rewilding Expert

Christopher Ryan & Peter Michael Bauer

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Peter Michael Bauer is an internationally known leader in the cultural rewilding movement. For over 20 years he has written and taught about rewilding. He has served as an expert source in multiple academic articles and books on the subject. He is the founder and director of Rewild Portland, a trend setting community based nonprofit.

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**Christopher:** This episode is with Peter Michael Bauer, a really interesting cat.

I met him quite a while ago in a coffee shop in Portland, and then we met again at our mutual friend Justin Alexander's memorial get together.

Yeah, we talked quite a bit about Justin.

If you'd like to fill yourself in on him, there are at least, I think, three episodes that I recorded with Justin in the archives, one in a park in Portland the first time we met and we became friends and I think we recorded another one in Los Angeles a couple of years later and then again in northern Thailand.

I don't know if we were in Chiang Mai or Pai when we recorded that last one and then he went off to Nepal and worked rebuilding a school that had been demolished in an earthquake and then went down into India and sent me a text saying that he was thinking, it was a Facebook message actually, saying that he was thinking of going off with this Sadhu into the caves and live in a cave in the Himalayas and real \*\*\*\*\* asceticism and as I often fell with Justin, I said something kind of fatherly and protective, like, dude, are you sure? You know, you don't want to just, I don't know, just like step back from the edge.

You don't need to be on the edge of the volcano.

You can look over into the crater without dancing on the edge.

Anyway, Never saw him again, never heard from him again and we talk about that a bit in this episode.

Peter met Justin a long time earlier, as you'll hear, at a survival workshop that he was doing in New Jersey and Peter has gone on to found Rewilding Portland, where kids go to learn how to sort of apply ancestral skills in the woods, taking care of themselves, building a fire, building a shelter, you know, the kind of stuff that humans used to all know how to do.

But now there are very few of us who do.

Anyway, Peter's a super interesting guy, and I'm very happy to bring him to your attention.

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Thanks, everybody.

Hope you're well.

Catch you soon.

**Peter:** All right.

At long last, Pete.

Peter and I are finally connecting.

God, thank you for your patience, dude.

Oh, you're welcome.

I've been, you and I have been talking about doing this podcast for what, like 4, four years or something?

**Christopher:** Probably, yeah, maybe even more.

**Peter:** Was it since that we met at Justin's Memorial thing in LA, right?

**Christopher:** Totally.

Actually, I met you in Portland at Stumptown Coffee one time.

I walked up because I saw you there when you were living here and I was like, you're Chris Ryan, right? And you were like, yeah and I was like, hello.

your book and that was that and then and then we met at just we connected at Justin's and then started talking about this and then yeah right yeah I was I think that was almost like that I mean was that like six or seven years ago?

**Peter:** Yeah I'm thinking it might be yeah crazy Yeah, a long time.

Anyway, so we've been talking about doing this podcast.

I remember thinking like, oh, this guy's interesting.

It would be a good podcast and we've tried and every time we connected, I was on my way to Spain or I was headed to the desert in the van or whatever and so this is a really good example of why the Starlink Mini was a good investment.

We can finally do this, even though I'm in the middle of \*\*\*\*\* nowhere, Mexico.

**Christopher:** It's amazing.

**Peter:** Yeah, isn't that crazy? So yeah, I'm glad we finally got a chance to do this. So you have a book, right? Rewild or Die.

**Christopher:** Yeah, I wrote that book when I was like 25.

It was more like a collection of blog entries that I sort of converted into a book, you know?

**Peter:** I see, okay.

**Christopher:** And it was written in like an experimental version of English called E-Prime, where I didn't use the verbs to be, like at all.

So I don't say is, am, were, been, be.

So it's a little weird and also like I didn't cite sources and I consider it like a historical document at this point.

**Peter:** Of your personal history.

**Christopher:** Yeah, exactly.

**Peter:** So what's the reasoning behind not using the most common and essential verb in the language?

**Christopher:** So in the 1920s, there was this group of scientists who were like studying, what was it, like an electron or something? And they were looking at it through different instruments and through one instrument, it looked like a wave and through another instrument, it looked like a particle.

But they couldn't say that it was a particle or was a wave because that would mean that it wasn't the other thing.

**Peter:** Right.

**Christopher:** And so they realized that the English language was limiting in the verb to be because it makes false statements about reality and so they created this whole thing called the general semantics movement.

One of them.

They didn't have enough to do, worrying about quantum physics.

**Peter:** It's like, let's get into semantics as well.

Yeah, sure.

**Christopher:** Yeah.

So part of that was like creating a version of English called E-prime, which eliminated the verb to be and it is interesting because like, if you look at indigenous languages around the world, none of them have the verb to be.

Like there's some like Latin and, or, you know, Romance languages and some Germanic language stuff that came out of like indo-european that have bee like things and Spanish is one of those you know it has like three different to bees Irish has a couple of different ones but you know if you think about like the states of being like in German they even do a thing where they don't say like I am hungry they say I have hunger yeah same as Spanish yeah exactly yeah so there's things like that that kind of like you know that hearken back to a time before you we had the verb to be.

Anyway, it was an experiment.

I don't, it's really hard to do that.

I don't do it anymore because I just think it's, you can't really speak with the kind of authority that people I think are used to with English and so I just don't, I don't really do that.

As an experiment, sometimes I feel like it did make me a better writer in some ways because you can't just rely on the verb.

You have to come up with, you know, other things, similes and stuff.

But then I ended up just using like the word like seems and appears in place of it a lot and that just felt sort of like, I don't know, it just felt weird, red weird.

So anyway, that's.

**Peter:** That might be the nerdiest thing I've ever heard, man.

**Christopher:** Thank you.

**Peter:** Were you doing this in your spoken life as well? Were you like admitting all of your friends?

**Christopher:** My little friend group, we were all sort of into this.

My friend Willem had been the one that inspired it because he had heard about it and there was actually, there's a book called *To Be or Not*, an E-Prime Anthology and it goes into some of the history and some like, you know and yeah, so we didn't, we didn't, we did like some sort of improvisational stuff from time to time where we would try to speak without using it.

But it was kind of involved in the sort of, from 2009 to 2000, or rather, 2007 to 2009 was like the heyday of the Rewild International Forum and part of it, we had like a sub-thread called E-Prime, and people would do this experiment where they would put a sentence like, to be or not, or something that had the verb is in it in some way or form and then the experiment was everybody had to write 5 sentences, rewrite that sentence in five ways that didn't use the verb to be and so that was just kind of a, it was called the E prime sandbox and so we did it, we did it, you know, in that, but it never really took off.

It was sort of an absurd thing to try to attempt.

I still love the idea of it, but you know, it just was not something that was really going to stick, I think.

**Peter:** So was the inspiration connected to the sort of rewilding movement? Was it the idea to change consciousness by way of linguistic changes?

**Christopher:** Absolutely.

Yeah, I was like, how do we rewild English, you know, the language English? And I think that people can, and I think that people are doing that, and there's lots of ways of that.

But in learning other languages, you find out that there's just so much connection to land and reality and different ways of experiencing reality, right? And so if we look at civilization in a context of creating fixed reality or trying to suspend ecosystems into a grain production field, and the idea of weeds, for example, all of the things that we do to control the environments, A lot of the linguistics around that, I think, stem from parts of English and so, yeah, when we were looking at how do we rewild English to make it more place-based, more reality-based, these scientists from the 1920s were already kind of starting to understand that English doesn't project a perception of reality, or at least made it really hard to speak about reality in the context of reality being an ever-changing, fluid thing.

right? Instead of a fixed thing.

Like one of the examples I used in that was you can use it even for like non-violent communication.

Cause like me and my friend who was also very much into E-Prime, we had an argument about Star Wars and I had been a huge fan of Star Wars.

Oh, it just got nerdier.

**Peter:** The layers of nerdiness.

**Christopher:** Yes.

**Peter:** Are you polyamorous as well?

**Christopher:** Yes.

I mean, I am hardwired that way, but I am not in a polyamorous relationship.

**Peter:** And you're living in Portland.

**Christopher:** My God.

OK, all right.

**Peter:** Sorry, go on with this.

**Christopher:** Yeah, I mean, as you can see, yeah, as you can see, there's, I mean, as somebody who is polyamorous and has written about it, I can, see that you sort of can also.

I'm not polyamorous.

You're not.

**Peter:** OK.

No, don't tell me polyamorous that.

**Christopher:** Were you ever non-monogamous in that way?

**Peter:** Oh yeah, non-monogamous, but not polygamous.

**Christopher:** That's how I feel about myself as well.

**Peter:** And now I'm being nerdy.

**Christopher:** Yeah.

But yeah, this idea of like fixed states, of like things not being able to change, there's no fluidity of all of that, you know and so yeah, anyway, that was just part of the language and so yeah, we got in this argument about Star Wars and I was like, Star Wars is a bad movie and he was like, no, Star Wars is a good movie and I was like, is it, we were like, I guess we just have different experiences of reality, but our language doesn't allow us to fully embrace that, right? And so then we started thinking about it in terms of non-violent communication.

We're like, I felt that Star Wars, I didn't like it.

You know, that kind of thing.

Anyway.

**Peter:** Yeah, it's interesting.

Spanish has these reflexive verbs, which I guess English does as well, but in Spanish they're much more, you know, so it's like, So that's literally saying the movie gives me pleasure, right? You can say .

You can say like it is good, but I like how in that sense in Spanish where you're referring to the thing's effect on you rather than the quality of the thing itself, you know?

**Christopher:** Yes, I'm learning.

Irish right now, Irish Gaelic and it's a similar thing where like they have prepositional pronouns.

So like sadness is on you.

Like, you know, that kind of thing.

Or happiness, how would you say that? Ta sasta ort is like happiness is on me.

You know, that kind of thing.

Right.

**Peter:** Which definitely accentuates the sense that it's a transitional state.

**Christopher:** Exactly.

**Peter:** Yeah, exactly.

Yeah, interesting.

So you, I mean, obviously you're a very thoughtful guy.

You are experiencing things through your mind very much.

What got you, I remember, I think it was you, were telling me a story.

You met Justin Alexander at a camp or something when you were kids and you told me some story about him climbing a tree and Like jumping out of the tree or something? Tell me that story again.

**Christopher:** So yeah, I met Justin.

I ran away from home when I was 16 after reading Ishmael and Tom Brown Jr and I, because I thought at that point, what good is a high school diploma going to be? Like I got to learn to survive the apocalypse.

My parents were like, you're crazy.

So I just ran away from home, dropped out of high school and I started couch surfing, saving up money, bagging groceries so I could go to this summer camp in New Jersey at the tracker school and so me and I convinced three of my friends to go.

We took a Greyhound across the country.

We get there and I'd been listening to bootleg audio cassette tapes of John Young's Seeing Through Native Eyes like on a Walkman and on the first night we were there, we did a blindfold drum stock and I hear this voice talking with the blindfold on and I'm like, oh \*\*\*\* like it's John Young, you know? And the next day he's there and he's like helping teach.

Tom Brown didn't show up at all that week, but John Young, who was, you know, his apprentice throughout his own childhood was there and his apprentice, he had two apprentices, Justin Alexander and Donnega Murdoch, who ended up also writing a book about her experiences with that and so yeah, that was where I met Justin and the first time I saw him, he came out and lit a hand drill fire for our big fire for this camp in eight seconds and I just remember like jaw-dropping because I had just learned how to do hand drill right before I came out there and hand drill was a lot more challenging than the bow drill and he did it just boom, in eight seconds.

**Peter:** Wow.

**Christopher:** And I just was like, oh my God, like I want to know this person and then we played like this scout game and in the scout game, you know, we're all camouflaged, sneaking around and Justin like drops out of a tree behind me and gets my throat with like a red piece of chalk or whatever and runs away and I was like, I was like, damn, this guy's awesome.

And, over time we found out we were from the same town and actually we had the same secret spot.

So for the year before I went out to this camp, I was hanging out in this place across the street from Nike World Headquarters.

That's this big undeveloped forest and when I started telling him about it, he was like, I'm from there.

That's my sit spot before I moved up here to be in Washington.

You know, at that point he was living with John in Washington and yeah, so we just became friends and then I went up to an art of mentoring, you know, and he just was sort of like this, you know, obviously, you know, he was fearless to a fault and one of the first things I ever saw him do was this stunt I spoke about this too.

I interviewed Tom McElroy and talked to him about going and tracking down or looking for Justin in India.

But so I've told this story a few times and one of the things that there was an arborist there.

The arborist climbs this tree and the arborist was built like a \*\*\*\*\* gorilla.

I mean, he was just huge upper body, crazy huge, tiny legs, you know and he climbs this tree.

It's a 60 foot tall cedar tree and he's like, I want to show you this trick and he jumps out of the tree and he free falls down the tree trunk.

Like he's maybe like two or three feet just from the trunk itself and he's catching the branches as he goes to slow himself down.

He falls out of the bottom of the tree and he lands like a ninja, hands up like this or some sort of like on the ground and Justin is, at this point, 18 maybe and his eyes just like explode and he's like, I'm going to do this and the guy's like, cool, I'll show you how to do it and everybody's like, this is probably a bad idea.

I mean, there's like 100 people here, right? And he climbs the tree with this guy and everybody's like, please don't do this.

is like a bad idea.

Or like, start from lower and Justin's like, no, I can do this.

Like they climb to the top of this tree and the guy, he's explaining how to do it.

He does it again.

The guy jumps out, free falls next to the trunk, lands on the ground, right? Justin's like, I mean, you know, he was always athletic.

So he's muscular.

He's like a competent, you know, physically and everything.

But then he jumps and he jumps like 10 feet from the trunk of the tree.

Oh, no.

So he's not close to any navigable branches to, and immediately flips upside down.

Everybody gasps.

We're like, you know, and there he goes.

He's falling like time slows down and everybody, I mean, everybody's just like, he's \*\*\*\*\* dead right there, you know and he just falls and he comes out of the canopy, which was about, you know, is trimmed to be about 10 feet up.

He falls out of there and you can see he's like holding on to one of these cedar branches, which I later learned can hold up to 450 pounds of pressure.

Oh, it's cedar withy, even the thin ones, right? So it was nice that it was a cedar tree because those things don't break easily.

So he had his hand on a cedar tree and he was just holding on for dear life.

But underneath this tree, the understory had been completely cleared and it was, so it was empty all the way around.

But in one little spot, there was a smile, a small pile of rocks, just about a foot by a foot and his head hits this pile of rocks and everybody's just still frozen, you know, but he bounces up immediately and he's like, I'm okay, I'm okay, I'm fine, I'm fine and just this wave of blood just like comes down from his hairline, you know, and just covers his face completely and so, everybody's doing stuff.

There's like acupuncturists, there's Reiki people, there's massage therapists, there's wilderness first responders, there's physical therapists, like everybody's just doing stuff and at the time, this Lakota elder lived on the property.

His name was Gilbert Walking Bull and he was just like, we got to get this kid in the lodge right now, which like, I don't know if heat after a severe concussion is the best idea, but they pulled him up there and immediately put him in a sweat lodge and did some sort of ceremony with him and I, at that point, I was like, this guy's like lucky to be alive, And then he was in a severe car accident.

I don't know if you know about his car accident, like about a year after this.

He just hadn't, he had nine lives, And.

**Peter:** He used every damn one of them.

**Christopher:** He did.

He lived his life to the fullest and I wish he hadn't lived it that fully.

I think he'd still be here.

but I also think he was just doing what he wanted to do and I'm somebody who's been mostly risk averse for my entire life.

So I think for me, when I look at him, and I think about him in retrospect, I have a lot of friends who've passed away and I like to think of them as here with me and what would they do and what would they encourage me to do and Justin was always, he wasn't like my personal trainer, but I know he did some of that and he was always just like one of the most enthusiastic, like inspirational motivators for me.

Like whenever we would hang out and like work out together and do anything, he was always just like, you can do anything, dude.

Like just do this and that and like, you should really do this and I feel like he helped me come out of a lot of risk aversion to the point where I still think about that.

Of course, I don't want to go as far as he did in terms of risk taking.

But in terms of my own relationship to him, he really helped me take more risks than I wouldn't have, you know, that have helped me in life.

**Peter:** Yeah, It's an interesting thing when your motivator motivates himself to death you know right yeah yeah so for people who don't know who we're talking about check the archives I did I don't know half a dozen episodes with Justin Alexander he was

a world traveler, adventurer, very interesting guy who disappeared in the Himalayas, what, three, four years ago now, I guess.

**Christopher:** I think it was like eight years ago.

**Peter:** Oh, was it? Jesus.

**Christopher:** Yeah, it was a long time ago now.

I know.

**Peter:** Time flies, huh?

**Christopher:** Yeah.

**Peter:** Yeah, so yeah, interesting guy and a lot of press about his disappearance, a lot of shady circumstances and As far as I know, it remains unresolved, right? The Sadhu, I know the helper to the Sadhu.

Wait, the Sadhu died mysteriously in the jail cell?

**Christopher:** Yes.

**Peter:** And then the Nepali guy just kind of disappeared.

**Christopher:** There's actually an 8 episode true crime podcast about it and they went to India and interviewed all these people.

They interviewed the guard who was like working the jail and stuff and so they were like, they came up with like 5 different potential scenarios and it's really maddening because I didn't learn, knowing him, talking to his mom, knowing the story and stuff, like I thought I knew most everything and I did, but there were some things in the podcast where I was like, okay, this is kind of changing maybe what happened.

**Peter:** Yeah, there was like a hash deal gone wrong.

**Christopher:** That's a potential reality.

That's a potential aspect of it.

Yeah.

I don't know.

I mean, at the end of the podcast, I was kind of like, there's no way to really know whatever happened and that's really disturbing to me.

**Peter:** Yeah.

**Christopher:** And at the end of the day, like, I don't know if he was murdered or he just slipped and fell.

I mean, knowing him, knowing, like one time he texted me and it was a picture of him in a ninja outfit.

At the top of the Brooklyn Bridge.

**Peter:** He sent me that as well.

**Christopher:** Yeah.

With no ropes.

Nothing.

At night.

Just like, hey, bro.

Yeah, at night.

Hey, bro, look where I am right now.

I was like, what? Are you insane? Like, what? You know, but you know, the last time we hung out, we had a similar feeling of like, you know, early 30s, moving to mid 30s and we were like, you know, What's the point of life? we're not, and is there like a real spiritual thing? Because we have been part of tracker school and both of us were very disillusioned with all of that.

Neither one of us believed any of Tom Brown's stories at this point and he spent a lot more time over there than I did and so, you know, just kind of that idea and sort of seeking kind of spiritual awakening that we had as teenagers, but then slipped from our grasp and I think he was, because I honestly feel he was one of those people who was born with no sense of fear and some of those people become heroes, like bomb diffusers, and some of them are sociopaths that can murder people or whatever and I think he was maybe, I know he wanted to be a hero, and I think he had a Superman shirt that there was like that common picture he did of him like ripping off a shirt with a Superman symbol and I was like, I feel like he was one of those people that, had no sense of fear and it caught up to him.

But I think he used that to try to find that experience of some sort of spiritual awakening of feeling truly alive and I think he was just like, because nothing really could really make him feel alive in that way.

If you can't feel fear, I think it's really hard to have that sense of aliveness and I think that's what he was really, like sometimes people think that he had a death wish and maybe he did.

I don't know.

I don't really feel like he did.

I think he had like a life wish just from the last time we really had a deep conversation and I think he was really trying to feel something, some kind of fear and like I heard, I listened to your, maybe you told me the story or I listened to your podcast about where he was just letting go of this motorcycle, you know, with you and it really like, man, I'm like, who would do something like that? Unless you really just want to die or you're just trying to feel Something.

**Peter:** With his feet behind him on the seat, like in some kind of yoga position.

So he had no brakes, no nothing, no even balance control, everything.

Yeah, yeah, it's weird.

I remember, you know, when we were in, that was in northern Thailand and the last time I saw him and he had this big tattoo on his back, like an eagle and I said something about the tattoo and I saw his eyes kind of cloud over and I said, What's wrong? You don't like the tattoo? He said, It was supposed to be an eagle.

It looks like a pigeon.

I was like, all right, that's symbolic of something.

I'm not sure what, but that sucks.

You're going for the eagle, you get the pigeon.

Yeah, yeah.

**Christopher:** Amazing.

**Peter:** Yeah.

So what do you think the odds are that he's alive out there somewhere?  
That this was all zero? Okay.

**Christopher:** Yeah.

I mean, after listening to that podcast, I was just like, no.

I mean, somebody would have seen him.

There were witnesses all over that trail.

I don't think I as much as I think I'm like, you know, he wanted to be a hero, but he wasn't like selfless to a to a fault.

Like he was definitely like, he had ego.

I think he was a status seeker.

**Peter:** He had a lot of ego.

**Christopher:** And I don't think he would have ever disappeared.

I don't think his ego would have allowed him to disappear.

I think he was, you know, and I think his, he made a, the reason why this is even a thing is because he made that joke on his last blog, his last blog on his travel website was like, if I don't come back, don't come looking for me, ha ha.

**Peter:** Right.

**Christopher:** And so people, I think, you know, it was just a joke though.

Like he didn't disappear.

There's no \*\*\*\*\* way.

**Peter:** Although if anyone could do it, he'd be the one I would suspect of it.

But no, I don't think emotionally he would let his parents think he died and his friends and all that.

**Christopher:** Right, exactly.

Yeah.

Could he have? Yes, I think he had the skills to make it happen.

Would he have? Right.

No, I don't think so.

Right.

**Peter:** So you, what kind of home did you run away from? Like, and why, how did you get into this stuff?

**Christopher:** Yeah, that's a good question.

because I tell people I ran away from home and they're like, oh, you were living on the streets or something and I'm like, no, I did the suburban white boy run away from home.

I had a family that was like, my parents divorced when I was four.

My dad was sort of classic kind of deadbeat dad, not really around much.

I went to his house every other weekend.

He didn't, he was just sort of like the cool parent or whatever who kind of let us get away with stuff.

But I lived with my mom.

I lived with my sisters and my Aunt Diane.

So the time I was like 13, 14, it was just like, and I'm the youngest.

So it was just like a house of estrogen.

Right and like, I love my family.

I love them.

They're good people.

But like being a budding teen or a man in a house with, back then you weren't allowed to, or you were, I should say that.

Nowadays, they tell divorced parents explicitly not to talk \*\*\*\* about the other parent.

This was not the case when I was a child and so from four years old until whatever, you know, my mom and my sisters and everybody would just talk \*\*\*\* about my dad, including my therapist and stuff, you know and so then by the time I was like becoming a man, there was not a lot of room for that in my house.

So that was kind of like the background.

But I read Ishmael when I was 16.

A friend of mine in high school gave it to me and I read Tom Brown, a friend of mine and another friend had given it to me and that year, my high school, there's a student body, we had voted to get a principal because we had, it's an art school in Beaverton, Oregon called Arts and Communications and we got this new principal and she basically gutted all of the cool things about this alternative high school and turned it into this terrible sort of mainstream thing and so at 16, I was like, I can't let this happen.

I was like a suicidal, depressed teenager transferred to this art school and it like, and I bloomed there and my depression went away and so now here's all these horrible things that she was going to do to the school.

So on the day that we were supposed to sign up for electives, I showed up with flyers and I would like handed them out to all the students and I was like, hey, if you think these changes are bad, like come meet at this park.

We're going to call the news.

We're going to like try to get this so she can't do this and I became like a political activist overnight just because I was afraid that I was going to end up being suicidal again, you know, as a depressed kid and so we started this sort of like movement to get her fired.

It failed.

One of the things that had happened was She was calling students into her office, telling them that God would judge them when they died for the bad things that they had did.

Oh, God and so there was this separation of church and state kind of infiltrating this school and so anyway, she did a lot of things that were really bad for the school.

There's a whole, I could get, that's a whole other story.

But on the last day, I realized I was going to drop out because I read Ishmael and Tom Brown and I was like, what's the \*\*\*\*\* point of staying here? I need to learn how to survive the collapse of civilization and so I wanted to go out with a bang.

So I dressed, it was Halloween, and I dressed as Jesus being crucified because I knew it would like \*\*\*\* her off or whatever, you know? And anyway, so that was my last day of high school and of course it did and it was a giant cardboard cross and I used the like sheet that they put over the video editing equipment because our school had a film department.

So I went there and I wore that as like some sort of like shroud or toga and like this long wig and a giant three-dimensional cardboard cross and I see her out of the corner of my eye, she comes into the classroom and she's like, talking to the teacher like, oh, that's not cool.

Like I need to, I got to, and she comes over to me and I'm taping it up because it was falling apart because it just made out of cardboard, So I like taping it up and she's like, Peter, you need to come with me to my office right now and I was like, I can't, I'm busy and I'm like taping and she was like, oh God, you know, you can do that when you get back and I was like, oh, do you promise? Yeah and she was like, please just come with me and I was like, okay.

So I go down the hall with her to the office and like, The whole thing is very symbolic because I just spent 3 months building a resistance to get her fired and so here's me carrying the cross down to her office to be crucified or whatever.

It's very symbolic.

So we get to the office and she has the student handbook open on the table and she's like, Peter, There's some students today that are offended by your costume because it's a religious symbol and if you look at the student handbook, it says that if somebody's wearing something that's offensive, it needs to be removed and I was like, I'm so glad you brought this to my attention because every costume that everyone is wearing today for Halloween is really offending me and so you need to make everyone in the school take off all of their costumes right now and she, you just sort of see the like, \*\*\*\* look on her face, And, but she was, I'm like 16.

She's like a master manipulator and she just keeps going and getting me to talk and eventually I, I have a pretty short fuse when it comes to certain things and so she was able to sort of trigger my fuse and eventually it was like, I can't, she was like, I don't like the tones that you're using with me and I was like, I don't like you and she was like, okay, I'm going to have you go talk to the vice principal.

So, And then the vice principal's like, Sorry, I'm gonna have to expel you, or not expel, but suspend you for the day, and I was like, I don't care, I'm never coming back anyway.

This is my last day, and I was like, Can you suspend me for Monday instead, so I can say goodbye to my friends? And he was like, I can't do that and I'm going to have to have the security guard escort you off campus.

Nice.

Oh my God, whatever.

So this is...

Well, yeah, I think...

Right, exactly.

So now I'm being escorted off campus.

I don't have the cross anymore.

I, you know, I threw it away or whatever.

I'm getting escorted off campus and I got to go to the bathroom really bad.

So I'm like, let me go to the bathroom.

He's like, all right, I'll wait out here.

So I go to the bathroom and my friend is in there and he's like, I'm like, yeah, I'm being escorted off campus and he was like, oh, why don't you go out the window and I'll go distract him.

So I open up the bathroom window and I jump out and Brandon goes out into the hallway and he starts talking to the security guard and he just stalls him for a bit and tell the guys like, he's been in there a long time.

I'm going to check on him and he goes in and he comes out and he's like, he went out the window and grabs his walkie-talkie and like, you know, military like war runs off like he's some \*\*\*\*\* superhero.

By that point, I was already like, you know, at the bus station or whatever.

**Peter:** So you can't fire me, I quit.

**Christopher:** Yeah, exactly.

Yeah, so then I just saved up money and went to tracker school in New Jersey and that was how I really got into a lot of stuff and then I met Justin out there.

He was living with John at Wilderness Awareness School.

So I decided to move up there.

I lived up there for a few months and it didn't work out because I was a runaway.

I was working five days a week at a hardware store to go to spend my weekends with a couple of homeschooled teenagers, you know, doing some skills in the forest and John had moved on.

He was teaching that was the first year of Wilderness Awareness Schools, an adult immersion program.

So I met all these people from Portland that were in that program and we all ended up moving back to Portland together and starting some things here and so that was how I ended up getting into a lot of the skills and things.

**Peter:** So was it was the appeal, because the way you describe it, you say, I'm going to have to learn skills to survive the collapse of civilization because you were very influenced by Ishmael and you and I have this in common.

I don't know if we talked about this, but I read a book called Wildwood Wisdom when I was like 11 or so and this was like the very early days of living off the land and all that.

I'm probably, what, 30 years older than you or something?

**Christopher:** I'm 43.

**Peter:** So 20 years older.

Yeah and Yeah, I mean, I was learning how to build lean-tos and snare animals and, you know, whatever, Tanahyde using the brains and all that \*\*\*\* or acorns and to an extent, I felt, I don't know if it's an instinctive thing that kids feel like I need to know how to protect myself, I need to know how to survive, or if it's a particular thing that, is a response, like a certain kind of personality that you and I share, this sort of defiant, I can take care of myself personality.

As an early teen, there's like a strong hunger to figure \*\*\*\* out and to have this sense that I can handle the world somehow.

But I guess this is a very long-winded way of asking if you think this impulse in you was innate, or was it a response to what you were seeing in the world? In other words, if you hadn't read Ishmael, was that pre-existing in you and would have been triggered by something else? Do you think it was an external influence?

**Christopher:** Definitely.

I think it was a combination of both and it didn't start with Ishmael, really.

I think it started with the part of myself that was sort of like animistic, if that makes sense.

Like as a kid, I was very much like attuned to other creatures in the wild and I was a scout.

So, going through scouts, we went camping all the time and then, factor in, again, I'm going to bring up Star Wars again, nerd alert.

But the idea of, you know, Taoism, obviously, you know, the force, all that stuff is just Taoism, which is just animism and so kind of being introduced to that at a young age, I was obsessed with that idea and I think, you know, on one of my first like Boy Scout camp outs when I was 11, I just like climbed to the top of this mountain by myself on one of our camp outs and just like spontaneously meditated without any instruction or anything because I was just like, is the force real? Can I feel it? And I'm also a massive skeptic now because of a lot of the things that I've been through.

But also like, I call myself an atheist animist.

everything is alive on an atomic level, but I don't know what anything is and I just don't, there's just mysteries we can't really solve, right? So I have my own spirituality.

It's just something that I generally keep to myself these days.

But I had this, you know, experience where I did feel some form of connection, a sensory experience, you know and I just started going camping with the scouts every weekend and that's really what saved me throughout my teen years from depression was this sort of relief of getting the \*\*\*\* out of the city and getting into the middle of the woods where there was basically nobody else around except for my peers.

And, you know, I would just go off by myself a lot of that time and just hang out.

My first merit badge was basket weaving, fishing and horsemanship when I was 11.

So I was definitely like, and then wilderness survival merit badge and all this and that was all before I read Ishmael.

**Peter:** Right, Do you think, you've mentioned depression a couple of times.

Do you think that your experience of depression was like an endogenous brain chemistry issue, or do you think it was an instinctive rejection of the meaninglessness of Western civilization?

**Christopher:** Yeah, I mean, it's isn't it both really? I mean, because, and it's the epigenetic thing, right? Like if I'm, if I'm out in the woods, I'm doing fine.

If I'm in a cage, I'm not and not everybody's like that.

So my brain chemistry is definitely more aligned and I remember reading, I think one of the first people to bring up this kind of idea was like a guy named Thomas Hartman.

He had some book in the late 90s about like ADHD being like a trait that hunter-gatherers, you know, that would have been good in hunter-gatherers and stuff like that and I probably am on the cusp of a lot of the ADHD, autism, whatever.

I don't think I don't think I fully have any of those things, but I definitely have some of those traits.

that then affect me on this level and I think, I've just always, I mean, the first time I remember being suicidal, I was like 11.

it was like that first huge wave of hormones probably in middle school, where I was just like, what the \*\*\*\* is the point of any of this? I don't feel, I feel like I'm trapped.

Whereas, for most of my elementary school years, they were like, this is a talented and gifted child.

And, you know, I took these tests when I was 5 and they were like, Peter is different than the other kids and so I was in the special special group for smart kids that were smarter than the other kids or what, I don't know what, or more artistic or whatever the \*\*\*\* it was, And then by the time I got to middle school, my grades were such garbage that they took me out of all of that stuff and put me in the dumber, whatever category and so I kind of had the like, this shift of being a privileged kid in terms of the level of intelligence they thought I had to being back to the bottom or whatever, where these other kids just had no clue because they had been there their whole life and I was, anyway.

Yeah, so I think there's definitely an intrinsic quality to it and I tried, as a teen, I went on Prozac when that was all the rage when it first came out and I could see what it was doing to me.

It basically completely numbed me.

to the point of nothing.

I felt nothing.

**Peter:** Yeah.

**Christopher:** And so, I quit that and I think it did temporarily.

It was sort of like a life preserver, maybe.

It saved me through a really bad time.

So I'm not against antidepressants for that.

But definitely for me, it was not something that was helpful in the long run for sure.

**Peter:** Yeah, Casilda, my ex-wife is a psychiatrist and I remember her explaining to me that antidepressant is not the right name for them because they don't just take away the sadness, they take away everything.

**Christopher:** Right.

**Peter:** It's A numbing principle.

Yeah, really intense.

Yeah, I mean, I don't, I feel like I, the reason I ask that question is I don't think I have any endogenous depression.

I don't, I've never been suicidal or whatever.

But at that same age, I had a very desperate sense of meaninglessness and like, what the \*\*\*\*? You guys, like this, is what you want me to participate in? This is what you brought me here for? Are you \*\*\*\* kiding me? And I think a lot of teenagers, like as they emerge out of the mysticism of childhood and start to get a sense of what's actually going on, The more they learn, the more angry they get.

Totally and I, you know, I think a lot of characteristics of teenage years, the restlessness, the \*\*\*\* the, you know, high energy, I think those are endogenous to all mammals.

But the anger, I think, is a particular I think it's a very healthy, actually, response to the disillusionment of Western society.

You know, it's like, it's like the, you know, you refer to being in a cage.

I think some animals, even if they're born in a cage, at some point, they're like, what the \*\*\*\* is this? I should be able to run.

Like, what's going on? Like, I can feel this isn't right, you know? Yeah.

Yeah.

Yeah, it's funny when you said that when you ran away, you did the suburban white, white guy version of it.

I did that as well and then one of the jokes in the family is one time I ran away to go live in the woods with my friend for a few days.

But before I took off, I my parents had bought like a 1/2 a cow or something and they had this big freezer in the basement full of beef and I went and grabbed some nice and it turns out that I had taken all the filet mignon and I was out in the woods cooking it like on a stick over a fire.

**Christopher:** It was actually probably pretty good.

It was great.

**Peter:** It was great.

But if there's a more like white boy suburban version of like running away, I don't know what it is.

**Christopher:** Right, exactly.

Yeah.

**Peter:** So you're, would you say you are 44 now? You're a grown man and you're still very interested in this stuff.

You're still, your life still kind of revolves around this.

You, you're teaching, what do you do? You're, how do you?

**Christopher:** Yeah, so.

I run a nonprofit called Rewild Portland.

So obviously, when the collapse didn't happen in 1998, like I thought it would.

**Peter:** What a disappointment.

Why did you think 98? Was there the money in calendar thing? Yeah.

**Christopher:** Well, no, I just, you know, I read Ishmael and the story of B and I was like, we got like a year.

This is crazy.

How can it go on any longer than that? You know, it's just the urgency within Daniel Quinn's books and I, you know, at that young age, I had no concept of what collapse would actually look like as it unfolded.

a lot of the collapses take decades or centuries even.

**Peter:** Yeah, collapse is a, getting back to the question of language, collapse is a misleading term, right?

**Christopher:** Totally.

**Peter:** It should be, there should be a slow collapse.

What's the word for slow implosion? You know, there is that.

**Christopher:** Decline, maybe.

Yeah, doesn't really do it.

**Peter:** Creeping decrepitude.

**Christopher:** So I formed a nonprofit called Rewild Portland and I was like, if it's not going to happen, then overnight, then I should spend my time like organizing community that is aware of it and try to figure out ways of mitigating it or softening the crash or collapse.

however I can and so part of that is teaching ancestral technology, like, bushcraft, survival skills.

Part of it is teaching people, permaculture.

Part of it is like actually doing like planting of foods in urban landscapes that are going to have challenges with food production in the near future or who knows when and part of it is, you know, I think for me, you know, I was 16 when I read the story of Bee, which to me was the most impactful.

I mean, obviously Ishmael was the most impactful overall.

But like The Story of Bee was the thing that gave me a drive that has never left since, which is, for those not familiar, The Story of Bee is Daniel Quinn's second book.

It's written in a journal format where it's a priest who's sent to investigate a speaker to find out if the speaker is the Antichrist based on what he's saying and so all of the journal entries are just what he's experiencing as he's going through kind of becoming part of the inner circle of the speakers.

It's not really a cult, but it's sort of like, a little, it's a secret little group where he's teaching them basically just anthropology.

And, he has a message of hope, which is like, we're not evil, we did not, we don't have original sin, and we can change the way we're living and that is dangerous to the church in this book and so the guy's assassinated.

Spoiler alert, sorry and his name was B, or that's what they were calling him and then after, you know, some period goes by, the second in command or whatever, the second most knowledgeable person in the group comes out and says, I'm actually B and you're like, whoa, she was B the whole time and this guy was just pretending or something, you know.

Anyway, at the end of the book, they quizzed the guy on all these different questions, like Q&A, what would B say to this? What would B say to that? And at the end of it, he realizes that B isn't actually a person, it's just the idea and the very last line of the book is like, we're going into hiding now.

You know, you got this book, so it doesn't matter.

They can't come after us.

Like, you are B and I remember just like, that line.

at like 16 being like, \*\*\*\* like I'm B, like it and I, and I have never stopped basically being that and so, to me, the concept of rewilding is essentially this, these, all of these ideas enacted or in practice and so I started teaching a class called rewilding 101, which is basically a lot of the stuff that's in Ishmael, maybe more specifically, in certain areas.

Daniel Quinn talks a lot in generalities and says, all of this stuff can be read in anthropology books, and it's true and so my stuff gets a little bit more specific than some of his things, but it's basically the similar concepts to what Daniel Quinn presented.

I think I'm a little bit more political than he was, you know, in terms of my framing.

I'm definitely more anarchist leaning than he was in a lot of his perspectives.

So yeah, I've been running this nonprofit, Rewild Portland, and teaching people rewilding as a philosophy, rewilding as a practice and yeah, right now, one of the things I'm doing is converting my, I've been teaching Rewilding 101 for over 10 years now.

It's like a 10-hour lecture, basically.

broken up into parts with reading in between and discussion with students.

**Peter:** Do you do this online or just in person?

**Christopher:** Both.

I mean, at first I refused to do it online because it felt like, I wanted it to be interactive.

**Peter:** Right.

**Christopher:** And then I was halfway through a class when the pandemic lockdowns happened and the students were like, when are we going to start this again? And I was like, this will only be a couple of weeks.

We'll just start it up again in a couple of weeks and of course, months went by and so I did the second-half on Zoom to finish it and I was like, oh, I could actually do this on Zoom and so once I started doing it on Zoom, and people had been asking me to do it online or over Zoom for years and so by that point, I'd started doing it on Zoom

and I had students all over Europe and Australia and things like that and so it kind of blew up and Now what I'm trying to do is actually, because it's so long, I'm going to convert it into, I'm going to run a Kickstarter in April.

Maybe this will be aligned with that and the idea for the Kickstarter is to turn it into like an eight-part documentary series, film series, that will then also have like an online companion course.

So people could do it at their own pace for themselves, or they could do it with a cohort and have live components to it.

**Peter:** So how would the film work for that? The eight-part film, like they would watch each episode of the film and then there would be coursework related to that.

**Christopher:** Exactly.

Yep, exactly.

Yeah.

Or, you know, we'd probably break the film, the eight parts into their own parts as well, because, you know, I don't know, attention span of people sitting for an hour or however long to watch a thing and each component has its own sort of breakdown of things within that as well.

So.

**Peter:** Yeah.

Interesting.

Have you lived with hunter-gatherer people?

**Christopher:** I have not, no.

I work a lot with here and there with indigenous people that work, you know, in the region here and aren't doing hunting and gathering practices as their main subsistence anymore, but are like, you know, decolonizing or re-indigenizing their own practices.

We team up with them a lot and so we're sort of this like, element of horticulture, which I think, I don't think it's possible for people to go back to living as hunter-gatherers, not on a grand scale anyway.

Like definitely people in pockets could do that.

So how do we get, how do we transition to whatever the thing is going to be after this? And it's probably going to be some sort of, you know, lower scale agrarian or horticultural subsistence method and practice.

So that's what we kind of team up with different people around here now and focus more on those skills.

than sort of the more hunting and gathering.

Well, gathering is one thing, but there's no megafauna that 8 billion people could subsist on, or even the millions of people that live in Multnomah County where I'm at, so what do we do? Where do we go from here? And it's definitely going to be more of a semi-domesticated existence, you know?

**Peter:** For sure.

Yeah, I mean, that's a thing people have asked me many times, like, oh, you know, what hunter-gatherer people have you lived with that, you know, gives you the author-

ity to, you know, base so much of your work on this and the funny thing about it is, it's like, it's an extremely privileged thing to be able to go hang out with the Hadza for a week, you know? And it's also disruptive and intrusive. The first actual exchange I had with Justin Alexander was he emailed me from the Philippines, I think, and he was asking me for advice about tribal people, maybe in Northern Thailand or Vietnam or something, like, and I remember saying like, oh, here's a \*\*\*\*\* selfish privileged white guy who wants to go like, find uncontacted tribes and I said to him, I gave him a bunch of \*\*\*\* and I was like, dude, you're bringing disease.

Who knows what kind of disruption you're gonna bring to these people for what, for your ego gratification, you know? Totally and to his credit, he wrote back and he was like, you make really good points and, but here's where I'm coming from and that began a friendship that lasted years.

Yeah.

But yeah, I tend to be kind of hostile to the, white guy who goes and, I spent an afternoon with the Hadza, but not uncontacted tribes.

Like they were selling, jewelry and stuff.

**Christopher:** Exactly.

**Peter:** Yeah.

Yeah, it was funny though, when I was with him, we were in Tanzania and there's a guy named Jeff Leach, who I've had on the podcast, who's a microbiome expert and he's been going and staying with this particular group of Hadza for 20 years.

He speaks their language and he was sort of famous.

He came to my attention because he took some Hadza \*\*\*\* and mixed it up with water.

**Christopher:** I've read about that totally.

Yeah, that guy.

**Peter:** And they call him Poo Jeff and it was so cool when I was with them.

And, you know, through a translator, I explained that I was friends with Poo Jeff and they were like, Oh, Poo Jeff, Poo Jeff and with my phone, we recorded a video of them like talking to Jeff that I sent to him and then when we left, they gave us a bag of seeds to take to him.

**Christopher:** And it's awesome.

**Peter:** It's like, it was so cute.

Like, you think we're going to take this bag of seeds to Texas? Have you ever been through Dallas Airport? Customs? Come on.

Yeah.

**Christopher:** That's awesome.

Yeah, I mean, I would.

I think that there are ethical ways of interacting with particular hunter-gatherers for sure.

**Peter:** But not uncontacted tribes.

Let's not \*\*\*\*\* go into the Amazon jungle looking for people.

**Christopher:** Yeah, I'm a huge supporter of Survival International and these other groups that are trying to prevent that contact from happening.

Yeah, Also, I think if I were going to do it, I would probably, I know there's like the sort of two avenues, right? There's like the tourist type of Ave.

where you're helping support the tribe financially by showing up there and like, I don't know if you're familiar with Nicole Appelian, but she was on a loan a couple seasons and does work where she takes groups of people out there and you know, to me, that's, she's done presentations and stuff about it and talked to me about it where it's like, they're actually able to like, a lot of these hunter-gatherers aren't, they can't live as hunter-gatherers anymore because of the governments, because of conservation, because of all kinds of things and so a lot of the technologies and the skills and tracking and stuff like that were being abandoned and when the sort of tourism moved into it, the younger kids were sort of seeing, oh, wait, my grandpa is like getting paid cash to like do these old skills and it reframed how they can potentially keep them alive in the current economy.

So it's \*\*\*\*\* \*\* in a lot of ways because it is sort of this tourist thing.

But then it also shows the younger kids that there is still value in a lot of these skills, because otherwise they just go get a job at a cattle ranch or something, you know? And that's kind of the reality, the harsh reality of some of these places and not necessarily the Hadza or places where they're so far out that conservation and stuff doesn't really touch them.

But, I mean, it's just, it just depends on the circumstance and so that's one way of doing it and I would do that if I had time and money and wanted to go that route and I know lots of people, Callie, who was also on a loan, she's a goat herder.

She takes people out there and links goes out there too.

But the other Ave.

is like the anthropological route, which is like to be part of a study and I would totally be an assistant.

I have no college degree.

I'm a call myself an anthropologist, but I, from it's an I'm an autodidact.

So I can't actually get probably grant funding to do that with no degree.

But I could go out as an assistant with somebody that's studying with them who has to go through all the ethics boards and things like that.

You know, I interviewed a woman named Denise who's She has puts like fitness trackers on the kids and local location trackers because they did a whole thing of they wanted to know what how much time children spent with different adults and each other and all this stuff to think about like education and how the Bayaka in Congo interact as immediate return hunter-gatherers and so, just kind of cool stuff like that and she filmed them doing some, like, five-year-olds with machetes, effortlessly chopping things and not really taking the kinds of precautions, just that kind of stuff.

Super cool and interesting and non-interfering, I think, in a lot of their livelihoods, but being able to interact with them in that kind of ethical way, we can learn from

them for both sides' benefit, and you're not disturbing, I think, is something that can be done.

But again, it's not an uncontacted tribe, and it's a way of bringing their cultural knowledge to people who \*\*\*\*\* need it really desperately.

Right and also not damaging, further damaging their culture through contact, I think, as much as it can't be just through general contact.

It will be, right? So.

**Peter:** Right.

So when you look to the coming collapse, whenever the \*\*\*\* it finally gets here, what do you see? I mean, you've touched on this a little, but I'd love to hear more thoughts on this.

What do you see from the current world that makes sense to bring into the future, right?

**Christopher:** Like transition tech?

**Peter:** Like Swiss army knives, obviously.

We're going to want them, you know.

Solar panels, maybe.

I mean, you know, what do you see that we've developed, you know, 'cause like, I don't know if you've read *Civilized to Death* or you remember the end, but there was this, I did this whole thing about the sort of prodigal son returning, the hero with a thousand faces, right? Like what do we bring home from our long 10,000 year peregrinations? You know, what did we learn that's worth holding onto?

**Christopher:** I mean, There's a couple of ways to answer that.

There's technology, like the physical material culture and then there's also, what did we learn, philosophically from these mistakes? And it makes me think again, kind of Daniel Quinn's concept of like, there's no one right way to live, like particular myths that that we need to bring with us that, to me, I call leveling mechanisms now, looking at like Chris Bohm's work with chimps and also hunter-gatherers and understanding that like egalitarian societies didn't just not also have the material means to really accumulate things, but they also had the mindset to prevent accumulation from happening, right? Like they had the mindset to prevent politically any actor from trying to accumulate or hoard things.

**Peter:** And I think that is not only things, but power and status.

**Christopher:** Right, exactly.

That's exactly right.

I don't know if you've read *Goliath's Curse* yet, but that's a newer book, 1010 Recommend.

It is now in my top five.

You'll appreciate it and you'll love it.

But he talks a lot about the status component in there, of how that's sort of the one thing I think that we still have, that yes, we've gotten rid of a lot of the forces of

domination prior to the material means of civilization and agriculture and hoarding and stuff that allowed hoarding to happen on this larger scale.

But one of the things that we still didn't really shed in becoming egalitarians over the last few million years was status competition and so even in egalitarian societies, you have forms of status that try to emerge, right? And that is, I think, one of the main factors that led us with the material means to become as hierarchical and dominating as we are today on a global scale.

**Peter:** So you don't think that the hierarchical tendency is innate to our species? You think it's a reaction to material conditions?

**Christopher:** I think that there are Innate qualities in our species to dominate others, but I think that I think Christopher Boehm or Baum Boehm.

I agree with him that the tendency to hate being dominated was stronger than the tendency to want to dominate and that is why we ended up pushing so hard into a more egalitarian life way and I posted about this recently.

Did you hear about the bonobos in November that murdered the male, the female? That is like the essential like aspect of like what Homo sapiens or not homo sapiens, but what the \*\*\*\* genus probably was up to for the last 2 million, 3 million years or whatever, right, of really being more egalitarian, but still having these dominating forces in some of the actors within their society, right?

**Peter:** \*\*\*\* around and find out.

Yeah.

**Christopher:** Exactly.

Yeah and so we did that, right, for a long time, but it never fully got rid of it.

never fully, and so now we have this, and it also never fully got rid of status in terms of like reproduction and some other aspects of status.

of courting, courtships, and how do you prove yourself, different things like that, kind of were sort of maintained these sort of domineering characteristics and so once the material means were there, it becomes like a feedback loop, where then how do we prevent this from happening? And I think this is the Pandora's box really of domestication, what I would call domestication, is just the idea that we can and should control our environments to whatever degree we are capable of doing.

Every society, I think, has tried to figure out leveling mechanisms.

You know, you have like, what's it called, Jubilee, right? Which is every 50 years, all debts are forgiven, all slaves are freed.

It's an attempt at leveling the structure again, leveling the hoarding, you have here in the Northwest where there weren't agricultural civilizations, but they essentially had horticultural ones.

they had the fish runs, the salmon runs.

Materially, the salmon runs are exactly the same as a grain production where you have to harvest it all in a couple of weeks and then you store it for the rest of the time and so while they couldn't export the salmon runs in the same way that you can

export and terraform for grain production, They were living essentially a hierarchical subsistence method here and had slaves and things like that.

But they also had this practice called the potlatch, which every winter, everybody brought excess wealth and you set it all on fire and the more you could destroy, the higher your status would be.

So it was this weird sort of leveling mechanism materially, but also would elevate people's status culturally, which was its own sort of form of hierarchy, right?

**Peter:** Burning Man.

**Christopher:** Yeah, exactly.

So I think that there are, I think that humans have been struggling with this feedback loop of like, how do we create leveling mechanisms? I honestly feel like democracy has been an attempt at that, even within the confines of the hierarchies that it emerges from, where, you know, even in Athens, they were democratic, but they still had slaves, you know, or even here in the United States, it was the same thing.

But you have these three distinct branches of government that are based off the Iroquois tradition of leveling power structures and the Iroquois, or Haudenosaunee, they had a semi-agricultural subsistence method.

They had a higher population.

I think they were doing the same thing.

I think there's just this struggle.

So if we were to, circling back to your question, if we're to take anything from this, I think that both, because of climate change, we're not going to have the conditions that allow for long-term agricultural subsistence anyway.

That's going away.

But culturally, if we're going to take something with us, it's got to be this idea that we need to have checks and balances and leveling power so long as the material conditions exist and they do.

We have opposable thumbs.

We can terraform environments.

Like, you know, we have a brain for it.

We have hands for it.

We can alter landscapes and yes, climate change might prevent us from doing it on scale that we're doing now.

But humans were altering landscapes and things and all kinds of stuff prior to that.

I mean, we potentially we killed off the megafauna, you know, over the last 90,000 years.

So if we're to take anything out of this, whatever it is, this bottleneck of the 6th extinction, it is how do we limit culturally our consumption, really, and accumulation of power?

**Peter:** Yeah, progressive taxation, you know, that's another attempt at- Totally.

**Christopher:** Something people are coming, yeah.

**Peter:** Birth control.

I think if we were more intelligent about birth control, we could reduce global population without exterminating anyone or forcing anyone into anything.

But if we could link minimum basic income with having fewer kids, that would, obviously with progressive taxation, those three things together, feed into each other, take care of each other, and we would, whoever's alive 50 years from now would have a much better quality of life.

**Christopher:** I was able to meet Daniel Quinn about a year before he died and he was halfway through his last book that he never finished and it was a fictional story that took place 100 years from now, where people voluntarily decreased their population to like a subsistence level, you know, a sustainable level.

from, what were we at that point, 7 billion down to some level and it was a book about sort of like Ecotopia, probably, somebody living in a society learning about what they did and it's a \*\*\*\*\* shame on one hand that he never was able to finish it, because I would have loved to read that book and also, it's just such a hot button issue that I wonder, what people would have thought of it.

Because it's really hard to talk about population because people are so scared because of the fascist ideology around the population growth of decreasing around like, yeah, exterminating people.

The only book I've read that kind of touches on some stuff is called Making Kin, Not Population.

It's a collection of essays from like, basically like Donna Haraway, I think, you know, is one of the authors.

But it's like all women, there's some indigenous women in there.

So it's definitely like, as far as the left goes, they can't make a complaint that these people are fascist or something along those lines, right? But yeah, it really would have been interesting to see what his take on it was.

But he was actually in a conundrum because he had just, when we showed up at his place in Houston, he was like full of despair and we were like, what's up? And he was like, well, if you had come last week, I would have been fine.

But I just read this e-mail that said, President Obama is going to be sending food aid to all of these people, and they're going to try to, feed.

He's like, the projections now are that we're going to get to 9 billion people and all of my math said that.

I could get people down to from 7 billion to a sustainable level within 100 years, but now I don't think we could, I don't think it's possible for us to get from 9 billion down to.

It was crazy because I read his \*\*\*\* and I was like, okay, civilization is going to collapse.

There's no \*\*\*\*\* way there's going to be some voluntary \*\*\*\*.

I just need to learn to survive the collapse and that's what I've been doing and he was always like, we just have to invent our way out of this with something cooler and blah, blah, blah and my friend Lisa, she wrote a book about it and it's in her book

or whatever, but she's like, so what do you think people should do then? And he was like, I don't know.

I mean, maybe a small group of people could band together and go to the wilderness and survive out there and she was like, that's kind of what Peter's been doing.

But I actually haven't.

My focus has always been on the urban environment because I just don't, I don't, I can't run away.

That's not my, that's not in my, it's not in my person.

I'm here and I'm going to die here in the city.

I'm going to go out that way if it happens.

**Peter:** Well, Portland, I think if any urban environment has a chance of getting through, it would be Portland.

I mean, the number.

when I was living there with Casilda, Casilda grew up in Africa, and we'd walk around Portland, we'd go for a walk in the afternoon, and she would just...

pick fruit and vegetables right out of people's yards and I had to keep explaining to her, like, this is not the wild.

You're not allowed to hunt and gather on, you know, \*\*\*\*\* whatever St. we were on.

Like, people are going to get \*\*\*\*\* \*\*\* if they see you just grabbing their tomatoes and, you know.

**Christopher:** Right.

**Peter:** But, and she's like, oh, come on, look at all these tomatoes.

Nobody here.

But yeah, Portland is such a lush environment and people have chickens in their yards and you know, there's, I feel like it's interesting.

I don't know, it's the hippie thing.

It's the richness of the soil and the rain and all that.

But there's, Portland definitely has this feeling of like one foot in some sort of sustainable world, much more than any other urban place I've ever been.

**Christopher:** Totally.

I feel like I tell people it's the Shire, because I grew up here, so I didn't really know any different and then when I leave, I'm like, what the \*\*\*\* is going on? I'm like, get me back home.

**Peter:** There's no water here.

Yeah.

It's cool.

All right, Peter, thank you very much for doing this, man.

Where do people find your work? I know you've got the internet presence.

**Christopher:** Yeah, petermichaelbauer.com is my website.

You can also find me on, you know, all the socials, Instagram and then yeah, I'm doing this Rewilding 101 Kickstarter.

So if this is airing at that time, you can check that out.  
You can find that links through my website.

**Peter:** Okay, cool.

Great and you know, you're going to write another book someday using all the verbs.

**Christopher:** Yes, I hope to do so.

Yes.

**Peter:** Good, good.

We're looking forward to that.

**Christopher:** I am. I'll say that. I am going to do that. I am.

**Peter:** I will be doing that. Yeah. Okay, cool.

**Christopher:** Thanks, Peter.

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Christopher Ryan & Peter Michael Bauer  
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Experimental Anthropologist & Rewilding Expert  
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