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Transcript

Rebekah Borucki: Hello, neighbor! Welcome to our third season of The Book Stoop...

And if you're new here, lemme help you get to where you're goin'.

So, you're gonna go past the corner bodega and down the block from the fresh cuts barbershop, and there you'll find a brick row house at the intersection of Literature Place and Social Justice Blvd. That's where you'll find the stoop.

Our host, Amanda Lytle, will be there to welcome you to the conversation. The Book Stoop is the place for the hottest takes on book culture, nerd culture, current events, with best-selling authors, change-makers, and risk-takers—our people.

And I'm Rebekah Borucki, President of Row House Publishing.

Now, come on in and meet Amanda.

Asha Frost: Thanks Bex. Hey friend. Let me be the second to welcome you to our spot, The Book Stoop. I feel incredibly honored to be the host of this podcast and I'm so grateful to have you here.

Today on The Book Stoop, I'm speaking with Asha Frost. Asha is an indigenous medicine woman and a member of the Chippewas of Nawash First Nation. She's the best-selling author of *You Are the Medicine* and has guided thousands of people with profound and lasting transformation.

Asha is from the Crane Clan, the totem of leadership, and believes in holding space from vision and heart. As an energy healer, homeopath and mentor, Asha has blended her life experiences with her innate gifts and the wisdom of her ancestors.

She loves sharing her medicine in powerful ways through ceremonies, teachings and speaking events. Through this work, she loves seeing people reclaim their roots, find their healing wisdom, and rise into their power.

In the conversation today, Asha recalls her experience of writing a book as being so similar to a birth and the challenges that came with the creative process in the lockdown period.

We hear about her latest projects, an oracle deck, and how her diagnosis with lupus redirected her in her adulthood. Asha shares about her intentions to help others rise into their power by

unwinding from the systemic damage and impact as well as how the essence of children weaves into her work.

Before we jump in, I want to invite you to share The Book Stoop with your community. If you're loving this episode, grab a screenshot and tag us on Instagram at @rowhousepub. Every share, five-star rating and written review helps us find more listeners and climb the charts. So we're super grateful for your help.

We start our chats on The Book Stoop with a rather fitting question. So what are you reading these days?

Asha Frost: So I am reading *Daughters of the Deer*, which is a fiction book actually and it's Canadian fiction and it's by Danielle Daniel and it's a very amazing book and I love it. I'm also reading *Tarot for Pregnancy* by – yes, which I just – I'm loving that book so much and I'm rereading a book called “Native” by one of my friend Kaitlin Curtice.

Amanda Lytle: I'm so excited to get my hands on a copy of *Tarot for Pregnancy*. I think that Brittany Carmona-Holt is just a legend. I actually haven't heard of the other two. So I'm excited to check out those.

Asha Frost: Amazing.

Amanda Lytle: OK. Well, speaking of books, let's dive right in. You had a book launch in March. I want to hear all about it.

Asha Frost: Oh my goodness. It feels like it was a birth. Like I have two children and it definitely feels like a third child and I worked so hard in this book. I've poured all of my love and care into this book and when it went into the world, it felt kind of terrifying to let it go because it had been such a beautiful relationship just being in my little cavern of writing.

But when I put it out in the world, it felt like now it had a spirit of its own. So it's called *You Are the Medicine*, and it has touched people in ways that I wasn't expecting, and I didn't really have any expectations, but it has really kind of flown in its own way and the launch was beautiful and exciting and also exhausting as book launches probably are. But it feels like a dream come true.

Amanda Lytle: Yeah. So tell me about the creative process that went into it for you. Like you've said, it's a labor of love, right? It felt like a birth and that each one like you've said even has – the book itself has its own spirit, its own entity. But the neatest thing is in my opinion, they all – every single one is just going on its own journey. So I would love to know what your own personal creative process, your own journey while writing was like.

Asha Frost: Yeah. It was – you know what? I think when I think back because it's really – we were in lockdown through most of it. We were in lockdown the most I think of all people on Turtle Island here in Ontario. So it felt very contained almost.

Like I think my creative process was in little blips because my children were being homeschooled and I was trying to run a business at the same time. So I think my creative process was very much like I'm lighting my candle. I'm going to put like a little kind of energetic cave around me to try to get this creation out. So it felt a little bit challenging to be honest.

The next book, I want to write it not in a pandemic. I would love to write it in a café or across like on the ocean or something that just feels a little more expansive. But I really sat with how can I bring forward some magic and medicine. I write a lot of legends in the book, and they felt very childlike to me. So I wanted to bring that childlike innocence and awe into this book and that felt like the creative parts for me where I could just sort of let loose and just have the animals and the plants and the trees talk to each other just as I used to learn legends as a child.

So the creative kind of spark really came through those legends and for me it felt very like a non-colonized way to write. It was just like we're going to decolonize the way we know our plants and animals to be and we're going to connect back to the spirit.

Amanda Lytle: That is so beautiful. You've just mentioned your childhood. So I'm curious about how oral traditions and just the magic that happened within the oral sharing of stories and these legends. Did you ever put pen to paper throughout your childhood?

Asha Frost: That's a good question. I don't think so. Not in the way where I would write in this way. I was more of like a visionary person or a dreamer. So every morning, my mom would say, "What did you dream about last night?" So we would share those dreams really effortlessly. There was a safe space for us to do that and to be in like what you imagined, what you visioned. I think that was probably more than the pen to paper because we are an oral culture. So we do pass down teachings and medicines and stories in that way without a lot of writing. So yeah, that's sort of how I remember my childhood to be.

Amanda Lytle: Oh, I love that. So on the topic of creation and creativity, you've got a project on the go already again, which is an oracle deck. I would love to hear about that too.

Asha Frost: Yeah. The oracle deck really is a dream come true. When I was 20, I discovered oracle decks and I thought, oh my goodness, I want to create one of these. These are such deep medicine and then I would invite them into my private practice and my healing circles for gosh, 25 years now, and I kept having these visions of what I could create, what medicine I could create with one of these decks.

So when I put this into the world and had this oracle deck deal, it felt like a dream come true and it really is these indigenous medicine teachings but also activation. So I hope that folks look at the cards, read the message and then feel like a sense of activation for their own medicine in the world. It's called the "Sacred Medicine Oracle". So it's a combination of the teachings mixed also with that activation energy of coming home to who you are, feeling your ancestors around you and then birthing your creation energy in the world.

Amanda Lytle: That is some sacred work. That's really beautiful.

Asha Frost: I hope so. Yeah.

Amanda Lytle: Yeah. That comes out next year, you said?

Asha Frost: Yes, next March.

Amanda Lytle: OK. So March. March and then March again. That's a really special month then too. Was that just by coincidence?

Asha Frost: It was, yes. But I think that I love – I love the turning of the season. So March with the spring equinox always feels like that rebirth. So it does feel really aligned with respect to how I see the seasons and the year.

Amanda Lytle: I'm really curious about your role, this beautiful title that you have, which is an indigenous medicine woman, and I would love to know a little bit about what that means to you.

Asha Frost: I think it would probably mean something different to everyone and traditionally a medicine person in our communities, it probably came to it in different ways. But when I was a child, I was a super sensitive child, a visionary, woodsy spirit. Ancestors would come into my room a lot and I didn't know that that was part of a gift. I sort of thought everybody experienced that to be honest and then as I grew up, I got sick when I was 17. I was diagnosed with a chronic illness called lupus and that just put me on a totally new path of healing because I thought I want to heal my body. These traditional pharmaceutical medications, they're not working for me. So I need to find another way.

So that put me on this path of reclamation because I had been pretty colonized out of our traditional medicine ways due to my grandparents being in residential schools, due to a lot of colonization and oppression in my lineage.

So it wasn't until I got sick that I was back on the road of finding out who I was and how to reconnect to that. So in that process, I started to unfold my own medicine. My hugest vision was for me to be well. But in that, I went to see a bunch of healers and alternative health practitioners and trying to find my own way back to myself led me into awakening my own medicine.

So I became a homeopath in my late 20s. I went to school for psychology and that didn't – that wasn't really what was my path was. But then the homeopathy really sparked my interest and then I started practicing that.

So I could say maybe it was more of a modern indigenous medicine person way because it wasn't traditionally passed down in the way that maybe some folks think it is because I didn't have access to that because of the oppression and the attempted genocide of my people.

So it was finding my own medicine through that way and then people would just start to come for help, and I started to do some – more of energetic medicine work and I felt that my role as a

medicine woman in this community that I'm in, I did it for 17 years seeing people and helping them and I sort of felt like, well, that is my role. That is my role in the community as a medicine person.

So it was sort of a self-title and also from my mother. You know, she was my biggest supporter and she saw that healer in me always.

Amanda Lytle: I was just going to ask if that was another thing that had kind of sparked in your childhood. You know, you can really see it. You can feel that energetically with a lot of the little beings on this planet is that they have that healing energy. So I was curious about – because you're a mom as well. In that world now as a mom, are you seeing that with your kids and then how do you really foster that with them?

Asha Frost: Oh, I see it in my first child. He's 10 and he just has that innate sensitivity and that beautiful way of relating I think with the world. So I see it in just his sort of kind heart, and he also loves to learn our medicine songs. He loves to learn how to do different medicine work and use my tools. Like he's really interested more than my little one. He's five and I mean he likes it but it's just not the same sort of interest. So I could see my eldest becoming a healer in some way and a helper because I feel he has both of those qualities really deeply inside.

Amanda Lytle: I had read about how you work really intentionally to help people rise into their power. So what are some personal or spiritual practices that you have to really help enhance that and increase that in others?

Asha Frost: I think over – especially over the last probably five years, it has really been helping folks to unwind from the systemic kind of damage or impact. Like, you know, this isn't your fault. This isn't your fault that you feel small, especially if you are a person of color. This isn't your fault. Like this is oppressive systems at work that have told you that you are not entitled to take up space. You're not entitled to ask for what you need. Those voices have been so strong in my own life, which led me to my own healing which then led me to offer that in circle to say, "How can we reclaim our power? We have to unwind and unweave from all of these systems first and foremost."

So that is like the biggest work that I think I do now of saying it's not your fault and it's your responsibility. If you are wanting to reclaim that power, now it's like taking action to do that and to see that we can create a new vision I think for how we're doing this capitalistic way of life and we can do it together.

So reclaiming your power really starts there I think.

Amanda Lytle: You're feeling super dysregulated or wound up in this case. You've said unwind and I really like that visual. What are some personal practices that you have to regulate yourself?

Asha Frost: Well, lying down flat. It sounds so simple but for some reason I think because rest has been so demonized almost in our culture, lying flat really helps me to regulate. Like I will lie

flat on the couch. I will lie flat on the earth. I will lie my womb to the womb of the earth because somehow that regulates the heartbeat in my own system and then I'm connecting to the heartbeat of the earth.

Getting outside barefoot. That regulates me. I do a lot of nervous system work of breathing and shaking. Even just when I'm driving sometimes, I will do just three deep breaths through your nose and then exhale out of your mouth and being intentional about those things really seem to help, especially in this climate.

There are so many ways that we can get dysregulated. I have to be very intentional to come back to really simple practices. Oh, and salt baths. I have a salt bath every day.

Amanda Lytle: Oh, I like the salt bath idea so much. We're just in rental mode. So I can't wait to have a bathtub.

Asha Frost: I love that.

Amanda Lytle: When you just mentioned just breathing and shaking, I remember the first time I actually tried the very intentional breathwork, shaking, movement, forced laughter. I could not believe energetically how much that moved in my body like to the point I was sobbing. Well – and I was like, “Where is this coming from?” And I think that that as a really powerful personal practice to share with others or I think in your case, you're really leading by example in this case by modelling. This is what works for me. Maybe try it. But by putting yourself at the center, I just think that that is such a gift for everyone else around you.

Asha Frost: Thank you.

Amanda Lytle: Of course. So when it comes to leadership, I recognize that you've had a really busy month. I know that last month was June, so Indigenous History Month. On the 21st of June, we had National Indigenous Day and that leadership component of being with children, being in school. So can you tell me about the month? I know it's open-ended. But yeah, take it where you wish.

Asha Frost: Yeah. So it is – on the 21st of June is the solstice and it's also National Indigenous Day and then it became National Indigenous History Month just a couple of years ago, I think, and it really is a month for us to be visible and seen and uplifted. All of these beautiful things and also I realized at the end of it – now we're at the end of it that I'm really exhausted. It's exhausting for indigenous people I think because we're using this month saying, “See us.” You know, that invisibility wound I think is a huge thing for indigenous people across Turtle Island.

So it becomes really evident when this month comes around of this force visibility almost because we're trying to scramble to be seen. But it's a really important month to see all of the issues that indigenous people face on Turtle Island.

In the schools I went in, schools are my favorite because children are so open-hearted. Children are so ready to listen and learn about the history, the true history of so-called Canada and I had brought a lot of teachings there and they just know how to be reciprocal. They know how to be grateful. They know how to take it in. They remember.

You know, children remember what it's like to have magic and joy in their life. So it's a true delight to sit with children, even young adults. I was in a lot of high schools this month too and even they remember. So it's my favorite way of delivering information and teachings because there's not a lot kind of taking up space that's like swirling around in them. They're so pure and it's the way I feel like they are the generation that's going to make the change.

I've hoped that they are fierce. They have vision. They are going to unwind some of the damage that we've done. I have hope for this generation.

Amanda Lytle: I just wrote down – this really hit me when you said it. Invisibility wound. I've never heard that phrase before and that in itself just even as the two words combined carries so much weight, so much depth, so much history. I would love to know a little bit about how you weave that into your storytelling with children because you're absolutely right. They do have this really beautiful innate ability to be empathetic, to be grateful, to listen and to remember.

Asha Frost: I think that – I mean if you tell children what the true history of our country is, sometimes people say to me like make it age-appropriate. I just feel like that is not doing them any service. I feel like children have the capacity to hold the truth. The truth is the truth, no matter how you slice it or no matter how you put it. The truth is the truth, and they just feel like they are open-hearted to receive that.

Of course they feel like horror-stricken at times. There's so much grief. But then they have questions. They have curiosity. It sparks this even – a more open heart to say, “What can I do? How can I change this? How can I change this?” and I think that is the most – I just asked why I feel like telling them the truth will help because I think that when I tell adults the truth, and I've been doing that for years and years, adults didn't care until the children were uncovered in all these graves across the residential school across Canada.

I was talking about them three years before people actually started caring. That's the invisibility wound and then it comes into the national news, and everybody is horrified whereas you could have told children those stories. They would have carried it in their hearts, and they would have said, “How can I help? How can I add healing?” They would have been on it. So that's where I think I can make the biggest impact.

Amanda Lytle: Even back to oral traditions. This is the importance of language. Language itself is so important and as an educator, even myself, the language-appropriate or age-appropriate again by design. It's all by design. I can relate so much to the importance of language and sharing authentically. You know, and also I think you would have such a gift unfortunately from a lot of tragedy and a lot of grief. But clearly, you have this beautiful ability, this gift to use that in the weaving of the stories that you're sharing so that you're speaking from a place of knowing

and I've always said that that's so powerful to listen because when someone speaks from a place of knowing, lived experience, it's received at a different level.

You know, you hear it differently. You truly hear it I guess if you're open again to receiving and that's back to the children, right? That is so crucial to share with them.

Asha Frost: I agree.

Amanda Lytle: What have some of your biggest takeaways been from working with children in particular when it comes to your own teachings and practice?

Asha Frost: Children remind me of my own childlike essence, and I think I actually carry that pretty naturally in the world. Like I still love to dance and sing and play. Those parts are really important for me also as reclamation for my indigenous joy. So children remind me that you have a right to this indigenous joy. You have a right to this ease and dancing and all of these things that they love to do so effortlessly. That is really the takeaway. I can look into their eyes, and I still see the sparkle.

It's sad. I mean I mostly work with adults, and I think a lot of the times because I was helping them with healing, the sparkle was gone. But children still have that. So that is the one thing I just hope that I can help them maintain that sparkle a little bit longer and they teach me so much. I just learn so much from their wisdom. I always think it's interesting my definition of an elder because I think that there's eldership in all of us and I think that children can be little elders. They are my elders. They teach me and I love to see the world in that way that everybody has something to teach me.

Amanda Lytle: That hits me so hard because I've often said that the wisdom that children bring us regardless of their age is monumental. My sister has got four kids who I'm so excited to see and they teach me things. They remind me of things that is just a full body experience to listen and to receive what they're sharing, what they're reminding me of, you know.

Yeah. I just wrote down there is an elder in all of us and I think often too there's such a disconnect with what's – I guess maybe it's an energetic wall where there's just so much heavy in the world right now that you just kind of block off to that and that's where the authenticity in conversation and connection, true connection is so pivotal. It's so transformative.

Asha Frost: It really is. People ask me, "What is the intention of your book? What is the hook?" That's what it is. It's connection, reconnection and it sounds so simple and kind of boring. But I think it's what we need the most is we are so disconnected. How can you connect first of all back to yourself and then back to the lands that your ancestors are on, back to the medicines and teachings of your own ways? How can you reconnect to your connection to your heart, your spirit, your inner knowing? All of those things that connection seems so simple, yet I think that we've kind of messed it up along the way.

Amanda Lytle: Oh gosh, back to capitalism, right? It's just like time is money. That mentality and it's just so forced away from connection.

Asha Frost: Yes.

Amanda Lytle: Oh, Asha, this has been beautiful. I have one more question for you and that is about a shoutout. So if you had the opportunity to give a shoutout or to point us in the direction of an account, a person, an organization, a disruptor, an activist, or a change agent, who would that be?

Asha Frost: I think it would be the person I talked about in the beginning, Kaitlin Curtice. She has a new book next year coming out about resistance and it is going to be so brilliant, and she speaks a lot about indigenous resistance and coming home to who we are and that reconnection piece.

Amanda Lytle: OK. I will have that noted. Thank you so much for your time and for being a guest on The Book Stoop.

Asha Frost: I felt so grateful when Bex reached out. So thank you so much for having me.

Amanda Lytle: Absolutely.

Thank you so much for being with us. Please be sure to check out rowhousepublishing.com/podcast for full episode transcriptions and guest image descriptions and the show notes for all the links. Talk soon.

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