

Episode 4.1 Growing Roots

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Hannah McGregor: [00:10](#)

Hi, I'm Hannah McGregor and this is Secret Feminist Agenda and we're back, can you believe it? It is season four of Secret Feminist Agenda. I wasn't originally clear on whether I was going to do a fourth season and then I thought how do you even talk to people if you don't have a podcast? How do you make new friends if you don't have a podcast? Unclear. Guess I better keep making this podcast. So before we get into it, this, our first mini-isode of season four, let me talk a little bit about what's going to be different this season. A couple of things. First off, I think I mentioned this in season three, our beloved Kaarina has decided to take a break from this project in order to prioritize other work, which is a great example of people drawing healthy boundaries and another demonstration of why Kaarina is the queen of self care. And that means this season I'm going to be testing out some potential other segments. So if you've got ideas for segments you might like to hear, throw those ideas my way. I am always eager for other people's ideas because I am the opposite of an ideas man.

Anyway, speaking of boundaries, the other major change this season is that I am moving from a weekly schedule to a fortnightly schedule. That's right, episodes are going to be coming out every second week. This season, unclear on how long the season is going to be, maybe twice as long because it's only coming out every second week. It's all very excitingly nebulous. I've been thinking a lot about what it looks like to sustain this podcast over a longer term and part of that for me has gotta be taking the production schedule down a little bit just so that I'm not worrying about putting out an episode every week. I think that's what sustainability is about. Who knows? Final thing I want to tell you about season four is that this whole season's going to have a kind of a theme and that theme is keeping it local. So in season four I'm really going to be focusing on chatting with Vancouver-based feminists. There's a couple of reasons for that and one of them I'm actually going to be unpacking a little bit in this very episode, but part of it is that I love interviewing people in person. I really like the actual being able to respond to people's body language and the kinds of energy and dynamics that emerge from in-person conversations. And so I wanted to build in more for that kind of in person interaction.

And the other reason is that I'm really interested in thinking through community and the local and what it means to build networks and build roots in the place where you are. So I guess on that topic, let's dive into season four. Here we go. So today I want to talk a little bit about the idea of roots. I recently, like maybe five days ago, got back from a glorious two week vacation in Nova Scotia with my dear friends, Aaron and Bart: Aaron of previous Secret Feminist Agenda episode fame. They have a really wonderful cottage that they very generously let me come stay at

with them. And that has become my real ideal summer vacation as I fly to Nova Scotia and I spend two weeks by the ocean with my very dear pals, and I really protect it as a no-work time. But this time around I did do some writing and what I found myself writing about and really wanting to think about is what it means to have a relationship to the land that you are living on and to the place that you are living in when you are not only a settler but a settler who has learned to fetishize mobility and movement and a kind of non attachment to the places where you live.

Mobility is not only a central part of my own life, the fact that I have moved around so much that I have given up and rebuilt communities in so many different places. But it's also a really central part of my family's narrative. All of my family were comparatively quite recent immigrants to Canada. My father was born in Scotland, my mother's mother was born in England, so we don't have long roots in this country. The only part of my family that does have that kind of longer history here is the Mennonite part of my family. My mother's father was Mennonite and his family came over in the 1890s. They were given land by the Canadian government in what I believe is treaty six territory in Saskatchewan, just North of Saskatoon. And in a characteristic example of how settler colonialism and white supremacy functions, one of the privileges they were offered by the Canadian government was the right to set up their own schools so that they could teach their children in the language and the culture that they wanted to, a freedom that was being extended to Mennonites in exactly the same moment that those rights of Indigenous nations were being denied as the residential school system was being set up. So there's one piece of my family history that's deeply rooted in 19th and early 20th century settler colonialism and the genocidal agendas of residential schools, and the way that part of the project of settler colonialism involved not just stealing territory, but also putting white farmers on that land. And at the same time, none of my family has any sense of ownership or attachment to that land. My grandfather couldn't wait to leave the farm. He jumped at the opportunity in World War II to join the Air Force and use that as leverage to leave and he really never looked back. My mom and her siblings recall I think one trip back to Saskatchewan to see his family at which, from what I understand, he received an extremely frosty reception because Mennonites are conscientious objectors and he left to join a war.

All of which is to say across the board, the idea of moving and of movement and of picking your life up and relocating it somewhere else has been not simply practiced by my family, but valued by my family. It's a sign of stasis, of stagnation, to stay in the same place. It's a sign of progress and adventurousness and being an interesting person if you move around and that's all an understanding of relation to place that I really internalized when I was young. I never imagined myself staying in Ottawa and I can't imagine myself going back to Ottawa now. And places, while they have been the sites of

really important life experiences and community building for me, have also always felt temporary. And one way that that temporariness has manifested for me is often not knowing the stories of the places where I live, not knowing their deeper histories, not knowing the nations whose territory I am living on, not knowing the languages, not knowing the plants and animals that are from here, not knowing what's in season when, I mean, my ignorance of place is deep and I think a function of this kind of settler mobility, this kind of understanding that a place is always temporary. I'm not trying to claim here that I'm going to live in Vancouver forever, because I don't know. And thinking about putting down roots and being more rooted in place can't for me necessarily go hand in hand with longevity or permanence. And, in fact, I think sometimes longevity and permanence in a place are really just signs of privilege. In Vancouver there's an intense feeling of transience in a lot of my communities as it continues to get more and more unsustainably expensive in the city and people are looking around and kind of counting down the days until they're going to have to move somewhere they can afford to live. But I want to think through roots as something that doesn't necessarily have to be linked to time, but can be a sort of deliberate choice. I want to think about what it means to learn more about the place where you are and to engage with and respect the specificity of place. It's kind of a function of modernity that the specificity of place is leached out in favour of a kind of generic replicated sameness. You know, that image of being able to get McDonald's or Starbucks in any city in the world. And at the same time, ideas of trying to access the authentic pre-modern spirit of a place can, itself, tie into these deeply settler colonial fantasies of, you know, pre-modern authenticity of tourism, of cultural appropriation. And these were all things that I want to try to hold together and think through during the season as I chat with other folks who are in Vancouver, chat with people who have different relationships to this space, people whose territory this is, people who have lived here for a long time, people who are relative newcomers, people who have come for different reasons, people who do different kinds of work in the city.

If you have recommendations of folks who are Vancouver-based who you think it would be great for me to talk to, please throw me those recommendations. I'm super open to hearing them. I have a few people sort of already in mind who I'm excited to talk to and I'm sure that list will keep growing as there seems to be no shortage ever of fascinating people in the world. And hopefully by the end of this I'll have a better sense of the stories of the place where I'm living and possibly a preliminary ability to identify what berries I can eat without dying. Fingers crossed. Okay, so in future minisodes right here, this is where the segment part would go. So what kind of segments do you want to hear here? I initially thought of like an ask, a feminist kind of segment, and then I was like, hmm, I'm not sure how good my advice is. And also what if people

ask me high stakes questions? Oh no! But if you've got any really great ideas, throw them my way. You know where to find me.

Here's where you find me. You find me on Twitter @hkpmcgregor. You find show notes and the rest of the episodes of Secret Feminist Agenda on secretfeministagenda.com. If you want to tweet about the podcasts, you can use the hashtag #secretfeministagenda. And of course you should rate and review the show, which is the only way I'm capable of perceiving affection. Let's see. I think we have four new reviews since this hiatus started. I've got one from bellcappo from halls8888 from lolaboat94 and from orchid5923. All full of exciting numbers, possibly all robots. Thank you all so much for your reviews. I also got my first one star review, which was also a thrilling and bracing experience.

The podcast theme song is Mesh Shirt by Mom Jeans off their album, Chub Rub. You can download the entire album on freemusicarchive.org or follow them on Facebook.

Secret Feminist Agenda is recorded on the traditional and unceded territory of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh First Nations where I'm grateful to live and work.

This has been Secret Feminist Agenda. Pass it on.