Rediscovering Roots: An Indigenous Scholar's Story of Connection and Reclamation

with Dr. Richard Vedan (UBC School of Social Work, Elder Scholar & the 2024 Inspiring Social Worker of the Year)

[Intro Theme Music]

Dr. Barbara Lee **00:06**

Our very first podcast episode features Dr. Richard Vedan, Associate Professor Emeritus and Elder Scholar at the University of British Columbia School of Social Work, and a distinguished member of the Neskonlith Band of the Secwepemc First Nation. Dr. Vedan's remarkable journey in social work is rooted in his 11 years of service with the Royal Canadian Air Force, where he trained as a navigator and later served as a Social Work Officer for Air Command, retiring with the rank of Captain. Dr. Vedan's relationship with the University of British Columbia (UBC) spans decades, beginning with his graduation with an Masters of Social Work in 1973—a milestone as one of only two Indigenous people in Canada to hold such a degree at the time. His journey later brought him back to University of British Columbia as an Associate Professor in 1994 and the Director of the First Nations House of Learning, sweatlodge keeper for over 20 years, and as the inaugural Senior Advisor to the UBC President on Aboriginal Affairs. In addition to being UBC School of Social Work, Elder Scholar and First Nations Advisor, he is also an Elder Scholar for the Simon Fraser University Faculty of Education, and member of the Indigenous Education and Reconciliation Council. In this episode, In this episode, Dr. Vedan shares his reflections on identity, resilience, and the lasting impacts of colonial policies on Indigenous communities. Drawing from his personal experiences and professional expertise, he explores intergenerational trauma, systemic inequities, and the role of social work in fostering reconciliation. He also discusses his work with Indigenous and non-Indigenous allies, addressing critical issues like epigenetics, intergenerational healing, and the importance of building culturally inclusive institutions. With a lens of hope, he envisions a future where Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities can collaboratively build equitable, sustainable, and culturally respectful path moving forward. As we honor Dr. Richard Vedan with the Inspiring Social Worker of the Year Award, this episode offers a powerful insight into his life's work, his advocacy for systemic change, and his enduring contributions to social work and Indigenous education. Join us for this inspiring conversation.

Dr. Richard Vedan

02:32

Weytkp7 quelque sel/stn, Secwepemc ken, Ren quest Chiteleqches. I also known as Dr. Richard Peter Zivievitan. I'm a member of the Naskaluth Indian Band of the Shishwapn First Nation, and I acknowledge myself as a guest here in the territory of my Coastal Salish relatives. My great grandfather, Johnny Peters was from Seabird, Coastal Salish Territory in Chihuahua, Chihuahua area. My great grandmother, Catherine Moses, was from High Bar. In the 1800s, they established their home in Clinton, BC, Secwepemc Territory, and raised their family. My grandmother, Amelia Peters, was from Clinton. As is my father, Hector Peters. He was born in Clinton, 1923. My grandparents and my father were all residential school survivors. My father, Hector, was also a

veteran of the Second World War. I take the time to introduce myself in a somewhat extended way, just to situate myself. But in this time of Indigenous identity being a topic of controversy, it's important that I establish that basis.

I am Professor Emeritus at UBC School of Social Work. And, I retired ten years ago when I turned 70, so it makes me 80, last time I counted. And I have some ways come full cycle. It is 55, 54 years ago that I began the application process to come to UBC's MSW program. I'd been a social worker for a year at that point in the Canadian military.

04:22

But that started another process in terms of connecting with my Shishwepem family in the interior of B. C. My father Hector had left his home territory in 1940 at the age of 17, having survived the residential school rheumatic fever that left him bedridden for a year, dealing with the, Issues, the socioeconomic and living standards in Sugarcane Reserve. And also the racism that was fairly blatant in Williams Lake, in that area. And he enlisted, even though he wasn't a citizen of Canada, he enlisted in the Royal Canadian, the Rocky Mountain Rangers, and that was part of the Canadian Army. He went overseas with the Westminster Regiment. And didn't come back to his home territory for 55 years. Because of the shame, perhaps the anger and the hurt he felt that what he'd experienced at the residential school and it's also in the interior. It's still not that long ago that there were Indian – there were signs in restaurants in the, in Caribou Interior or in the Okanagan that said, “no Indians or dogs”.

05:40

So, that was pretty raw. My mother Mary is an English war bride. And my memory of being a schoolboy in England, because that's where I was born in wartime. In response to queries by my schoolmates as to why my complexion was different than theirs, and my mother would say, “Well, I think your dad's, is Canadian Indian, ask him”. I did, and got a reply, nonverbal, that, that was not so, a topic that should be ever discussed. And that was very similar to many of the veterans, Indigenous, or, all veterans who've gone through wartime experience. They don't talk about that. And my experience then and since is that many Native Indian, Canadian Indian, First Nations, however the term used, don't talk about that. They don't talk about their residential school experience until fairly recently. There's still some for whom that's a challenge. It was when I came out to visit UBC to investigate the MSW program that I came into contact with extended family members in Williams Lake. So there was two beginnings.

06:55

I began as a grad student and and also when my Aunt Irene and Uncle Sammy Peters said, well, I should tell them that I know I was a member of the William's Lake Indian Band, which I did not, I didn't even know what those terms meant. But that started the journey. At that point, I was a captain in the Royal Canadian Air Force. I'd enlisted in 1966 as a means to pay for university and completed a degree in psychology. And after I was commissioned, did a year's training as a long range tactical navigator. Uh, and then the Air Force decided they had other things in mind for me at a time when they were developing a drug and alcohol treatment program.

07:42

So I was reassigned to be a member of the Air Force, the Canadian Armed Forces Social Work Branch, and that was in Winnipeg. It's interesting because at that time I'd, uh, taken a course at, uh, University of Winnipeg with Don McCaskill. He taught sociology and political science, and, uh, he's been at his full career at Trent University. We used to discuss things, and he said, well, I should investigate. This was before I came out to BC. He said, well, what do you do? You should check out. You may be, you recognized, as many people around us did, that, uh, I was Native Indian. And he said, well, I should check out. Maybe I'm a band member. And I said, well, that's nothing to do with me being quite dismissive. I visited Don, as we do infrequently. I remind him of that and how prophetic that was . So that's coming full circle. I've been working with projects at the Emeritus College and Green College, which is located in the old School of Social Work

08:40

Hopefully, you know, circles closing and evolving to the next circles. As a social work officer, I was involved with providing a range of services to many people who were my father's age, who were Second World War veterans. And some of them had been in some same places, you know, Italy, France, Germany, Holland, Army, Air Force, and Navy. And again, the topic was, you know, don't talk about that. Um, and the terms used were shell shock, lack of moral fiber, and what we now know as post-traumatic stress disorder. Many of the means to deal with that stress, contemporary and historic, was to self-medicate. And the many bars, the fact, the officers mess, the canteens, beverage alcohol was readily available, and the social life evolved around that.

09:35

So with the last few years since, since becoming emeritus, I've been working with Marv Westwood, who's emeritus at UBC Counseling Psych. And he is the founder of the UBC Veterans Transition Program, who are dealing with, uh, contemporary veterans in Afghanistan, Kosovo, and, uh, and more recently, Afghanistan. And I'm working also with Dr. Judith Hall, who's an Emerita UBC medicine. She was the head of pediatrics at Women and Children's Hospital and is also a clinical geneticist. And we've been, developed a topic, or a series of lectures on intergenerational trauma and epigenetics. We've been doing that just before COVID. We did two years now onto the second phase of that with resilience. And we've had colleagues such as Peter Sudfeld, who's a former Dean Emeritus at in psychology, who himself is a Holocaust survivor. And looking at means to approach intergenerational trauma, how to interrupt it, how to break that cycle.

10:44

That fits with many of the undertakings I had, both in my military that I took retirement, early retirement in 77 after 11 years, because, uh, my relatives in here in British Columbia said, we need you back home. At, uh, that time – I got to be corrected on this – I was the first member of the Shushrub Band to complete a master's degree in any topic, and, and the first in terms to go on to a PhD much later in life. So there was a much, in fact, many of my colleagues and mentors encouraged me to take that direction as well. Uh, because up until that time, I was committed to a career in the military as a family therapist, drug and alcohol, and there was a lot to be done, and there still is. I recall my mentor in the Master program, Ben Chudd, who in the same age as my father, after he had also served in, uh, in the infantry in the Second World War, and was very active in the Jewish community centre, and unlike my father, he was very supportive in helping me talk

about what took place. And he encouraged me to basically do what I did, take early retirement from the military and work. And, um, a few things, Ben's, among many others, teachings he gave me are, was that, tell a story of sitting in a trench in Holland as an infantryman, reading a newspaper. And one of his colleagues saying, Why are you doing that? There's nothing in there but politics. And as he's sitting in the trenches, cold, wet, he said, Well, what do you think this is all about? And he was correct. So again, that person is political.

12:33

Another story he said is that Ben grew up in Montreal, not from a, from a very, um, hardworking background, Jewish background, and went, talks about being unemployed, poorly housed, poorly clothed, poorly nourished in one day. And the next day, he had a full-time job. He had new sets of clothes. He had regular meals. And the difference was that he enlisted in the army. His point, was it was not, well, many points, is that our poverty situation, our discrepant situation of economic wealth is not a matter of lack of resources. It's a lack of political will. And we see that again today, the lack of political will. On my way here, I was listening to CBC, um, an advocate for people with disabilities, and how they are living so far below the poverty line. There are no words for it. So not a great deal has changed.

13:46

At the orientation, I made reference to the first textbook I used, England's Road to Social Security, Erich de Schweinitz, and a quote from Joseph Townsend, an Anglican, Church of England priest in the 1700s, said it's necessary that we have the poor on the verge of starvation. I'm paraphrasing. Because otherwise, if people weren't in desperate circumstance, they would not be prepared to go to war, to do the drudgery and all the unpleasant work that needs to be done, that would then have to be done by more genteel individuals. Not much has changed. Not much has changed from Ben saying, it's not a matter of lack of resources, it's a matter of political will. It's January 2nd, no, it's December 2nd. January 2nd, a month from now, a year or so, we'll get reports about how many corporate CEOs by coffee break after the first day back at work will have earned as much money as the rest of the working people, the vast majority of working people in Canada and throughout the world, will earn for the rest of the year.

15:05

That discrepancy is obscene. So that has come full circle in, I think back to 68, 69. There was a sense, there was an optimism in Canada. It was the Canada Assistance Plan that was being implemented. And, in fact, UBC Professor Emeritus Dick Splane, who was one of the key architects of that, was putting in the Canada Assistance Plan, which was to attend to poverty and reduce the poverty levels of one in five, or whatever the, the proportions are now. Now it is far greater than that. So again, things coming full circle. Things have improved. Things coming full circle in terms of Indigeneity.

15:49

I've recently found after following graduation that a number of my classmates in the MSW program that, like myself, either revealed or learned that they were indeed First Nations, Inuit, Métis. Whether they didn't feel comfortable at the time or they were not aware of that because of, similar

to my father wanting to escape that, uh, was not, that information was not available to them. That's come full circle. It's good to be able to talk about it. But not always easy, not always safe. Dr Carmen Crey from Sto Lo in Chillewack and Amy Perreault, 20 years ago, they wrote a paper, "What I Learned in Class Today". And it was about the challenges of being First Nations here at UBC. As when I was Director of the House of Learning, which I was from 2001 to 2009, many people did not identify as First Nations, Inuit, or Métis until after they'd graduated. Because they were concerned about the experience of not being, thinking that they had been fraudulently enrolled and allowed to come to UBC. So that was one of the things that, Carmen and Amy discussed in terms of what they learned in school today. And, uh, and that, that is continuing. Um, so we're still in a state of, uh, great flux.

17:18

And I say at the time my father Hector was born, 1923, was a time when Duncan Campbell Scott, um, who implemented as Director General of, of Indian Affairs, implemented some of the more draconian aspects of the Indian Act, that it emerged the effect that the purpose of this legislation is that there is no Indian that has not been absorbed into the body politic. And there is no Indian, and no Indian problem. That's been revisited a number of times, uh, by Pierre Elliott Trudeau in the White paper of 1969, when not unlike, um, well, perhaps it was the Fraser Institute that has adopted his means, but because he said in 1969 before the Fraser Institute in their comments about how to deal with the poverty line, rather than deal with the problem, you redefine the problem. In 1969, the federal government, Jean Chretien was the Minister of Indian Affairs, uh, Trudeau, the senior, was the Prime Minister. There'd been a report about the conditions of Native Indians in Canada, completed by Dr. Harry Hawthorne of UBC.

18:07

Rather than deal with the recommendations for improved standards, more resources, the approach was to take, well, rather than solve the problem, we'll change the definition of the problem. And the problem was Indians, and lands reserved for Indians. Seven words, which are in section 91.24 of the British North America Act, now the Canadian Constitution. The federal government is responsible for Indians and the lands reserved to the Indians. The White Paper of 1969, as proposed by the Trudeau government, was to, within a five-year period, eliminate Indian reserves, the lands reserved for the Indians, and Indians status. So, if there are no Indians and there are no Indian lands, you can do that without it. It's defined by law. Then you have no responsibility.

19:27

The earlier part of the 20th century, Duncan Campbell Scott, who along with John A. Macdonald, the first prime minister, established residential schools as a means of breaking up the culture, attacking the family, the Indigenous family, the extended family, and the potlatch law, so by addressing an oral tradition, you make it illegal to talk, to practice culture. The other elements of that is that it was against the law for a period of time from, I think, from 1927 to 1951 for, um, First Nations or Native Indians, individuals or bands to hire lawyers to advocate for land claims. Or it was against the law for Native people to talk about land claims. So those things are, were passed on. Families became quite, not just dysfunctional, pathogenic. Because individuals like my father

were socialized into a bureaucracy. They were not socialized within the context of the family after the age of six, so they had no understanding of the role, reciprocal role between parents and children, grandparents and children, unless you've had that experience.

20:39

So that is still breaking, you know, getting back to the role. So, it's rather ironic that, uh, at that, in that era, some of the more famous Indians were actually not Indians. Today, Gary Owl, who was a, I think Blaney was from Hastings in England, and he found that it was called upon to speak on environmental issues. Another individual who was very well known as, Chief Buffalo Child Longlance. And he, in fact, was a African American who found it was more acceptable to be Native Indian and then relate to one of the South Alberta groups. That experience, certainly, I think, was experienced by people like my father, Hector, and others, where there were signs, “no Indians, no dogs”.

21:32

And having the opportunity to go elsewhere, but also living in denial. It wasn't until I'll say, uh, late in his life that my father, Hector, acknowledged that he went to residential school and was able to share some of the experiences he had. And it was a, a relief. Such was fine, the work we're doing with veterans, through the Veterans Transition Program here and elsewhere. That, um, re-enactment of trauma, re-enactment of situation, whether it's the trauma in, uh, residential school, in, or in operational theaters of war is very, is, is very important because otherwise it makes one ill.

22:15

Many First Nations teachings have been learned over the years is that when you do something, you have to take responsibility in doing it in a manner which will be, um, beneficial, will be taken into consideration in the seven generations to come. I work with Dr. Judith Hall, and her, what I've learned from her is I, and I'm still very much, I think I'm over four steps up the ladder I might qualify as a novice when it comes to epigenetics, but her research is showing that chronic stress has an effect upon the genome that will be transmitted seven generations. And that relates to whether the stress is experienced by the father or the mother. And the effect of the impact on the genome is that one's response to stress is dictated, that fight or flight, one's vulnerability to autoimmune issues, cardiovascular issues, respiratory issues, type 2 diabetes, are all impacted.

23:24

That's the bad news and there's plenty of that in terms of it. Currently First Nations are still overrepresented in all of the negative socioeconomic or the United Nations Human Development Index parameters and underrepresented in the more positive ones. The good news from people who write and study epigenetics, is that those trends can be reversed. That nature nurture, that the social environment can have an impact. But when people are maintained in a manner of borderline starvation, in desperate means, those changes aren't going to happen. And we're currently propagating in socioeconomically, spiritually, physically, emotionally, every way, you know, the next generation of traumatized, traumatized children. That circle is important to be broken.

24:24

I reflect back to 54 years ago, or even further, uh, studying as an undergrad, studying psychology, was at Tabla Raza, Nature Nurture, and we're finding now it could be one and the same. And that applies to people, not just Indigenous people, but to people for all. You know, I've developed a good relationship with Chinese Canadian veterans, who like my father, enlisted in the Army, Air Force, and Navy at a time when they were not, they had, did not have the right to vote and were not considered citizens of the country. The same impacts. You know, we've had occasion to meet with members of the Tuskegee Airmen, who were the African American squadron who flew P 51s as fighter escorts. And the 2nd World War had the, above and beyond the best record ever. Again, with that notion if you're Chinese, Canadian, Native, Indian, or you have to be twice as good to get half as much recognition. That applies to people of all cultures. Individuals who are working class, poor, Caucasian, Anglo Saxon, experience epigenetics the same way. And the stress of just getting by with, you know, working the drudgery of working on an assembly line.

25:46

The issue of when I introduced myself, I took the time to situate myself as far back as I can, to my great grandparents. I have speculation as to who my great, great grandparents are on both sides. My English, my mother's an English war bride. I have my grandparents there. I grew up in East London. But maybe we'll go back so far in that direction. In 1978, I was Director of Health and Social Development for the Union of B. C. Indian Chiefs and Ben Chudd and Dr. Mary Russell, who's Emerita, a good long-term colleague. They were co-chairs of the Native Indian Advisory Group that the School had established.

26:11

And so I was the Director of Health and Social Health for the Union of B. C. Indian Chiefs, and they invited us, myself and, Ernie Willey, who was from the Kwagiyoth, um, from Manilert Bay, to teach a course, Continuing Studies, here in the old school at Graham House. A number of people who took that course in Graham House. But there was a lady who came up from the coffee break and introduced us out. She said, “I'm Doriss Peters, I'm your aunt”. And she was from Stolotary. And she was a bit, somewhat, a bit younger than my father, but she was old enough to remember my father, who would come down to the valley from Clinton and Williams Lake, and they would work in the hop fields.

27:13

So, that felt amazing, to be given that information because I'm not getting any information from my father. And at that time Doris was a guard with the BC Women's Prison. Another, her daughter Linda Locke, who at the time was a social worker, was also taking the course. Back now, I had a whole lot, they had a whole lot more to teach me than I had to teach them. Fifteen years ago, so when I was, uh, 65, I would encounter, cross paths now and again, we'd keep in touch, and Doris asked me, “did I have a name?” I said, no, I never wanted to ask for one, that type of thing. So, she said they would give me a, so that happened. And it took a while, because they need to get to know me, and, uh, because it's an important process, and that gives it meaning.

28:05

People have been dispersed across the world, not just in North America, through the Sixties Scoop. Children have been adopted to Europe, to the United States. And the children of children, you know, the children of individuals who are subject to the Sixties Scoop, with even looser connections, or people like my relatives who enfranchised, which means they gave up their status, but then their children, grandchildren have sought it back, or Bill C-31, individual life givers, women who lost their status under Section 12.1B of the Indian Act because they married a non-status. That goes with the words of Duncan Campbell Scott. The purpose of this policy is that there will be no Indian that is not been absorbed into body politic. Well, looking closely at the current, um, status, and that's the formal Indian Affairs cards, that section, you know, different categories. 6. 1, 6. 2. If you're a 6. 1, you can pass on your Indigeneity to your children. If you're 6. 2, you can't, and there may be individuals, members of the same family. So that gets to be very divisive. And it certainly is very divisive, turning families against themselves, turning communities against themselves because as people have come back to seek out their Indigeneity, the reserves have not increased in size.

29:38

There's still 37 100ths of 1%, less than 1 percent of landmass is the reserves for 5 percent of the population. The majority, there's over sixty percent or so, or seventy percent of people living off reserve, not because they want to, because the social conditions, and there's no housing, no jobs, et cetera. They're not always welcomed back by the people who are not always inclined. They're under stress because there's not enough resources. So there's not, whether it's a person coming back from an adopted situation, or someone who's coming back, having, being isolated, alienating themselves in denial for several generations. That's always an issue.

30:34

I think of Christine Walsh, who's a cinematographer and feminist scholar and taught in women's studies at UVic. One of her feature films was Women in the Shadow, in which he describes her great, well, she was an ancestor, a great grandmother, who was the country wife for Sir George Williams, who was the head of Dodson Bay. Having grown up in, uh, Saskatchewan, Christine was not, was aware that she had dark complexioned features, but her father, who was Métis, would never talk about that. In fact, family members, you would be scolded, as I was admonished by my father, don't talk about that. No.

31:29

So the current situation where you have individuals similar to Gray Owl or Chief Buffalo Child Longlands, who found it advantageous, both personally and economically, to be identified as Indigenous, that has been taken upon in current situations, where some people who have done some remarkable work in advocacy for, on behalf of First Nations people, have found out that, you know, we've discovered, sadly and tragically, that their identity is based upon a fraud.

31:46

I'm concerned for the pain those people must be in, but also concerned that what is lacking in their sense of who they are in their own authentic roots. I have a number of concerns. I think it's hard not to get angry when I think of my father, Hector, who for a whole lifetime lived in a state of denial and an alienation from his family because being Native was too painful, was too dangerous for people to fabricate an identity that is to their advantage without any of that experience. So when someone presumes to take on that history, as a way of enhancing what would have been in other ways, you know, a positive, either academic or professional career.

32:40

I think of some of the incredible allies we have, uh, Louise Mandel, and her partner, Leslie Pinder, were great advocates. They took cases to the Supreme Court on behalf. But they never presented themselves as other than non-Indigenous allies. I think of, you know, my mentor Ben and other people who were very strong allies. And as the pendulum swings back to the, "we've had enough", people say well, "no more of this diversity, equity, inclusion". Or, you know, people who argue against UNDRIP and Truth and Reconciliation. That's concerns of people who are gonna be more reluctant to come forward to find out whether they have a legitimate identity.

33:28

So, 54, 55 years later, I am very fortunate to, I've been accepted into UBC School of Social Work, completed a Masters Degree in Social Work, which allowed me to, when I retired, I was Senior Social Work Officer for Air Command based out of Winnipeg. That gave me an opportunity to a whole range of, of social work practice, and marital family, drug and alcohol, child protection, economic issues, medical social work. And then come forward with that, and then the decision to continue that while going into education, working with a place like the Friendship Center as a volunteer, Native Education Center, the Native Urban Native Police Liaison. I've always been a strong advocate of our profession, having had the opportunity to sit on the Provincial Board of BCSW back in the 80s, and then also serve on the Board of Registration and chair the Board of Registration in the 90s, and as we move towards regulation of the profession.

34:41

Then my only wish is that, I wish I was young enough, had the energy, I could go back and crack the books and learn more about biochemistry and get into bio epigenetics more. But I'm having the benefit of working with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous colleagues, nationally and internationally. I look forward to doing more of the same and being at the opportunity to serve on the advisory committee as the school. The school was taking initiatives towards Indigenizing the curriculum as early, well back into the eighties. Things move forward. But there's been a long-term commitment. And then that commitment is continuing. And I'm also doing that with the Faculty of Education, it's, it's Simon Fraser, so it's very positive, you know, but we do need to be cautious.

Dr. Barbara Lee **35:33**

Just some reflections of, that we're in this moment of thinking about decolonizing and, and Indigenizing the academic space, what would you say are your hopes and vision moving forward? And, how do non Indigenous people become allies to support that work and walk alongside with Indigenous peoples?

Dr. Richard Vedan **36:01**

I'll start with the last one first, in terms of how non-Indigenous, whether academics or professional - in my work with Warriors Against Violence for my doctoral studies, the men there were dealing with anger issues. They didn't know their story. They were not aware that their parents or that there were somehow some connection with residential school. They weren't aware of Canada's colonial history. All they knew is they went around angry like a bomb. Becoming aware of the reality of what their family history was wasn't the answer, but it was the first step in taking steps forward, and in light of that, what needs to change. Non-Indigenous people don't always know their story. What is missing?

36:57

Holistically, in social, we talk about, well, you need to have a clinical self-awareness. But more than just at a cognitive level, affective level, it needs to be at a holistic level. And it's an ongoing... I was first introduced to autoethnography by Celia Haig Brown. That being aware of where you're from. And for non-Indigenous people, certainly those who've been here for a number of generations, what their role may have been in the colonizing policies that were put in place against, to subjugate First Nations people, and how do you deal with that? You can't change it, but being guilty, you know, getting bound up or paralyzed by guilt, it doesn't lead anywhere, and it leads to resentments.

37:47

The vision for the university with the issues and the controversy about self-identification, my concern is that there will be a rush to find identification, Indigenous identity terms in black and white terms that may discourage, that may make it, or that will go back to, "do you have a status card?". You can call yourself whatever you like, but as long as you're not trying to defraud. When you've got people who are franchising status Indians who are allowing their name to be attached to a corporate body, as was done with the Arrive Canada app, and using a post office postal address on a reserve to funnel money through with no value added. That's an issue. That's fraud. So, not overreacting. And I'm hoping that the university will take the time to do that. I do have concern. That there's some, and not just at, you know, universities, that there's people who thought, well, the Tri Council, OCAP, and all of this.

38:57

That's just a slight, you know, that's just a, uh, a brief anomaly, then we'll, you know, we'll get through that and we'll go back to the way things were previously. You know, many people thought with the, you know, the OCAP, the Tri Council Ethics or, well, just as a checkbox. And rather than going at it authentically and meaningfully, you're just something to get out of your way.

39:20

What do I see looking forward? Um, as more positions have become, based upon hard dollars, part of core budget, that's a good thing. That has not always been, you know, and, again, there's been a lot of initiatives that have started with grants, soft dollars, foundational grants, but it's what,

the universities and UBC have made the commitment to make it part of core budget and to make positions, academic positions, part of the core budget. I'm working now in my retirement on a 1949 MG, and I'm putting a lot of energy into it. I'm using contemporary means to get it back on the road. But no matter what I do to that 1940 MG, it's always gonna be a 1949 MG. What we need in, I'm not sure if it's an analogy or a metaphor, but apparently that in terms of competing, we need someone that's going to be in the next generation that's going to make Elon Musk envious that his Tesla's can't do it.

40:37

We need people conceptualizing. So again, the struggle is that having people in senior positions at the table, at the Academic Council, the Executive Council, who are tenure track or tenured, who can address issues globally at a philosophical level, rather than technical. Not, you know, we also need, M& P management professional, but that assumes that the system is fine. The structures aren't. All we have to do is manage it better. No, we need to look at what, at a theoretical level, what things need to be, you know, what needs to be evolved. And it's only when we now have the academics, the critical mass of Indigenous academics, um, well, early on in my, uh, term as the director of the House of Learning going down to Phoenix for the American Indian Native Alaska Professor's Conference, and there were a couple hundred of us in the, and out of that full room, there were only eight of us who were, who were, um, I need to get my numbers correct, but it's going back almost 30 years, but, there were very few, a small number, less than ten, who were tenure track, and less than a handful who were tenured when I was. That's changed.

42:00

So as we come, that, that, synergy that comes with people coming together and, you know, the give and take that takes, you know, within the academy and the importance of having, um, a senior academic such as an Associate Dean Indigenous or Associate Vice President or Associate Vice President Provost at the table all the time so the Indigenous topics of Indigenous curriculum, Indigenous program don't come up only when there's a problem. It's a part of every conversation. It's a part of every conversation in every faculty. And, uh, so it's not siloed, and it's not ghettoized. And I think the universities are moving, moving towards that.

Dr. Barbara Lee **42:51**

Just given your longstanding role with First Nations, the Longhouse, and now as a Indigenous Elder Scholar of the School of Social Work, and all the mentorship that you've provided for students, as we grapple with the idea of, as you started out with, around identities, and you have shared that, some former students had denied their identities in their academic studies for a number of reasons. Just thinking about how we can support the exploration of identities, the acceptance of self, and what it means within this academic space. What are your thoughts and reflections?

Dr. Richard Vedan **43:26**

The matter of self-identity, um, needs to be initially wide, so it's inviting, but then not without scrutiny. So that, again, I think that you don't want to discourage people. And it will not take a lot to discourage people who may, who will feel unsure of themselves. Like I was, you know, and when Don McCaskill said, I should check it. Well, that's nothing to do with me. My father's told me so.

Or, that sounded, and you know, one of the rules of thumb, or rather, certainly non-academic, or like, in terms of legitimacy or authenticity of indigenous, is if you can't remember a time when you wished you weren't Native Indian, either because it wasn't safe, or because how you were being treated, you know, that doesn't apply to everybody. And you know, Drew Hayden Taylor, an author, he wrote a book, The Tales of a Blue Eyed Ojibwe. And he's Ojibwe, and he has blue eyes, and I think the subtitle is Funny You Don't Look Like One.

44:39

Um, you know, how do you help people be comfortable and to deal with it and to do the necessary investigation? It's gonna take time, but again, the, the Canadian government, they, whether it was Truth and Reconciliation, the Royal Commission want a one size fits all that doesn't cost too much money and will be quick. It's taken generations to get to where we are now, in terms of generations of denial. Um, generations of putting, well, you know, I'm not completely up to date with the United Nations Human Development Index. I think the last time I know it, the 21st century, Canada was the best place in the world to live, unless you were Indigenous, and if you were on reserve or urban was 63rd, and if you were on reserve, it was 70th.

45:28

Now, I think the most recent, it may be more recent, but Canada's now 13th, and I think cumulatively urban and rural, Indigenous people are 75th. So that's a huge gap. So, again, why would anybody want to be, Indigenous, if you didn't have to be? And that was the whole purpose of the Indian. So that they, there's no Indian who has not been absorbed into the body politic. And no Indian problem. And it's interesting that, uh, when Pierre Trudeau, was introducing a cabinet shuffle. And, I think, he referred to Alastair Gillespie as an industry in minds. And, Judd Buchanan, Minister of Indian Problems. That was the word, Minister of Indian Problems. So, not Indian Affairs and Northern Development, which is a, but so that spoke. So, you want to get rid of the problem. That's the challenge, and this is the role for post-secondary institutions, the role of creating new knowledge and creating, being critical.

46:35

Critical Indigenous studies or critical Black studies, that's, you know, that is a, um, they're, they're gonna have laws. in the United States saying you can't teach, you know, what, you know, the thing, or what is, if something isn't critical, then it's non-academic, or critical thinking. If it's not critical, then it's not truly thinking. So as the university moves forward, taking the time and to realize that there is a broader, you know, there's a broader perspective, and I think that will be of benefit to people of all backgrounds. We're in this together and we are in, you know, there's only one Mother Earth. Yeah.

[Outro Theme Music]

Dr. Barbara Lee **47:12**

Thanks for listening to The Knowledge Exchange: A Partnership-in-Action Podcast! This podcast is a University of British Columbia Knowledge Exchange and Mobilization Scholars initiative funded by the UBC Office of the Vice-President Research and Innovation's Knowledge Exchange unit. I'm

Dr. Barbara Lee, the Knowledge Exchange and Mobilization Scholar for the School of Social Work, podcast host, and executive producer. Michelle O'Kane is the podcast producer. Cathy Jiu and Qian Zhou is the podcast producer and editor. Podcast cover was designed by Cathy Jiu. Podcast music is open source, called Motivational Day, Audio Coffee by Denis Kyshchuk. Thanks for listening!