Calling DIBS

Episode 19: "Consultation to Maximize Impact & Minimize Unintended Consequences"

with Jeremy Douglas Executive Vice President of External Relations at Ocean Wise

Jeremy Douglas weaves together his experiences in the non-profit and media sectors to highlight the need to scale BI findings for impact, the importance of approaching projects with humility, and the danger of unintended consequences. Together we discuss how consultation and measurement can help with each of these challenges and create a bright future for BI.

Transcript:

KIRSTIN APPELT, HOST: Welcome to this edition of Calling DIBS. I'm your host, Kirstin Appelt, Research Director with UBC Decision Insights for Business and Society, or DIBS for short.

Today, we're calling DIBS on Jeremy Douglas, Executive Vice President of External Relations at Ocean Wise. I'm really thrilled we have Jeremy joining us today because he's collaborated with DIBS on research, he's presented at the Big Difference B.C. conference, and we're really fortunate to include him in our local BI community. And I'm looking forward to hearing more of Jeremy's stories. So welcome to the podcast, Jeremy.

JEREMY DOUGLAS, GUEST: Thanks, Kirstin! Happy to be here.

APPELT: Can you start by just telling us a little bit about yourself?

DOUGLAS: Yeah, sure. So, I guess if I go chronologically and look back, I grew up in London, Ontario, born and raised, and then ended up doing the lazy thing and going to Western for university, which is in London, and started out actually going into business and commerce. I think I was motivated mostly by making a lot of money, as a lot of young men are, and I started out my academic studies in that. Then during my first year, I just sort of I don't know, I hated it. And so, I thought, "Well, why don't I just do the thing I'm interested in, rather than being motivated by, you know, some sort of goal to make as much money as possible".

And so, I ended up switching my major to philosophy. The reason for that is because really, I was just curious about, you know, all these big questions. But then also this sort of undercurrent of equity and social justice, and wanting to know more about the thinkers on that, and get more into that sort of space. So, kind of the exact opposite of going into business and trying to become a big CEO of a company, and that ended up really influencing my entire career and how I ended up here, because since I graduated, all of my roles have been either for NGOs or for public sector organizations.

I'm focused on trying to make a difference. And most recently, with most of my roles, it's been within the environmental sector and with environmental NGOs in Canada and trying to raise money and raise awareness and profile and support those organizations to have a big impact. It is interesting how, you know, what I thought I knew at the beginning really shifted. And just following what I was most interested in, led me to this career that I absolutely love.

APPELT: That's fantastic. One of the things I really love about doing this podcast is that it's just finding more and more kindred spirits. Almost everyone talks about how they wanted to do something that would make a difference, and they saw this as an opportunity, working in this space to do that. So, is that also some of where your interest in behavioural insights began?

DOUGLAS: Yeah, exactly. I think where I really kind of grasped onto this concept was when I was working and living in the UK for BBC Media Action. So, this is an arm of BBC World Service, which reaches hundreds of millions of people around the world, mostly on radio, in countries where there is no trusted media source. And they use media to try to influence in a positive way things from democracy and getting involved in voting and fair and free elections, through to women and girls' education to health issues, combating counterfeit medication, you name it. Any of those sorts of issues of which, there are many, that countries around the world are facing, they use media to try to influence behaviour at a large scale.

And I had never really, I guess, never really thought of that as something that an organization would be focused on or that there was the potential there to use media for good. I think so often we're used to hearing media, especially these days, being criticized or, you know, being untrustworthy or diluted. So, this was my first insights into this concept of behaviour change, and we didn't even really use the term behaviour change. It was more like media, media for development, media for achieving those positive global development indicator goals. And that really got me hooked and fascinated by this concept of behaviour change in general, but especially how media all around us is influencing our behaviour, whether we realize it or not.

APPELT: That's such an interesting perspective to bring to it. I'm glad we're going to get to chat about that today. But first I'm, actually, I know, as you've already alluded, you've worked both in media and the nonprofit. And I was hoping we could separate those a bit and maybe start on nonprofit. So, a bit of a reverse chronology of your career.

So, you spent a lot of the last decade in the world of philanthropy with your years at Ocean Wise now, and previously the David Suzuki Foundation. And both of those are nonprofits, for those who are unfamiliar, that are trying to change behaviour, to be more environmentally sustainable. So, in your experience, are nonprofits starting to use the tools of behavioural insights as they try to change behaviour?

DOUGLAS: We definitely hear it being discussed more and more now. I think the very reason that we're having this podcast and why there's DIBSnet and more momentum is because people are becoming more aware of it. But it's certainly not something new. You talk to anybody who has been doing marketing for companies, and that's exactly what they've been trying to do for decades, is try to influence behaviour for people to buy their products or services more.

I think non-profits are very late to the game to try to catch up and realize like, "Oh, yeah, we can actually use our channels and our audiences to try to influence people's behaviour for positive social or environmental or health outcomes" that they're trying to achieve. So, it's really just a matter of them catching up in a rapid way as much as possible to what the for-profit sector has already known about and been doing for many years. And, you know, with the lens to environmental organizations where, you know, with Ocean Wise and David Suzuki Foundation, they spent the last 10 years or so, we look at environmental issues as primarily being a problem of negative behaviours that have caused us to get to the situation we have now.

It's behaviour change that got us into these problems. It's behaviour change that's going to get us out of them. So, I think that's absolutely critical for the nonprofit sector to be focusing on this in terms of "How do you actually measure and know that you're having those outcomes that you want to achieve?". I think it's essential.

APPELT: I really like how you frame that as behaviour change that has gotten us into many of these problems and behaviour change that can get us out of many. And I think that speaks to some of what we see, which is we are doing what we do now and we think of that as the status quo. But it doesn't necessarily always mean the status quo. We change behaviour at some point to get here. We can change behaviour again. And I think that's a nice way to frame it, that makes it feel maybe more achievable.

And so, one of the things I was curious about as non-profits are starting to get more into the space and thinking about our BI certificate students, who some of them are exploring various career options, in your sector, do you see people having BI experts in-house? Do you typically partner with BI experts, work with BI consultants? How does that process usually work?

DOUGLAS: I haven't seen it in-house so much because again, I think it's something that the nonprofit sector is just sort of waking up to now. And it's great that there's more discussion about this and incorporating it. And it's really down to the fundamental question of "How do you know if your work is making a difference or not?" It's so critical and it is so core to the entire mission of so many nonprofit organizations, because if you actually really scratch below the surface on how they're measuring towards progress or towards outcomes that they've set, you might find they're on a little bit of shifting sands or shaky ground there. Whereas behavioural insights and taking more of an academic approach to this can actually provide some more certainty and some more insights, not only where you're making progress, but also, perhaps more importantly, where you aren't and you need to change programs or cancel them and try something different altogether. So, there's this realization starting to bubble below the surface now.

But I haven't seen a lot of organizations that actually have gone that step to bring someone on board who, this is their academic background. Maybe there's just not a lot of those people out there. But it's also not something quite mainstream yet. So, for us, we've done some initiatives that have partnered with folks at UBC, with Professor Jiaying Zhao. And we've worked on measuring plastic waste reduction through behaviour change. And that was really successful collaboration with that team and with KPMG as well, as sort of the guinea pigs on that initiative.

We're starting to get more and more involved in it, but it's doing it on more of that project basis or sort of consultative basis, rather than bringing in sort of an expert, in-house BI practitioner, which might come in the future. But I think it's still early days for non-profits to be doing that right now.

APPELT: Yeah, that makes a lot of sense, and I mean, that's obvious, honestly, it was one of the reasons behind the certificate is that there is a dearth of supply of these folks who have this rigorous training. So, we're hoping to help fill those gaps so that as sectors come more on board, we have great folks to fill those gaps.

So, you alluded to the Plastic Lives project that you did with JZ. So, can you tell us a little bit more about that project?

DOUGLAS: Yeah. I love the name JZ, and we're trying to get it popular, as you said, some people in Canada just call her JZed, which is to be forgiven, I guess. So, yeah, that one. I'm trying to recall how that came about originally. I think it was, again, just me kind of on my hobby horse off of thinking about the Times at BBC Media Action and wanting to apply some of that behavioural insights approach to the work at Ocean Wise and just thinking I'm just going to try to see if we can do this and figure something out. I ended up making some calls to people I knew at Mitacs and I said "Oh, you know a lot of people in the academic fields of behaviour change and sciences and whatnot. Can you recommend anyone?".

And that's how I got connected with JZ and we sort of just had an initial sort of exploratory discussion around our program. The goal was to reduce consumers' plastic waste behaviours, to have them, you know, throwing out less plastic and using less single use plastic. And during that discussion, it just sort of, I'm not sure how it emerged, but we came up with this idea that we would work with KPMG, who we have a partnership with, and this is all pre-COVID, this project so bear that in mind. They have an office downtown Vancouver and they occupy about 10 floors or so. Each floor has kitchen area where you've got garbage and recycling and compost. And what we designed for this study was to do different messaging that would go where these kitchen garbage, recycling, compost areas are, around trying to encourage people to reduce the amount of plastic waste that was going into those bins.

And so, what we did is pilot or try different interventions on different messaging. One would be sign up for a pledge, you know, make a pledge to reduce your plastic input there. And that was sort of under the assumption that by maybe making a commitment, people feel obligated to follow through on that. Another one that we tried was just leaving up the standard signage. Another one was making it a bit more modern. Another one was using pictures of animals, ocean animals entangled in plastic as sort of more of a negative or the consequences of plastic waste going into the ocean.

So JZ's team did a baseline audit of how much plastic waste was happening on sort of the ongoing basis, and then we put in all of those different messaging on the different floors measured over a number of weeks how that changed the amount of plastic waste going into those bins and then removed the interventions, remove the messaging, and then tested how it did as a follow up.

And so, the result was that the messaging that had the biggest impact, was the one with the pictures of animals on it caught in plastic. So, we thought, “Well that's interesting”. And it also helps us as an ocean NGO that works to help animals in the ocean, because that really is a message that we can easily get onboard with and put out to our audiences. It was a significant enough difference with that messaging versus the others that we felt confident about it.

And so, the result of that was then we presented to the entire KPMG staff because, of course, they couldn't have known about this, while we were doing it because then it would ruin the study and they were all shocked and very, you know, motivated to do more. This is sort of this catalyst for them of “Wow, okay. I didn't know there was so much plastic waste in our offices, and I never really think about what I'm putting in, what bins”. And this sort of just kickstarted this huge snowball effect where they then took the lead for all KPMG offices across the country to do things like get rid of using reusing single use cutlery, they replaced it all with silverware. All of their tea bags were previously single-use wrapped in plastic. So, they got rid of those, and found a supplier that were in cardboard packaging or they could be composted or recycled, a whole bunch of initiatives like that that just rolled out across the country.

This one little study ended up sort of catalyzing lots of action from this company. And what we're doing with JZ and her team now, is looking at if we can bring this into a grocery store setting, to influence grocery store shoppers’ behaviour on, in particular, the single-use bags in the produce area, the bulk section, and the bags check out. And so, we're working with Save-on-Foods, who's one of our partners, to see if we can have some impact in that setting as well. So very exciting, what we've been able to do on these, and we're just looking to build on that momentum and apply it in more situations. And plastic waste is just one of many issues, but it's one that I think that people can easily understand. And it's so pervasive in all of our daily lives that it's not hard to think of areas in places where we could try these interventions.

APPELT: Yeah, it's so neat that that project has had such a huge impact, because one of the things we've talked about in our previous conversations is that sometimes projects don't scale. And then I think, as you said,

they're kind of more interesting case studies rather than wide scale programs and implementation. So, can you elaborate a bit on why you think that wide scale program implementation and the scaling up of projects is crucial?

DOUGLAS: Yeah, I think this is so fundamental. To even the study design that you think about the scaling potential of it before you even start it, because otherwise I'm worried it would just become an interesting anecdote or an interesting case study. I've heard so many fascinating ones from different BI professors and practitioners and just in literature. Its like, “Wow, that's really cool, that's interesting study, but I can't see or I can't even imagine how you would scale that. It only would work in that sort of small setting”. And so that's something that I think is sort of critical to any of these study designs, is if it's going to be meaningful, it has to reach like more than a couple of dozen people are involved in a small initiative, or you have to at least have a past or a plan to scale it to have a bigger impact.

And that's I think, where there's such an opportunity in making more impact by working with, for example, governments or others who are able to reach a lot of people or a company. That's why we partner with KPMG and then with Save on Foods is because they have the potential to help bring these solutions to scale and to reach a lot of people. I think that's kind of got to be baked into the original study design is what's the scaling potential of it?

APPELT: Yeah, I really like that point and about how we have to start at that from the beginning, because usually when we think of a project cycle, we think of scaling is at the end. We'll get there when we get there. But you really do need to have that from the beginning. And when you think of feasibility, it can't just be feasibility of running this trial. It has to be feasibility of running it and then scaling it up. And I think often in our rush to get studies out the door, we kind of miss that big picture feasibility issue, which I think, as you said, is really crucial.

So, changing gears and going to your media career, obviously, as you said, media influences behaviour. It typically has, or often has a wide reach. So how do you think BI can leverage media to have broader impacts? Or work with media to have broader impacts?

DOUGLAS: Yeah. I think, you know, media is so critical and media is- even that the term now, it's hard to put your thumb on it. You know what I mean? It's in the past it was easily defined as “Oh that media is newspapers and radio and TV”. And there's only a few networks. And it's very clear, like if you want to reach people by mass media, here are the main players and how you do it.

Now, media is so fragmented and it's much more complicated. It's more of a two-way dialogue than in the past. It was just one way flow of information. There are no feedback loops. Now, with social media, the whole premise of social media is based on that two-way feedback. So, it's a more complicated environment, becoming ever more complicated and it's also becoming less trustworthy, which is a big challenge.

So, media has the potential to influence people in a huge way, though. And I think that's really where it drills down into behavioural insights and how they can leverage media to help with understanding, driving behaviour change for positive benefit for social, environmental, health good. We can see right now, you know, a very live example of the impact of media driving behaviour change, you just have to look at the impeachment of Donald Trump going on right now, which the whole premise of that is essentially that media is a behaviour influencer and a behaviour change tool, because the argument is that he incited violence using media, using Twitter. That whole case is really built around what we're talking about, which is media influencing behaviour change on the ground. That someone can say something on a platform, or something

can be brought up on TV, or on social media, and that causes the viewers or the audience to change their behaviour in some way.

And that's the fundamental assumption for all of the work we did, BBC Media Action, which is that people are influenced by media and we actually measured it to prove that. And it's true. So, we know that it can have a big impact. And I think, that's really where I'm excited about the future of BI and the potential for it to be more integrated into media. And that also helps with that scaling issue that we were talking about, because, of course, using media, you can reach a lot more people, than sort of more controlled in-person studies.

APPELT: Absolutely. You can't see, but I've been nodding along very forcefully as you've been talking. And so, I think what you've done with your time with BBC, you had so many great stories. So, can you tell us an example of your time working with BBC, and how you saw the media being able to change behaviour there?

DOUGLAS: Yeah. So, there's I mean, there's so many amazing things that they've done, which I can take zero credit for, I was just lucky to be working there with some amazing people who are journalists. But then also, they had entire-- still have, an entire research and statistics department, which is, I think when your earlier question about in-house practitioners, that's where I first saw it and where I, to this day haven't seen it done at that scale before, where they like basically have a whole team of statisticians and people who are working to measure and use rigorous academic and peer reviewed publications to demonstrate the impact of the program. It's just so impressive. And I think that organization doesn't get as much credit as it deserves for what they've done. The way that they approach it is to work in, you know, local contexts and made in countries solutions. Which I think is so important to understand what's going on the ground, before designing what the intervention would be or what the right behaviour change activity and influencers could be on that.

So, for example, in Bangladesh, there's a big problem with maternal health around pregnancy and childbirth and even postnatal. There's lots of health complications. And the childhood, the early childhood survival rate and the pregnancy death rates, their numbers are a lot worse than other countries. And so, this is an issue where they're trying to improve those rates and make healthier moms and babies, and looking at what they can do in media to try to address this issue. And one of the biggest problems is the information that women are getting during the pregnancy is not giving them the best chance of success. They're getting mostly information handed down from their mothers-in-law. Men are usually not part of part of the picture there, surprise, surprise. And so, what they found was they need to work with influencing the influencers.

They need to influence mothers-in-law because what they're telling their daughters-in-law during their pregnancy is mostly based on whatever they learned when they went through that pregnancy and childbirth. So, they started running radio programs. Most of the people they were trying to target, their main media consumption was radio. And they were able to reach people through radio, and have entertaining shows and discussions where the people on those shows, they were identifiable with the women who they were trying to target. So, it was really trying to get people to see themselves in the media and understand that other people were going through similar issues, and they came up with different results or their conclusions were, “Oh, we need to access the local health care facility more. We need to work with local nurses and health practitioners rather than always relying on sort of at-home birth solutions”.

They were really trying to encourage people to reach out for more health advice and seek those expert practitioners. But the way that they thought about doing that was influencing those mothers-in-law by having the radio programs really reflect the situations that they were going through. So, for example, they would have a call-in show where, you know, mothers-in-law going through, recounting an experience of something that happened and where they reached out to health practitioners and came up with a better solution. It's really trying to model the behaviour that they wanted people to see. And they would host listening groups and

call in. And then they would measure throughout the program, they would do focus groups. And then they would also do baseline studies and compare the results of a control group versus those who had listened to these radio programs. And the results were that, you know, the women who listened to the programs were more than twice as likely to access health experts and facilities and seek postnatal care and to go for a hospital birth if there were complications rather than always going for a home birth.

So, the result was that there were better health outcomes for those mothers and their babies. And it was all because of understanding the local context, what type of media people access, which was radio, and then who the influencers are, which were the mothers-in-law, and I think those when you combine all of those ingredients, you know, you've got a good outcome there because they're really attuned to what the situation is in that particular community.

I think for their programs, the reason they're successful is because they take the time upfront. And we're coming back to that idea of, you know, the study design. They take the time upfront to do some field research and to really understand the context before designing the intervention. So, it's really not making any assumptions about what the appropriate intervention would be until you actually properly understand your audience and how they were influenced and what the appropriate media could be in order to drive that behaviour change.

APPELT: That's such a neat case study that underscores so many neat things. So, whether it's, like you said, the importance of the taking the time to understand the population, and the touch points, and the barriers and motivators for them, the idea of media actually testing the impact of the program. And I think something you've talked about before is that not all media does that measurement. So, was that something you think that's fairly unique to BBC, that they were measuring not just viewership, but these other kinds of impacts?

DOUGLAS: Yes, absolutely, because, you know, if you look at traditional media, the only reason they were measuring something is to sell advertising. So, they're not, you know, you look at CNN or even CBC or anything like that, it's like they're not measuring in order to say, “Are we having a positive impact on our communities' social and environmental health outcomes”, maybe, in like, you know, here and there that that happens. But by and large, they're measuring audience numbers and what sort of content gets what type of audiences so you can then sell more advertising target it. It's all trying to feed the revenue beast.

And so that's why BBC Media Action was set up as a sort of arm's length charity. You know, it's funded by aid agencies. You know, it's funded by foreign aid that was able to support these outcomes because otherwise there's no like no one makes money off of it. They're just doing it because they're trying to have these positive development outcomes as their core mission of that arm of BBC World Service. So that's where it gets tricky, like with anything that's trying to benefit society, or the environment, if most of it doesn't make a profit, there's no, you know, for-profit motivation for it.

It's tricky to try to find, you know, the funding to do this sort of thing, which I think that's a whole separate discussion in itself. But it's, you know, really the motivation, as you know, isn't primarily about making money. So, it's trying to find that alignment. And I think where we've been creative and successful with that, just recently with was with aligning on companies who have these certain agendas in their corporate social responsibility and making the case that behavioural insights can help advance those with KPMG or Save on Foods, as I mentioned. I think that's where we found a good, sweet spot. It's still doing work that's not generating revenue, but it's helping those companies and those brands in their social responsibility goals. And it is helping their image at the end of the day to be able to say that they're part of this.

And I would it goes the same for governments. If you can demonstrate that behavioural insights are helping to advance their agendas and what they're trying to accomplish, then, you know, I think you would have willing partners there. So, the funding piece will definitely continue to be a tricky one.

APPELT: Absolutely. As someone who writes a lot of grants that definitely hits home. I think we have time for one more big question, and this one, it is a big one, so we may not wrestle it to death, but just have to start thinking about it. It is one thing that struck me from our previous conversations is really that we talk about behavioural insights as a tool. And I think media is a tool as well. And with tools, tools aren't themselves good or bad, but they can be used for good or bad.

In behavioural insights, a default can help people save more for retirement, but it can also sign them up for spam. Similarly, media can educate and provide common ground, or, you know, like you said earlier, with the impeachment stuff, it can also misinform, drive people apart, drive people to do bad things. And so, some of what we've seen in the last decade, we've seen some cautionary tales of how behavioural science has been used in ways that have been powerful in terms of how they've changed behaviour but have not necessarily been for good. So, do you think there's ways we can ensure that BI and media work together positively or ways we can guard against them being used negatively?

DOUGLAS: That is a big question. You know, unintended consequence is something that we've seen, you know, for working in the environmental sector, and working for environmental NGOs, basically the whole 20th century is story after story of unintended negative consequences. You know, from DDT through to carbon emissions through to you name it. So, at the time, no one was of course, no one was thinking, “Okay by burning these fuels for electricity or for power generation, then that's going to maybe create this unintended consequence of this greenhouse gas effect, and it's going to warm the planet” like no one, at the time originally, no one was thinking about that. You could even say the same about smoking is like when people started first smoking tobacco, that wasn't on anyone's radar. It's hard to imagine that you can possibly cover off or even imagine the unimaginable with these unintended consequences. And that's why, you know, we often preach the precautionary principle around anything to do with the environment.

So rather than with new products and new chemicals and new ideas, rather than being innocent until proven guilty, it's almost the flip side. It's guilty until proven innocent, which would be the wise approach. But often we don't see that approach happening. Absolutely. The precautionary principle is definitely not the norm. But that's with, you know, I'm talking mostly now about things that are developed with the purpose of creating new markets and driving revenue, creating new companies, those sorts of things. And so, their primary motivation is, “Will this thing sell a lot and how will people buy it? And can we sell it to as many people as possible” whereas what we're talking about with behavioural insights is “Will this thing have a positive benefit for people? And can we get as many people benefiting from it as possible?”. So that's right from the outset, your motivations are in a different place and you're trying to, the primary motivation is to ensure a good outcome for people. And as you say, there are some, there are examples of unintended consequences.

And I don't think there's a clear answer to that or there's no silver bullet. You just have to evaluate on the balance based on everything I can think of in terms of consequences that might come out of it. On the balance, do I feel like this will have more good coming out of it than harm? It's almost, I guess, that utilitarian sort of view of a project moving forward is just trying to anticipate those consequences. And I think understanding the cultural context in the communities you're working with, as much as possible and actually doing that upfront field research, which I kind of mentioned with BBC, is that will help check some of your biases that you see.

You as a researcher or someone looking at a study, you only can think about whatever is within your world of vision. So, you can help bolster some of that thinking or checking some of those other consequences by actually asking the people on the ground in the communities and the types of people who are the participants in these sorts of studies that you might do, in really understanding their particular situation and consequences around that.

I wish I had one of those examples to hand because I know I've heard them before, but there are those examples of where a researcher had certain biases and just had the blinders on cultural or what have you. And they came in with a behavioural insight solution and it just it missed the mark and it had consequences that they didn't anticipate. They felt bad about it, but they should have been caught, if you're truly understanding the community and the context you're working within. So, I heard you kind of affirming that one, maybe you have an example of one of those that's happened.

APPELT Yeah. I think a lot of times, like you said, it's just the idea that they come in with their solution. And then hopefully, like you also said, they do that consultation process before they launch it, so they catch it. So just thinking of my own work, there's times we have gone in and we've thought, like, “Oh, definitely what we'll do is X” and then we talk to the community, and we're like, “Well, that's not going to work”. And then we change gears. So that's, like you said, this idea of doing the consultation. So, you find that out before too late.

And this specific example I was thinking of is we did a project with snowmobilers in Eastern BC trying to get them to stay out of the areas that are closed due to caribou migration patterns and habitats. And we were thinking, “Oh, we should probably put the maps, just like make sure they can get maps, or put maps on um, like goggle wipers, goggle holders, or maybe do like a weatherproof map”. And then it turned out all of those things were just going to basically generate garbage that the snowmobile clubs would have to clean up. And what we found was like they actually just wanted an app. And so, luckily, we did that consultation and we found that out before we designed something. So, like you said hugely important.

DOUGLAS: Well, that that's interesting, and that got me thinking about work that we do with Ocean Wise in Canada's Arctic. We work with a number of Inuit communities, and the program is called Ikaarvik, which is Inuktitut for bridge. And the idea being that we're trying to bridge the communities in the North with those in Southern Canada, but especially bridging different ways of knowing, because the whole history of research around scientific and environmental research and all the research going on in the North is people from universities in the South, going up there, doing their studies, leaving, and there's no capacity being built, and the communities aren't involved.

So, what we're really trying to do is get young Inuit leaders in those communities to be the primary investigators of this research, and those folks from universities who are doing the research, they are almost the advisors rather than they're the ones coming in and calling the shots, with the whole assumption being that who knows the land and the situation better than the people who've lived there for millennia.

This has been hugely successful because it's giving that confidence in the skill-building to those young people. But it's also improving the research because researchers, before they design their studies, they have to factor in traditional knowledge, which in the Arctic, is so critical and so important. And just one little anecdote of that is, you know, one researcher was going off and they were going to design their study they were going to do in there. And they said, “OK, well, we're going to design this around the weather patterns and the seasons. OK, we've got a need to factor in summer, fall, winter, and spring”. And you're going to design it around the weather changes there. And when they're talking to one of the young Inuit leaders, she said, “Well, actually, in the Arctic here, we have 10 distinct seasons that we've observed throughout many generations. So, you really have to design for 10 distinct weather patterns”.

That's just one example of, you know, you really need to understand the local knowledge and the people who are on the ground and check your biases and assumptions that because you're a researcher from the Western science, academic tradition, that you all of a sudden know better than everyone on anything. And I think putting the communities more in the driver's seat on helping to design those studies, and checking your ego at the door as a researcher, improves the outcomes for everyone. And we've seen that firsthand. I think that maybe is part of the lesson for those unintended consequences is don't try to pretend that you as a researcher can think of every possible consequence, so that you don't need to consult with anyone else on it.

APPELT: Absolutely. I just want to tie some of the things together to kind of summarize because I think you brought up so many good things. The idea that there is potential for unintended consequences, and so consultation can help with that. Also just measuring the impacts, and that's why we do test before we scale, is we want to find those unintended consequences before too late if we can. And then just constantly iterating on the project. So just because a project worked once doesn't mean it's going to work elsewhere the same way, or that it's going to work the same way in 10 years as conditions change. It's just constantly being aware of these things; I think is hugely critical. And we are at about time. So, we'll just end up with one final question. And this one's a lot smaller, I promise. Do you have a final message or any advice for our practitioners in training?

DOUGLAS: I think my- it's not very insightful, because probably the practitioners in training know a lot more about BI than I do. So, take it with a grain of salt. But I think just getting out there and experimenting and developing partnerships, working with others. So, just go out there and network and find who else wants to do this, because I think, you know, that word community is really operative. It's like a number of groups coming together to come up with how they can develop a BI project together and have shared outcomes, because as you scratch below the surface, you quickly find out there are a lot of groups who have a shared interest in these same sorts of things that are trying to tackle something like plastic waste. The communities that are impacted by plastic waste care about it, the companies that make the products that don't end up getting recycled or thrown in landfill, the ones that end up environment, they don't want that to happen. They have an interest in it. Environmental NGOs have an interest. The government has an interest.

So, you know, any of these issues where you're trying to influence behaviour, there's probably a lot of groups who share in those. So, it's really, you know, just get out there, bring people together, be a convener around these solutions and just experiment. And I think as you're saying, you can evolve from there and you can build on it and you can refine, but you just have to start somewhere. And I think for us, that was what was great about doing that one project with KPMG. And, you know, we got lucky that it was a big success out of the gate.

But, you know, you just got to start somewhere and build from there. So, there's lots of people interested in it. I think you would know as well as anyone, Kirstin. But there's tons of opportunity to really, you know, make a positive difference here.

APPELT: Absolutely. And I think that's a great note to end on, because one of the things we've tried to highlight in the program is that these projects are always partnerships. I have yet to do a single BI project where it's been me by myself. It's always convening different groups and bringing everyone to the table. And I think that speaks to some of the things we've talked about before about consultation. And so, I think that's a wonderful conclusion.

So, thank you for joining us. For me, this has been really neat and love chatting about it and hearing about your different experiences, because while there's some kind of common themes, there are also very different

approaches and different ideas. It's been really exciting for me, and hopefully we gave our listeners some good food for thought. So, thank you for joining us, Jeremy.

DOUGLAS: Thanks so much, Kirstin. Yeah, and thanks to everyone who's getting interested and involved in this field, because I think it's super exciting and fun and tons of opportunity.

APPELT: Absolutely, and thanks to our listeners for joining another episode of Calling DIBS.
