Episode 80: "The ABCDEs of Indigenizing Behavioural Science"

with Stephanie Papik, the Moose Hide Campaign Society's Director for the Public Service

Stephanie Papik returns to share how we can work together to simultaneously Indigenize behavioural science and use Indigenized behavioural science to tackle issues impacting Indigenous peoples. Stephanie discusses the power of two-eyed seeing and the ABCDE framework, which encourages us to consider our Assumptions, who we've left Behind, who've we Consulted, what's the Data, and are the outcomes Equitable? Visit our new wiki page for more resources: https://blogs.ubc.ca/biwiki/anti-racism/

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 Stephanie Papik.

Stephanie is the Director of Strategic Integration of Indigenous Knowledge, Cultural Safety and Humility, Strategic Partnerships at Emergency Management BC. And she's on an assignment with the Moose Hide Campaign Development Society as Director for the BC Public Service.

Stephanie is also on our BIG Difference Advisory board. And as regular listeners know, we're fortunate to have Stephanie as almost an annual guest on the podcast, and I vote to keep that trend going, which we will do today. Stephanie is a huge inspiration to me and has been a guiding force in my own Reconciliation journey, so I'm thrilled to once again have the opportunity to listen and learn from Stephanie today. So welcome back to the podcast, Stephanie.

STEPHANIE PAPIK, GUEST: Thank you. It's great to be here again.

APPELT: So many of our listeners will know you, but for anyone who's new to the podcast, can you refresh us a little bit about yourself?

PAPIK: Yes. Thank you. So my name is Stephanie Papik. My Inuvialuit name is Paniguvuluk. I am Inuk on my dad's side and on my mom's side I'm Irish and Scottish ancestry, with a bit of Spanish. And I've been a visitor to the Lekwungen territory a good part of my life. And that's where I'm joining from today. And I've been with the BC Public service for 17 years now.

APPELT: Wow. That's impressive. So I know we've covered this before, but I think it's kind of an evergreen topic, and I thought it'd be fun if you refreshed us on your journey to behavioural science and how you became interested in this space.

PAPIK: I've been interested in behavioural sciences, I think for potentially as long as I can remember. I remember as a youth wanting to be a Child Psychologist. And then as I got older, I thought, "Well, that might

be a really hard and depressing job". So I ended up doing sciences and even in there studying behavioural ecology and was really interested in animal behaviour.

And in my early 20s, I was a supervisor with staff and kind of wondering, you know, noticing some people will do the things that are needed and other folks might not. And so I was kind of curious around, like, people's behaviour, what they choose to do or not do and, and all those pieces and how to cultivate the best out of people to do their best in their work.

APPELT: I was laughing because when you first said Child Psychologist, I was imagining you, as a Psychologist, as a child. Stephanie Papik, Child Psychologist. Knowing you now, I can see you having that wisdom throughout your life and being in that role early.

So before I referenced your previous visits to the podcast, in your first visit in episode 26, we talked about some of the similarities and differences between Inuit ways of knowing and being, and behavioural science practices. And in episode 41, we talked about how BI can help us understand and tackle reconciliation.

Today, we're going to take our conversation a bit further into the nexus of behavioural science and reconciliation. And we're actually taping this episode in conjunction with the release of a new resource on the Wiki, which comes to fruition with the help of folks like Stephanie and others like Crystal Hall at the University of Washington and Rhiannon Mosher and colleagues at the Public Health Agency's Behavioural Science Office.

And through all of our combined work, we're putting a page on the wiki on anti-racism, particularly as it applies to behavioural science. And the page talks about the WEIRD history of behavioral science, weird in the context of western, educated, industrialized, rich, and democratic participants and practitioners. It also talks about how we can move toward an anti-racist, Indigenized behavioural science and how we can apply behavioral science to anti-racism and reconciliation. And as we release the page, we thought it'd be really neat to tape some podcast episodes in conjunction.

And for today specifically, we thought we could focus on how we can work together to use behavioural science to help with issues impacting Indigenous Peoples and how that in itself can be an opportunity to Indigenize behavioural science. In future episodes, I'm sure we'll explore some of the other ideas on the page, but we thought this would be a fantastic starting point. And one of the ways into this conversation is talking actually about the work Stephanie, you do with the Moose Hide Campaign Society. And some folks may not be familiar with Moose Hide, so I'm hoping you can tell us a little bit about what the Moose Hide Campaign Society is, and what its purpose is.

PAPIK: The Moose Hide campaign is a BC born, Indigenous led, family led, grassroots movement to engage men and boys in ending violence towards women and children and those on the gender continuum. And it started out on the Highway of Tears, overlapping with the founders, Paul and Raven Lacerte, father daughter, who were out on their traditional territories moose hunting and with a strong desire about what can we do right now to end violence against women and children.

And so they had taken down a moose, brought that home. Tanned it, cut it all up and started hand-writing out these cards that said, if you wear this piece of moose hide, you're standing up to end violence against women and children. And so what started at the kitchen table has now become a nation wide event with this year's Moose Hide Campaign Day on May 16th. It's both online and in person in Victoria, BC.

APPELT: It's such a powerful story, and I love how I'm already seeing behavioural science in there, using the moose hide as reminders and commitment devices. I'm excited to pull this apart a little bit with you. So issues

like gender based violence and goals like reconciliation and reducing violence are of course systemic issues and then require systems change. But as we just started to get into, they are also behavioural issues that require behaviour change. So where do you see behaviour having a role or an impact or having any relation to these issues?

PAPIK: Huge. It all begins with our unconscious biases that we have, that informs our attitudes, which informs our behaviours, which leads to action or even inaction. So, you know, that often can be just as harmful if something is happening and we don't take action and do or say something. So I think it's fundamentally at the base of all of that.

APPELT: Yeah, for sure. And I like how you called in both action and inaction as being behavioural elements of this problem, because there is the inaction because of the intention action gap. There's also inaction, more willful inaction. So I think there's a lot of richness there. So what are some of the specific behavioural barriers that you think are relevant?

PAPIK: Ultimately, a lot of what's underlying it is fear. Fear of getting it wrong, making a mistake. And so that those 'fearriers'-- because those fears become barriers to action for people, they just kind of get stuck and they don't, when the opportunity arises, do or say something.

APPELT: I know it was a bit of a misspeak, but I actually I like that idea of “fearriers” because I think a lot of barriers are fear based. So fearriers really makes a lot of sense. And, I think part of what's really powerful about what you're saying there is people might have the intention to act, but then the fear really holds them back.

And so knowing that, you would tackle that differently than if it was lack of knowledge or something else, but knowing that it's something coming from fear, then we can think of how do we address that fear? And so building on that idea, if there are behavioural barriers at play then maybe there's a space for behavioural science and behavioural solutions to help. And this seems like a really perfect opportunity for behavioural science to be Indigenized because we have the right folks at the table, the right ideas. But I realize Indigeninzing behavioural science might be a new set of terms to be put together for some people. So can you help us unpack what that means? What does it mean to Indigenize behavioural science?

PAPIK: Sure. I kind of like the analogy of two eyes seeing. So one eye where you see with our Western ways of knowing, so behavioural sciences and then uh, the other lens, we look at Indigenous ways of being and knowing. They're equal. And in fact, I would argue around the need to center, so really prioritize Indigenous ways of knowing, being, in our work.

My favorite quote comes from Albert Einstein that “You can't use the same thinking to get yourself out of a problem that got you into the problem”. And, you know, we have globalization, addiction, homelessness, climate crisis, all these aspects so that are a symptom of colonization. And so the answers out of this lie in the land and in the Nations who've been stewards of these lands for thousands of generations.

APPELT: I really like what you're saying about Two Eyed Seeing, because I think it really makes the point of not only that each of these eyes is powerful, but that together they bring out more in each other. So with our physical bodies, you see both of our eyes, we have depth perception, and it gives us shading and different things that we don't have if we cover one eye.

And so similarly with two eyed seeing, you can see that knowing something from Indigenous ways of knowing could give you new meanings or new understanding, new richness to a behavioural science concept and vice

versa. And that together we're so much more powerful than if we're closing one of our eyes. And if we know that, then why would we ever decide to purposely only look out of one eye when we have these two eyes available to us?

PAPIK: Exactly.

APPELT: So getting into the specifics, what are some of the ways that we can act to Indigenize behavioural science to action this idea of two-eyed seeing?

PAPIK: That is a really great question. One of the ways is applying the principle of nothing about us without us. So when we begin a meeting or a project, we pause at the very beginning and take notes. Well, you actually could apply the ABCs of gender based analysis plus. Are we making any assumptions in our work? Who've we left behind? So A is assumptions, B behind, C who did we consult? D what's the data? What are we looking at? What kind of story are we telling with that data? Is it a strength based or deficit based? And E equitable outcomes. And you know, if we look around the table and there aren't any Indigenous people at the table and we ask the question, “Will this have an impact on Indigenous people?”. How will we know if our assumptions about that impact is true or not without, you know, making that space?

And there's lots of different ways, within government, we hire consultants, so we can hire Indigenous knowledge keepers and pay them as consultants. Or we can also look at our hiring practices to see, you know, how are we supporting being diverse, representative of the population that we serve? So those are some kind of initial examples.

Other ways too is using circle practice or aspects of circle within meetings, making that time for the relational. So doing that by offering some agreements and how we want to show up and be in relation to each other today, offering a little check in, that humanizing piece about recognizing each of us as a whole person, making that time and space to talk about our feelings so that they don't become 'fearriers.' And even checkouts, just that, that little bit of time to see how things are landing. And it's possible for you to leave a meeting instead of just having a big checklist of things to do and mounting stress to having a time where you also it feels nourishing and that you feel supported as well as achieving the goals of the organization.

APPELT: Wow, yeah. There's so much richness there. I really like that. And I've heard parts of ABC, but I don't think I've had the D and E put together. So I love how that works. And again, I think some of this is just making things very clear and spelled out, like we said, with two eyed seeing, it just makes it obvious the benefits.

And so similarly, if we don't have someone in the room, we're almost by definition assuming because they're not there to share. So unless they've, you know, given us notes in advance or something, we're almost by definition assuming what their perspective is, their history, their impacts. So I think it helps really make it concrete about the importance of having folks there. Because without that it's hard to do the BCDE if you're doing the A. So I think that that's super helpful. And as you know, we like checklists to help us organize our thoughts. So that's perfect.

One thing you talked about coming out of the BIG Difference Conference, which I thought maybe we could pick up on again, is the idea that two eyed seeing can also help us recognize that nudging for good can feel good and do good beyond the behaviour being nudged. Can you expand on that?

PAPIK: Sure. It's kind of like the quadruple word score for Scrabble. It's often I find in sharing this information, people can often feel a sense of overwhelm of like, “Oh my gosh, you know, I'm already feel like I'm stretched.

Now you want me to do another thing", and it might, you know, you're like it just starts to that sense of like overwhelm and then another barrier to action.

And so, stepping into this space, you know, I've been working in this realm for over ten years now. And I get emails from people that say, you know, like, since they've kind of stepped into this realm around reconciliation, making space for indigenous people, knowledge and practice in their work, that not only are they able to do their job better in terms of those pieces around reconciliation, around gender-based analysis class, around cultural safety, diversity, all of those various areas that a lot of government and institutions are really focused on these days. It also because of using things like circle practice creates that time for the relational. So, people have told me it helps them to have better relationships with their colleagues, with their family members, with themselves. So there is all of these different layers of benefit by stepping into this space and recognizing that, you know, colonization has impacted all of us, not just Indigenous people. So there's also benefit for each and everyone of us.

APPELT: Yeah, absolutely. And I think in some ways, the elements like circle practice are even more important when we're doing virtual collaborations and virtual events, because it can be really hard to get that interpersonal connection when you're on Zooms with people. But for me at least, I find that when we do elements of circle practice, it really does make it feel like you're actually talking to humans and not just pixels that are on your screen. So that really resonates with me.

So we've talked generally about Indigenizing behavioural science. Are there anything specific when we talk about mental wellness? And you've already mentioned the quadruple word score, but anything else you wanted to bring up in that context?

PAPIK: Sure. Yeah. An interesting thing when I was back at Emergency Management and during the pandemic, when we had stood at the provincial Emergency Coordination Centre, we were into year two of the pandemic, and we had been doing these cultural safety and humility segments in partnership with First Nations Health Authority unpacking what is cultural safety, how does that look, what can that look like applied to my work day? And people were feeling that sense of overwhelm.

So we dialed it back to the foundations of developing one's cultural safety and humility skills, which is self-discovery and awareness. So learning about our biases, our blind spots. Just you know, all those pieces of our life that shape how and who we are each day as well. So self-discovery, and awareness, and self-care.

You know that, putting the oxygen mask on yourself first and then the little kiddo in the seat next to you on the airplane, we, you know, we won't be able to show up in a good way for others if we're in a space where we need to be taking care of our spirits and our bodies. And then the practice of mindfulness, and it was interesting because a couple of months in, after we started doing that, the Public Service Agency came in and did a mental wellness session. And lo and behold, what did they focus on? Self discovery and awareness, self-care and the practice of mindfulness. So that's again, that kind of stepping into that space and how it can have so many different benefits.

APPELT: Yeah. So one of the things I really love about what you're saying around the importance of self-awareness, self-care and all of these components and tying it to the idea of emergency management and to the idea of putting on your own oxygen mask first, is sometimes these are the self awareness, self-care, more the invisible emergencies. And so our attention is more drawn to the very visible emergencies.

So like during the pandemic, you know, we have to save these lives and we have to change the policies on this. And so all of those often feel more urgent and more like emergencies. But like you said, that's where burnout

comes in because we're doing all of those and not paying attention to the invisible emergencies. So I think bringing those ideas together, you see that self-awareness and self-care are the foundation, and not like this bonus thing that we get to when we have time. We have to do them in order to do that other work. And I think that's a really powerful idea and one that I almost need like a physical reminder next to my desk about the oxygen mask. I love that as a metaphor, that's so powerful.

One of the other things I really love about our conversations and you actually already hinted about this, is just the idea that you always like to leave our conversations so that they inspire people with hope and give pragmatic next steps. And you already mentioned the idea of the quadruple word score. I'm wondering if there are other tangible steps you want people to take away from this episode into the addition of the many ones I've already written down?

PAPIK: I think that one for me has been, and I think I've spoken about this before, just the idea of like wearing the moose hide pin on a daily basis and using that as a visual cue. It could be a visual cue around practicing self-care today and that being open to cultivating and receiving feedback so that we can learn and grow.

And even, a biggest thing too, a takeaway this past week when I was at a gathering, that's another kind of thread in there, around the practice of mindfulness around that, bringing our attention always back to our breath and that, you know, we're always just a breath away from re-grounding ourselves, re-centering, doing that conscious shift from our amygdala, nine times stronger than our prefrontal cortex. So, you know, that conscious breath and presence-ing to be in our compassionate thinking part of our brain. So yeah, using the pin as a daily reminder for those foundations of developing cultural safety and humility skills and then will be, you know, a safe person for somebody.

APPELT: Yeah. And I think that's really powerful too, because as we all know, in our own lives, as well as from behavioural science research, that habits are hard to form unless it's something that is really just amazing out of the gate. A lot of times they take work to build the habits, and so things like the reminder can help us build the habit. So sometimes we need that physical reminder until we've made it an ingrained habit. And then it's still useful as a reminder and also as a signal to others. But it's really crucial in those phases where we're working to build the habit. So I think that is a great message.

And I also think I heard something at a recent event I attended where they were talking about how hope isn't passive, it's active. It's something you have to work on, especially with everything going on in the world. And so I think all of this is resonating with that idea as well. If you do these things towards self-care, self-compassion, self-awareness, it builds that hope in you as well. So I think that's a very powerful note as we start to wrap up the episode.

PAPIK: And, you know, when I'm at the airport and anywhere across Canada and I see folks wearing a pin that also gives me hope, I'm like, “Oh, okay you know, we have a shared common purpose and goal in life”.

APPELT: Yeah, yeah. For sure. It's like we talked about at the BIG Difference Conference this past year, the power of social norms and how they're dynamic and not static. So, you know, we're all building the change together. And then we get to see the ripple effects, which is so powerful. Well, as you know, one of my always repeated questions is, do you have a message for our BI practitioners in training? Folks who are new to the field?

PAPIK: It's that invitation to step into this realm and draw on any of the wiki resources that kind of speak out to you, that could be of interest, whether that's like entering the space through National Day of Truth and

Reconciliation or Moose Hide Campaign Day, May 16th. There's lots of different entry points into this space, and everybody is welcome. And it's to create that systemic change.

So, you know, it takes each and every one of us, even if you feel like you might not have a big circle of influence, just even that whole piece about how you take care of yourself can have huge ripple effects throughout the day and the world.

APPELT: Yeah, that's a really powerful message. And my traditional final question. Just any last thoughts? Anything I should have asked and didn't, or any additional, thoughts you wanted to offer?

PAPIK: Sending out love to everybody, recognizing there's so much happening in the world and around us and just want to wrap everybody in love and protection and offer gratitude for making the time to listen to our DIBS podcast again. Thank you.

APPELT: Thank you. That's a perfect note to end on. And I just want to say, I feel so grateful to have these conversations with you and that we count you as a member of our behavioural science community. You're really a leader in the space of Indigenizing behavioural science, and we're all much better for it. So thank you for always being so generous with your energy and knowledge. It's so great to have you back on the podcast.

PAPIK: Thank you. It's only possible with fabulous allies like yourself.

APPELT: And thanks to our other allies, our listeners who are joining us for another episode of Calling DIBS.