

AT Banter Podcast Episode 300 - PossAbilities

📅 Mon, 8/29 12:25PM ⌚ 49:45

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

people, disability, support, community, organization, employers, services, experience, employees, website, bc, podcast, called, platform, pandemic, individual, folks, employment, ryan, started

SPEAKERS

Rob Mineault, Ryan Fleury, Monique Nelson

R Rob Mineault 00:17
Hey and welcome to another episode of AT Banter,

R Ryan Fleury 00:23
Banter, banter.

R Rob Mineault 00:25
This is of course a podcast where we talk with advocates and members of the disability community to educate and inspire better conversation about disability. Hey, my name is Rob Mineault and joining me today once again, just me and him. Mr. Ryan Fleury

R Ryan Fleury 00:42
Together again. Hello.

R Rob Mineault 00:46
Yeah, I'm getting kind of used to this, just me and you doing the show.

R Ryan Fleury 00:50
Yeah, we don't need those other two co-hosts, do we?

R

Rob Mineault 00:53

Yeah, I mean, clearly not. I mean, I don't know.. Maybe we could we could use all the funds that we save on their salaries to I don't know, do nothing.

R

Ryan Fleury 01:07

Sounds good.

R

Rob Mineault 01:11

How are you? How are you doing over there? It's it's pretty hot.

R

Ryan Fleury 01:16

Yeah, it's been toasty I think today and tomorrow are supposed to be the two hottest days of the week so I'm gonna get through it we've got a couple air conditioner units here in the house. So we will manage. And of course I am recording currently in my basement which is below ground. So place a cool down here.

R

Rob Mineault 01:35

Lucky. I'm on the ninth floor. Terrible so geez, I don't know my mind went blank. Ryan I went to ask you I thought I thought I had something for you. Okay. All right. Well, let's not waste any more time, Ryan. Since we're both hot and I want to get my barbecue started. Why don't you tell the fine folks at home just what the heck we're doing today.

R

Ryan Fleury 02:16

Today, our special guest is Monique Nelson, who's the director of Community Engagement from the Possibilities Association of British Columbia. Welcome, Monique.

M

Monique Nelson 02:27

Thank you, Ryan. Great to be here. Thank you for inviting me to the show.

R

Rob Mineault 02:31

Oh, glad you could make it. I have to say that he called you a special guest. I don't remember the last time that he called anybody a special guest. So just saying clearly he's taking this prepared is very serious.

M Monique Nelson 02:45
Like, oh, okay, I don't mind I've got some gray hair.

R Ryan Fleury 02:51
I think we all do.

R Rob Mineault 02:55
Well, listen, we want to thank you so much, actually, for coming on the show. We've actually we actually wanted to get you on for a while but we had some scheduling hiccups. But that's kind of just a normal summer thing. We can't even tell you how many podcast guests we've been trying to get over the course of the summer that we've had trouble scheduling just because vacation schedules. Everybody's going on vacation this year because they can.

M Monique Nelson 03:20
I'm staying here in beautiful BC.

R Rob Mineault 03:23
All right. Well, why don't we start off with maybe just giving us a little bit of a sort of a brief overview of yourself and what you do over there are Possibilities. And then just a really brief overview of what the organization does.

M Monique Nelson 04:00
Sure love to do that. So I'm Monique. And I'm a mom of two young people, one of whom has autism. And that's how I got into the field of community living. So I was working in treaty negotiations before that doing communication and consultation work. And I found that I had to bring my professional life and my personal life a little bit closer together in order to support the family. But a lot of what I learned working with the indigenous community actually directly applies to working with people with disabilities as well. We share a very similar experience of institutionalization. Although there are many differences between our groups that certainly a common thread, and it was really hit the ground running and I've created this role. Hope it's fair to say that started out in family support and technical writing, and then assumed the role of communications manager and social media, digital communication specialists. And our little team at Possibilities helps support 600 employees who serve about 1900 individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities across BC, while we do the internal and external communications, including things like the Good for All podcast.

R Rob Mineault 05:23
So it's a fairly large organization. I actually had no idea

so it's a fairly large organization, I actually had no idea.

M

Monique Nelson 05:27

Yeah, it's one of the larger ones in BC, and mostly serving the Lower Mainland. But we also have behavior support services, and home living in other parts of BC. So yeah, we're on the island and in the interior and up the Sunshine Coast a little ways. So we provide employment services, community connecting and integration, employment supports, and all kinds of different residential options from 24/7, staff group homes, through to supporting folks to live in apartments on their own. And then the most common model of support for residential these days is the shared living, where we help match individuals with caregivers. And it's a nice organic arrangement that's community based.

R

Ryan Fleury 06:15

That's one thing I noticed is the common thread of either building partnerships with the community, or developing relationships within the disability community itself. It really seems that Possibilities is all about community.

M

Monique Nelson 06:32

Yeah, thank you for noticing that. I really appreciate it. Because that was exactly the approach that I took on when I first joined the organization 14 years ago, I was thinking about where are the gaps and how can we work better together. And believe it or not, right, and that wasn't always the way it was, it was a little more competitive over contracts. And, of course, each individual organization still has to compete for lack of a better word to serve, folks. But there's a lot more cooperation and collegiality. And some individuals will have one kind of service from one organization like their data supports, and the residential with us, or vice versa. And so people need to be able to communicate clearly, across different company cultures. Just pretty interesting. We also have lots of employees who work for more than one organization, this nature of the business, actually lots of people who are two jobs from even three.

R

Rob Mineault 07:30

It's interesting that you say that, because that's something that we've often talked about on the podcast is that the disability community on a whole can feel very fragmented sometimes. And it can, can be kind of difficult to navigate, because there's just so many different organizations that are servicing sort of niche pockets of, of disability. And that's really, because that's just the nature of the beast, because, you know, a lot of a lot of these organizations aren't necessarily big, and they don't have the resources to say service, hundreds and hundreds of people. So they're servicing, you know, sort of a small base. But there's just so many of them. So for people out there in the community that that sort of are looking for resources, they don't sort of always know where to go.

M

Monique Nelson 08:25

Yeah, you're absolutely right. And I think the way that came about, particularly in community living, is that it's been family driven. So those boards of nonprofits, societies, were often a group of families who got together to support their kids, you know, who they got together to, say, educate them in church basements, and then the kids got older. And they would say, Well, what are we going to do about housing, who's going to take care of them and love them like I do when I'm gone. So a lot of these little organizations popped up in that passion. And even as recently as just a few years ago, there were a group of parents in Burnaby, they started something called the Square Peg Society. And that was because the their loved ones wouldn't qualify for support from Community Living BC. Typically, they're on the autism spectrum. And they they have a very high IQ. But they definitely could use other supports to social skill, employment skill, post secondary education, housing, access, all of those things. And so these parents formed to support each other, and to start to tease out those pockets and advocate for more support for their sons and daughters. And they've done a lot of great work in Burnaby over the last few years, and I'm thankful every week, I'm sending someone to their door to help them out.

R

Rob Mineault 09:44

Yeah, it's really interesting, and I really see that as an important aspect of this sort of battle for disability rights and to really sort of move the needle in terms of of really building out an infrastructure of accessibility and inclusion and, and building out a lot of these services. That's how they get they need to start, they start small and they build it. Can you speak a little bit to, you know, sort of in that sense about partners and who you partner with? How important is sort of partnership with all these different organizations for you guys?

M

Monique Nelson 10:24

Yeah, it's, it's always been important. But particularly, I would say, in the last eight years or so, we work together with an organization called Kinsight which actually has operations in both of your communities Coquitlam and in New Westminister, as well as the Burnaby Association for Community Inclusion. And together, our organizations have a very large budget, the majority of the funds that are spent on adult services with disabilities within what we call the Fraser region are CLDC calls the Fraser region. So when we work together and advocate for a platform or change, we're likely to be more successful than if we were working individually. So over this past eight years, we started working with social designers and ethnographers, to start to look at the lived experience of people with disabilities and the impoverishment of experience that had sort of resulted from life of coming out of the institutions, and so on. That, particularly amongst the older folks who didn't have inclusive education, they have a very different lived experience. And so just sort of studying that, looking at what that is, and how could we address those pain points. And this design team helped us prototype a few new services, one of which was called Kudoz. And it was a thing, a platform online, originally, that would introduce people with and without cognitive disabilities to share a connection, a passion. For example, I'm passionate about bird walks and cares about nature and birdwatching, and so on. So I would host walks around Deer Lake or Central Park in Burnaby. And share with folks what I knew about the forest, the ecology, the wildlife, for an hour. So it was just a moment that was something an opportunity for me to give back. And an opportunity for a person with a disability to teach me from their lens, how they experienced the same interest, a shared moment of connection. And that platform was very successful, and they prototype some others. And now

together, we have support from Community Living BC, to host something called Caracal, which is the continuance of these moments of connection. But now it's not just one to one in person. It's one to one experiences, group experience, online experience, video experiences. And it's a platform that can scale across BC and further, to serve folks who live in rural and remote communities, for example, it can be a really helpful tool in providing connection and learning opportunities. So that's something we did very collaboratively raised millions of dollars on the side through grants, and private foundations to do that work and that refinement, before being able to present a polished platform that could become part of a catalog of services. You know, it's funny, you brought up Curico, because I'm actually looking at that word right now it's in my notes. And did these platforms or programs, were they in effect before the pandemic? Or did it become part of the pivot that you had to do and go online? Yeah, Curico is sort of the new brand name of a variety of prototypes that came together. But the individual prototypes did exist before the pandemic. And what the pandemic did was actually help us accelerate that platform and offer it to more people as an option for something to do to help fill their days when they weren't no longer participating in their community activities. So yes, it proved itself to be very valuable, as well as an opportunity to teach folks how to use technology to access that all these activities were delivered via Zoom. So go on to the website, click on the Zoom, you're in the experience.

R

Ryan Fleury 14:17

Well, and I think that's so important, you know, not just in the developmental disability community, but all all parts of life, you know, when the pandemic hit, the streets were silent. Nobody knew what to do, where to go, how to do it. You know, we lost that social connection with each other. And so we had to kind of relearn reevaluate how we were going to move on with life. So it's interesting, you know, like I said, your site is a wealth of information, and there's so much to dig into there.

M

Monique Nelson 14:47

Oh, thank you. I'm glad you are enjoying checking it out. And you reminded me of one other type of experience that's offered which is part of that new name, and it's Meraki. So Meraki boxes were actually the boxed experiences that were delivered to people's homes, some tactile ways to engage with objects and learning. So not just on blacks, we have a variety of experiences, our hip hop dance lessons or a video tutorial.

R

Rob Mineault 15:16

I love it. You know, I was I was the same way, you know, I was really fascinated with the site, because what really struck me is just the sheer number of different activities and services that that you provide. And knowing how many employees you have, and how many people that you service, I'm, I'm sort of gobsmacked, just how you guys managed to, to deal with it all. You guys must be run off your feet.

M

Monique Nelson 15:48

But it's interesting that you say that part of it I think is a good blend of employees who are

But it's interesting that you say that part of it, I think is a good blend of employees who are deeply experienced and new innovators who are joining our teams, the possibilities came together in 1998. As for smaller organizations, who each have a specialty, so there's the mainstream association for proactive Community Living is what we were called at that time. And then a fifth joined us, which was Laurel society, and behavior consultation became part of what we could offer. So through this period of time, like I can't tell you how many weeks I'll receive a notification that someone's been with us for 20 years, or 30 years. You know, they're the people who've been with us since the beginning. And that's been really helpful, I think, as well as the new folks coming in with the design thinking, and what else can we do? How can we excavate the gifts of people and in the workplace, so it's not just about the job? It's what kind of new roles how do we harness people's gifts so that it's meaningful for the employees and the people we support and our community members. So it's been a really good process for us to go through this animation involved, it plays in that work as well.

R

Ryan Fleury 17:04

When you have a testimonial of a client who got a job at marks on your website, what's the reaction been from employers and engaging with that community?

M

Monique Nelson 17:16

You know, we've had a very strong year, our employment services team has placed 96 people into competitive community based employment, the average prior to that had been 70 to 75 people. So that's a significant increase during COVID. For us, it was our employment relationship is for at least three years with the employee and the employer. And what that allows us to do is to support the person if their role changes. If the employer's needs change, to try on a new career, if the first employer isn't, you know, is someone that they grow out of here isn't the best fit to problem solve, if something isn't going right, or to build capacity in the workplace, with the other employees to support help support the individual to do some job carving. So there's lots of different things that employment services does to help people secure and maintain employment or to develop their careers. So from an employer's perspective, I think it's important for them to know that we're there. And that if challenges arise, they have someone that they can give a call to. And our typical experience has been if someone's been employed for three years, they're going to continue to be employed, they've learned the skills that they need to continue to work or find other jobs. But we're there for them if they need.

R

Ryan Fleury 18:35

Yeah, I think, you know, we're seeing more and more, I'm seeing more and more on Twitter and social media, and news of just mainstream companies employing people with disabilities, realizing how beneficial that is to them. So, you know, we are seeing that evolve.

M

Monique Nelson 18:54

We are in, you know, something like the pandemic, like the current labor shortage has been helpful. And in some ways, I'm sorry, it had to come to that. It's not like this is a new initiative by any stretch. But it certainly helped shine a spotlight on the abilities of the people that we

support. And we're really thankful for that opportunity. And we're starting to get those phone calls from much larger employers. The next big step, it really is to help employers adjust how they bring people in the right. If they're putting out a total online process, and someone struggles with that and doesn't have support, they're not going to get that employee to come in for an interview, or if they aren't flexible enough to offer a working interview, to allow someone to demonstrate their skills that can be another barrier. So there's still work to be done in that sense. Most most employers are mom and pop shops, right? I think about what two thirds of our chambers of commerce is comprised of small businesses. And so there's lots of employment there, but it's also helpful to get the big players on boards. Yeah, this can be more job carving sometimes in most situations.

R

Ryan Fleury 20:04

Yeah. Yeah, we have recently talked about disclosure of disabilities on some recent shows as well. And, you know, you get your foot in the door, and you might be on that on the fringe, right? Do you disclose that you are partially sighted? Do you have enough to functionally see? Or, you know, there may be a task that you're not able to do. So do you disclose that disability?

M

Monique Nelson 20:27

That's very much up to the individual what they feel comfortable with. And employer would know that the individual has some support needs. Closure kind of comes with that. But we can help in different ways. So we also do fee for service contracts for people. So we not only serving folks who come to us through a referral by our our funder Community Living BC, but some people may come to us, and they don't wish to disclose, but they need help preparing their resume or preparing for the interview. So privacy, and that can be big. It really just depends on what the individual wants and needs.

R

Rob Mineault 21:06

Yeah, makes sense. So can you talk to us a little bit about just how important education is in what you guys do as well. And I guess, in that, I mean, sort of educating, say the community, but also say educating employers about about, you know, inclusive hiring practices do you have Is there a component of Possibilities that sort of focuses in on that?

M

Monique Nelson 21:34

Well, part of the employment service, one of the offerings that they do have is reversibility training, which is specifically with employers or their employees, who may have doubts, to give them a safe space to air, what it is that they're concerned about, and to have those questions addressed. So that's certainly part of it. As an organization, we definitely do a certain amount of profile work, as well as simply word of mouth, right. Like most people find their jobs, often it's a lead from a family member, that so it's just getting out there. And the more people that are employed, the more employers that will notice and hear and try. So it's, I think it's really a snowball effect. We're involved in our boards of trade, I think the time is coming, where people are going to start looking to us for leads to help fill those positions. Our approach is to work

with the individuals. So if they're interested in TV and film, then we'll go searching with them to find employment in TV and film. It's not that we just have a roster of employers and try to slot people in where there are spaces. We also don't work on a subsidy basis, which is really important. Because what we have found from others over the years, is that once subsidy in the child, and that's absolutely crushing to someone who's doing a good job doesn't mean they need to be like. So, you know, we're not big. So where we will access subsidies will be in something like job coaching, if that provides additional hours per some great, but not least, if that makes sense.

R Ryan Fleury 23:10

Yep. No, that's kind of how I got one of my first jobs was wage subsidies.

M Monique Nelson 23:16

And did it stick?

R Ryan Fleury 23:18

Actually, I'm here. 22 years later. .

R Rob Mineault 23:26

So yeah, and, you know, the sort of the great thing about this on most of the things that, that we're talking about it and that that you do, is that it sort of scratches two itches at once, because you're getting you're getting people out into the community, which, you know, you're providing the services and support, and you're involving the community, which is educating the community, all at the same time.

M Monique Nelson 24:05

Yep. That's right. We're accredited by CARF, which the actual standard for employment services. So like we've seen, there's that sort of sweet spot where if we can stick with a person or an employer for three years, we've got it down, you know, that that will continue. That's a good practice that, that we've learned to part of our accreditation, but it also is based on evidence that it'll help people maintain jobs for life.

R Rob Mineault 24:36

So I want to talk a little bit about the podcast.

R Ryan Fleury 24:40

I was just gonna ask her when she wants to co host ours.

R

Rob Mineault 25:00

So how did that can you talk to us a little bit about how that came about? And kind of what the what sort of the mandate of the of the podcast is?

M

Monique Nelson 25:08

Absolutely. That came about through a desire to meet the information needs of our employees primarily. They were asking for another channel, another way for us to communicate, share stories with them. So we have a team member who is passionate about podcasting and communications. And so we started and to be honest, we struggle with the time it takes to produce what we've done. But it is something that we thoroughly enjoy, and we we intend to continue even though they might not be at a great pace that we're hoping for, but going more informal might be an important step for us to get.

R

Rob Mineault 25:50

Yeah, it's worked for us. We're quantity over quality.

R

Ryan Fleury 26:01

They've got five quality episodes.

M

Monique Nelson 26:04

We actually worked with the team to train us on like shaping story and different kind of ways to structure podcasts, techniques for music and background and on site work. It's been great learning.

R

Rob Mineault 26:24

See them Ryan, we need to do some training. Now that existed. No idea what we're doing. But but it's but it is really true. The I find the podcast platform is is really great for sharing stories and sharing information. And trying to get the word out there and educating people. It's just there's, there's been no better platform for many, many, many years, that sort of has allowed an organization or an individual no matter the size, you know, if they've got a working mic, and they've got some free software on their computer, they have the means to produce something, and to put it out into the world. I do think that part of that sort of in conjunction is to share with stuff like social media. But I think that this is the thing, these are the things that we have to thank, for actually pushing the needle forward in terms of educating, and, you know, the big uptick in advocacy in the disability community.

M

Monique Nelson 27:45

And, on that note, what do you think of platforms like Tiktok? for the same purpose?

R

Ryan Fleury 27:50

Don't get me started on TikTok, I don't know. As a blind person, I, I've, I've tried it. I cannot. It doesn't seem to be that accessible to me. Okay. And I know there are blind people using it. But I don't know what limited vision they have. But I I'm not able to make any sense of it.

R

Rob Mineault 28:11

Social media is such a complicated beast. It it really is sort of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde in ways. And so it's it's a complicated question. I think that social media is fantastic for being able to create communities and to bring people together that normally would never have been able to interact and share resources. We I mean, we desperately need that, especially in something like the disability community, because like we talked about earlier, most of there's a lot of times where people don't know where to go, and there's no, it's not like there's a centralized Information Hub resource that's easy to find, for people to go in to be like, oh, you know, you know, I have a, I have a son who is visually impaired, what are my what are my funding options? Or where can I go for support, there is no centralized hub. So in a way social media can help mitigate some of that. So and I think that that's, that's really great. And the same thing with you know, I think that that people in the disability community that are utilizing these platforms to create content and whether that content is just something that they do for fun that they enjoy that enriches their life, that's great if they use it as as an opportunity to try to educate. Also think that's great. It's just, it's just the all the other bad apples that sort of that's that sort of get on those platforms and sort of ruin it for everybody else.

M

Monique Nelson 29:46

I'm curious about your comment about no central hub for information because I was thinking, in my experience, that first person was the social worker that we had when my son was little. And then as he got older he was, there was a new position navigator, which helped us figure out some of the transition to adult aspects of his life. Was that different for you having low vision, or different experience?

R

Ryan Fleury 30:16

I lost my sight in a car accident, so instantaneously, and was living in different province than my my parents. And I was obviously a young adult. And so, you know, at the time, there was the CNIB and, you know, being the National Organization for the Blind, that's where you went. And so, you know, that was pretty straightforward. But, but now, well, even prior to that, but now there's the CCB, the CFB, the AEBC, there's, you know, 567 different organizations, for the blind and partially sighted, but there's not a, there's not, like Rob said, there isn't one website, you can go to, you know, I'm blind.com that lists the different funding agencies for K to 12, or

post secondary, if you're blind or partially sighted, where you can get, you know, mobility orientation, mobility training, Braille instruction, you know, there's no, there's not a one stop shop.

R

Rob Mineault 31:13

Well, yeah, yeah, it's especially and it's especially tricky to when you factor in things like, well, you know, I have I have a school aged child that we need some sort of, you know, electronic Braille equipment to help them with school, where, where can we go to, to get a loan for that? Or where can we go to get funding to buy something like that? Those those types of questions have very specific needs, I feel like those are the things that sort of fall through the gaps people like, why don't I don't know, I don't know where to go for that particular need. So it can be it can be really tricky and part of the problem. And you know, we can really speak well, I feel like with the sort of the the low vision in the blindness community, because that's where most of our experience lies. But certainly part of the problem is that different organizations don't always talk to each other, they don't always will work together. Because like you mentioned before, even though we're all on the same team, and we're all working towards the same end, there's also a component where there's a little bit of competition, because because of funding because of grants, like everybody's trying to get funding for their, for their or own organization. And so things like referrals, or things like that don't always happen when they need to. But um, but I'm curious to get your take on that. And what your kind of experience is.

M

Monique Nelson 32:40

You know, as you were speaking, my mind went right away to the disability alliance of BC. And how, how might they be able to help in, in my experience, there's been some significant growth in an organization called The Family Support Institute of BC, it is pan-disability. So although you know, a lot of the folks that they serve would qualify for our services. There are also folks who have rare genetic disorders or other types of disabilities, they face the same kinds of issues when it comes to things like, you know, advocating for inclusive educational support in the classroom, through to their parents planning for wills, estates, and trusts and Disability Savings Plans, you know, and the challenges that might come with developing friendships and networks and caregiver burnout, and, and all of those things. So I've been very fortunate to see that blossom. That was one of my, my aspirations, when I first started in the field is that there would be a one stop shop for families, rather than all of our individual associations and hosting workshops and learning events, just trying to get information out to people. But I really think we need solid investment in social workers. And when we came into the system in the early 2000s, there were a series of cuts in that area. I'm not sure if they ever recovered. I think the amount of people needing support puts that system into crisis mode. And only the families in crisis get attended to the proactive planning and support that used to be there with the moderate case, no visit isn't there. We'll see what happens. There's going to be a redesign of the service framework -- It's underway already for children and youth with additional support needs. And it's moving to local area networks or hubs. I think there are 43 plan for across the province. So that will change things. And we'll see how that goes with and without a diagnosis.

R

Ryan Fleury 34:43

That's why we do the podcast because we learn something every week.

R

Rob Mineault 34:48

So true. And that does that makes me that that actually gives me some hope. Because I mean, I don't think it takes a rocket scientist to look at the system right now and to realize that there's some problems. Certainly. I mean, I don't know if I would go as far as it's broke. But I mean, it certainly it's it's like you said it's in crisis mode. And that's not even considering all the other things that that effect that that are also in crisis mode, like, eg housing, inflation. There's all these things that will trickle down and affect all of us in this in the advocacy world.

M

Monique Nelson 35:29

Oh, absolutely. And there's quite strong opposition to these changes that are being proposed from the autism community, because it's a move away from individualized funding and choice that things have happened since about two thirds, the year 2000 2002, somewhere in there when autism funding was first introduced, because it was won through the court system. So there's pushback as well, and people are concerned with how's it going to work? How long will the wait times be through the centers? That kind of things. And it's no, no invest additional investment, how we serve more people?

R

Ryan Fleury 36:09

I've tried to have someone from the Autism Society of Canada, even on the podcast, they are such a large, and I'm going to assume powerful organization that, you know, it would be hard to, to make any movement there.

M

Monique Nelson 36:24

Yeah, yeah, there's an organization called AID, autism information. And I forget, sorry, the last two letters, they have a variety of helpful toolkits for families that want to check out some other resources.

R

Rob Mineault 36:41

Yeah, that must be sometimes be a little bit of a challenge. Because that's the other thing about the disability community that is so large, and it's so widespread. So it can be hard to get everybody working together in the same direction, because sometimes, some policies might sort of seem like it's works against a certain pocket. And they might not like that, even if it's sort of for the better of the entire system.

M

Monique Nelson 37:14

Yes, yeah. That's, that's a really good point. And I'm hoping that as each province finalizes and implements its Accessibility Act legislation, that things will improve for more people.

R Ryan Fleury 37:29
Another optimist.

R Rob Mineault 37:31
Fingers, fingers crossed on that one to believe we've got our fingers and toes crossed, waiting for the Accessible Canada Act as well.

M Monique Nelson 37:38
So yeah, yeah, we have to keep our fingers crossed. It's taken a tremendously long time to get to this point. So we're gonna have to hold everyone accountable for the 10 year horizon to roll it out. Have either of you ever been to the National Museum for Human Rights in Winnipeg?

R Rob Mineault 38:03
No.

M Monique Nelson 38:05
Well, if you get a chance, there's a fantastic display there on disability, disability, and it's the most radically accessible building I've ever been beautiful. So you've got your new low vision support, your auditory supports, the physical accessibility of the space, the accessibility of the learning materials and exhibits that are suitable for children, adults of all ages. So it's quite a place.

R Rob Mineault 38:34
I think you just gave us a podcast idea.

M Monique Nelson 38:47
There's a strong disability movement there in Winnipeg, right. BC people first isn't the first people first, Winnipeg was the first place.

R Ryan Fleury 39:00
I gotta go. I'm learning too much here. Listening to your pod, one of your podcast episodes. You talked about October is Community Inclusion Month. So do you have any events planned or anything you want to talk about or promote for this upcoming October? I know we're only in

August right now.

M

Monique Nelson 39:25

Oh, I'm so glad you asked. Absolutely. We have the Inclusion Art show and sale Number 18. We've been doing this for 18 years and Possibilities is the convener or host and we invite art studios from other organizations, as well as independent artists who identify as neurodiverse or having a disability to come and join us to show and sell their work. And we take a modest commission and charge a little bit for tables and lattices to recover our costs, but it's not too much. It's a good thing and people sell lots and lots of art, we typically sell 10 to \$14,000.

R

Ryan Fleury 40:05

Well, and listening to that podcast episode about you guys and PotteryWorks and listening to the artists talk about their work, you can tell there's a sense of pride, there's a sense of ownership. And it was, you know, that's the only episode I've listened to so far. But it was just, you know, again so good. So about community and relationships, and just their, their eagerness to share their talents, right, finding your passion.

M

Monique Nelson 40:37

I mentioned the sale part, because the validation of having some a purchase art can also be really important to some people participate. And the economic benefits of that. It's been wonderful. And it's the kind of event where you leave it exhausted, because your face hurts from smiling so much, and your body hurts. And you've been dressed up and, and socializing and having nibbles and things music as well. And it's just the most joyful occasion, we're delighted to host in person. During COVID, we developed a website, year one, it was just a showcase, because we didn't quite have, we weren't quite sure what we were going to do yet with this website. And then we added a shopping cart feature for year two. And that was really successful for us. So we plan to maintain the in person show and a web collection. So people can shop or present in either format. Some of the artists don't wish to be engaging with the public. And they quite like the idea of just going online. So we're able to meet more people's preferences.

R

Ryan Fleury 41:38

And so will all the event details be up on your website? Probably in the next month, I'm assuming?

M

Monique Nelson 41:42

Yes, yes. And we have our own website for the art show. It's inclusion, art show.com. Thank you for helping us share that out. Our registration is still open. So people have until basically Labor Day weekend to get the registration that was that they'd like to join in this year. So thank you so much for the opportunity. I'd love to come back because there is so much to talk about.

R Ryan Fleury 42:03
There absolutely is.

R Rob Mineault 42:04
Yeah, absolutely. Maybe Maybe we can Well, we can line it up with an event that you we can help you promote.

M Monique Nelson 42:11
That sounds fantastic. You know where to find us?

R Rob Mineault 42:14
Absolutely. Well, thank you so much Monique for taking some time out and talking with us. And yeah, please come back again. And we'll we'll definitely be in touch.

M Monique Nelson 42:24
Thank you, Rob and Ryan, it's been my pleasure.

R Ryan Fleury 42:26
Thank you so much.

R Rob Mineault 42:28
Wow, I feel guilty. And I feel like we rushed her off. And I she just didn't want to go.

R Ryan Fleury 42:33
Well, like I mentioned a couple times in that interview. If you go to the website possabilities.ca. There's a wealth of information there now. Tons of events, tons of information about all sorts of stuff. Like she said, housing, employment.

R Rob Mineault 42:52
Yeah, these guys do so much. Like it's crazy how much they do. And like I had, I had no idea that the staff was so big, although it doesn't surprise me, but also like, just how many people

they serve across the province. Yeah, it's and they do so much, like so much. And so they're very they have, they have internal clubs, they have, you know, community events where they're in the community doing different things, you know, providing housing or providing employment. I really don't know how they do it.

R

Ryan Fleury 43:25

People, the right people in the workplace?

R

Rob Mineault 43:28

Well, you know, it's funny, you know, to think that there are other organizations that will remain nameless, that are around the same size. And they really struggle in providing sort of baseline services. So I think you're onto something or it's, it's about the right people and the right infrastructure. And I mean, look, I'm not that I'm slugging anybody, like whatever a every organization has their Achilles heel and something you know, that they struggle with. And some organizations really no matter their size, if you don't have the right people, and you don't have the right infrastructure, it can be a real a real problem to try to try to provide services for a huge swath of people.

R

Ryan Fleury 44:12

And I think it comes down to passion. You know, she said, she's a mom of two young kids, I think, on the autism spectrum. So you know, she has a passion, right? She has a desire, to educate to advocate, not just for her own her own family, but others in the community. And so you can you can see that on the website. They're doing great work.

R

Rob Mineault 44:36

Yep. Yeah, they really are. So we'll definitely have her back and talk more about about what they do, but definitely encourage anybody who's interested to go to the website, go to the art show...

R

Ryan Fleury 44:52

Even if you don't know of anyone with a developmental disability, you know, maybe you're not interested. Go there anyway, and just look at the site. Listen to a podcast episode. I guarantee you will get something out of that website.

R

Rob Mineault 45:05

Yep. 100% Guess what else? What?

R Ryan Fleury 45:12
It's our 300th Episode

R Rob Mineault 45:16
That's right. I forgot about that. I knew that coming into the show and then I completely forgot. So alright, well, you want to do you want to give a little speech? How do you feel? Let me interview you. So you've done you've been on 300 episodes of a podcast. How do you feel?

R Ryan Fleury 45:34
Actually, I haven't, I took a break, remember?

R Rob Mineault 45:46
No, it's great. It's hard to believe it's hard to believe that it's been 300 episodes that number seems very surreal to me. Because I still remember doing episode one, and how much we struggled with that. And we were super nervous. And it was a terrible episode. And we sucked. And it was like 20 minutes long.

R Ryan Fleury 46:08
And yeah, and, you know, we talked to I think it was Steve, who said, you know, probably last three or four episodes, you know, here we are into our seventh year, and our 300th episode. And we still have guests booked and we're still booking. So you know, there's no shortage of people organizations are even topics to talk about. So yes, right. As long as you're game, we will continue on.

R Rob Mineault 46:38
Exactly. As long as it sounds, we're fighting this the good fight, and trying to fix all these systems and in advance disability rights. And you don't even when we fix that, then it's just going to be then we're going to tell cool stories. We used to have people in the community come on, talk about cool stuff that they do. That'd be cool, too. I'm down with that.

R Ryan Fleury 46:59
So well, there's let's put that out there because even now, you know, if people have some cool stories to talk about that are disability related. Send us an email to cowbell@atbanter.com. We want to hear your stories.



R

Rob Mineault 47:14

Yeah, sure. Why not? Well, absolutely. I'll talk to you. We'll talk to anybody almost. Yeah, pretty much.

R

Ryan Fleury 47:21

Pretty much. Go and talk to us. We certainly want to hear from you.

R

Rob Mineault 47:31

All right. Well, I think that's it. Let's get out of here. Hey, Ryan.

R

Ryan Fleury 47:38

Yeah, Rob.

R

Rob Mineault 47:38

Where can people find us?

R

Ryan Fleury 48:32

They can find us online at www.atbanter.com.

R

Rob Mineault 48:36

They can also drop us an email if they so desire at [cow bell at a tea banter.com](mailto:cowbell@teabanter.com)

R

Ryan Fleury 48:48

And they can find us on Facebook and Twitter.

R

Rob Mineault 48:52

That is going to about do it for us this week. Big thanks, of course to Monique for joining us today. And we will see everybody next week.