

Transcript for Lurchable Learning 27 - Patrick Tarlit, Anne Sommerfeld

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Hosts: Leva Lee and Helena Prins

Guests: Patrick Tarlit, Anne Sommerfeld

<https://lurchablelearning.opened.ca/2022/05/09/may-is-teaching-and-learning-month-learning-through-a-pandemic-students-and-leaders-reflect/>

HELENA PRINS:

Hello Lurchable Learning listeners. Thanks for joining us today as we discuss trending topics, tools and tips for those who teach and love to learn. I'm Helena Prins, and I'm joining you from my home office on the unceded traditional territories of the Lekwungen-speaking people, which include the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations. I'm deeply grateful for their hospitality. I'm joined by Leva Lee and our tech producer Harper Friedman, happy Monday Leva.

LEVA LEE:

Hi, Helena and Harper. Hi, everyone. As you know, Lurchable Learning has been our show about teaching and learning. And for this month, we continue to profile interesting people and work in the BC post secondary sector. Please note that today on May 30 shows will be our last for this spring. We will feature students and learning leaders and how things have been for them during the pandemic, what was learned? What are they looking forward to, and their hopes for the future? So, as we wrap things up on May 30th, we will have a special celebration show. And you won't want to miss that.

HELENA PRINS:

Yes, I'm excited for that one. So for today, though, we have two fabulous guests, Patrick Tarlit, and Anne Sommerfeld. Let's meet them. Today, we have Patrick Tarlit here with us, Patrick, it's great to see you again. How are you?

PATRICK TARLIT:

I'm great Helena. It's great being here. Thanks for having me.

HELENA PRINS:

Always, always nice to talk to you. Patrick, why don't you just tell us a little bit about the program that you're studying. And recently, you had your Co-op experience here at BCcampus. We're so curious about why you chose BC campus, and she can share some of your highlights and challenges of that.

PATRICK TARLIT:

For sure. So currently, I'm in my fourth year in mechanical engineering at UVic. And I've done two Co-op work terms with BCcampus as an information services system for the IT support team. I chose BCcampus for too many reasons I can recall had to jot them down prior but it's so welcoming, great community aspect. It truly I'm consciously reflecting about my work term with BCcampus. And it's hard to think of the key takeaways, but one that always comes to mind is really it was a place to learn how to learn and learn how to communicate, and even teach and just like how applicable that is, especially over the past two years of the pandemic. The way we communicate and the way we relay information is so is so key. Regardless, if you're, you know, a writer or you're engineering or you're a philosopher, or working in

social work, it's OK. And I just love the really interactive aspect at BCcampus. So, that was a really lovely experience.

LEVA LEE:

Wow, hi, Patrick. But what, what am I to say I'm going to reflect on that a bit more to communication is so important. My son is actually taking engineering as well. So yeah, communication, I'm going to have to make sure I give him that tip. So, I'm thinking about this past two years and your and all the what we hear about the student experience during the pandemic. I would like to know about yourself how did you find it as a student and maybe what have you learned about yourself or about the post secondary system that you'd like to share?

PATRICK TARLIT:

Yeah, shifting to online made me I guess I'll start with realizing things about myself just how I learned and how I retained information. I do like to be in a class setting, being around my peers, my friends and feeling that that energy and collaborating and talking with other people and hearing their ideas like right away, but there are times to when I need to work on a project or something a bit more technical, I need to sit down with something and I do, I kind of turn into my introvert state and need to kind of just bury myself in my room and feel more comfortable that way, it feels a bit more safe. And I already have so many voices in my head putting pressure on myself, right? So, I need to kind of like tune that out into other people's energy out. So, I learned that there are times it's okay to learn by myself. And other times I can learn with other people and I want to collaborate. So, it's not here nor there. So, it's a hybrid between the two, and about the post secondary system.

After going online. In the past two years of the pandemic, I realized how so many students have been learning one way for so many years. And every student is different. Every person is different, regardless of history. We're all students, we're all teachers interchangeably, and how can you dismiss these unique aspects about us, when there's just this one set of one way of learning this entire time? And it's not accessible for everyone. And that's another key term is accessibility that I learned that BCcampus and what that really meant, and how important that is. So, that's a key thing. I kind of learned about the post secondary system and about myself and being a student.

LEVA LEE:

That's amazing.

HELENA PRINS:

Yeah, that's a great insight to share. And I just hope that we'll continue to think around accessibility and that not everyone learns the same way. So, that being said, are there some things that instructors did specifically to make the experience a little bit better or easier, and it stands out to you?

PATRICK TARLIT:

Definitely. Just for starting off with the small things, it was really nice that profs would include additional resources, because in class, you know, someone that put up their hand like it, is there a textbook or like, where did you get this formula? And, you know, they can think about it on the spot, because they're focusing on the class and person. And it I guess the benefit online is that they were writing out their computer, they had the resources, they had their files, right, like, Oh, I think this would be useful for the students, I think they could refer to this and especially for more visual learners, right, it was easy for them to put more documents and more visuals for sample problems or whatnot. So, a lot more

accessibility in that sense. I do recall a prof I actually had a commotion before I transferred to UVic. He started incorporating intro music to his pre recorded lectures. So, I thought that was a really lovely touch to make you excited about going to the next lecture or you know, if it was pre recorded to like, click on it the day of once it was uploaded.

So, it was nice having that fun aspect and not really feeling that you're just online, and you're just being fed information. And there's times where I felt like I wasn't really learning, right? Because you were lacking that energy from people in the room. So, I thought that was great that teachers did try to find different ways to make it more fun. Because we're all at home.

LEVA LEE:

Yeah, it's bringing in that human element day that we're all missing, being mediated by the technology. Now, we often hear right now is it's a good time to let's now as we move forward, think about ways that we can be better and do better in our sector. And I would like to know as a student, now that you're nearing the end of the year, you're graduating soon. So, what are your hopes, maybe you can share some hopes that you have for the future of learning.

PATRICK TARLIT:

Kind of touching back on what I said, originally, just realizing there's an, of course, there's students and teachers are realizing this after the past two years that there's so many different ways of learning, and maybe integrating that more or expanding that more. Just realizing that fact and have creating more of a safe space for students to say like I need to I need to retain that information this way. I do want to learn, I want to be here but I'm not able to because of this one way so and that kind of bridges to maybe incorporating more of a mental health aspect and self care aspect which I feel like is kind of lacking in certain sectors of the post secondary system is just making sure your baseline you is feeling good feeling safe is in a good state to learn. Because if you're not, you're not going to retain any information you're dealing with so many things right? It's already hard to manage personal development and personal growth. Growing up as a student growing up as a human being and you're trying to learn something new and you're learning about yourself, it gets complicated.

So, it's not it'd be nice if the post secondary system that did hone in on those key things so we can focus more on learning what we're intending to do.

LEVA LEE:

Wise words are they Helena?

HELENA PRINS:

Absolutely, thank you for sharing all of that says Patrick. And you know, speaking of music, and finally do want to bring some fun to this show as well. And we ask you if there's a specific song you'd like us to play out with, what did you pick?

PATRICK TARLIT:

For sure. So, the song I chose is 'Break My Stride' by Matthew Wilder. And I chose the song because when we shifted to online there's a key group of friends or my cohort from commotion, we'd study online, stay up late and just work on assignments. So, we got into a groove we got into his stride, even working online and we we'd sing this chorus when we kind of fell down and they kept us going. And yeah, regardless of being online or in person, school is always hard learning is hard. Teaching is hard, as

well. But when you do have a community when you do have friends, it makes it that much easier. So, that's why I chose this song..

HELENA PRINS:

What a great choice I can see here. Yeah, thanks for being here.

LEVA LEE:

Thank you so much.

HELENA PRINS:

Let's enjoy Patrick's song 'Break My Stride' (MUSIC PLAYS) (MUSIC ENDS) Hi Anne, we are delighted that you're here with us today. It's been a while since we've been in the same Zoom Room. I think it might have been last summer for her boot camp or is that that two summers ago?

ANNE SOMMERFELD:

I think it's two summers ago now, time flies.

HELENA PRINS:

Oh my goodness. Well, welcome here. Let's start by hearing a little bit about your role at UNBC and the BCTLC.

ANNE SOMMERFELD:

OK, UNBC is located halfway up the province is in the traditional territory of Lheidli T'enneh, as well as UNBC has remote campuses and four other locations that works with other First Nations. So, my role at UMBC for going into my fourth year now is the Director for the Center for Teaching Learning and Technology. I fell in love with teaching and learning and knowing how to engage my students better while I was a faculty member in the School of Health Sciences and I taught in that program for almost 10 years. But my love and spurred on going on to my educational doctorate actually and learning how to promote teaching and learning better for all people. Because of that ongoing love of that role. I also got involved with the at BC Teaching Learning Council, which works with the other teaching centers in the province. And I've been in leadership with that for the last two years, which has been an amazing time through the pandemic, and helping everyone just hang on and stay together.

LEVA LEE:

That's wonderful. And yes, we've been watching some of the great work by the BCTLC. So, congratulations on that. So, what can you tell us about your experience, actually, as a leader in the higher ed through the pandemic, because I know there must be some interesting stories, and also, what have you learned about yourself, and maybe a bit about the sector.

ANNE SOMMERFELD:

Being a leader in a time of crisis definitely brings out a different skill sets than what you've had before. In my previous role, before academics, I was an emergency room nurse. So, I'm a little bit used to panic. And you know, that ultimate flexibility, but not everybody is, not everybody thrives on chaos and chaos theory. So, I think that's a major role that I was able to help with, because of those past skills. And to get past that the post secondary system tends to be slow to change. And it's built on tradition, and it's built on a lot of good things. But what a catalyst for change the COVID has been, we have talked more about teaching and learning in the last two to three years than the last 10 years, for example. And we've gone from having faculty members not know where the learning management system is to actually teaching it

and understanding it. So, what a shift that we've made in that. And I think the post secondary system needs to embrace some of those changes. And some of those the good things, the silver linings that have come out of this.

My personal level of communication and dealing with faculty members, that personal touch, those conversations just helped with that it's not, it's something that each person has to individualize and change their teaching. We call it pandemic pedagogy. And now, going forward from there, what are we going to do with it? I'm an eternal optimist. So, I'm always looking for the best things to come out of things like this. And there was some downsides, yes. But in the north, for example, I think our students benefited because we had much more accessibility for students, and much more flexibility for students who had children or had elderly parents to look after. And we just kind of was more inclusive for those types of students rather than the straight out of high school, typical graduates that we picture and imagine when we're planning these kinds of things. So I think, as a leader in this, we were able to reach out and to broaden the experience and to make it a bit more inclusive.

LEVA LEE:

That's great. So, three things flexibility, inclusivity, and

ANNE SOMMERFELD:

Accessibility,

LEVA LEE:

Accessibility. Yeah.

ANNE SOMMERFELD:

Would give you a third one. Yeah.

HELENA PRINS:

Oh, I'm sure you've seen some success stories. As you mentioned, you're also very optimistic is there some of those stories that you feel you can share with us?

ANNE SOMMERFELD:

Oh, as a leader, I was just floored by some of the feedback I got from faculty members who had been resistant to ever teaching online to now saying, you know, that kind of work, I'm going to keep some of these aspects in my classes going forward. And for us, that was a massive when the cheer went up, because it was more than one faculty and more faculty member, but also different faculties. You know, the sciences tend to be more lab based and hands on, but they found that they could expand their reach and their knowledge and the depth of knowledge by having some of these online components as well. I think some of our success is moving forward is some of the assessments, the way we do exams and papers have changed. And how do we actually get students to demonstrate their learning to us? And we're on the verge, I think of having more universal design for learning principles coming forward out of this, because we've seen the flexibility, like I said, from the online versus just a paper based time exam, what else can we do with it?

You know, that and that increases that accessibility again, personally, like I said, we've talked more about teaching and learning in the last couple of years and I hope that those conversations will continue. That is a success story. People now know what centers for teaching and learning do we are those. Yeah (LAUGHS). We are those people

LEVA LEE:

That's like we are here, we are here, we are here.

ANNE SOMMERFELD:

(LAUGHS) Nobody knew where we were before and now everybody knows how to contact us. Some of that's some of the success some at UNBC being a small school. We were able to utilize some of the tools like have teams or zoom, quite readily, people learn that quite quickly, which is amazing. So, now any changes going forward is just we're changing the models, you know, we're just changing it to something slightly different. And just, it's like a model car. And we're just changing, where are the buttons? And where do we do those kinds of things? So, those are some of the success stories that I've seen going forward.

LEVA LEE:

And how about your hopes for the future of learning? Now that we've been through this and a little bit time to reflect? Do you have some thing else that you'd like to share?

ANNE SOMMERFELD:

Well, I have said, I'm the eternal optimist. So, I think we should just keep on charging forward with all of the changes. But for some people that's really hard and change, fatigue is definitely present. People are tired of changing. But if you reframe it as benefiting the students, and having that benefit that student experience, especially in the north, where we don't have as many opportunities, and now like I said, we've increased accessibility, we've increased the way of thinking, the problem solving around some of the access to computers, or to the internet, or just to classes in general. And I'm hoping that the catalyst that started with COVID, will continue to increase and make it accessible for all students. I think the old way of thinking is that universities and colleges are for the elite students. And I don't think that's the case anymore. And it's my hope for the future that we make it much more accessible to all students, and increasing that accessibility through UDL or just having much more flexible learning and course designs.

HELENA PRINS:

Well said Anne, (LAUGHTER) so many of the things you just said there, and I am amazed, I didn't know about your history as an ER nurse. And now I've seen Wow, the UNBC team, they were really fortunate in more than one way to have you lead them through the global pandemic. And we are so thankful for your leadership for all the contributions you've made to the BC post secondary system and we'll continue to make so thank you for giving us some of your time today.

ANNE SOMMERFELD:

You're very welcome. It's been lovely to chat.

LEVA LEE:

We are pleased to be featuring a second segment of our show within a show created by Tracy Roberts, our director of learning and teaching at BCcampus. Here she is with Jason Toal. Let's listen and find out more about what's fun.

TRACY ROBERTS:

Hi, I'm Tracy Roberts. I live work and record this on the lands of the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations of Lekwungen ancestors and families. I'm also the director of learning and teaching at BCcampus Welcome to the fun show where I talk to colleagues in BC higher ed about fun, because my hunch is that fun is the

method, the vibe, the ultimate engagement strategy we need right now to help us get more connected and engaged with each other. And with our work. I also asked him to pick us a fun song. Let's get into it. So, here with me today is someone I always have fun collaborating and talking with educational media expert, learning experience designer, visual artist, facilitator, consultant, DJ, extreme doodler Jason Toal. Welcome and please introduce yourself in whatever way you like.

JASON TOAL:

Well, thanks so much, Tracy. It's hard to top that introduction, actually. Thank you for having me on. As you mentioned, my name is Jason toll and I'm a newly minted Educational Consultant with UBC Okanagan in the Center for Teaching and Learning there. My area is technology projects and strategy. So, it is proving to be a lot of fun, even though it's been just a few short weeks.

TRACY ROBERTS:

Oh, that's good to hear.

JASON TOAL:

Yes.

TRACY ROBERTS:

Well, let's get into it. Tell me just like what is what about it is fun. What is fun about the work or when you're there? Does it feel like fun?

JASON TOAL:

Well, I do even though it's been a few short weeks at my current gig. It's been quite a few years that I've been doing similar types of work, basically working with educational technology and the employment of it by instructors and faculty in post secondary. So, I do have some experience to draw from you just to sum it up in two words. It's the creative process. Yes. And I found that a technology, let's say a challenge can often lead to, I don't want to say the I word, but I'll just say a discovery a spark (LAUGHTER), something that is sort of new and fresh. And so that inevitably will unleash some sort of a design process. I think you mentioned I do like working in visual practice, working with folks that are drawing or using drawing as a means to teach or to learn. And also in the area of audio, if you're producing a podcast, let's say it sort of, to me, that is the fun part.

TRACY ROBERTS:

Can I just ask a little more about that. So, I have now got three of the shows in the can, I am starting to notice a theme about problems and the solving thereof. And I'm wondering for you with the work that you do, which I'm imagining is very often in partnership with an educator is it do you think it's for you about helping them to solve the problem? Or is there something that you are solving? Or does it even matter who owns the problem?

JASON TOAL:

That's a good question. For me, it is about helping, I can definitely I've consistently that the helper B, it sort of ties back in I think about my high school years. And I had a lot of friends that were in drama, drama.

TRACY ROBERTS:

Drama.

JASON TOAL:

The theater. Yes. And I was not involved in the drama club at all. I did end up helping with a lot of the backstage purely for fun. Working on the lights, working on the smoke is particularly fun (LAUGHTER). I bet. I bet. Yeah. To answer your question. I definitely think the helping of faculty and instructors that are teaching classes is a big part of it.

TRACY ROBERTS:

OK. Well, let's leave the workspace for a moment and just talk about the wild open spaces outside of that. What do you get up to for fun when you're not at work?

JASON TOAL:

Well, I liked the phrasing of your question actually, in the notes, the key word being outside. And, you know, never has this become more prominent in my head, that fun and being outdoors are connected. And for me that could be working in the garden.

TRACY ROBERTS:

Yeah.

JASON TOAL:

If I am lucky enough to have a place to dig and plant things. But also, in terms of sports. You know, we're big outdoor enthusiast for winter sports. Mostly skiing downhill, and Nordic skiing. That's what we sort of tried to design our lives around. How can we ski more?

TRACY ROBERTS:

Nice, nice (LAUGHTER). Nice. So, literally playing outside is a big part is.

JASON TOAL:

Absolutely, yes. I mean, we were sort of chatting about this earlier, there used to be a time when maybe watching movies inside or going through my music library on iTunes was what's considered fun gaming. These things are less fun to me these days, simply because they involve more screen time.

TRACY ROBERTS:

Right? Right. Yeah. Right. Yeah, that makes total sense. OK, so maybe just thinking about everything we've talked about so far. If you've what is essential about fun, or what conditions have to be in place for fun to occur, what comes to mind for you?

JASON TOAL:

Something about spontaneity and or, you know, the unexpected. We always frame our trips as adventures. So, you potentially have a destination, a goal, some kind of project, we're going to this location or we're traveling this route, but then unexpected things will inevitably occur along the way. Sometimes they're not pleasant, dealing with those navigating around them enjoying our time along the way.

TRACY ROBERTS:

I'm hearing that problem thing again. There's something about (LAUGHTER) solving problems, but you know, there's some fun.

JASON TOAL:

Oh my goodness moving to that. Yeah.

TRACY ROBERTS:

Something to that. Yeah.

JASON TOAL:

Which I do not like I'm more of a chill seeker, if you may have heard and so avoiding potential stress is my where I like to go but.

TRACY ROBERTS:

Yeah, I hear you the spontaneity thing I love when a plan happens without a plan. You know, somebody just shows up at your door rather than like spending weeks trying to nail down details. Yeah, that I love. There's something fun about that for me.

JASON TOAL:

Yeah, agreed.

TRACY ROBERTS:

Alright, well, um, you were invited to pick a song that for you in some way conjures fun or is fun. How about bring some of that DJ magic to the fun show and set us up with your fun song.

JASON TOAL:

Alrighty. Well, this was I hummed and hawed for like, five seconds. And then I it was immediately obvious what song I would have to contribute. So, when I'm on my adventures, and I said, we, by we, I meant my wife, Jenny and I. And so the song that I've picked is a bit of a love song. And it was our first dance, both at our wedding and in the living room. It's a fun party song. That's really all I need to say. Except I need to say what it is.

TRACY ROBERTS:

Oh, yeah, say what it is.

JASON TOAL:

So, the song is 'Lady You Bring Me Up' by the Commodores.

HELENA PRINS:

I hope that you all enjoyed meeting our three guests today as much as I did. We will be back in two weeks with some more inspiring conversations.

LEVA LEE:

Yes, let's end this show with Jason's song pick. 'Lady You Bring Me Up' by the Commodores. Have a great week everyone and let's walk the walk. (MUSIC PLAYS) (MUSIC ENDS)