

David (he/him): There's a million and one EDI professionals everywhere. We've been doing all these inclusion projects, and it's been going on like this for the last 15 years. If this is working, have we produced the outcomes that we've set out to do? And if we haven't, do we need to go back to the drawing board around what it is that we're doing?

Jade (they/them): I'm Jade Pichette. (they/them)

Erin (she/her): and I'm Erin Davis and I use the pronouns she and her.

Jade (they/them): Welcome to Uncovering Belonging,

Erin (She/her): a podcast that explores the professional and personal stories of unique voices of what it means to belong

Jade (they/them): and the journey to finding our authentic self.
Erin, I'm so excited to introduce you today to David Lewis-Peart.

Erin (she/her): I'm excited as well. This is so fun for us because every episode one of us gets to meet someone new and so that's for me this episode and meeting David and hearing more about his journey and his work.

Jade (they/them): David Lewis-Peart (he/him) has worked in a number of roles - adjunct professor, community worker, consultant, corporate trainer, writer, and playwright. He completed graduate studies at York University in Toronto, where his area of research was on community interventions and Black gay male youth.

He holds a diploma in Human Services Counseling - mental health and addictions, post-graduate training in Alternative Dispute Resolution and Mediation, has certification in Life Skills Coaching, and additional training in Facilitating Restorative Circles and Family Group Conferencing. He has previously been a member of faculty in both the Child and Youth Care and Social Service Work programs in Toronto, Brampton and Oakville. David has been a founding lead on a number of community service and arts-based initiatives, supporting Black and other groups, including work with Sunset Service Toronto and We Other Sons, a queer men of color theater arts collective through Buddies in Bad Times Theater. More recently, David speaks on and delivers training around working across difference and restorative practice, and has regularly contributed to publications such as CBC Arts, Huffington Post Canada, ByBlacks and Global News on topics of race, identity, masculinity, and wellbeing. He is presently undergoing graduate study with a focus on Indigenous trauma and resiliency at the University of Toronto's Faculty of Social Work.

And currently he's calling in from Tkarón:to or Toronto, and I'm grateful to have you here and also just to see your face, cuz it's been, uh, I think the last time we actually saw each other in person was the Parliament of World Religions, in 2018, which was, uh, quite the experience I have to say, but so glad that you're able to make it with us today and you're spending the time with us.

David (he/him): Thanks for having me Jade. Thanks for having me Erin.

Erin (she/her): Hi, David. So excited to hear your story. Just hearing your bio there are so many themes and topics that we could discuss today, but I wanna open up the conversation and just ask: how did you get into this work, and how did you end up in the diversity and inclusion space?

David (he/him): So, I feel like my story is just as long as my bio and it's a bit of a winding road. I got into social work because I was a kid from a home that had fallen apart, and I had ended up in the care system. And I had been helped through some really amazing people in my life. And some not-so-amazing people in my life. And I wanted to do this work because I had been impacted by it too.

Erin (she/her): Hmm

David (he/him): And I ended up going into a counseling program at a vocational college in Toronto. And while I was there, I had the opportunity to get involved into some work with an organization called the Metro Action Committee on Violence Against Women and Children (METRAC). And for those who are in the know METRAC was, and I'm sure still is, a bit of a hub for a lot of thought leaders and activists. Many many, many, many, many, mostly women who've gone on to contribute to this EDI space and doing work and activism. And it was while I was there that I really sort of honed this interest in the work of educating and training and facilitating. And that was a really great experience for me. And when I had completed college, I had gone off into the world, I was working in the HIV/AIDS sector, but just prior to that, I think it was in my late teens, I had ended up at a talk at the University of Toronto. And there was a gentleman, who was giving a talk, uh, by the name of Douglas Stewart. And Douglas Stewart is a quite well known Afro-Caribbean Canadian community builder, and an activist, and now a consultant and trainer. And, I saw him, you know, in my late teens and I see this handsome older man with dreadlocks commanding the space in such a beautiful way. And I remember thinking, God, he's so handsome, he's so articulate, and you know, when I'm older, I really wanna do some of what he's doing. And as fate would have it, some years later, I'm working at Black CAP, the organization that he helped found and

was the first executive director for, and he invited me to support him on some consulting project with a children's mental health agency in the city. And that was my first opportunity to do consulting work and training and education work. And it went swimmingly. And that was sort of my toe into the water of the sort of EDI space.

Jade (they/them): I find it really interesting cuz Douglas intersects with my story as well. He helped me get to where I am in terms of my consulting as well. If anybody wants to learn about Douglas Stewart, his current company is Competence Consultants, and we'll throw it in the show notes, as well as METRAC, which is such a great organization that is still doing really, really amazing work. So David, you've started to mention the people and organizations that have shaped you, but I know we want to explore more of that story. So I'm gonna throw it over to Erin to dig a bit deeper.

Erin (she/her): Yeah, thanks Jade. And I wanna come back to how you started your story. How do you, how have you found this sense of belonging in the work that you're doing now, as you think about that little boy, many years ago, to where you are now?

David (he/him): I think most of my career, and most of my personal journey too, has not been about belonging, but an absence of belonging,

Erin (she/her): mm-hmm.

David (he/him): And, um, if I'm honest, a lot of that still remains. I think that the work is sort of aspirational. My work is less about, um, trying to make better humans because I, I know that I am a human with a lot of, uh, my own challenges and flaws and shortcomings, but how to create, sort of, and curate the kinds of spaces, environments that allow people to rise to their best self, right? Whatever that means, you know?

Erin (she/her): mm-hmm.

David (he/him): Ironically enough some of my work also was in the child welfare space. And all of the statistics, all of the data shows across the country and across the province that having been involved in the care system puts so many young people at risk of a whole host of poor outcomes later on in their life. And the antidote to all of those experiences of disconnection is always about how to create right relationship, how to bring them into right relationship, how to connect these folks who've historically experienced adversity and disconnection. And so while that's true in the child welfare space, and for those who move through that, I think it's true for the world too.

Jade (they/them): Right.

David (he/him): A lot of my work is about trying to create those kinds of environments that allow us to feel like we're in right relationship with one another, give the tools to be in right relationship with one another and to work through some of the challenges that keep us from being in relationship and feeling like we belong. You know?

Erin (she/her): I hear that.

David (he/him): And I do that from not like a, like um, like a lofty place, right? Like, like, it's, it's, it's not like, oh, I'm at the mountaintop and I'm now going to speak down to those in the valley. It's like, oh, I'm, I'm in the mix and the mire too. And I've seen how a sense of not belonging, a sense of not being in right relationship, how that's impacted me and continues to impact me in some areas. And I want to have less of that.

Erin (she/her): mm-hmm

David (he/him): So it's almost like doing for others what you'd like done for you. Creating the things for others that you would like created for yourself. And I wanna raise that because I think it's so important for us to be honest about what motivates us in the work that we do. Cause too often, those of us who are in the helping profession or in facilitation, training, consulting work, it's often about others, right? Like I have to bring something to these others, rather than saying no, I'm in it too.

Erin (she/her): Hmm

David (he/him): You know, had I been some Huxtable kid, I likely would not have ended up doing this kind of work. I would've had a very different outcome. Likely. What brings me to this work is my own wounds. And the quicker that we're able to acknowledge our humanity in that the better that we'll be able to be in the work, cuz then there's a certain amount of humility and grace, you know? I literally had to have it tattooed on my arm. You probably can't see it, but grace over everything. For me, grace is not this sort of religious thing. I think when people hear the word grace, they think of it in a sort of religious context, but I think of grace as the space that we give ourselves and by extension each other to be fully human. The missteps, the mistakes, the misspeaks and the messy - and trust that people can start again. You know?

Erin (she/her): yes.

David (he/him): And so, my work is about giving opportunities and creating spaces for people to rise to that occasion and to start again, because I was given that. And I'm continually given that, you know? So, yeah. Your question was about belonging.

Erin (she/her): Yes. And, and you're, you're now adding all of these dimensions to that word. And do you know what's interesting for me in hearing grace? There's such beauty to that word. I think that's the perfect way to describe this idea of humility. How often do we hear, you know, no one's perfect or we can't seek perfection. Yeah, yeah, yeah. I get it. I get it. I get it. But humility to really understand that we might make a mistake, and guess what, we actually probably will make a ton of mistakes, but having humility to learn from that becomes part of the journey. And, so I'll turn it over to Jade.

Jade (they/them): Yeah, this discussion of humility, humanness, it's really connecting and resonating for me as well. And, though different stories, I also have a background in social work, also because of my family of origin. So I feel you in that, and connect in that regard. The word that really also stood out for me, that you said was disconnection. Where do you see that disconnection coming from? Like, certainly I could assume some answers, but I'd love to hear from you. Like, what creates disconnection, which is creating barriers for people to feel that sense of belonging, for yourself or for others that you've worked with.

David (he/him): I think it depends, but if you're thinking about it from like a trauma-informed space, like most of us developed our first sense of how we are oriented in the world in our homes, and with the people that brought us into the world, and a lot of us experienced our first sort of sense of disconnection right there. Now that's not to blame or shame. It's just to say like, our wounds are early wounds. And that can weave its way through all of our relationships with others, with ourselves, and with the world. And for many of us who've experienced adversity and childhood challenge and trauma, there's often a constant sense of disconnection, constant sense of not being in right relationship with others. And for some of us and myself included a deep desire for, uh, relationship. And it's funny, I was speaking to some young people that I'm doing some work with, and one of the things that two of the young people that I was speaking to shared with me was how when they were younger and in the child welfare space with their foster and adopted families, how often they found themselves at odds with their carers. And, in a lot of ways, them being at odds with their carers was a way of trying to belong. In this weird, um, strangely antagonistic, but there's sense in the nonsense to it. Right? One of the young people who was sharing with me, you know, I was testing my carers, I was testing my foster carers, I was testing my adopted parents to see if they'd really, really invested in being there for me, if they really were in this for the long haul. And so I showed up as my most difficult self, but underneath that was this

desire to be in family with them. You know, I don't need you, I don't want to be there. I, you know, come closer, come closer. And so, yeah, I think for a lot of us, our sense of disconnect began really early. And for those of us who are familiar with like group processes, like many of us are working out our primary group experiences, which oftentimes is our families or communities of origin in these other groups spaces. And so many of us are working out the stuff that happened in our home, or didn't happen in our home, in our intimate relationships, in our interpersonal relationships, in our professional spaces, and wondering sometimes why it's not always working, you know?

Jade (they/them): Totally.

David (he/him): And so go back to the source. Maybe this isn't about your boss, maybe this is about your mom. Maybe this isn't about your partner, maybe this is about your dad. That's a, that's a whole other conversation.

Jade (they/them): But a really important one. I used to do youth work with youth who used substances, used drugs, and really at the end of the day, they were looking for that connection, they were looking for that belonging, even when they were the most confrontational with the people that were caring for them. And then I think that translates also into how equity deserving groups treat ourselves, and treat each other. Where we have experienced that, disconnection, that lack of belonging, when we're young and then that translates into how we treat others within our own communities when we're trying to create that space for ourselves and for others who are like us. So I'm curious if there's any other pieces that you've seen, worked really well to bring some of these concepts forward?

David (he/him): I'm thinking of Kai Cheng Thom. She wrote a really great article that I was such a fan of some years ago. Kai Cheng Thom is a clinician and a writer, a trans woman of color, and she wrote this article some years ago called *Why are queer people so mean?*

Jade (they/them): Hmm.

David (he/him): And that rubbed some people the wrong way when they saw that article, but I loved it. And what I thought was so excellent that she was able to do was to explore how our own experiences of trauma as LGBTQ spectrum folks has influenced and informed even the ways in which we attempt to create Community. And how that shows up in social justice circles, how that shows up in social work spaces, and how even those of us with all the right quote unquote language and all the right quote unquote politics can be so horrible with each other.

Jade (they/them): Mm-hmm

David (he/him): Under the guises of community building, under the guises of inclusion and equity and under the guises of all those things. And why there are so many folks who in droves are leaving quote unquote community because of this feeling of disconnection.

Jade (they/them): Yeah.

David (he/him): There can be a tendency, myself included, for us to sort of drink our own Kool-Aid and forget that, yes, you read a couple books or you went to a couple lectures or you attend such and such protests, but that doesn't exempt you from being human.

Jade (they/them): Mm-hmm

David (he/him): You, like everybody else, showed up on this planet without your consent, kicking and screaming. And you, like everybody else on this planet, is gonna go out again, without your consent, sometimes kicking, and screaming. And so humility is actually about perspective. And so when you can hold that perspective of recognizing that you, like everybody else, are on this rollercoaster ride, that you didn't ask to be on, trying to figure it out mid ride, the ups, the downs, it allows you then back to this idea of grace. It allows you to be more graceful with not only yourself, but other people. I think that there's been an over-emphasis over the years in this "community first". Let's build for community let's do for community without acknowledging the ways that communities are built through individuals who come together. And if you don't figure out the individual and the small groups, then of course you're not gonna figure out the bigger groups.

Jade (they/them): Right

David (he/him): When I was 14 years old and coming out of the closet and finding myself, it was in the arms of quote unquote community that I found respite, that I found connection. I think many people have that story, you know, that first time in the village or that first time saying the words I am gay, I'm lesbian, I'm trans, whatever. And that feeling of, ah, finally my tribe, you know? And I've also seen and heard a lot of people in and outside of community share how that experience has dissipated over the years, how the realities of community, the difficulties and the challenge of communities, how that shows up too. And so I do think that the conversations about the ways in which our individual and group level traumas can impede the very world that we're trying to co-create together, you know?

Erin (she/her): Absolutely

David (he/him): And so why is it that all of us who speak and preach belonging have such difficulty being in right relationship with each other. Who have all the right words to say, and are constantly at odds with each other on and offline about a myriad of things from the biggest to the smallest, and why we are people that are so committed supposedly to abolition of systems of oppression and policing, are so quick to police and abolish each other. And so I, I'm always very curious about that. I think it's a moment that we're in right now and we're having to contend with.

Jade (they/them): I would agree. I've seen this very consistently through our communities and it's a real challenge. I mean, I know for myself, I was the very, like, gung-ho angry activist, and the way that I interacted with people wasn't always bringing them in. Wasn't always producing space. And we had another guest, Deepak Kashyap, who talked about moving from being a social justice warrior to a social justice worker. Not to say that sometimes we don't need warriors, cuz sometimes we do in my opinion. So I'm curious how we can move through some of these pieces and move towards these futures that are more welcoming, that bring more space.

So, Erin, do you want to talk about the future space?

Erin (she/her): I do. I'm going to share a quote that's not gonna be word for word, but I'm reminded of it often from the book Hood Feminism by Mikki Kendall. And she talks about this concept of having to exist in the world as it currently is, not in how we wish it would be. And there's so much in there for me about this future state. And it's gonna take us a while to get there. You know, it pains me even to say it's gonna take us a while, but it's not gonna happen overnight.

So David, as we think about the future, what are we working towards?

David (he/him): When I think about what I'm working towards, I think it's changed. And I like the quote that you offered up. I'd love to sit with the original quote itself, but what it's drawing to mind is this conversation I remember James Baldwin having and watching this lecture he and Malcolm X had had. Malcolm X had had some ideas around what would be in the best interest of Black people. And I think for him it was based in sort of religious ideology. But one of the things that James had said was, you know, Malcolm, I don't think Black people need any more myth. What Black people need is the courage to face reality as it is.

Erin (she/her): Hmm

David (he/him): And I remember hearing that lecture, and I was living in England at the time, and that landed for me like a really powerful way.

Erin (she/her): Mm-hmm

David (he/him): And, you know, I'm a big meditator. That's a part of my own practice. And a lot of meditation is about learning to just be with what is. Not to resist it, but to be in whole relationship with life as it is.

Erin (she/her): mm-hmm

David (he/him): That you can't change anything that you can't be with, you can't change anything that you can't sit in. And so the way that the work for me looks different now than it might have, 15 years ago, or 20 years ago, when I was starting out is I'm less interested in having the world conform to this idea of what I see as whatever in my head and have me be able to recognize the world for what it is and work with what it is. Now that doesn't mean accepting things that are unacceptable, but it means, and this goes back to this humility thing, like recognize where you are in the full spectrum of life. The insignificance of you, and yet the significance of you.

Erin (she/her): Yep.

David (he/him): I don't know what a perfect world would look like because I'm an imperfect thing. And because the machine itself is imperfect, any of its computations will be imperfect. So my work now I think is, rather than how can I get Erin and Jade on my page? It's how can I find the places where Erin and Jade and I are in accord.

Erin (she/her): I love that. Tell me more about that

David (he/him): How can I build bridges? How can I be in right relationship, even across difference? There's so much going on. One of the things I've been having to ask myself and other colleagues in this space is there's a million and one EDI professionals everywhere. We've been doing all these inclusion projects, and it's been going like this for the last 15 years. If this is working, have we produced the outcomes that we've set out to do? And if we haven't do we need to go back to the drawing board around what it is that we're doing?

Erin (she/her): I hear that.

David (he/him): Now I know that that's not necessarily everybody's jam to hear, but I think that there's a value in building more bridges, you know?

Jade (they/them): Yeah.

David (he/him): And so I'm really interested in, and I think my time in, my mediation program what it really taught me was how do we create spaces to have people across different come together? And, and right now, given all the things that we're in so many culture wars, right? Like there's so many culture wars happening right now, concurrently all of them, all at once, right? Around race, around gender, around religion, around class, around..., and everybody's at odds, and everybody has the answer, but very few of us are engaged in creating more opportunities for conversation. And like real conversation that sometimes will make us uncomfortable. Sometimes you're gonna have to sit across from somebody who sees the world in a completely different way than you do, and that doesn't make them a horrible person. It means that we have to find the in. And not the in for you the wise one to get into the ignorant one, but how can two wise people find a place of commonality, despite the differences, and despite the different perspectives, and all that other jazz.

Erin (she/her): Wow. You are speaking my language. I love this so much because we're not asking people to understand every single part of us. We're trying to create the space, like you're talking about, to at least just be able to connect as humans. And, you know, I, I'm pausing and, and reflecting a little bit here because you asked a really powerful question. Have we figured it out? Have we actually created more inclusive spaces? Have people found a sense of belonging as these organizations work in these spaces? And, to be honest, I don't know if we necessarily have.

David (he/him): And I would gently push against the idea that we are all trying to do this. Cause I actually don't know if we are all trying to do that.

Erin (she/her): Mm-hmm

David (he/him): I think some of us aren't there. I think some of us have not yet gotten to the place where there's even the possibility for a bridging of the divides with other folks.

Erin (she/her): Yeah.

David (he/him): There are many of us who can't even be in the room with people who might see the world differently than us. So I don't know if that's all of our aim, but I think, given everything that's going on, it should be most of our aims at this time.

Erin (she/her): Yeah.

David (he/him): Like, there's no other option. It's this or civil wars and more tribalism and more... like we have to be able to cultivate an ability to endure it long enough to hear, to be, with difference, you know?

Erin (she/her): Definitely

Jade (they/them): Agreed. Tell me more about that.

David (he/him): Some years ago, I was doing a training around anti-racism. And there was a gentleman in this particular training, a racialized white person, and he was just not jiving with some of the things. And I continued to engage him. You know? I made intentionally to make sure he felt , even though this wasn't his jam, that he felt like this space was for him, that I'm not here to wag a finger and tell you that you're a horrible human being, cuz that's not, I don't believe it. I'm not that guy. You want a facilitator who does that? Find them. I don't do that. And what was so amazing for me is that at some point in the training, he ended up sharing a story. His family had come as newcomers and they had lived in small town Ontario. And they were the foreigners in this community. And they often didn't have a lot of money, they didn't usually go out to the mall or to restaurants. But one, one day his mother had saved up enough money to take the family out to McDonald's. And he remembers as a young person following his mother and his siblings out to go to McDonald's and watching her struggle to count her change and communicate with the waiter to make her order at McDonald's. And a group of young men behind them began to make fun, right? Making fun of these foreigners. And he's telling this story, and he he's sharing the story. And he talks about looking up at his mother's face and seeing the deflation. She had started out this conversation really proud, you know, I'm here, taking my kids to McDonald's, and by the end, she was feeling like a piece of, of crap because these folks had made fun of her. And so I said to him, I said, do you remember what that felt like to watch your mom, and to see the deflation and to feel that? And as he was sharing some of the things that were coming up for him, I said, so now back to the conversation we were having about some of the experience of racialized folks, can you see perhaps that connection between that experience of disconnection and deflation that your mother experienced and the ones that are held by many other folks, including racialized and other minority folks. And it was this aha moment. Now, I wasn't trying to rub his nose in anything, I wasn't trying to

shame him or blame him. Everybody can get this stuff, if we approach them as whole human beings, and not as problems to be fixed by us, the benevolent other, or the angry warrior with the picket fence ready to bash anybody over the head who doesn't see things in the exact same way that we do. I love to have conversations with people who are not like me. I love to have conversations with people who, in a lot of ways would vexate my spirit. And I love to have those kinds of conversations that have me walking away, finding something, even if it's a kernel of truth and connection that other. I don't need to like you to hear you. I don't need to agree with you to give you an opportunity to speak.

Erin (she/her): mhm.

David (he/him): And as long as you're not going out of your way to cause me actual harm, I'm open, I'm open. Not only diversity of bodies, but diversity of perspectives.

Erin (she/her): Wow. Everything you're talking about makes me think about the bump against how might be told we need to show up inside of a corporate environment - that we have to fit into a box that we have to be a certain way to do our work. And what a weird concept that is. Aren't we the same person right now as we're having this conversation as the person that shows up inside of a corporate environment?

David (he/him): I've been thinking about this a lot. A lot of companies, private and public sector, have begun filling slots and checking boxes for queers, for racialized folks, for women, for whatever. I think that there is value to representation, but beyond representation is having meaningful integration and collaboration of people across differences.

Erin (she/her): Mm-hmm

David (he/him): I don't want checkbox relationships. I don't want, okay, now it's Pride Month and now everything in the office is gonna be sprinkled fairy dust. And I, I know for some other folks, this next statement will challenge them. I don't even need your celebration. I don't necessarily need that. I would like to see a place where however we are, and however we show up in whatever boxes we tick are so regular it doesn't even register.

Jade (they/them): Exactly.

David (he/him): I talk about this often in the ABR space or anti-Black racism space. As a bit of a sort of reflex against anti-Black racism, many of us sort of took up this Black

magic, Black excellence mantra, right. Where we're gonna be awesome all the time. And many of us have seen in a lot of our communities there's been this sort of deification of all things minority. And what happens to all of the things that we lift up and exalt? They fall the ground, because they're human.

Erin (she/her): Yeah.

David (he/him): And I'm like, actually to me, the win would be being able to be mediocre. Being able to be Black and mediocre. Regular, just regular. And that not to, to, to elicit any kind of whatever. That I don't need to be magical and excellent at all times. I just need to be regular. Good enough. Because that's, to me, the sign of true inclusion. And so I'd like a place where the trans staff member, it doesn't even register. It's not even a thing. It doesn't even have to be a conversation. That the Black colleague, not even a thing. That the whatever, fill in the blank on whatever, it doesn't even register. It's as normal and as every day as anything else. That to me is the win. Rather than these performative celebrations of us that have been co-opted and corporatized, and everybody's, you know, turns their screens a particular color, and that's the demonstration of their allyship. You don't need to drink my Kool-Aid. You just need to see me and my fullness and be okay with that and not have to other me, or move me out of existence, you know?

Erin (she/her): Yeah. Allow space for everyone, right?

David (he/him): Everyone.

Erin (she/her): Yeah, that's a beautiful image to create and to work towards and pull back on your word of grace. We're gonna have to give ourselves grace as we navigate that idea and figure it out. Um, so I know we're gonna, we're going to I'm I'm pre-warning you cuz we're gonna get into rapid fire, but I will, I will read the quote from Mikki. She says, "We all have to engage with the world as it is, not as we might wish it to be" And so we wanna get to this future state, but we also exist in the now, and how do we all create the space to show up and be ourselves? And I think you've really shared some great insights with us. So thank you so much. And Jade's gonna lead us into a bit of rapid fire, so I hope you're ready.

Jade (they/them): Let's get into the rapid fire. So if you could recommend one book, what would it be?

David (he/him): I Hope We Choose Love by Kai Cheng Thom.

Jade (they/them): I fully agree and I'm in love with that book as well.

Erin (she/her): It's now going on my list. So next question. What brings you joy, no matter what?

David (he/him): Having people over who wouldn't normally be in the same room together, but are only brought together because you know, they know me. I'm the king of standing quietly in the corner of my own party and watching the room. Because I just love the sound of people who wouldn't normally speak, speaking.

Erin (she/her): I love that.

Jade (they/them): It's beautiful. So what's your theme song for today?

David (he/him): So I was thinking about belonging and, and I thought of a song that I did and do love. I will forewarn that there's a bit nepotism in there. It's a song that my nephew James Baley has written, called My Family. And in the song, he talks about this idea of feeling disconnected and feeling alone. Looking for love and surrounded by sadness, he says, and finding community and finding family. And I felt like given this idea of belonging, that was sort of apt to call into the space. So, My Family by James Baley.

Erin (she/her): I love that. Well, it's actually maybe resonant of our next question. Who is someone that inspires you in how they create belonging, but doesn't receive enough credit?

David (he/him): So I would say Sylvia Delgado. Really great facilitator, trainer, educator. In fact, she was sort of the inspiration for me to go back to school and, and do my MSW. Kai Cheng Thom gets a lot of nods, but I'll nod her again, especially now a lot of her work is focused on restorative practice, and supporting people through conflict. And my now friend Aisha Akanbi, having sort of the difficult conversations about how we can have different relationship in communities of justice. Yeah, those are the three.

Jade (they/them): All powerful community workers who bring a lot to the space and the communities that they serve. So to close out with our last question, what is one call to action you'd like from our listeners?

David (he/him): Have a conversation with someone that you would never have a conversation with. Read a magazine or a newspaper from across the fence. Go to a part of the city that you would normally not go to, just as a thought experiment. You

know, if, if you read the Toronto Star, pick up the Toronto Sun. If you read The Globe and Mail, pick up the National Post. If you live in the west side of the city, go to the east side of city. Have a conversation with that colleague that you would think is completely unlike you, and see what happens.

Jade (they/them): That power of making that connection actually resonates with something I read this morning in one of the books that I was reading.

David (he/him): What book are you reading Jade?

Jade (they/them): uh, I am reading currently Dare to Lead by Brene Brown.

David (he/him): Oh, I love Brene Brown.

Jade (they/them): She comes up in every episode of this podcast it seems like. Everybody who listens to this podcast, I really hope that they take up your call to action and really put themselves out there. And I think, especially those of us who are white, we like to say, oh, well I read it. I read it and now I'm done. And so I'm going to encourage people to do more than read it, but also they can go read it as well, in addition. So, so thankful for you being here today. My goodness, Erin, what a conversation we had today.

Erin (she/her): Yeah, wow. What a powerful conversation with David. He did leave us with so many great ideas for our listeners to think about, because, as practitioners, we can become so comfortable with those that are in our sphere, the sphere that are willing to listen, that they're on the same journey that we are on. But if we're truly going to make a difference in this world, I do think it's connecting across difference. I do think it's hearing what other people have to say, creating the space so they can hear what we have to say too. But if we just keep having the same conversation with people who are on that same journey, then I don't know if we're actually gonna create that change.

Jade (they/them): I agree. We have to be connecting with people who are not on the journey, who, you know, sometimes may cause us some discomfort too. But if we're not doing that, are we truly doing the work of creating belonging?

Erin (she/her): Absolutely. And that's our challenge to ourselves, but a challenge to our listeners as well as they uncover belonging.

Jade (they/them): Thank you so much for tuning in. We hope that you enjoyed, learned and uncovered deeper belonging with us. Connect with us on LinkedIn, and let us know

what part of today's episode resonated most with you. Many thanks to our production team: editor, Shawn Ahmed, communications, Luis Augusto Nobre, and production support, Connor Pion. We'd also like to thank and share a brief message from our sponsor Erin Davis Co.

Erin (she/her): Today's episode is sponsored by Erin Davis Co. As the founder and Lead Inclusion Strategist, Erin Davis brings her award-winning expertise, global thought leadership, and unique ability to bravely and authentically challenge the status quo to help people feel a greater sense of connection and belonging. Ultimately, Erin Davis Co. supports organizations on their diversity, equity, and accessibility journey to create a more inclusive workplace. One conversation at a time. To learn more about Erin Davis Co. visit erindavisco.ca

Jade (they/them): And of course, most of all, we'd like to thank you for joining us today. For more information about today's guest, links referenced, and a transcript, check out our show notes, which are available on the Pride at Work Canada's website. Subscribe or follow wherever you get your podcasts, including Apple Podcasts, Spotify, Amazon, Google Podcasts, and more.

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