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

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

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

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

Jade Pichette (they/them): and the journey to finding our authentic self.

Erin Davis (she/her): This is an exciting episode for us because we are turning the microphone on ourselves because I think we would be remiss if we didn't share a little bit about our own story and how the podcast got started.

So, Jade, what do you remember about us first connecting so many years ago?

Jade Pichette (they/them): Yeah, so it was a

Erin Davis (she/her): I think, 2019. It was definitely pre-pandemic.

I I remember I had the opportunity to bring Pride at Work Canada out to my home city of Edmonton and Treaty 6 and host a ProPride event.

Jade Pichette (they/them): It was the first time that I was ever in Edmonton, ever in Treaty 6 territory at all.

Erin Davis (she/her): Yeah

Jade Pichette (they/them): And you know, we got to really focus on family and impact that family had in the workplace, which brought such joy, like there were even kids, have kids at the event as well.

And I don't know, there's been an understanding between each other that resulted in us being able to have really good conversations and just kind of riff off of each other

Erin Davis (she/her): And then, You know, you throw a little pandemic in the mix and it became a lot easier for us to connect . And I don't remember if it was Jade or it was myself, but one of us said, "We should record our conversations."

Jade Pichette (they/them): , do things collaboratively instead of just kind of doing our own projects on our own because partnership is something that brings so much more life and dynamics. And it's meant that you've brought some of your network that is very much West Coast-based and I brought some light network that's much more East Coast-based. But now we're not only just turning the mics on each other, we're also doing it in person.-

Erin Davis (she/her): Yes, okay, that is also really a good point because we're sitting here looking at each other as we record this and I'm having a bit of a moment of I feel more comfortable with my computer screen front of me because that's the world that we have existed in for the last two and a half years. So, it feels really great to be in Toronto and being able to have this conversation and I wanted to start with that story today because often in our work, we can get caught up in this idea of getting it right or how do we go about doing this?

Jade Pichette (they/them): Yeah.

And we've made mistakes over the course of the podcast as well, in terms of figuring out audio and figuring out like, how do we record? How do we invite people? You know, we both had those relationships and those networks, we had both done public speaking, but, regardless, I think we both entered into a space that was new to both of us and that, was a challenge and thank goodness for people like our production assistant Connor.

Erin Davis (she/her): Yes, absolutely.

Jade Pichette (they/them): And our editor Shawn, who's actually sitting or standing with us in the room today for kind of guiding us along part of that journey as well. And even though I think we're doing really well with the

podcast, we've made tons of mistakes along the way, but that didn't stop us from creating to begin with.

Erin Davis (she/her): Absolutely.

Well, with that , let's get into the questions.

And the first one is not any different than we've asked our guests who've been on the podcast. tell us about your story,

Jade Pichette (they/them): So for me, I got into this type of work in terms of equity, diversity, and inclusion, not by direction, not by intention, but by happenstance more than anything. You know, when I was a teenager, I had come out as trans and back in the early 2000s, that, especially in Ottawa, that was rare.

I didn't know a single other trans teenager, these days, you know, there are trans teens everywhere, even in small towns, which shocks me warms my heart to such degree. But for me there really wasn't that. And so I ended up on a email listserv and found trans youth group on there, and they had never met.

It had only ever existed as a virtual platform, but there was some willingness and interest for people to get together. And so I ended up suggesting a cafe that I was really comfortable with and invited people to meet up. And so we we have this first meeting originally of just five of us that then grew into an ongoing group called Trans Youth Ottawa. I never intended that group to go into and start becoming the expert and doing trainings and things of this nature, but that's what ended up happening. So we certainly had the support group side but it was really, it showcased for us that, we could have a space that was inclusive, that was welcoming, that brought us together, that brought us connection, and brought that for me in particular, but that wasn't the case in the rest of the world.-

Erin Davis (she/her): Right.

Jade Pichette (they/them): - You know, anywhere else that we went, especially services, that we needed healthcare, was not inclusive. And so, really, we started to do trainings, and I started to do trainings with different employers, with different service providers, and really just the basics of who are trans people, how can you be inclusive towards us, and really tried to start with some of that discussion that frankly had not been happening.

Erin Davis (she/her): Yeah

Jade Pichette (they/them): And so that's how I started on this journey, and eventually I decided I wanted to go into social work because I had started in political science and found that no one else in political science at the time seemed to care about other human beings. And that was my main focus of why I was interested in politics was not just the geekery of like policy and how power interacts in the world, which is frankly of interest of mine.

But instead, I really wanted to do that because of the fact that I wanted to make a change in the world. And so I saw that as a possibility within social work. And so within social work, I ended up working at a youth treatment center, I did youth mental health outreach, and that's really where I was starting to find my sense of belonging was through doing work within my community and for my community.

I didn't want to do that long term. That wasn't my focus long term. I really had thought about going into private practice of some sort I wasn't quite sure . That journey would lead me in the end. But then I ended up at a very controversial institution, being the Ottawa Police and their diversity and race relations division, which I now no longer am very supportive of police and that's an issue that people can have many different feelings on.

But I would not work with them them today, but at the time it was the option that I had. And so I really started to see the world of EDI when I was there because it was EDI department that I was in. And so I did that and then really from there said, "Okay, this isn't going to be what I'm gonna do.

I'm not gonna do this EDI thing.

Erin Davis (she/her): Right. Yeah.

Jade Pichette (they/them): And instead went on and did my Master's in Social Work and then couldn't find work. I couldn't find work with my Master's, actually had to take my Master's off of my resume to start getting callbacks.

Erin Davis (she/her): Wow.

Jade Pichette (they/them): Because nobody wanted to hire a trans person, let alone a trans feminine one.

And... really just tried to find whatever I could find and eventually I did find a job at The Archives, which is Canada's largest 2SLGBTQIA+ archive and one of the largest in the world. And I was working as a volunteering community outreach coordinator, did that for a few years. I was still passionate because I was still serving my community and that was what was important to me.

And then when I finished there, though, I kind of said, "Okay, I'm not going to do community work anymore. I'm going to move on. I'm going to do something else." And then almost four and a half years later, here I am. Here you are doing community work. At Pride at Work Canada, still doing community work. And having found some sense of belonging in the work that I do because, at Pride at Work Canada we create that space for our staff because if we can't create it for our staff how can we encourage it in the world?

Erin Davis (she/her): Isn't it interesting to think about this thread of, community throughout your entire story that you just shared either creating it on your own, because it didn't exist, or entering into a community to help support others as well.

And so maybe, you aren't directly doing the social work, as it were, but you kind are in an indirect, way and that call to service, right?

Jade Pichette (they/them): And that's something that I feel very strongly about is that, is that word the word service, in my bio, I will always put serves this is something that I've been doing for a very long time. And it's a subtle little thing but because of the fact that I do see myself as being in service to community because there is so much need.-

Erin Davis (she/her): Yeah.

Jade Pichette (they/them): And it's what fills me. You know, I will have a more full cup if I know I've left the world even a little bit better Yeah.

You know, a lot to me.

Erin Davis (she/her): It's a powerful thing and I think that that brings up a lot of, you know, emotions for me in terms of the world in which we currently exist in and this juxtaposition that I sort of witness where it's not necessarily everyone's bottom line.

Yet we can hear these stories, and I hear your story about how connected you are to community and service to help others, especially those who may have

gone through similar experiences because you know how important that is for dare I say, like survival for some.

Jade Pichette (they/them): Yeah, it's very real that it is about survival because for many people they don't have supports or they don't have inclusive work. And we know that that has one of the biggest impacts on ability to access health care. We know that has one of the biggest impacts in terms of well-being and sense of purpose in life.

so . Not to say that everybody work is going to be their central thing, and I don't necessarily even think it needs to be, but it often has to be without our choice. And so if it's not our choice we have to be finding that sense of purpose through work instead of other things, then at least we should have a welcoming space, a place that we feel like we're making a difference in a positive way, even if that's small.

And that can be a lot of different things, right? Like I think that a marine biologist is doing a lot of positive things for the world. A computer programmer might be programming some really important software, you know, doesn't have to look any specific way. I see that with you as well in the work that you do and so I want to throw it back at you in terms of how you got into this work.

Erin Davis (she/her): Thanks for that. For me, I've gotten to this place where I can't not do the work.

So if I think back to the beginning of my story, I guess I'll be honest and say sometimes I give myself a hard time because it doesn't necessarily go back to my childhood. I was an average kid. I loved music. I was in band. It's hilarious for many people know that I went to band camp. I graduated with a Bachelor of Arts and I started working in the corporate world.

And the first part of my journey in the corporate world, was pretty good. I would take on a role, I would learn it, I would master it, and then I would move on. I sort of had this repetition of every two to three years taking on a new role, a new responsibility.

I know now that that's my connection to curiosity, that I'm always wanting to learn and understand more, but I hit the proverbial ceiling. And so about 10 years into my career, I started to apply for more senior level jobs, and I wasn't getting them. And, you know, you can take from that what you want, you know,

maybe I was not the most qualified in that position. But that's when I started to become a bit more curious about diversity and inclusion. That's we called it back in the day it's gone through a few more iterations I was asked to be on a diversity and inclusion committee.

And through that curiosity and through some conversations, I accepted. I went on committee and started to read and do all this research around what is a glass ceiling. and , here we are, you know, 15 years later, and we still see representative numbers that women are not moving into any roles that sort of yield as much power as straight white men continue to hold

but I also want to share with our audience this comment that I got from someone about, "You know, Erin, you're going to do well in this world because you're a woman and you're a woman of color." And I got that comment like 15 years ago, and I was like, " What are you talking about?" And so I took it upon myself to really understand, this comment that I'm going to do really well in my career, yet I'm not getting these higher level positions. And so it led me to a pathway of curiosity again. I was doing strategic planning at the time and went to a different organization because I didn't think I could sort of succeed in the quote-unquote male-dominated industry that I was in, although I went into another one, I went into the space of engineering and continued to ask questions about what diversity inclusion meant And this is a time when people weren't measuring it. And my background was in strategic planning.

And I was like, okay, we need to figure this out. If you're going to have conversations with your board of directors on how we're more money for the organization, meeting our financial targets, how we're doing around health and safety and making sure that everyone goes home safely. Well, we better figure out what it means to create a more diverse and inclusive organization. So that was my winding pathway to eventually taking on the role to lead diversity and inclusion in a large, global organization, and I did that for a number of years. And then honestly, I felt like I got to a place where I couldn't make any more change. For me, I operated in the Department of . Human Resources in an engineering firm as a support service to the business, and I couldn't impact any more change.

So I went into the non-profit side of the world and started to learn about the really great research that Catalyst does. I worked with them for a number of years and so did that and, got to point of more curiosity and it started my own business. But I share all of that and tie it back to this idea of belonging because I don't know if I ever had a sense of belonging in any of those workplaces belonging to me was created when I started my own business

Jade Pichette (they/them): that really, kind of winding journey to get you to that place is something that many people go through.

Erin Davis (she/her): Hm-hmm. Yep.

Jade Pichette (they/them): It's usually those almost aha moments when somebody says something that sometimes is an inside voice conversation-

Erin Davis (she/her): Yeah.

Jade Pichette (they/them): - that then ends up having this internal impact in yourself and saying, " Oh, so that's how I'm perceived."

Erin Davis (she/her): -Mm-hmm.

Jade Pichette (they/them): -And sometimes it takes that moment for a recognition of why you never felt like one of the people.

Erin Davis (she/her): -Yeah.

Jade Pichette (they/them): Like, there wasn't quite that sense and you wanted it to be there, but there was just something missing and you couldn't put your finger on it. And so think that both of our stories bring kind of those different angles to where do we find the impetus to create change.

Erin Davis (she/her): Yep

Jade Pichette (they/them): And to build change. And I don't think there's any one story for that. And I don't think there's any one point that we have to have figured that out.

Erin Davis (she/her): - Right.

Jade Pichette (they/them): - Like I think if we figure that out in our teens, that's great. I think if we figure that out in our 80s, that's also great.

Erin Davis (she/her): - Yes, yeah.

Jade Pichette (they/them): - You know, and it's giving that space for time to develop and for us to figure out these different pieces of ourselves as well, 'cause sometimes it takes time when it comes to those pieces of ourselves and

when we want to even show those pieces, because there are certain things that we don't have a choice in whether they're being shown or not. And so I know for myself, this was very much around, I don't really have a choice about being perceived as a trans person because, hello. But I did have a choice about whether I was being perceived disabled or not, at least I thought I did.

And that part of myself I hid for many years and didn't really have my aha moment until my 30s to actually start making that type of change. So I think that we all find ourselves in different points in that journey. And heard many challenges along the way in terms of, you know, you really just wanting them to create that space.

You wanting to be able to show those pieces of yourselves. And I think, that's a huge part of why our podcast exists is this idea that we want the organizations to change because we believe in capacity for change.

Erin Davis (she/her): Yeah.

Jade Pichette (they/them): We believe in capacity for creating these spaces but it is on the employer, it is on the people that are creating a space build that and to also take the moments to say, I don't know the answer here, so I'm going to bring in an expert.

Erin Davis (she/her): Totally.

Jade Pichette (they/them): And now you're one of those experts.

Erin Davis (she/her): Yes yeah, I sum it up to this idea of humility that us as individuals need to have because there's no way that we possibly can understand, everything.

And we have to have humility that we might not always get it right because we are constantly learning.

And also are we not constantly evolving in terms of understanding who we are? Because for the first part of my career, I really showed up in an inauthentic way.

I showed up in how I perceived success to look like.

And I often tell the story about those first 10 years of my career and the one time I cried at work because you don't cry at work. You don't show emotion at work. You show up in a robotic-like manner and you get the job done. And so I

was embarrassed that I was crying at work. I happened to be seven months pregnant at the time and probably fairly hormonal and my mentor was sharing with me that they were leaving the organization. So there was sort of an accumulation of emotions happening.

But the fact that I was embarrassed to show that emotion at work really taught me upon reflection, not in the moment, that I wasn't able to be my authentic self, that I wasn't able to show the true me in these spaces. I'm now in a space of being able to be my authentic self and show emotion and show up. But , I don't think everyone can show up that way at all

Jade Pichette (they/them): I don't think it's safe for everybody to.

Erin Davis (she/her): - Yeah.

Jade Pichette (they/them): - Is like reality and I wish it was safe or, and I mean, this is again, why we're doing this, we believe in this work, is we want people to have that safety. But sometimes the safest option is not showing parts of yourself.

Erin Davis (she/her): Mm-hmm.

Jade Pichette (they/them): And that need for safety comes before a need for belonging at the end of the day. You know, it's the hierarchy of needs. And really that sense of safety is what grounds us into whether we're able to approach a sense of belonging and that has been the case in my career as well where I've had moments where I knew that if I was completely honest and completely myself.

I got written up and written up as having issues with my communication style when really what that was was me showing up and being authentic when I would get angry

Erin Davis (she/her): right

Jade Pichette (they/them): I would get angry because people would do something that was racist or homophobic or transphobic or sexist often sexist

and that anger was real and it was heartfelt felt that there were so many times where I'd have to quash my anger or hide my anger because I knew how it would be received. And I know that, we have different implications as a society

around, , sadness and anger, but really at the end of the day they're both human emotions that we should be able to show at work.

And you know, different if that is causing harm to another person, but somebody just having an emotion isn't causing harm to another person. And so we need to be able to create space for that. And I want to share maybe my last crying story at work. And it actually was in this job, but it wasn't about this job.

there were some personal things going on in my life. I was really, really struggling and I had decided to come into the office on a Friday afternoon because I thought nobody would be here and I would just have the space to myself to just like work and ground and just do my own thing. And one of my co-workers was here and I didn't expect to see him and he was like, "Are you okay?" And so just was like, " No."

- Yeah.

- And that's why I'm here.

Erin Davis (she/her): - Yeah.

Jade Pichette (they/them): - But I will be.

Erin Davis (she/her): - Yes.

Jade Pichette (they/them): - And I started to cry a little bit and then I went to my office, I spent time by myself and just like bawled a little bit, but I felt so supported and I felt like I belonged to such a deep degree because there was both a human empathy that came out from my coworker, but also there was no expectation

Erin Davis (she/her): -Yes

Jade Pichette (they/them): -With that. There was no, oh my gods, are you okay? Like what's wrong? I need to fix this for you right now something along those lines it was just a genuine human connection.-

Erin Davis (she/her): Yes.

Jade Pichette (they/them): - And then when I didn't need anything from this person at the time, that was enough.

Erin Davis (she/her): - Yeah

Jade Pichette (they/them): - And so a space of true belonging includes being able to cry at work and being okay.

Erin Davis (she/her): - Absolutely. This is great like just us talking through these barriers, these challenges and some don't even have that safety to even be able to show . Up and say I'm not having a good day.

Jade Pichette (they/them): Yeah

And how many people have had to pretend that they had some type of physical illness when really they were just having some Issues in their life that required them to need a day off Sometimes you just need a day off and yet people will have to hide that fact.

They'll have to hide why they're needing a day and put it as some type of physical illness because that way it's seen as legitimate within the working world.

Erin Davis (she/her): Yeah. That's a really good point and it doesn't have to mean sharing every piece of that, but just being okay to phone in and say like, "I need a day." And having learned that lesson during the pandemic

I wonder is the pendulum swinging back

Jade Pichette (they/them): I mean, I would hope not, but I think the answer is otherwise. We're definitely at a place where the pendulum is swinging again towards needing to fake how you're doing. ' Cause the reality is for most people, most people aren't okay. Like even the people who are kind of okay, they're still not okay Because there has been so much grief, so much disconnection, so much, challenges,

and that could be an economic reason, that could be a health reason, that could be loss. But we're all very tired. I haven't spoken to a single person recently who's like, oh yeah, I'm truly energized and just raring to go right in a way that I think used to be sometimes the case for people. But we're all just coming out of this time of pandemic and isolation with challenges. And so I see us swinging back to this fakeness where we're covering how we're actually feeling.

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Erin Davis (she/her): I feel that energy too. It makes me nervous .

It makes me think about how can we not just get to a place of accepting what it means to be human, and , being able to say, like, I can only show up at 80% today, but I'm going to give 100% of that 80%. And that's okay. So, what do we tell Our listeners about this post-pandemic world?

Jade Pichette (they/them): I really think that we need to continue some of the lessons that we learned during the pandemic. In terms of flexibility of work, in terms of accessibility, all of which seemed to be dwindling fading away. And, you know, not the hyper-productivity, which I know is a topic that both of us want to do a bit more of a deep dive on later, but this idea that we always have to be busy.

Erin Davis (she/her): Yeah.

Jade Pichette (they/them): And almost want to challenge this idea of even showing up at 80%. Like, is work 80% of your life? No. So why are you showing up at 80%?

Erin Davis (she/her): Totally.

Jade Pichette (they/them): If that's not 80% of your life, you have much more within your life to give. And so I think that if we actually took a moment to pause, say, what did we learn over the last three years? What fed me as an individual? What fed people on my team what really brought us that sense that we were in this together and let's bring it back. Let's not lose it.

Erin Davis (she/her): Yeah.

I love that. And there are so many lessons that I think we did learn and we've lost that. back to the transactional, how many meetings can we fit into a day? How many conversations can we have? You know, we're still scheduling meetings back to back, but all of a sudden we have to incorporate travel time into there. So I think my encouragement for anyone listening to this is hold the space for what works for you. Share that with your colleague, share that with your manager, have the conversation. And if it doesn't go in the direction you need it to go, then maybe that isn't the place in which you can have that true belonging. And I'm hopeful that our listeners really can have and spark good dialogue on what it means show up a workplace and truly belong.

Jade Pichette (they/them): Agreed

Erin Davis (she/her): So you know, drum roll however we want to do this. Cue the music. Let's do the rapid fire..

I will kickstart us asking for your book recommendation.

Jade Pichette (they/them): So my one book would be Care Work, Dreaming Disability Justice by and I think it really fits

into the conversation that we've been having today what about you?

Erin Davis (she/her): Rules are made to be broken. So I'm going to give two .

the first From the Ashes by Jesse Thistle, the second one Unbound by Steph Jagger,

Jade Pichette (they/them): Wonderful. And so what brings you joy no matter what?

Erin Davis (she/her): I love to Take photographs and so if I have my camera at hand and just capturing that moment, it always brings me joy. What about

you?

Jade Pichette (they/them): Cute dog. So if you take any photos of cute dogs, please send them my way.

Erin Davis (she/her): Okay. I might have a few of those.

Jade Pichette (they/them): have one in particular, which is my dog, Apollo, who is the best cuddler of dog

I've ever met. He is a great little spoon despite being 100 pounds.

Erin Davis (she/her): I love that. So this is the question that always trips me up with our guests, because I don't know how they do it, but what's your theme song for today?

Jade Pichette (they/them): I'm going to go with Grammy Award winner Lizzo's " About Down Time," which I highly recommend the song if you haven't heard it What about yourself?

Erin Davis (she/her): I will confess that I was looking through my Spotify and like trying to figure it out, but you know what really caught my attention? Simply the Best, Tina Turner. And I think when I was little, I used to sing the best of the best.

Jade Pichette (they/them): Well, that's simply the best answer.

Erin Davis (she/her): Thank you.

Jade Pichette (they/them): And who is somebody who inspires you in how they create belonging doesn't receive enough credit?

Erin Davis (she/her): I want to give a shout out to my partner who helps me find that sense of belonging every single day. So thank you, Clayton. But the reason I also share that is because I want that to be sort of a universal thank you to all the partners, to individuals who are doing D&I work in this world, because it's not easy. It's hard. You come home and there are stories to tell. And I hope that you have someone that you can share that with in your life because that support so needed.

Jade Pichette (they/them): Yeah, my partner, Daya, definitely gets to hear a few stories that I wouldn't tell to anybody else and very, very grateful for. There's somebody else, though, that I wanted to kind of shout out, which is Chanel Gallant, who is a white anti-racist advocate. She is a sex worker rights advocate and really is one of my heroes, however you want to say it. But she's my answer for today.

Erin Davis (she/her): - I love it. Well, last question, what is one call to action that you have for our listeners?

Jade Pichette (they/them): - For me, I really wanna encourage people to consider self-accommodation.

Erin Davis (she/her): - Right.

Jade Pichette (they/them): And this is something that as like a disabled person certainly has certain implications, like, do I bring my cane or do I not bring my cane? But it also has other implications. Like, two years ago, I would not have worn a head to toe pink suit. You know, like I would not have done that because I would not consider it professional enough.

Erin Davis (she/her): Yeah.

Jade Pichette (they/them): But did it today. and happy about it. So that's the thing that I really think that people need to consider is how do you accommodate yourself and how do you create the world to be more accessible and welcoming for yourself?

Erin Davis (she/her):

I will attest to Jade's amazing outfit today, head to toe, pink, and they are rocking it. I'll share my call to action. To everyone listening keep learning. and in that process, identify what is that one small action? What is that one key piece of learning? When you listen to that podcast, when you read that book, when you watch that show that has an intersectional lens that you can share with someone else, keep the conversation going.