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Presenter: You're listening to CiTR 101.9 broadcasting from UBC's Point Grey campus located on the traditional, unceded Coast Salish territory of the Halkomelem speaking Musqueam people.

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Santa Ono: Broadcasting from the University of British Columbia where thousands of academics gather for the Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences, this is *Blue and Goldcast*.

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Santa: I'm Santa Ono, the President and Vice-Chancellor of UBC.

Margot Young: I'm Margot Young, a Professor with UBC's Allard School of Law. This month on the *Blue and Goldcast*, coming to you from the unceded ancestral lands of the Musqueam people, we're exploring the Congress of the Humanities and Social Sciences. It's one of the largest and most important academic conferences in Canada, and this year, it's hosted by UBC.

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Margot: Congress has come to UBC. There are 9910 academics and researchers on our campus, and there are 73 scholarly associations meeting here. There are lots of receptions, important and interesting visitors. Santa, I bet you've got a busy social schedule this week.

Santa: I have never seen so many receptions, but people are smiling, and people are having fun. They're enjoying the weather. I got to tell you that there are also members of public that are coming to UBC, they're attracted by the congress.

Margot: This year's congress has the theme of Circles of Conversation, the deep, two-way relationship between universities and the communities they serve.

Santa: The other thing that I'm proud of is that the different sessions really focus on problems and issues that we have to resolve, and where humanities and social sciences are absolutely needed more than ever before as part of the solution.

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Laura Yvonne Bulk: Right now, we are sitting in a lovely gazebo across Westbrook from UBC Hospital beside Regent College. It's a beautiful sunny day with a nice, maybe slightly chilly breeze. My name is Laura Yvonne Bulk. At UBC, I am in Rehabilitation Science doing my doctoral work focusing on being blind and belonging in academia. At congress, I presented only a small snippet of the stories that I've shared myself as a blind person, and of the stories that I have heard from other blind people.

In my work, I'm really wanting to focus not just on the policy issues and the access issues, but hone down on this idea of belonging. That's based on my own

experience, and also, talking with other people in the community about how we can have all the inclusive policy and rhetoric that we want, but if people's hearts don't change, we'll never have a place where everyone can belong.

In order to gain equitable access to our working, learning, and teaching spaces, we are needing to do a lot of extra work and carry extra burdens. For example, if I want to take a class, and if there are certain materials that need to be read, I need to go a few months in advance to figure out what those readings are. If the instructor has even got that contract yet, if they're sessional, and if they've decided what the readings are, then I try to get those as soon as I can. Then, I need to find out if it's already available in an accessible format. I need to either buy it and then take it to the people who will transform it into an accessible format, they need to check with the publisher, then finally gets back to me. It's a very long process, and that takes a lot of time.

When I'm spending so much time and so much energy trying just to get access, I don't have time and energy to engage in the same way that I would like to, to develop that sense of belonging. It's interesting, I was talking with someone about their experience as an indigenous person, and they shared a very similar thing, talking about how they are expected to meet the same timelines, meet the same grades, all these things, while carrying extra burden. I said, "That is exactly what we are saying as blind people." There are all these points of solidarity, so to speak. Another piece of it is this idea that I've been calling gestures of belonging.

One example would be, you arrive at a meeting, and you can hear cups and spoons clinking, you can smell coffee, you can maybe make out something in the middle of the table, but no one makes this gesture of belonging to say, "Hey, Laura. There are some cookies in the middle of the table, and coffee by the door, if you want some." It's those small things, those gestures that say, "Yes, you belong here. We expect you to be here." That segues nicely into another piece is expectation and imagination. This idea that people don't expect us. When we show up in a space as blind people, we are an anomaly. It's like, "Oh, there's a blind person. What exactly do we do?" One person described it as, "There's a gulf between myself as a blind person and the sighted world".

I think part of the change that needs to happen, yes, policy is important, practices are important, going back to this idea that people's hearts need to change, and that's what's going to create a place where we can belong. The question is, how do we change people's hearts? I think that using arts-based approaches is really valuable, or arts-informed approaches, creative approaches. For example, I'm hoping to create some research-based radio theater based on some of my findings, something that can touch people's **[unintelligible 00:07:04]** in a way that a policy brief or a checklist of handy tips and tricks doesn't.

One part of the reason that I did decide to pursue a Ph.D. and some work in academia is that me being here makes a statement, and me being here has helped to challenge some of the assumptions that people around me have about blind people, and even about what it means to be blind in the first place.

[music]

Santa: One of the things that we want to focus on in this episode are some ideas of what a university can be or should be, and the future of higher education.

Margot: In that vein, we're joined by Jessica Riddell. Among her many titles, she is the Stephen A. Jarislowsky Chair of Undergraduate Teaching Excellence at Bishop's University. She looks at innovative ways of teaching and learning. She holds a 3M Teaching Fellowship, which is one of the highest honors of teaching in Canada. Over the last four years, she's written a column with the online weekly newsletter, *University Affairs*. Her column is called *Adventures in Academe*. In this congress, Jessica's been part of a panel called Looking Ahead in Higher Ed: What Keeps You Up at Night?

Santa: Welcome to UBC.

Margot: It's wonderful to have you here. Hello.

Jessica Riddell: Thanks for having me.

Santa: In this panel at congress, the question was, "What's keeping you up at night?" When it comes to the road ahead in higher education, what is keeping you up at night?

Jessica: Great question. I made the joke at the panel this morning that I have two small children, so I'm up a lot at night. They wake me up, and then as I try to get back to sleep, I think about some of the major issues that are facing higher education, what does it look like in the 21st century in an increasingly complex global landscape. I think there are a number of issues that are really demanding our attention. One of them is indigenizing the academy. Another one is figuring out how to address the precarious and contingent professoriate. Another is around accommodations and accessibility.

The issue that I talked about this morning in the panel is an issue about the quality of undergraduate education in Canada, and the growing belief that we need to have a candid and even uncomfortable conversation about whether or not we are delivering a high-quality undergraduate education.

Margot: What gets you out of bed in the morning? What's your positive optimism, the critical optimism you want undergraduates to have? What's yours when you go out and face the day and do the work that you do?

Jessica: I've started to take on a leadership role with the Maple League of Universities, which is a consortium of four primarily undergraduate liberal arts, or liberal education models universities in rural or regional areas. Bishop's University in the Eastern Townships in Quebec. St. Francis Xavier in Antigonish, Nova Scotia. Mount Allison University in Sackville. New Brunswick and Acadia University in Wolfville, Nova Scotia. They're really trying to innovate what a 21st-century liberal education looks like.

For me, the scrappiness of this model of university in a publicly funded system means that there's critical hope, despite the funding formulas in our provincial model, despite the fact that we value bums, seats, and growing enrollment at the

undergraduate level, most universities are incentivized to grow their undergraduate programs to fund their graduate schools and put their time and the resources in innovation at the graduate level or in professional schools.

Of course, universities have grown and, of course, they have shifted their resources based on the alignment of that funding formula. For me, that critical hope, that scrappiness, of these four universities who are intentionally small they've grown by design, that they are existing despite not because of the conditions within which they exist, for me, gives me hope because there is an intentional focus on undergraduate education. There's an intentional focus in building engaged citizens.

There is really great contested conversations about what quality undergraduate education is, without being exclusive. By building conversations and collaborations with many different kinds of models of education, and talking to leaders across Canada about what this means, that gives me critical hope.

Santa: I love it. Every single one of those institutions that are part of this group. I'm a big believer, even though I'm the president of one of the largest universities in Canada. I think that you put your finger on it. I think that it's incumbent upon governments, provincial governments, and systems to recognize their value that they are the right places for certain undergraduates to go to, that medical doctoral institutions are not the right places for some undergraduates to attend. I'm a big fan.

Another option is, if you think about the University of Chicago they had a very small college embedded in a very large research university, or if you think about the situation in Halifax. Dal actually has a liberal arts college embedded within. It's an affiliate, but it's becoming even more closely affiliated with Dal. That's another model, is to within a large research university try to replicate the ethos and environment of a small liberal college within the confines of a large research universities. I've seen that work as well. What do you think about that?

Jessica: Absolutely. I'm from Halifax. I almost went to King's College [laughs], I decided to go to McGill instead, because I thought I was a big city girl. I fell through the cracks at McGill and might have benefited from King's College. One of the distinguishing features of the Maple League is that because we're not tied to the mothership, because we don't have that umbrella institution, we're also not located in urban areas. We're all the regional drivers of culture and the economy, and the social conditions of our region.

That's a really interesting concept for us to think about, where are the places to grow for social innovation in regions? What does it mean to be part of a rural community? And can we build some of those capacities outside of urban centers?

Margot: That's really interesting. You began this comment by saying you fell through the cracks at McGill. Can you talk a bit about your first foray into undergraduate studies?

Jessica: I can. It's a messy journey, as are all good journeys. I was not a very reflective learner when I decided to embark on my undergraduate career. I went to McGill because it was a large city. I went to McGill because it had a fabulous reputation internationally. I went to McGill because it had a drinking age of 18. I

arrived, and I was sitting in classrooms of 600 people, and I was lost. I didn't have professors who had office hours or email addresses. There was no recourse for me to find extra help. I had some lovely IRAs and TAs but they were fresh out of their undergraduate themselves and we're still figuring it out.

After about two years, of wandering, aimlessly, and angsting in existential ways only an 18-year-old can do, I dropped out. I dropped out and I took a year off. I did a lot of self-reflection around my own privilege, and my own lack of gratitude and mindfulness about higher education as a privilege. When I went back to university, I went back with the conviction that if I was to make the world a better place, I could do that, and be best served through education.

Santa: Tell me a little bit about more about McGill. I went to McGill. I was a graduate student there, but I can see what you're saying. I was there in the late '80s. That was quite a while ago, and I'm sure McGill changed quite a bit. Tell me a little bit about the professors that were there. Do you think that the situation could have been aided by training them more with respect to how to be an effective professor in terms of undergraduate education?

Having been a professor myself, there's very low training that occurs. Some universities have centers for teaching and learning, others do not. Some will just say, "Oh, you have gotten your Ph.D.", and they throw you into a class, which was my case, with 600 students. I wouldn't really put the finger on them. They're not adequately trained in terms of what it takes to be an effective faculty member. What do you think? Do you think that there are things that could have been done better to prepare them to be professors and have things changed?

Jessica: I certainly don't want to put the finger on the blame of McGill. I think this is a much broader set of questions and challenges really, around what does quality teaching and learning look like at the level of higher education. One of the great conversations I have with my university president, Michael Goldbloom, who I love, I believe is a true visionary in higher education, and will often tease me and say, "Well, you're a naturally gifted teacher. You're just naturally good at this".

I always disagree with him [laughs]. I say, "I don't believe that you're naturally gifted at teaching. I believe that it's a capacity that you build, and that anybody has that capacity if they are given the support and the resources to do so." When I started as a professor, I was thrown in to the classroom, I was a Teaching Fellow at Queen's. I was only three years into my Ph.D. with no training, I was given an upper-year 16th-century poetry and prose class. I spent a lot of time preparing lectures, PowerPoints, standing behind the podium, and relying on the authority of my discipline and the authority of my podium to expound.

I modeled the sage on the stage because that was the model that I had experienced as an undergraduate, and had very generous students who allowed me to find my way in the classroom. Now several years past that, I understand teaching much more collaboratively. I've had the confidence to be able to step away from the podium and to sit in a circle with students in co-construction and co-design, whether that's a large class in an Intro to Lit classroom or a small senior seminar, but that requires a level of confidence, of experience, of mentors and of other colleagues who have given me permission over the years to be messy, to be playful.

I understand that as a privilege of my seniority, as a privilege of being a full professor, as the privilege of being a 3M. I often talk to young faculty who are teaching often for the first time and talk about the risks and the vulnerabilities around relinquishing your authority. That's a pretty nuanced set of conversations to have. It doesn't answer your question but it opens up some questions about building teaching capacities, which I believe everybody has.

Margot: It also points to the different channels of power in the academy. We often think of teachers being so powerful in a hierarchical relationship to students, but there's also an exchange back and forth, particularly for racialized professors, for professors who are new, for women, and so on. It's really an important qualification of any advice you give for universities to improve their emphasis on the quality of teaching, which is to pay attention to the diversity and the different marginalities that faculty also experience.

Santa: I think what you said is incredibly profound and more people need to hear it, the relinquishing of power. It's not just at the level of the professor, the new professor, and the student. But it's also true for the department head, for the provost and the president, that at each of the different levels, there needs to be culture change within an institution.

Jessica: I absolutely agree. You've put your finger on something that I have been percolating around transformation where we often talk about transformative learning for our students. We less often talk about transformative learning through our teaching and through our research as faculty members. We even less often talk about that at the departmental or the institutional level, that we have to adopt growth mindsets at every level of our institution and build those cultures. We are interested in process rather than product. We are interested in messy journeys. We are interested in navigating contested, conceptual trains together in collaboration and with deep generosity of spirit.

Margot: This goes back to your thoughts on failure, I think. You're extending now this notion of tolerating and thinking about failure, not just for students but also for faculty, for administrators in the university. I know that you've cautioned against turning failure into a fetish and the tension between an individual focus and a focus on the system for change. I want to go back and imagine ourselves in your office where I've learned you have two framed transcripts on the wall. One is the transcript from your first couple of years at McGill full of Ds and Fs. Is that right?

Jessica: Yes. I even have a D-. It's spectacular [chuckles].

Margot: Excellent. Then, you have another transcript which reflects considerably higher marks after you took a year out and you came back, and resumed your undergraduate education. Can you talk about why you have those on your walls? And then, what kind of cautions you would issue with respect to this, showing off of failure by clearly successful powerful individuals?

Jessica: It's something that, for me, it was also a learning journey. I'd been carrying that first transcript around as a badge of shame and I had it hidden in a shoebox for a long time.

Margot: A literal shoebox?

Jessica: A literal shoebox in a closet. A number of years ago now I pulled it out and I pulled out my St. Mary's transcript, which was As and A+ all the way down. That was my second iteration. I decided to reclaim that shame. I originally framed them side by side and thought, "This is a wonderful reminder for me that I'm the same person and I was just as worthy of the love, and attention, and help of my professors in both of those iterations. I was two very different students, but I was still worthy".

It was a reminder always for me on my office wall to treat everybody as lovely three-dimensional humans. The second thing I did was invite students into the conversation where they will often arrive for advising or for help and say, "Please don't judge me by my transcript." I could be able to point to the wall and say, "I'm not judging you, I have been in both of those places."

When I did a more critical reflection about that, I was uncomfortably aware of the fact I was invisibly telegraphing a narrative of triumph that said, "It's okay, you will get there." "You will get to the As and A+" as if that was the ultimate goal. It took a lot of really difficult and uncomfortable reflection for me to realize that I was sending the wrong message. If I wasn't framing that frame on the wall really carefully about not fetishizing failure, if I wasn't having more nuanced conversations, not just with my students but with my colleagues, about failure, I was being disingenuous.

I do think that this fail up, or fail forward, or fetishizing failure model that we are borrowing from Silicon Valley is actually quite dangerous when the consequences for failure are real, they're material, they can be devastating and they can have long term impact. Until we change the system, I think it's very difficult and even disingenuous for us to encourage our students to fail better.

Margot: I also hear you saying as well, though, that even within a single institution there can be variety. When you talk about the need to engage with students as you plan your course, as you execute your course, as you talk about learning objectives, that's one of the mechanisms for making each classroom experience maybe a unique experience, even in a large institution. I want to talk about, I don't know what you call it, Shakespeare and the Law. What do you do with that?

Jessica: We have a lot of fun. We have a lot of delight, and delight has to be at the heart of our endeavors. Delight is something for me that is not the opposite of rigor, it is the delivery method for rigor. You're talking about a Shakespeare trial that I engage with students a few years ago. It actually started in a conversation in my Intro to Lit class where a trailer came out for a movie called *Anonymous*. He had gotten onto this idea of the Shakespeare conspiracy theories, which is that Shakespeare could not possibly been educated enough or wealthy enough to produce the canon that he did. This has been around since the 18th century. Shakespearians never give this oxygen, but one of the things about Shakespearians not addressing the conspiracy theories is that the conspiracy theories continue to grow in many ways because they're uncontested.

Margot: I'm totally seeing where this is going, keep going [laughs].

Jessica: I was teaching Intro to Lit, the movie came out and I thought, "I've got 75 students in my class, even if five think that this is plausible and I don't say anything, I am not doing my due diligence." I structured a class as a way to introduce the 16th century. I was covering about a thousand years of literature in that class and we unpacked the trailer. We unpacked some of the theories about why or why not Shakespeare wrote the canon, and what was really supposed to be a conversation starter of 15 minutes, really fun playful introduction to the early modern period, turn into a full class that then split into the hallways and was just animated and continued.

I thought, "I've just hit on something. I've hit on something that's interesting and that the students have an appetite for debate and discussion." The next semester I was teaching a Shakespeare class, and I often find that their eyes glaze over when I give the social and historical context within which Shakespeare was writing his plays. I believe it's important to understand that Shakespeare is not writing in a vacuum, that he's writing in a very particular historical moment, really exciting times, but they just glaze over, they just start to fall asleep and I lose their energy. I thought, "Okay, I'm going to take the first three weeks of class and I'm going to turn this into something dynamic." We decided to prosecute Shakespeare for fraud in a Canadian criminal court.

I broke the students into teams who had to research various themes. They were building all the evidence. They came up with some recommendations for the prosecution and defense teams. Then we prosecuted Shakespeare with the two teams, and then the students also were witnesses. We had Shakespeare, we had Anne Hathaway, his wife. We had the two editors of the first folio. We had Ben Jonson and Christopher Marlowe, who were his contemporaries and often rivals.

It started as just a really fun pedagogical exercise. Because the students were so engaged we created extra trial teams, extra workshops, and we brought an alumnus who had been thinking about **[unintelligible 00:27:56]** in their nuanced and complex ways. We had a massive final performance where we packed our student pub, there were 450 people there--

Margot: With their costumes?

Jessica: There were tons of costumes. The drama department got involved, we had 40 protestors outside the courtroom, which was the pub, with big placard saying, "Out, out, damn charges." [laughs] it was just so playful. Our university president, Michael Goldbloom was the judge and the audience was the jury. There was this wonderful trial, and of course, we orchestrated it so it would be a hung jury. Then the Deus Ex Machina, Elizabeth I, comes with all of her glory and sets Shakespeare free. It was something that was a learning experience for me because I did not anticipate how big it would get and how engaged the students were. I had the confidence through that experience to step away from steering the ship to making sure that it stayed afloat and it had the resources and support that it needed.

Santa: I think it was extraordinary. I wish I was the judge in that situation. I have a question. How did you assess each individual student in that scenario?

Jessica: I've been quite inspired by a thinker in higher education called Jesse Stommel, who is really at the forefront of a movement called Ungrading. He's looking

at unconventional ways of assessment and designing assessment that reaches the student at their capacity. There's lots of different variations of that. One of them is critical self-reflection and self-assessment. There's peer assessment. There's formative assessment over a long period of time. If you have transformed, if you have ontologically changed, if you've changed your identity and moved through a threshold, one of the ways you can assess that is a difference in the way in which you use language, whether you're speaking or writing about your experience.

Lots of those strategies are very helpful for capturing that process of transformation and growth.

Santa: Was it hard for you to assess and grade them?

Jessica: I asked the students to assign themselves a mark in their self-reflection. They had to go through several pages of critical self-reflection, and take their own pulse, and talk about what they learned and their expectations. At the very end, I said, "Could you please assign yourself a mark and then justify why?" Almost without exception, they gave themselves lower marks than I did.

Margot: That's really interesting. I have one more content-based question about what you do in your class. You've talked about *Paradise Lost*. In the age of Trump, have you used the current political context in the classes on Milton's *Paradise Lost*?

Jessica: One of the only silver linings, I think, that has come out of the Trump administration is that my classrooms are exhilarated. They are invigorated. They are absolutely struggling with the relevance of some of these old texts. *Paradise Lost* is, as you know, a text about a fall. The whole story is about how Adam and Eve are created, and how they are kicked out of the garden because they engage in that eating of the apple. Nobody is reading this anymore. Nobody is engaging in this theodicy.

I have found it very difficult for students to pre-Trump get through all 12 books of this 17th-century theodicy. I was teaching the course right after Trump was elected. I decided to use this same model of a trial, and we decided to prosecute Satan for crimes against humanity in an international criminal court with the idea that we are also in the light of a Trump era and a very, very complex global political landscape. The students were, again, incredible.

This was a more senior seminar, so the Shakespeare trial. I worked with 65 students, and in the *Paradise Lost* class, I worked with 20 students. They were absolutely amazed by how relevant even urgent *Paradise Lost* was as we were trying to understand and grapple with this new political reality, a loss of Eden. Feeling like we are disabused of our notions of what good and evil look like, of going into this complex moral landscape that is postlapsarian.

Santa: While you were experimenting with this new approach to teaching, did you get any pushback?

Jessica: I always make the joke that I got to be innovative because I was too stupid to know better [laughs]. I didn't go up against any kind of structural departmental divisional boundaries. I had a lot of support from my colleagues across the

departments and institutions. I went through full promotion just recently, and I was putting together my dossier, and I was reading the collective agreement.

I looked at the collective agreement and thought, "Oh my goodness, most of the things that I've done are not written here, they do not count. The service, the pedagogy, and the research that I do, it's not being evaluated, there's no category here." I called up one of my friends who was also going through the process, I said, "Did you know this?" He goes, "Yes. That's why I've said, no to a bunch of things that you say, 'Hey, let's do this', because I knew that it wasn't valued and it wasn't compensated".

For me now, one of the big pieces of advocacy is how to think about creating those spaces for people who are outliers and innovators, who are working in the margins, who are doing things that don't fit into categories. I think that there's been a lot of careful work done in collective agreements across the country where there are these new categories of creative, imaginative, professional engagement. They have these new spaces that allow for people to explore things like a community engagement. Those things that don't fit in our traditional teaching service research boxes but are absolutely essential to a 21st-century education.

Margot: You've written about how, one dimensional, you found students' notions of citizenship. Really, what's your nationality, what's your legal citizenship status to be, and instead you want to evoke really the kind of, as you say, in something you write, 16th-century humanism understanding of citizenship. I hear this in what you say both about building a university community that facilitates innovative, community involved work by faculty members, but also what you do in your classrooms.

Jessica: I believe that a 21st-century education is aspirational to build, engage dedicated citizens who believe that one of their responsibilities is to have the difficult conversations to make this world more equitable, more just, and more inclusive. For me, a 21st-century level education is to encourage students to be curious, to be courageous, to be generous, and to exercise critical empathy.

One of the ways we can do that is through very interdisciplinary courses and pathways to study so that you can do a course in engineering, and you can do one in law, and you can do one in philosophy, and in English literature, and in biology. That we're starting to do that more intentionally, but to build that curiosity-driven approach to learning, to look through different lenses, and to understand that different disciplines can add a really rich dimension to that conversation around citizenship in the 21st century.

Margot: Well, thank you. You're certainly aspirational to us, and you're thinking about undergraduate education, and about teaching, and about how to get to a moment for you to teach *Paradise Regained*.

Santa: If I'm ever in Bishop and you're teaching, I'm coming to watch. If there is not a YouTube video or a documentary of your approach, there ought to be.

Jessica: [laughs] Thank you.

[music]

Margot: You can find links to Jessica Riddle's work at our website, blueandgoldcast.com.

Santa: I'm Santa Ono.

Margot: I'm Margot Young.

Santa: You're listening to *Blue and Goldcast* on CiTR 101.9 FM, UBC's campus radio station. Back in a minute.

[music]

Margot: Congress isn't only about the exchange of academic ideas, it's also a showcase for art and creative works. Nettie Wild, a UBC alumna and one of BC's most well-known documentarians, has screened her latest documentary, *Koneline: Our Land Beautiful* at the Congress. This film explores Northwestern BC looking at resource extraction and the tensions this industry generates for the people who live there. Nettie Wild and her longtime producer, Betsy Carson met up with the Blue and Goldcast team.

Betsy Carson: My name is Betsy Carson. I'm a producer with Canada Wild Productions.

Nettie Wild: My name is Nettie Wild. I'm a director with Canada Wild Productions. In cutting *Koneline*, in particular, it was a very difficult shoot, took over a year because we were creating a cinematic experience that had to pick people up at the beginning, carry them through complexity and present them at the end without voice-over narration and with really little sync sound, actually. We took our cue from music because music does do all of that, and it has to do with being associator in your editing instead of literally going from one plot point or another.

Betsy: I think that we were reacting to the overwhelming amount of information that's out there now. The audiences are tired. We got tired too and wanted to try and go another route which addresses them emotionally, first of all. Once you've got them emotionally, then their heads can expand to the rest of what you're placing in front of them.

Also, the imagery is presented in all of our productions on a big, big screen with great music, and great sound, and really in showing in community. It's very different from somebody watching our documentary on their phone or their tablet, where they're isolated and they're not going to discuss it with anybody as they walk out of the theater.

Nettie: I'm really hoping that experience that Betsy talks about it's something which, for instance, with *Koneline* were in Northwest BC and the big resource extraction industry up there is mining. It was our hope that, first of all, we could find people in the mining industry to be in front of our camera, which was a real challenge. Then, once we did, that we created something that a diamond driller and a geologist wouldn't be frightened of going to see. Because this is what's happening, their world is so polarized, that it was just an assumption that our film is going to be of a certain ilk and we were going to crucify everybody in that industry.

Betsy: You have to maintain your editorial independence and present something which works for a huge general audience so that you can pull them in and can have the discussions that come afterwards.

Nettie: We get into this trap of being very prescriptive, that we have to come up with something, and, out of that, you gauge your success by whether or not a dam has been stopped or what. It leads to a storytelling that makes you sleepy, not because you're not interested, but you're overwhelmed and the undertow is deep down, it feels impossible and you don't like having somebody wag their finger in your face.

The last couple of projects really taught us that creating experience and creates a umbrella that opens up to all sorts of different people. What they do with that afterwards? You can't control it, but I think that's the role of artists. I think as these times get more controversial, I think our role actually is bigger because it allows people to touch complexity, as opposed to overly simplified tweets that put us in our corners, and then we're not talking to each other and then we're **[unintelligible 00:41:39]**.

[music]

Margot: What a great episode. A really, really interesting conversation and inspiring.

Santa: Absolutely, we'll have to have her back.

Margot: Indeed. Santa, why don't you hire her and bring her to the university to teach our students. Anyway, that does it for the June edition of the *Blue and Goldcast*. You can find links to our guests' work, as well as previous editions of the show, at blueandgoldcast.com.

Santa: If you want to get in touch, send us an email at blue-and-goldcast@ubc.ca. All small letters.

Margot: You can also subscribe to the *Blue and Goldcast* on Stitcher, Apple Music, or iTunes.

Santa: We're back next month.

[music]