

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Hello, and welcome to You Got This! A podcast about teaching and learning and sustaining community for everyone at Thompson Rivers University. I'm your host, Brenna Clarke Gray, Coordinator of Educational Technologies, and this podcast is a project of your friends over at Learning Technology & Innovation. We're housed within Open Learning, but we support the whole campus community. I record this podcast into Tk'emlups te Secwepemc, within the unceded, traditional land of Secwepemcú'ecw, where I hope to learn and grow in community with all of you. And that word community, that's the one I'm thinking about a lot this week. Welcome back to another wild semester. Let's get into it.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

So I was off sick at the beginning of term, hence the podcast coming to you later in January than usual. Not COVID, and if you want more details, I talk way too much on my Twitter account. But suffice it to say I had a difficult holiday, and both physically and mentally, emotionally, I struggled with the return. Not for the usual reasons. I think that we're coming back to a really uncertain moment, and I can see that in my Twitter feed, in the community of educators who I converse with online, there's such a range of practices. Who's back on campus? And who isn't? Who's glad about being back on campus? And who isn't? Who's happy to be online? And who isn't? We're all having these radically different experiences.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Here at TRU, we are back in the classroom, but I know that many of you are working on a plan B, maybe. You've got some strategies in your back pocket. You're wondering if another pivot is eminent. You're watching the case counts. If there's one thing I think we've all learned in the last two years, even if we didn't know it before, it's that uncertainty causes stress. But the pandemic isn't the only thing creating uncertainty around here, hey? We talked obliquely at the end of the fall term out some of the allegations and news stories that have come out around campus. It changes the environment of teaching and learning to cope with any kind of uncertainty, but particularly such serious allegations, and such troubling claims.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

This is a show about community, and I think it would be irresponsible of me to claim I make a show about our community, and to not talk about what is clearly such a central issue for so many people within our community. And so not without trepidation, that's what the show's about today. We're going to talk about the current allegations against members of the senior management team. We're going to talk about concerns around process. We're going to talk about the affective experience of working within a community that is facing such serious allegations. I've invited some people on the show today who know far more about this issue than I do, and I'm going to hand it over to our conversation. We also have an additional voice who wasn't able to make the conversation, and I'll share their comments at the end.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

But before we do that, I think it's important to think about position, when we have these kinds of conversations. I'm not tenured as will come up in the chat today, and I think a lot about, what risks are open to us when we have the protections of things like tenure? And what risks we might shy away from until we have that protection? We are all supported by academic freedom and a strong union. And I hold onto those things really closely when I step into the breach to make comment or to create space for difficult conversations. But I also think that the role of an educational technologist, particularly, one

who's been entrusted with a faculty role and faculty status and privilege, is to push on all kinds of issues in critical ways.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

At the centerpiece of my work is establishing, maintaining, protecting, and nurturing a teaching and learning community. And usually I do it with digital tools. Today, I'm doing it with my podcast. I hope you'll come with me. And whether you agree or disagree with the folks sharing their thoughts today, I hope you'll agree with me that our whole community would benefit from a more transparent discussion of the allegations in a way that would benefit everyone, including the respondents. I'm going to hand it over to my guests now. Thanks for listening.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

In our last episode before the holidays, we talked a little bit, in kind of vague, cloaked terms about the situation at TRU. And I thought that it would be wise to invite some folks who have taken the responsibility, the reins of speaking publicly about some of the issues we've seen with the executive team lately, to give them a chance to talk about the issue, talk about what's important, and also talk about some of the experiences on campus that people have been feeling since the allegations became public in the fall term.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

So I'm joined today by Kyra, Chelsea, and Wendy. I'm going to ask each of them to introduce themselves. Maybe you could all say who you are and where you're positioned on campus, and maybe where people might see you, when we are out in the real world, and not just hiding in our offices. And then we'll jump in and talk about the situation. So Kyra, did you want to go first?

Kyra Garson:

Sure. Hi, I'm Kyra Garson. I am the Intercultural Coordinator at TRU, so I'm within the faculty of student development, but my work is really pan-institutional. So I don't just work with students, I work with staff and faculty as well. When, and if I ever see anyone again, I tend to be found around house four and house five on, I guess, it's the south side of campus, so great to see some folks in person soon.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Awesome. Thank you, Kara. Chelsea?

Chelsea Corsi:

Oh, good morning. My name is Chelsea Corsi. My pronouns are she and her, and I am the Senior Wellness Coordinator. Also, like Kyra, work pan-institutionally, primarily the last few years with student and student facing, but definitely a lot of our initiatives are across campus. And I would just like to also say that I am privileged to be joining this conversation from the traditional unceded territory of Tk'emlups te Secwepemc.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Thank you, Chelsea. And Wendy?

Wendy Hulko:

Hi, thanks for inviting us all, first of all, Brenna. I'm Wendy Hulko. I'm an associate professor in the faculty of education and social work, so I'm over in the AE building. I've been actively involved with TRUFA and served on different leadership roles across campus for a long time. So I think my main connection to this issue now is as a member of the TRUFA Equity Committee, and also the TRUFA representative for the disability and rehabilitation management. My pronouns are she/her and I am a settler accomplice, pleased to be living and working here in the unceded territory of Tk'emlups te Secwepemc.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Thank you all. And thank you for joining me, I guess, sort of the broad brushstrokes overview, probably everybody knows, back in the fall, the campus community was made aware through some news stories about allegations that had been made against the Head of HR and also the VP Finance. And what was troubling about that, for many members of the community, was not only that this investigation had been going on for so long without community being aware of it, but also that those people were not put on leave. And so complaints relating to HR that relate very closely to some of the issues in the allegations were still being handled, for example, by someone who was under allegation. So I will link to some of those news stories in the show notes, so that people can refresh their memories if they, gosh, I don't know, were trapped under the Open Learning building back in the fall and didn't hear about it. But I wonder if I could ask the three of you to sort of give me a sense of an overview of the situation as it stands now. And maybe what it is you think is most important for the community to know about where we are now in the investigation allegation process?

Kyra Garson:

Well, the overview of the situation is that things have come to light, and I think the biggest concern for me is the response or lack thereof. It feels like things are being covered up or sort of pushed aside as unimportant. I have real concerns for members of the community that wanted to join the investigation, were led to believe that they could be part of the investigation, and then received notification from the investigators that, according to the board, they weren't allowed to be in the investigation. And so it's almost a retraumatizing of the traumatized, and certainly not a trauma-informed approach, which we've been told by the board is what they've been trying to achieve. Also, concerns just for members of the community that maybe didn't have complaints that are really triggered by this news, student, staff, and faculty alike. And there was a real lack of care initially, and then it seemed to be, oh, maybe we should act like we care. But I still don't think there's been anything put in place to support people on campus, either complainants or folks that are troubled by this information.

Chelsea Corsi:

This is Chelsea. I'd like, just to add on to what Kyra has said, just about the lack of response. And I think that is, I was thinking about this last night thinking if they would've handled themselves with integrity and ethics from the beginning, we wouldn't be in this situation. And I want to just call our attention to a couple things, because of what's happened as of late, was that our colleague spoke to CBC, a Dr. Charis Kamphuis, on December 22nd. And actually the board chair, Marilyn McLean, finally did an interview with CBC. And I'm not sure if any of you heard that interview. And there's some statements that were made that were false or misrepresent what's happening. And I thought it was important. So when I reviewed back, November 22nd, she stated in Kamloops This Week, and this is her quote, "While expediency is important, thoroughness is equally important, which means that the process will not be rushed if that will sacrifice or compromise the subcommittee's ability to fully investigate these allegations." So those were her statements in Kamloops This Week.

Chelsea Corsi:

When I listened to her, and I listened to the audio of her CBC interview December 23rd, multiple times, because I wanted to make sure, am I hearing this correctly? You know what she said then was that it would be grossly unfair for the respondents to include new complainants that came forward after this arbitrary October 30th deadline, because the investigation had been going on since February, and actually that's false. Allegations were brought forward in February, but if you look at the terms of reference that were shared in the media, the actual investigation terms of reference were not created until August.

Chelsea Corsi:

And so they weren't actually finalized until the end of October a few days before this October 30th arbitrary deadline. And also I went back to say, what about the respondents? Because I thought I had seen something, and sure enough, the respondents said in the media, in November, as the story broke, that they had just learned of the investigation days before. So really it looks like the board and Ms. McLean is using this own delay of six months to produce a terms of reference, to exclude and justify the exclusion of these complainants who came forward just days or weeks after they were finalized. So it doesn't make sense, if you want a thorough investigation, to exclude people who've come forward just near this arbitrary deadline. When the respondents themselves have said, they just learned about it in November. So there's contradictory things happening, and I think our community needs to know that.

Wendy Hulko:

Thank you, both Kyra and Chelsea. I think what's been distressing, and fascinating at the same time and from an academic perspective is that we're watching and we're experiencing in real time what Sara Ahmed researched and wrote about in her book *Complaint!*, right?

Chelsea Corsi:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Wendy Hulko:

In terms of based on the research that she did with faculty and students that make complaints in post-secondary education institutions, and what is so telling is the way that they manipulate the language that they co-oped, well, not even co-oped, they use the words of trauma-informed and make this a thorough investigation. But the actions belie that they're not actually doing any of that. And the contradictions are so obvious throughout all of this, and just the passing back and forth between the administration and the board of governor or the TRU executive, meaning the president, primarily.

Wendy Hulko:

So the president and then the chair of the board of governors, Marilyn McLean. So we have the board saying that they don't involve themselves in HR matters that that's not their purview as a board of governors. And then we have the executive, the president, saying, "Well, the board is handling this. They're handling this investigation." Right.

Chelsea Corsi:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Wendy Hulko:

And so they're all avoiding responsibility, and then they've created this more complex, confusing obtuse process for anyone else-

Chelsea Corsi:

Thank you, Wendy.

Wendy Hulko:

... that wants to be... Exactly. For anyone else that wants to, that has information, certainly there have been a number of complaints. I think it's been at least a doubling of the initial 13 complaints since the media broke. But as Chelsea indicated, there was this arbitrary deadline that was set to limit that. And then we hear about people no longer being at the institution, but there's no official statement made about that.

Wendy Hulko:

So we've been making these calls. We had the petition that over a 100 faculty signed, and we heard from a lot of faculty that were non-tenured or contingent faculty, sessionals for example, that didn't feel comfortable signing, because it was public, but supported it. And so we've had all of these public calls, all of like TRUSU writing, TRUFA writing, the equity committee, we've had all of these public calls and all of the media and the complainants and students asking for these two individuals who are under investigation, that have been accused of really serious, they're really serious allegations of anti-indigenous racism, sexual harassment, and bullying and harassment. And were this a faculty member, the faculty member would immediately be put on leave with pay, and in fact that has happened in the past.

Wendy Hulko:

So we now know, apparently, that Larry Phillips is no longer with the university, but there's no intention to make that public. So what does that do for faculty and staff? We have no idea who is in charge of what was formally human resources, and the euphemistically, renamed People and Culture. I understand, also, and this is through just piecing things together, it's not through anything public. I understand also that Matt Milovick may be on leave as well, as the budget presentation to Senate was canceled for January. And the Student Union's weekly meetings have been canceled until April. So there's some indications that, perhaps, he is also on leave and that might have been him voluntarily taking an administrative leave. But the point is that there's a complete lack of transparency.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I think that, my perspective on this is that I am a relatively new and untenured faculty member, and I look at this process unfolding and those are exactly my questions, right?

Kyra Garson:

Yeah.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I know that if I had allegations like that against me, whether in the classroom or in my role as faculty support, that would absolutely be grounds for me to be on administrative leave, while it was

investigated. And so I guess my question to you kind of grows out of what Wendy was saying, which is that, what do you think the impact has been on the community? You've all been hearing from people you've all been hearing about the affective experience of being in this community right now. Obviously, without disclosing anything inappropriate from what people have told you, I'm just wondering what you think that impact has been on our community?

Wendy Hulko:

Tremendous, and it is not just our community. It's beyond our community. It's our future community too. It's future students and parents of future students questioning whether they want to send their kids to a university that is potentially unsafe. And then it's impacts on donors, donors don't want to give their money to TRU. They're looking for some action. They're looking for some integrity and accountability and care on the part of the administration, and how they handle this situation. And that's where they have the opportunity to turn things around. But instead, the position has been of Marilyn McLean of, we're a great institution, and we don't think it's had an impact, essentially.

Chelsea Corsi:

Yeah. Well, and I just want to agree, this is Chelsea again, with Wendy. And I think, I've been at TRU for 17 years, I am tenured. I am promoted, which is, I am using this privilege. And this is why I've been speaking out Brenna, because I know there's so many people, like you've referred to, and I'm sure that my colleagues here, we've all heard from people.

Chelsea Corsi:

I had someone who emailed me after my first email, when I called some attention to some things, and in response to the equity committees amazing calls to action, which I think there were eight of them, Wendy can speak to that. But they said, "I know 12 people who would come forward if they didn't fear retaliation, and if they trusted the institution." So what they've done rather than build care and trusts, like Wendy has said, is they've actually done the antithesis of that. They haven't listened. They haven't listened to those public and community cries for action, for a trauma-informed process that's actually trauma-informed. Like Wendy said, using language is so powerful.

Chelsea Corsi:

So they're saying these words, that aren't truth, but then they're also calling the complainants anonymous or that the allegations are anonymous, continually, which really, in my opinion, is the president and the board chair gaslighting any complainants, and any further wants to come forward and minimizing their complaints, minimizing the allegations. So how are you as a person who wants to come forward... Let's think about this really clearly, to come forward, when there are people in the executive who the allegations are against, these are who our respondents are, to come forward with your concern about your job security, your family, are you going to risk that, when this new process that they've set up...

Chelsea Corsi:

So you're being excluded from this process, and I don't think anyone has criticized these investigators of this original terms of reference process. But you created a new process, because of course they don't qualify for this ongoing investigation about the same respondents, which makes no sense, logistically. It fragments the evidence, but it's a process that is created by the executive. So when you have a process created by the executive, how are people going to come forward? It doesn't make sense. And now one

of my emails to the president and across campus was about this Neutral Zone and this Lisa Castle person. I think it's important for the institution to know that he did respond to me, and how he worded his email, I thought Lisa Castle and the Neutral Zone were one of the same, like she was working for them. So he clarified no other two separate groups. And he clarified that the Neutral Zone had not worked for TRU before. He did not clarify about Lisa Castle, because then I've talked to two separate people who have confirmed that they actually met with Lisa Castle when she was doing a review of HR at TRU. So to me, how do you have faith and trust in an organization, when you are the executive who's under investigation and you are the ones creating a process, and you're bringing in someone who's already done work for you?

Wendy Hulko:

Well, yeah, and I think people have talked about this previously about the impact on the current searches that are underway. For example, we have candidates coming to campus, now, last week and this week and next week, four candidates, for the position of provost and vice president academic. I know as soon as the news broke, I was contacted by a colleague of mine, a feminist scholar, who's now retired, who had a friend who was shortlisted, who was now second guessing, I don't know if that's the right word, was now considering withdrawing from the competition. Because of this, wondering what kind of an institution is this. And, well, we certainly more than ever we have evidence that it is a colonial, neoliberal, misogynist, extractivist institution, as our most post-secondary education institutions, we're not unique in that sense.

Wendy Hulko:

What I try to stress as well, I think, if we can put any kind of positive spin on this, is that we do have a very strong community of activists, of people who are concerned about equity, diversity, inclusion, and decolonization. And are trying to hold the institution to account, and are prioritizing the complainants and the larger community that's been impacted by this.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I do find that heartening, I have to say. I've noticed the last year or so a much more engaged faculty compliment, which I think is the opposite of what has happened under remote learning at a lot of institutions. And I think about this in issues big and small, like relative to what we're talking about, something fairly minor, like the Vital Source conversation last year, which saw a huge amount of faculty engagement, which was, I think, really positive. And I think, perhaps, the faculty engagement on this issue has maybe been underestimated. And I guess, I mean, we've done a good job, I think, you've all done a good job of outlining what the concerns are about the process. And I guess my question is, there have been protests, there have been open letters, there has been a lively discourse on our shared faculty lists, and it's not just faculty, of course, we've seen huge response from staff who are much more precarious. We've seen huge response from students who of course are the most vulnerable of all. I wonder what the next steps are in terms of organizing around this response. What do you see happening in the winter term? If we have anything planned, I guess.

Kyra Garson:

I guess I can say what I hope will happen. And part of it is, is exactly what you're trying to initiate, Brenna, so thank you. I think it needs to stay on the agenda and on the minds of folks. And one of my big concerns is that all of this sort of happened at the end of a really hard semester, and people were adjudicating exams and trying to get their holiday thing in order. And the new restrictions coming out

from the provincial health office. I mean, there was so much going on as some of these stories were breaking. And I really don't think that everyone in the community has a fulsome picture of like the timeline. Like what has happened here and what are the contradictions that Chelsea and Wendy have brought up?

Kyra Garson:

You talked a little bit about the impact. I mean, I wrote one of the first letters to the president, and I can tell you that I had many, many, many replies that were not reply all, and I think this speaks very strongly to the culture of fear and silencing that is a really big part. I mean, I appreciate what you're saying, that there is, maybe, a strong activism and there's a lot of people coming forward, but there's a lot of people that are very afraid to come forward. And as Chelsea said, as a tenure, promoted faculty member, I do feel it's my responsibility to call for some accountability here.

Kyra Garson:

The other thing, we spoke about process, but I mean, between December 1st and December 9th, the president sent out three different sets of instructions for people to file a complaint. And at no time was anyone actually given the information of how to get into the investigation. So it seems to me that even before the board had these discussions with the investigators, that they had no plan to include any new complainants in the beginning. And so then, as Chelsea's pointed out, they give us this new process. Well, part of that process is going to the Human Rights Officer, who works under general counsel and has worked for these folks for years, and is part of the club that's created this culture of fear and silencing. So I mean, how can any of this be trusted? I don't know. And I like how we're talking about this, that people are maybe hesitant to apply. Just prior to this, we had a posting that was about to go forward for a new EDI coordinator. Well, as someone who's worked as intercultural coordinator at TRU for years, we finally had a plan, an EDI action plan, we hired five people that were EDI oriented positions, and in less than six months, three of them have left the institution because of this and gone elsewhere. And it's my understanding that some of them brought their concerns to the executive.

Kyra Garson:

And so to say that these are anonymous complainants is really inaccurate. And, again, these people are being disappeared and there's no announcement. We have no idea what's going on. But to go from five to two and leave them in charge of the entire EDI agenda, where they were originally reporting to Larry Phillips, I mean the whole thing, mind-boggling. It's mind boggling.

Wendy Hulko:

Exactly. Well, that is one of the calls from the TRUFA Equity Committee that has been met was that the EDI office be moved out of People and Culture. That they not be reporting to Larry Phillips, to the Head of People and Culture. And so that did happen. They are now within nursing, reporting to the Dean of Nursing. Out of the five, three have left, and one of them is a post-doc reporting-

Wendy Hulko:

Yes.

Kyra Garson:

... to research. So there's two left, one reporting to Will and one reporting to Rani.



Chelsea Corsi:

If that doesn't speak volumes, I don't know what does. And thank you Kyra for sharing that. I think people just don't know these things, because, like Wendy said, the transparency is abominable. And for me, Brenna, I think what I hope to see, Wendy brought up that Matt may be on leave, I think that steadfast that while there's an investigation, the respondent needs to be put on paid leave. And a student said to me, "Paid leave is not oppression." And I said, "Exactly." And secondly, I was-

Wendy Hulko:

And it's not a finding of guilt either. That's the point we've been-

Chelsea Corsi:

No, it's not.

Wendy Hulko:

It's not saying anyone's guilty. It's ensuring integrity of the process for complainants and respondents.

Chelsea Corsi:

Exactly Wendy, which makes... If you want to have a process with integrity and ethics, let's do these things. Let's show that we have ethics. Let's show that we have integrity. So for me that's one. And the second thing is, I was thinking about this last night as I'm driving home from Stake Lake, and I'm thinking, last year, the governor general was under investigation for allegations of harassment and bullying. Do you think that if a complainant came forward who learned about the investigation and said, "I want to be part of investigation, because it's the same respondent and I have the same types of allegations or I want to have my voice heard," do you think they would've been denied?

Chelsea Corsi:

I want to know why we're denying complainants to enter an investigation about the same respondents, about the same types of allegations? So I want all complainants who have come forward to be able to join this investigation. That's what I hope to see.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Thank you. I mean, all three of you, thank you for being here, but thank you for so clearly articulating what you see the issues as being. I'm mindful that last semester was hard. Last year was hard. This semester is going to be hard. And I guess, let's say, I'm Joe TRU Employee, and I don't feel particularly directly impacted by the allegations and I'm tired and I'm overworked. And I'm wondering if I'm about to pivot, why should I care? What is it that I should be concerned about here when I have so much else that feels so pressing and so immediate to be concerned about?

Wendy Hulko:

Well, the people that are under investigation are ultimately the ones that control whether you have a job or not. The head of people and culture and the head of administration and finance. And I mean, it affects everybody. It affects our students. It's affecting us. As you've said, Brenna, here we're going into, I don't think we can avoid it, I think we are going to go into year three of the pandemic. It's been hard. It's been hard on everyone. It's well documented the increase in mental illness or mental health issues,

in general, and in university campuses in particular as a result of this. And then we have this unfolding situation.

Wendy Hulko:

And so it's something that we have to really keep top of mind and be aware of the impact it's having on everybody, and continue to call for that accountability, continue to call for this ethic of care being applied to everybody in concern, not just the administration. Thinking about our relations and thinking about the unceded territory that we're on, and if we want to be the institution of choice for indigenous learners, and we have been engaged in this process of supposedly decolonizing, more indigenizing our campus, how can we learn from the people on whose land we're on? And what has this done to our relationships that we've been working so hard to rebuild and to maintain and to fortify? It's another tremendous setback in that respect.

Chelsea Corsi:

Yeah. Couldn't agree more Wendy. And I know there's some probably human resources academic had said something like, "Culture eats strategy for breakfast." And if we are living... And it's the truth, we know this. We know back in whatever it was 2017, 2018, we did that review, I can't remember who conducted it. And one of the biggest concerns that staff, faculty, everyone had, was lack of trust of the administration, the senior administration. That was the number one concern.

Chelsea Corsi:

So here's an opportunity... Like you said, Brenna, it's much more broad spread than just a few of us who've been public about our concerns, but it is hard. It is hard to do this work. Like Kyra said, people get activated because of the own experiences that they've had in terms of some of these situations. I know students have been activated, just seeing some of the allegations and the response of the board chair and the president in their videos. Students actually told me they got nauseous watching them. So while it's hard, it's just and it's right. I mean, and once again, doing what people can do within the scope of their own control, but I really think that if we don't do it, it is going to continue to hurt our reputation. It's going to continue to harm. Like Wendy said, will indigenous students feel comfortable accessing our institution. How can they trust that it's a safe place for them to come? So I think we want students to succeed. And so we want, also, our colleagues to succeed in the work that they're doing. And it's really hard to succeed at something when you're in a toxic culture.

Kyra Garson:

So your question was posed about, why should X faculty member, staff member who's already under intense pressure from other things going on care? And I would say that we should all be very, very concerned that the next level of leadership has been radio silent on all of this. I have some serious concerns about where the deans are. My understanding is that the deans were all copied on the original allegations in February. So it's not as though they haven't known this was coming down the pipe. And there has been zero statement, although I have heard, and this is hearsay, but that one of the concerns from the deans who might stand up and say something, is that there worried about their budget being cut? I mean, come on. If that is the situation that we're in, where people cannot stand up against human rights infractions, because they're worried about their budget, this is the problem. At the very core, our deans are being intimidated into staying silent so that they can get their budget. What is going on, right?

Chelsea Corsi:

Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Wendy Hulko:

Right.

Kyra Garson:

I mean, and if this is not what's happening, then what is happening? Where is the leadership at any level? I mean, the only leadership we've seen is from the unions, from student groups, and from independent, ad hoc faculty stepping up. It's very, very concerning to me that we seem to have a leadership vacuum on this topic. And it's 2021, we're a university, we should not be condoning misogyny, anti-indigenous racism, and sexual harassment in any form, let alone from our senior administrators.

Wendy Hulko:

One other thing to mention in terms of next steps, I think it will be very important to see or to take part in, in whatever way we can, what happens at the January 24th meeting of Senate, so that's one. Like if Senate is going to actually take on anything, talk about it. And then the other is the board of governors meeting.

Chelsea Corsi:

But I think Wendy, too, as you speak to the board of governors and Senate, I also think like, where is the ministry?

Kyra Garson:

Exactly.

Chelsea Corsi:

They appoint this board. I mean, most of... I looked, there are five board members that are voted in, so two faculty, two students and one non-faculty or non-student. Where are our representatives here? It's been silent except for Marilyn McLean finally gave an interview, and for her couple public statements. Where is the ministry overseeing this? Back in, when was it? The spring that the president of UNBC tweeted a racist comment, and the minister Anne Kang fired him immediately. Where is the ministry here? I know people have written to the ministry. So I think that's also next steps.

Chelsea Corsi:

And I also hope that there are people who will step forward and almost create like a task force or coalition to say, "Okay, who do we need to advocate to? Where's our activism channeled next?" And it could be there. It could be, if we don't get the responses that we think are just and right from the board, which we haven't seen, from the president, which we haven't seen, the ministry might need to, and I think they do need to intervene.

Wendy Hulko:

But even, I think, that faculty, that we should be able to hold accountable our representatives. I reached out to one-

Chelsea Corsi:

I agree.

Wendy Hulko:

... of the representatives and for faculty to ask for information, their position on this. And just got a very brief response that they can't comment because it's under investigation. Well, I don't think that's accurate.

Kyra Garson:

No.

Wendy Hulko:

I think, yes, it's true, you can't comment because it's under investigation. You can't comment on the specifics, but you can certainly be accountable to faculty in terms of what your advocating for, in terms of the process, and what your knowledge is, and what stance you've taken, what you're reporting.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I really want to thank the three of you for coming and having this conversation with me today. I know that even though all three of you are using your positions of privilege within the institution, that doesn't make the actual act of consistently talking about this easy. So I'm grateful to you for coming on.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

And it's my hope in doing this, that we can keep the conversation going. I think it is to everyone's benefit, including the respondents, that this conversation be open and that people have no question at the end of the day about whatever decision is made. And as it stands right now, I don't think that's where we are. So there were other voices today who wanted to join us, who couldn't make this time slot. We'll come back to this conversation later in the semester, and invite some more of those voices in. But for now, just thank you so much for stepping up and being willing to have this conversation with me today.

Chelsea Corsi:

Thanks Brenna.

Wendy Hulko:

Thank you, Brenna.

Kyra Garson:

Thanks Brenna.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

So I had also invited Silvia Straka to join in that conversation, and due to some technical issues around the joys of rural internet in BC, Silvia, wasn't able to join us. She offered to pre-record some of her thoughts, and I'm going to share those here.

Silvia Straka:

My name is Sylvia Straka, pronouns she/her. I'm a white Austrian Canadian settler living on the unceded and occupied territory of the Secwepemc people. And I'm also a tenured associate professor at TRU. I think it's worth taking a moment to reflect on the meaning of our institutional land acknowledgement, as TRU aims to be the university of choice for indigenous people. And I think that this is important in light of the current allegations of overt anti-indigenous racism, sexual harassment, and bullying on the part of two senior administrators at TRU. And this situation has allegedly been allowed to continue for many years, despite complaints having been made to the president and the board, which for me raises questions about how can this happen, unless there has been complicity on the part of senior administration?

Silvia Straka:

I also want to acknowledge that I'm coming to this public conversation on these issues with more privilege than most. I do feel that my tenure carries a grave responsibility to speak up, but power and safety are huge issues in terms of who is able to speak in this situation. And I want to do so from a stance of uncertainty and learning about how to locate myself in the conversation in as respectful a way as possible, when to step forward and when to step back.

Silvia Straka:

In terms of the current situation, I have been shocked at the level of utter disconnection of our president and board with the rest of the TRU community, as well as the community at large. Not a single action statement of theirs has come from a position of humility or a concern for those victimized or an authentic desire to heal harms. So at this point, it's become clear to me that we can't look to our administration to create the change that is needed at TRU.

Silvia Straka:

To the complainants and survivors, it is important to say, I believe you, and I want to support you. I salute these brave individuals that are pursuing the confidential complaint. And I also want to say to those who have chosen not to pursue it, I also salute you. You are making the best decision you can for what you're able to do at this time.

Silvia Straka:

I suspect this group are just the tip of the iceberg. It's not my intention to actually centre my own experiences right now, but I do want to share that I have also personally experienced several kinds of harm from one of the accused parties. And since the news broke, I've been having nightmares and sleepless nights as my own experiences have been triggered. And the reason I'm sharing this is just to point out how widespread this harm might be. And how many of us have been affected by these two administrators in one way or another.

Silvia Straka:

So what can be done? I believe that continuing and expanding a collective community response is crucial. I've been reading Sara Ahmed's research in her book entitled *Complaint!*, where she highlights the importance of forming collectivities with regards to complaints in academia. The problem is that university processes, they individualize the and their resolution, and they shroud everything in this confidentiality and non-disclosure and non-disparagement agreements and an overall lack of

transparency. And yet at this moment, at TRU, so many of us have intuitively and out of our collective experiences come together to push back against the institutional discourse.

Silvia Straka:

One of the ways I could see moving forward is to form various levels of collectives. There could be smaller collectives, which would need to be safe in private spaces. They could be a way of sharing experiences and supporting each other, and collectively theorizing, what has happened? What is happening? How does this happen? Collectives can also be formed for the purpose of creating institutional change. And these are not mutually exclusive by any means, they're all connected.

Silvia Straka:

Any such collectives, however, would need to be guided by principles of intersectionality. We've got to recognize marginalization and oppression and power and voice in these situations. And I think following directions that are given to us by indigenous and racialized social movements about how to address these issues in the most respectful of ways.

Silvia Straka:

I think a starting point could also be to have some study groups with Sara Ahmed's book. But in any event I expect no support or healing from our institution. I think that's become obvious. And I think we should find ways to do it ourselves and to continue our broader collective dialogue and venues such as this. Thank you so much, Brenna, for your courage and commitment in hosting this topic. And I also want to thank my courageous and articulate colleagues here today, and those who have also spoken up throughout the university in the past weeks.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

So that is it for season two, episode 14 of You Got This! As always, if you want to write to us, you can email me, I'm bgray@tru.ca. I'm also on Twitter @BrennaCGray. And in both cases, that's gray with an A. All of our show notes and transcripts are posted at yougotthis.trubox.ca, and you can always comment on individual episodes there.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I'm going to leave you today with a Tiny Teaching Tip. I had a whole bunch of ideas for how to start the semester off right, and then of course I wasn't here to help you start the semester off right. But I am going to underscore care today in my tiny teaching tip. We are all so tired and so burnt out, and it's really easy to go into kind of an autopilot mode. I've been reading a lot of scholars of organizational behaviour who specialize, particularly, in post-secondary contexts, and something that they're noticing or commenting on is the likelihood of faculty resigning themselves to a semester of detachment, where they pull back from a lot of their commitments.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

And I get it. I really get it. And I think in many ways, pulling back from things is the healthiest thing to do. I think it's important to remember, as we are looking for spaces to take more care of ourselves, that our students don't have a choice, really, whether they're in the classroom or not, in many cases. And so thinking about the ways we can keep extending those pandemic practices of care, even now, maybe, especially now, as we grow more tired and more fed up. I know that we are 100% back in the classroom

and accommodations are not expected. And I get it. I read the emails too, but I also know that you know, that the human beings in front of you are going to need some extra TLC this semester.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

So just a reminder, I support all of those practices that you engage in so carefully. And if there's anything our office can do to help you implement some care techniques in your classroom, I'm always happy to have that chat.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Until next time I will see you next week with an episode that's a little bit more me centric, frankly. We are launching a 2022 digital detox, it has been delayed by my absence. And next week, I'm going to spend some time talking to you about it in, introducing it, and encouraging you to register and hang out with us. We think of digital detox a little bit differently than you might, so I hope you'll join me for that conversation next week. So until then, take care of yourselves, take care of each other, and I will see you soon. Bye-bye.