

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Hello and welcome to You Got This! A podcast about teaching, learning, community, conversation, and your digital life, made for everyone at Thompson Rivers University. I'm your host, Brenna Clarke Gray, coordinator of Educational Technologies, and this podcast is a project from your friends over at Learning Technology and Innovation where we support the whole campus community. I record this podcast in Tk'emlups te Secwepemc within the unseated traditional lands of Secwepemcú'ecw, where I hope to learn and grow in community with all of you. And today I'm thinking about all the different ways we learn. Let's get into it.

So my guest on the show today is Susan Forseille. And I have to tell you, Susan is the director of PLAR over in Open Learning. And it's a wild thing to me that we have this gem called PLAR at our institution. I didn't know anything about it before I came to TRU and I didn't have a great understanding of it, I don't think, before my conversation with Susan today. But PLAR is all about recognizing the kinds of learning that you do outside of institutional settings. This is so valuable and so important. And as I talk about in my conversation with Susan today, it's such a critical part of the notion of decolonization, right? If you really believe that the only learning that can happen is within the walls of the institution, then you can't decolonize, right? The idea of decolonization requires flexibility, responsiveness, and the need to break away from the kinds of structures that have impeded innovation, development, change within the university for a long time. I'm talking about the capital T, capital U, the university, right? Not TRU in particular, but the structure of the university.

You'll hear me get into all of this with Susan today, but it's got me thinking about all the ways in which much of the learning that has most directly impacted my career, even within the context of the university, didn't happen in the context of a classroom. As most of you know who have listened for a while, my background is in literary studies. And now I'm an educational technologist. And those are really different things. I used to actually feel really intimidated by my lack of qualifications in the area of educational technology. I felt like I should have an MEd or an EdD or a PhD in education, something that indicated that I knew what I was talking about. But all of my learning has been really practical and hands on. What I know about teaching, I learned from teaching and also from research and from reading and from wanting to have a scholarly and informed practice, but it's taken me a long time to pick up all the bits of theory and that kind of stuff that I would've had if I had done graduate education in my field.

But it's interesting to think about how life experiences and working experiences might be equivalent to educational experiences while still recognizing that they're really different things. I still toy with the idea of a credential in education, and maybe I'll get there someday, but it's validating too to think about all the different paths that people take and how important that hands-on experience is. I don't know if traditionally we valued it enough within the walls of the university. And I think it's worth thinking about like... I mean, these are the examples of musings of a privileged white lady with a graduate degree who knows how to make herself legible to a university structure. Think about all the people who don't, right? Think about all the people who don't have that experience and what we lose when we don't invite them to the table too. Anyway, Susan's going to talk about this with a lot more eloquence than me and a lot of passion, and I really encourage you to find out more about what it means to recognize prior learning and make space for more people in the university. I'll let Susan take it from here.

I am joined today by Susan Forseille. Susan, could you let people know what your role is at TRU and maybe a little bit about what you do?

Susan Forseille:

Yes. I'm the director of Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition, affectionately called PLAR. And what that means is I help oversee the program. And the last couple years we've been in a really big expansion phase.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

So I promised you I was going to ask you some really foolish basic questions today, and I'm going to start by asking what is PLAR?

Susan Forseille:

Yeah, it's such a good question. PLAR is a really unique program, and I'll talk a little bit about the research in a bit. But essentially, it's the understanding that throughout our life as we're living our life, that experiential learning, that place-based learning, we're learning as we walk through our life. TRU has a way of assessing what we call prior learning. So that would be informal and non-formal learning. So for example, as we're talking today, I'm in Williams Lake, well, usually there's a lot of logging going on, and you think of somebody who's owns their own logging track and maybe they decided they don't want to do logging anymore or often as has it, their body can't do it anymore, then they need to look at other options for career. Maybe that is taking a look at what did they learn when they started their logging, maybe start driving the truck when they started their own company and then they grew to three or four trucks. There's a lot that you learned just that lived learning. And so we have four different paths to help people get credit for that prior learning that they have.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I love this. I love this idea because I used to teach in a community college and so often I'd have students coming and they'd be like, "Oh, I'm not really like an academic person," or "I don't really know much about this." And then you'd start to talk to them and you'd realize they had much varied experiences that actually directly related to things that they were learning or things that they were being asked to do. I imagine the work you do is really empowering for those individuals who are exploring what their next options are.

Susan Forseille:

I started off by saying PLAR is very unique. Post-secondary schools do it, but they don't do a lot of it. And so the research is really emerging in this area. There's a lot of evidence to support now as this research is emerging that we've always known that PLAR saves time and money for students because let's say you come in and you've been working in human resources for the last 10 years, you already have a lot of learning. We just need a way to document that learning and have it assessed. But for me, more importantly is that some of the benefits it gives students, some of the research shows is that it really increases students' sense of self-worth, their personal self-worth and their career. It gives them more confidence, it increases their motivation not just to pursue education, but to pursue other life goals. So that might be career oriented or it might be personal. They get a sense of self-fulfillment and also inclusion.

So I spent the day today, I was at one of the bands just west of Williams Lake, and we talked a lot about that sense of inclusion and the colonized education system and how difficult it is for many of their community members to even come into Williams Lake to go to school, nevermind coming into Kamloops, that piece of inclusion and how important it was for them and is for them, where they get it and where they don't. So PLAR is a way that's a very different path to and through education, and it's a way that students can feel quite included.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

So what does the process look like for that student who comes to PLAR and says like, "Hey, I think I want to study X or Y. Where do I begin?"? What does that look like?

Susan Forseille:

They'll reach out to us usually by email. We'll send them some basic information, some of the options of the different PLAR paths. Depending on which option they're interested in, and sometimes they'll call us and they'll ask more questions, but there's four PLAR paths. And so let's say it's course-based PLAR, and that's go back to the HR example. They've worked for 10 years in HR and they've learned a lot of things. That first year, HR course. Maybe their first two years, HR focus courses. They might not need to do those classes because they have the learning. They would reach out to us, get a sense of some of their options. And then depending on which path they want to choose, they might send us a resume or they might do an online, a self-assessment tool and we'll help guide them.

What we want to see is we don't want them to waste their time with PLAR if say they're 17 just getting out of high school and they don't have that lived experience yet. Whereas say they're in their mid to late 20s or even older and they send us their resume and we can see through their experience that, "Hey, you know what? There's a good chance that this person has had a lot of really good learning through these experiences. Let's give them some options of what paths they can go down." It's up to the student which paths they want to combine or do a loan to go through PLAR.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

What are the paths?

Susan Forseille:

I said a little bit about course based, I'll just go back to HR. So let's say they've worked in HR for those 10 years and they're looking at their first year courses and they say, "Okay, well reading the calendar description for this course, I don't know that there's much more I can learn here because I've done it." So they would reach out to us, we would ask them for course rationale, our rationale as to why they think they could challenge that course. And if everything checks out, meaning we look at their resume, we'll talk to a faculty member that teaches that class, make sure that they're in agreement, and then we'll go back to that student and say, "Yeah, this is a course that you can challenge and here's the learning objectives. Here's the textbooks or the other readings." We would ask them to put together a portfolio to help share or communicate or articulate that they do have that prior learning.

And what goes into that portfolio, it largely depends on what course they're challenging and what's the best way to assess it. So it's always with the learning objectives and they talk about how they acquired that experience and more importantly, what they learned from that experience. And then they weave that in with the theory. It could be from completing an assignment or a project. It could be a student in fine arts who's talking about doing this directing course. Maybe it's a demonstration of their skills.

Increasingly, we have more and more assessors or subject matter experts, faculty members that are assessing this prior learning. They'll do an interview with the student, just have a conversation to build off of other work they've done. Sometimes there's a self-assessment. So in our human services programs, students do a self-assessment reflecting on some of the criteria for them to go into social work. Almost always there's some sort of evidence. So somebody has seen their work in HR or in theater, so it might be a letter of reference, it might be a report they wrote. It might be a proposal or a newspaper article, but it's usually anchored with some diversity or variety like that. As I said, we really

work hard with the faculty members, the assessors to what type of knowledge is that we're assessing and what is the best way to assess this knowledge. That's course-based.

Or students could choose a really simple path, it's the challenge exams. That is where they say, "Okay, I've been doing marketing for the last 15 years. I don't think I need to take this digital marketing class because I've been doing it at my current job for 10 years." Not all courses have this option. Actually, most of them don't, but they could do a summative exam. So an exam from the very beginning of the semester to the end of that content. We would give them a course study guide, again, telling them what to expect from the exam. So how many multiple choice, how many essay questions, how many short answers, what textbook or reading materials to study, and what are the learning objectives from that class.

Now, challenge exams we don't do too often, as I said. And that's mainly because they're not a great assessment tool. They're quick and easy to do, but it's not a really good way to measure different depths of knowledge, understandings of knowledge. So it's something we do for accounting programs, we'll do for languages, but we really guide the faculty into doing other types of assessments, mostly the portfolio route.

A third one we have, we call it the credit bank. If you think of a credit bank, it's like a bank of credits. A literal bank of credits. What that is, is we'll go in and we'll pre-assess private schools or continuing study programs or organizations that have done training on their own. We'll send in our subject matter experts. So the most recent one we did was the Canadian Association of Medical Radiology Technicians, and they teach some basic first year stuff. So we sent in two TRU assessors to look at... Oh my gosh, we looked at so much. And we do this all the time, but we looked at things like what are they teaching, how are they teaching it, who's teaching it, how are they assessing that learning, how are they documenting the learning, what are the resources they're using, what is the software programs they're learning, how did the instructors get feedback. There's quite a bit that we're assessing.

We pull together the packages for two assessors, two faculty member from TRU for that one. And because that's not an area that TRU teaches in, we brought in a subject matter expert from SAIT in Calgary and they reviewed all of the content that we'd been given, and then they met together and they talked about what the credit award would be, what the recommended would be. We ran it by the registrar and the dean, and then we sign. This is very quick way to describe it. Once we get all the levels of approval, then any student who took that training in the years that we have assessed it, they automatically will get credit towards their TRU program a study.

And so we have some that are really... With The CAMRT one, that one is I think six or nine credits depending on what the student took. But we have some massage therapy that are 69 credits. Students can save a big chunk of time. And that is a fairly easy path for students. It's a lot of work on our end, but from the student's perspective, it's pretty good. And then the last one, I saved this one for last because this is where I got my start in PLAR, and this is the one that is the most unique of any PLAR that TRU does. We call it competency-based PLAR. Before I describe what it is, I've only been in this job I guess just over five years now.

When I first started in this job, I didn't know very much about PLAR at all. I started doing research. Who else is doing it in different universities and colleges across Canada and specifically who's doing competency based PLAR? And in BC, all I've found is, well, KPU does it, but we do it for them because we have the expertise and whatnot. Athabasca does it. Others do, like rural roads, they do parts of it, but not all of it. And that's it. That's all we found.

The schools in the states that do it, Ireland has been mandated. Their government's mandated every post-secondary to do PLAR period. Competency based PLAR is one of the PLAR paths they have to do. It's not many of us doing it. But having said all that, essentially we've taken the TRU institutional learning

outcomes, which used to be called the graduate attributes. Those are the skillsets that we say when students graduate from TRU, they have communication skills, teamwork and leadership skills, information gathering and organization skills, problem solving skills, numeracy skills, critical and creative thinking, intellectual maturity. So we've really taken a hard look at when students graduate from TRU, what do we have confidence saying they have in terms of competencies? Other people will know these as soft skills, liability skills, or increasingly the word transversal skills is coming into play.

And so we have a process where students build up very rich portfolios where they speak to each of those eight competencies and how they've acquired them, how did they learn them, and they evidence at all with if they say, "I developed these communication skills when I was working at big brothers and sisters and I had a little sister who had gone through some really difficult times." Or recently I read a portfolio from a mom who had had twins and one of the twins had a terminal illness and passed away and the learning that she had had from that. It was just those lived experiences.

I met this woman today whose son had a kidney transplant last year. She started to talk to me about the research she had to do and the learning she had to do to support him as he was sick before they knew he was able to even get the kidney transplant and waiting for the donor and then having the kidney transplant. And you just think what profound learning goes on in those lived experiences. We have a way that students can document them, evidence them, and then we assess them. Depending on what program of study they're in at TRU, and I should quantify this, at this point in time, it's only available for students in Open Learning programs. This type of PLAR is only available for Open Learning students, not for campus students. We're hoping to change that in the next year or two, but for now, it's only for students going through OL. The other PLAR paths are available for all students, but this one's not.

So depending on their program of study they're in, if they're like in Bachelor of Commerce, it's all counts as elective credit. So how much elective room they have in that program of study dictates how much credit they can get. So a bachelor commerce, they might only be able to get 15 lower level credits, so that means first or second year and maybe nine or 12 upper level credits. That's just what they have room available for. The assessment helps determine what credits they're going to get. But then you look at something like bachelor general studies that has a lot of elective room, they can get 60 lower level credits. So that's two years towards the degree and 15 upper level credits. And they can mix and match any of the PLAR options.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

That's what I was about to ask. Can they do the competency based and then also argue for specific courses based on their history?

Susan Forseille:

If they're an OL student, PLAR counts for their residency requirements as well. So they don't have any limits there technically. This has only ever happened once. I think PLAR started... Well, when TRU became a university, we brought over the Open Learning agency's PLAR program with it, and we really started it with hiring a director in 2007. But yeah, so for Open Learning students, technically they could do their whole degree through PLAR, but it's only ever happened once. I don't even know if that's accurate or if that's just a TRU myth or rumor. Students that are campus students, PLAR does not count for their residency requirement, so they can only do 25% of their degree through PLAR.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

My head's just kind of spinning at the sheer diversity of student experiences that must cross your desk every single day.

Susan Forseille:

It's maybe somebody that works for the RCMP or spent their career working in a bank or one woman we had lived up north and she was a trapper. You're honored to hear their stories and to help them surface that learning because so much is, it's what we call tacit knowledge. It's learning that they've hidden. They don't think about it anymore because it's just so automated and so ingrained. We talk about PLAR as a way to deconstruct what they know and build it back up using academic language. I have this great image in my head and on some of my videos of a Lego pile. That learning is just this big pile of Legos and we just help guide them into how to build it in a way that we can assess it to help them understand what they've learned and then help our assessors translate that to TRU credit.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

What do you find the biggest challenge to be when you work with a student whose experiences are so separate from the way the university understands sort of knowledge and learning? I mean, the university and the abstract, not just TRU. But when you talk about someone who has this life experience as a trapper, and I can think of all the science and physics that goes into that work, there's so much plain survival skills, and yet I'm sitting here trying to imagine how that translates into something that the university can assess.

Susan Forseille:

Very carefully in a lot of thought and a lot of discussions, no two portfolios are the same. They're so different. I was talking to a colleague in a fairly large university back east, and he was tasked to setting up a PLAR program for them. He called me last week because he was getting quite a bit of pushback. In his words, the faculty were saying, "If I didn't teach it in front of a class, it can't be learned." I feel for him because that's such a difficult place to be. I don't think it's ever been the case at our learning has been predominantly in a formal setting. I know I work for a university and I know that's difficult for many to hear, but when you think about I was a faculty member at TRU for 13 years, the best learning I did it was by doing it and by researching what I was doing and reflecting on what I was doing and trying that and the class different or trying that and my practice different and then it's like, "Oh, that worked excellent, but I'm not going to do that again."

And yes, I had my undergraduate and I had a master's, but the bulk of my learning was that non-formal and informal. So yeah, we do get a lot of different stories. How we assess it is we have a rubric. For each of the competencies, it's a pretty solid rubric. We train those assessors, it's always teams of two that assess the portfolios. They read the document and then they also talk to the student for about an hour, an hour and a half to just dig a little bit deeper. But A, we've got to have an audit trail, we have to have rigor. We have to have confidence that these credits that we're awarding is a really well deserved. The last thing we want to do is set students up for failure.

So two, three years ago, I worked with our institutional planning and excellence team to compare students that had gone through PLAR with students that hadn't gone through PLAR. We were looking at completion rates, time to completion, GPA, and if there was any other benefits. We looked at rural students versus urban students. We looked at women, we looked at indigenous populations. What that research showed through IPE was that students that have gone through PLAR, their GPA goes up usually about half a letter grade to a full letter grade. We can dive right down into the different programs and dissected a little bit deeper, but that was the big picture. Their completion rates were about 10 to 12% higher. But for some programs, they were quite a bit higher.

The rural and urban, those students that had barriers going to post-secondary, and maybe it was confidence, maybe it was financial, maybe they were the first in their family or maybe they didn't finish

grade 10, just makes that education so much more accessible. And because we know that especially students that go through competency-based PLAR or course-based PLAR, it really does impact their confidence in other areas. So what they tell us is they just feel more empowered to go to school or to take that career shift or to take that leap of whatever it is. I think it's because they get that sense of belonging, and they do have that knowledge that you might not use the same vocabulary, but they do have that depth of knowledge. Somebody said today, "It's just because I don't have the letters behind my name doesn't mean I don't know this content." And she was right. She does know it through and through.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

This is me editorializing, but it seems to me that if we're serious about language decolonization, that this is exactly the work that we need to empower, right? That recognizing that the university as a structure is not the only place that knowledge lies, that that's fundamental to decolonizing the whole thing, right? When you talk about the reaction that that colleague is experiencing at their institution, I mean, that's such a colonial understanding of learning, right? It's like it has to happen in the classroom and it has to happen with somebody at the front of the room. Like, ideally an old white guy, ideally, versus really recognizing the range of experiences and the fact that so much of our learning does happen outside of a classroom.

I think there's this phrase that all learning is already hybrid because so little of the actual learning experience is what you do in the classroom with the teacher even in a fully face-to-face course. And you just kind of have to expand that to the course of someone's whole life. But what I'm hearing as you talk is all these residences with the ideals of decolonization. You can't do that without this kind of work, I would think.

Susan Forseille:

We've been working on decolonizing PLAR since 2018. When I first started with PLAR, one of the assessors who had been there for a number of years said to me, "PLAR advantages those who are already advantaged." And I said, "Well, what do you mean?" And she goes, "Well, the students that already have really strong self motivation, they have strong drive and they have confidence, those are the students that do PLAR well." That was horrifying to hear especially growing up in a small community where going to postsecondary was a really difficult path. What about all those people? They don't deserve it.

So one of the very first things I did when we started with PLAR, there was two research projects I initiated. One was I reached out to self-identified indigenous students that had gone through any of our PLAR processes and I asked them if they felt a sense of cultural safety, sharing their indigenous ways of knowing. It was interesting because for that research, most of them said they did. But when I went and flipped back through their work, very few of them talked about their indigenous ways of knowing. They didn't mention their culture, they didn't mention the importance of ceremony or being out on the land and picking medicines. And so it's like, "Okay, they said that they felt confident sharing it, but I didn't see that reflected in their portfolios."

So that led me down a path. I invited a, I guess I think the first lunch we had 12 people, there, different people from TRU that either worked with indigenous students or were indigenous. It was a very simple question. I asked them, "Should we decolonize and/or indigenized PLAR? What are your thoughts?" We had Marie Bartlett at that meeting and she was drawing as we were talking. We still have that map, that graphic recording from that day. That was such good, profound learning for me, and this is embarrassing to admit, I thought if we changed some of the wording, we put some pictures in of indigenous people

into some of our literature, that we were done. I started to understand how much I didn't know and what decolonization meant and how much I didn't understand decolonization.

So over the last few years, we've been talking to lots of people about, "Okay, we are decolonizing it. What does decolonizing look like and how do we do it? Where do we go for advice and guidance?" Which is why I'm here in Williams Lake right now, we're just building on that. But one of the most profound learning I had was with a student to... When I first started in PLAR, I met him. He was a very gregarious, outgoing, young man. I was all excited to have him do PLAR because they really wanted to put in his indigenous ways of knowing. He had done some really important work for his community. I just didn't see his name come across my desk. I didn't see any work he was submitting.

And so I reached out to him a few times and he said, "Yeah, yeah, I'm on it. I'm getting back to it." After a few times, I just said, "Can we go for lunch?" And I just said, "What's keeping you from doing this?" And then he said, "I don't write." And I was like, "Oh." He said, "Everything you're asking me to do," he said, "you're asking me to compartmentalize my learning. You're asking me to write it. You're asking me to use a language I don't use." He said, "I don't know how to do this." He says, "I've sat at my desk for hours and hours. I've given this so much time and I can't get more than a paragraph or two done." I was like, "Okay, that helps me a lot."

And then the next question was, "Well, what do you need for us to understand your learning? What is a good way for you to communicate that to us?" And he asked, "Can I do oral storytelling?"

"Yeah, you can do oral storytelling. Let's explore that. What could that look like?" So he did three sessions in front of a video camera. Each time there was something matter with that, meaning he didn't feel like he could get his lived learning out there, or bits and pieces of it weren't working. So we'd meet again and we would say, "Okay, what worked? How do we change it? What didn't work? What can we do different?" Academics would call that open pedagogy. We just worked together. "What do we do? How do we do this?" We brought in people from around us, asked for their advice and guidance.

And then it took us probably about two years after that, he finally finished his portfolio in August of 2022. So not that long ago. He got full credit award. But after he finished it, we had lots of meetings with him, with the assessors, anybody that had worked in getting him to share his learning. We asked ourselves, "What did we learn from this and what can we do different moving forward?" And in today's meeting, a student asked, again, it was the writing part, she said, "Is there any way else I can share what I've learned and how I've learned?" And she goes, "Can I take you on the land? Can I do a dance? Can I bead something? Can you speak to the elders and the knowledge keepers in my community? I don't want to have to talk about myself. I don't want to tell you. I want to show you." And it's like, "Yeah, we can do that."

So what we've been doing with decolonizing PLAR has been a really slow path. And like I said, the more we walk it, the more I realize we don't know, to the point now that it's who should even be assessing this knowledge. And back to your point around the epistemology of it, whose knowledge is most valued and why is it only predominantly that western, that colonized way of seeing things and how do we expand past that and recognize that there's so many different ways of knowing and seeing. And as long as we can find a way to communicate it, to assess it in a way that we're all confident that credit is deserved, then why shouldn't we be doing that?

We'll never finish decolonizing PLAR. It'll always be a work in process. But one step at a time, and you take a step, you look around, you ask lots of questions, you gather a couple more people and you all walk the next step together. So we've been doing that since 2008 or '18 I should say. What we're learning from it is going to help all students. We're just deconstructing what we've been doing and the students are going to have more choice, more flexibility. It's just a better way of moving forward.



Brenna Clarke Gray:

It's so good to hear that this is happening somewhere. I think a lot about how we privilege this one way of communicating, whether it's learning or demonstrating competencies, this has been a year for me of, I did a tenure and promotion portfolio. I sat on the awards committee. I've just been on in all these settings where there's been only one acceptable way of demonstrating success, right? It doesn't really matter who you are or how embodied your pedagogy is if at the end of the day it's got to fit into this one form in a PDF. The ISP funding proposals been another example of that. I've been working with Marie on that project and we have all these wonderful graphic recording sessions from all of our consultations that we did across the university. And there's no space for that, right? There's no place to include that. And so yeah, I don't know. It's really cheered me up tremendously to hear the ways that PLAR is moving to embrace multiple ways of expressing ourselves and our skills and our competencies.

Susan Forseille:

When I express it verbally, you can probably hear the enthusiasm and the passion in my voice. I don't know if you can hear the fear. The fear resonates. There's so many questions. The last thing when we talk about decolonization and when people start talking about their lived experiences and the pain that came with it, I don't want to retraumatize people. So there's that fear of, "What are we doing?" In the back of my head, Bryan Daly, who works on the Williams Lake campuses, he's about to retire imminently, but he gave me really good advice. He said, "Always under promise and over-deliver. Don't promise anything you can't do. And really small baby steps was important."

And then Vernie Clement at TRU, he gave me different advice that very first lunch we had in 2019 about whether we should decolonize PLAR, indigenize it. When I get really fearful or scared, I think of these words and he says, "Be the buffalo." And he asked me, he goes, "How does a buffalo get through a storm?" And I was like, "I don't know Vernie. I don't know how buffaloes deal with storms." He goes, "Directly through head down, just walk through it one step at a time and you'll get to the other end." And so the fear that's come with this, I've taken his advice and Bryan's advice, really small little steps and always looking up and around to see how that worked. But the questions is, "Are the students ready for this?" Is TRU ready for this? What if in my enthusiasm I take a step too fast or too big of a step and others aren't ready to walk with us?" It's petrifying at times.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I get that. I think that a lot of the most important work when it comes to change comes with that sense of fear because pushing against a way of doing things that is so entrenched. It's wild to me that we are still having conversations like that one year colleague shared with you about where knowledge is kept and how it's held. You would think in 2023 we'd all be on the same page about that, but we're not, right? Status quo is very, very powerful and change is really, really scary. So I am so grateful that you are the director at PLAR, Susan, and that you're there and doing the work and being willing to be scared because I think there's a lot of value in it. I think that when we're engaged in change, that's a really... Feeling fearful is part of knowing that we're taking meaningful risks, I think.

Susan Forseille:

I think so. I know we're wrapping up, but the part of the fear is knowing you're going to make mistakes making them. Even with the best intentions, mistakes are going to be made and it's okay. "Oops, I made a mistake. Now what? What did I learn from that? What did we learn from that? What does that mean moving forward?" Yeah, it's fascinating. It would be so much easier if I just knew everything. I think my hope for PLAR is that TRU will embrace the uniqueness of the PLAR program and celebrate it. Many

times in my time at TRU and the director of PLAR role, I've felt the support and that there's been a few times I haven't felt it. So it would be nice if that recognition was there that we have something extremely unique and that the students can and should be benefiting as much as they want to.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

So that is it for Season 3, Episode 17 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 and Mastodon.social at @brennacgray. In both cases, that's gray with an A. All of our show notes and transcripts are posted at yougotthis@trubox.ca. And of course you can always comment on individual episodes there.

A little bit of a programming note. I'm taking a little bit of time off. It's Easter weekend next weekend, which means it's a long weekend here. I'm going to take some days between now and then, which means no new episode next Monday. But we'll be back with bells on on April 17th.

I'm going to leave you today with a Tiny Teaching Tip. Oh my goodness, between now and the next time I talk to you, exams will be in full swing, which means your homework for the next two weeks is to practice self-care, keeping yourself on top of what you need to do, but also giving yourself grace and space. And I'll also ask you to check in on your students, your colleagues. See how everybody's doing. The April exam period is always so weird, right? I always felt like I was white knuckling it through until May. Increasingly, May is not common quiet even for those who don't teach during the summer semester. There's just so many meetings and so much curriculum work to do. And I get that, but I just always remember feeling like I was holding my breath until May came. So try to let that breath out and take a couple of deep ones and check in on the people around you.

You take care of those breaths. I will try to get some space from work too. In fact, I think today, the day you're hearing this is my first day off. And it's my birthday. I'm 40 today. Isn't that wild? It feels wild to me. Here's to another great year ahead and I'll hope to spend it with all of you. Take care of yourselves and each other and we'll talk soon. Bye-bye.