Brenna Clarke Gray:

Hello and welcome to You Got This! A podcast about teaching and learning and pivoting to digital for the whole TRU community. I'm your host Brenna Clarke Gray, coordinator of educational technologies, and this podcast is a project of your friends over at Learning Technology and Innovation. We're housed within Open Learning, but we support the whole campus community. I record this podcast in Tk'emlups te Secwepemc within the unceded traditional lands of Secwepemcú'ecw, where I hope to learn and grow in community with all of you. And today's episode is about endings beginnings, something in between. Let's get into it.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

This is the 33rd episode of You Got This! And it is the season one season finale. That's right. We are taking a break, very excited about the break. I love making this show and also I am very excited to not make it for a few weeks. So we're going on hiatus just till the end of August. Just through the summer lull, so to speak, partly because I'm really looking forward to taking a break, but partly because I think I need to do some thinking and some retooling. The show, of course, is a show about teaching and learning and pivoting to digital. And we are not pivoting to digital anymore. We are pivoted, we're pivoting back, we're face-to-face, but also accommodating students asynchronously, or maybe synchronously with live streaming, or maybe not live streaming. Maybe we're reusing the lectures from last year -- you see why the show might need some help.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

So as I spend some time re-imagining what this show can be, I thought that I might talk a little bit about what the show has meant to me over the last year. I've been really grateful to have the opportunity to talk to so many people across campus this year about what teaching and learning looks like for them in their contexts and how the pandemic has impacted their work. I've learned a lot from everyone and found out about work people do that I had no idea about -- that's been extremely rewarding, especially for someone who (I know I keep saying this, but) I'm actually really new to campus. Like I only worked on campus for seven months before the pandemic. And since then I have been in my house.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I'm not really sure how I feel about the return to campus. Most days I feel excited. I'm looking forward to walking between meetings. That'll be fun. I'm looking forward to Reservoir on the way to work. My favourite place to stop and do an hour of email before I head into the office. I'm looking forward to seeing people in the hallways and I'm looking forward to bumping into folks and sharing ideas. I don't think I'm looking forward to face-to-face meetings. My meetings have been more productive in the online modality, and I'm not looking forward to sitting around a room awkwardly, waiting for people to decide to talk, in many ways. We're in the midst of rethinking our programming. What will go back to face-to-face and what won't, what changes are we going to make to try to accommodate the kinds of working styles that folks seem to be wanting to adapt to? There's a lot up in the air for us in many ways. I feel more uncertain now than I did at this time last year, because at least at this time, last year, I knew exactly what was happening. I was herding you all lemming-like into Moodle and teaching you how to use the functions you needed. Now, there's going to be so many different ways to accommodate those students who aren't in the room and you're going to have new and exciting ideas and I'm here for it. I'm eager. And I'm also kind of terrified. For me, too, coming back to campus face to face is going to mean less time with my kiddo. It's been one of the best parts of the pandemic for me, spending so much time with him and seeing him really turn into like this cool little person. You know, he was three at the

pandemic start and now he's four and a half and he's got big ideas and a big personality. And all of these things are going to be really different. So I'm thinking about endings, the end of my quiet, my time at home, which is what a lot of this has been, which has been really soothing for me as an introvert in a lot of ways, the beginning of reopening and the excitement that I feel about seeing so many things. I love reemerge from this period of quiet. This podcast is ending right now for the season and it's going to come back as something different, but I do promise it's coming back. It'll just come back as something different. And that's kind of scary too, cause I don't know what that's going to look like yet. In all, I think we're all, all in a moment of significant transition.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

It's actually why I thought the best person to have as the guest for the season finale is the same person who is the guest on our very first episode, my boss and friend Brian Lamb, Director of Innovation here at TRU. Brian's going to talk a bit about the lessons we learned this year and what we're thinking about as we look towards the future. And I think I'll let him take it from here.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Okay. So I am back again with Brian Lamb, Director of Innovations at TRU. Brian, last time we chatted, it was August 25th. I went and looked at my calendar. I mean, not last time we like chatted if you were on the

Brian Lamb:

We have a great working relationship, how are you?

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Very functional. You know, it's been a year. But yeah, so that was the season premiere sort of series premiere of the show. And this is the season finale. We've recorded -- this is the 33rd episode, which seems absurd to me. I can't believe we've recorded 33 episodes. And I wanted you to come back for the last episode of the season because we sort of started off really kind of spitballing about what the year would be. And I thought we might finish up with an episode where we do a little bit of kind of critical reflection on the year that's been, and then some spitballing, I guess, on what's going to happen next year.

Brian Lamb:

Well, thank you for bringing me back to bookend this series, which I've just been loving. And so yeah, I'm flattered to be back.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I think when we talked last time, a lots of things hadn't happened yet. Like BigBlueButton hadn't collapsed on us yet. And Kaltura was behaving itself nicely. Like things were going pretty well. We were kind of ready or feeling as ready as we were going to be. I don't want to dwell too much on the sort of negative lessons learned because just like I've been doing with faculty, I really want to try to think about the kinds of things that happen this year, that we can fold into our practice and make part of our professional identity rather than just sort of being like, well, this year was a tire fire, but I thought we might start maybe with some of the lessons that we've learned over the course of the year and then sort of transition into what we're hoping to hang on to as we move forward. If that makes sense. That's kind of a shape for today's conversation.

Brian Lamb:

It's certainly worth it's worth a try.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

So what do you think in terms of the lessons learned, where are you, where are you at in your reflective process? It is by the way, really hard to be reflective while everything is still moving. But as best you can, what do you think your lessons were from the year so far?

Brian Lamb:

You, you were reminding me, I wondered about relistening to that first episode as preparation for this one and I couldn't quite do it. And I think that was because I remembered, I think it caught us at a good time. I don't know, even though it had been probably, I mean, certainly as hard as six or seven month period of, of professional life that I'd ever experienced. And I know it was for you too, that I think we, we, we we'd had a few wins, you'd had that wonderful set of summer programming. And a lot of we were seeing a lot of the people we were dealing with were, were really stepping up. And I think we were allowing ourselves to feel hopeful and even a little excited and have a little bit of that, you know, first day of class, a vibe feeling, which was a nice thing.

Brian Lamb:

And yeah, the timing of course was, I mean, we had our, probably our most significant technical failure. I think we've had, certainly since you've been part of the team, you know, literally hit on the first day of class, I mean, a system just wasn't ready for the scale that it got hit with. And obviously, I mean, the lessons learned there are, you know, that was something I had been trying to address over the summer. Obviously I didn't put enough urgency into it, you know, that taking no for an answer isn't okay. And you know, everyone was busy and you know, I think we talk about inside the team a lot of the times, you know, when to push, you know, back off, because maybe someone else has their own issues and in, in delivering things or, or whatever. And obviously, you know, looking back on that, that was another thing where boy, I really wish I had been a lot more belligerent and hard to deal with. I don't know if that's a lessons learned or not, but I think, I think sometimes they'll maybe just remembering that, you know, that little voice inside you, that's, that's got concerns, you know, a lot of times those are valid concerns and, and they, and they, again, you can't back them off.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I hope that was a lesson for other folks too, right. That like, we, we are not a team that cries Wolf ever, you know, we, we make asks when things are critically important. I don't think we spend a lot of time sort of asking for like, you know, random super-powered tools we don't actually need to do the job. Like we tend to keep our asks pretty reasonable. And I think that I hope that that's the last time something actually has to break before it gets resolved. Right. And, and, you know, maybe that's not just a lesson for us, I guess, is what I'm saying.

Brian Lamb:

Yeah. Well, and, and I think it, the other thing I learned too is, I mean, I mean, some people rolled with it and were wonderfully supportive and it was actually, you know, I got called into various meetings with various councils and having to explain what the heck happened and actually got to do media work as well. It was nice to know actually how many people actually did have our backs. I mean, I think to us in the moment, it felt like we were squandering all the good will that we had built up over the summer.

And, and I think we did tap into it. I think we could have found better uses for it, but that said that good will was there. And, you know I was actually struck by how many people, including some of the people that keep us jumping on the help desk, you know, we're making a point of, of, of sticking up for us and, and you know, almost doing some of the legwork with their colleagues to help explain what was going on and things like that.

Brian Lamb:

But also at the same time too, I'm still hearing, I still have the, you know, it was a one week period where video conferencing wasn't performing very well. I still hear about it, you know, I still get people making references to, and so it also really does underline, you know, even when you've built up a lot of trust, it is a very fragile thing. And when trust is ruptured, it's not something that's easily restored. So, you know, I think we did know that, and I think that's why that period was so upsetting to us, because I think we do take that, that bond seriously. We, we want to have credibility with the people we work with and when it feels like that's been undermined, I mean, I found that part devastating, honestly. Yeah.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Yeah, yeah, absolutely. And I think it's played into some oh, I dunno. I think people were a bit traumatized by the experience. We saw pretty busy migration over to Teams for some courses, some folks moving to Blue Jeans. And, and the reality though is that there are very few systems sector-wide, continent-wide that didn't experience some kind of outage with the loads they were seeing. SFU had a zoom outage. Kwantlen's whole learning management system went down. Like these are unprecedented loads. And I think that we could guess at the way, the tools were going to be used. But none of us really had any idea what the fall was going to look like. And, and you can, that's not an excuse. It's just like a reality. You can look around the sector at it departments and learning technology departments, and everyone had some kind of mass outage to manage. Ours, unfortunately, also kind of aligned with some issues with like Outlook mail. Right. So I think people were feeling a little bit like, oh, I can't communicate with anybody at all, which is not a good feeling and not something we would ever minimize. But I do think scale was just, we, we, we weren't ready, but nobody was ready. Yeah.

Brian Lamb:

You've written a lot and thought a lot about, you know, how you know, kind of corporate and cloud platforms, you know, situate within higher education and related to how open source does, do you think, what did you ever, did you ever think about, you know, like the standards that get applied to a cloud platform in times like that, as opposed to, you know, like BigBlueButton was a self hosted open source application, and to an extent, maybe I was a bit defensive because I felt like that model was under attack too.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Yeah. Well, I think it kind of was, I think it has been through the whole pandemic. Right. Yeah, I think that it, the irony is that like, if all of Microsoft goes down, right, like Microsoft had that big Office365 outage on the Eastern seaboard, Zoom had a big outage across the continental US. There's an ability to kind of shrug, and what's interesting is like, what I like about BigBlueButton is we knew exactly what needed to happen to fix it. Right. And we could get on it. And by we, I mean, not at all me, but like, you know, everybody knew what we needed. We needed specific resources. We needed the sys admin's time and he needed to be able to get in and do what needed to be done to add additional resources.

Right. We, we were entirely in control of that process. And I think that that is something that you would hope would be sort of the preferable system, but it seems like as institutions we're moving towards this well, Microsoft's down and there's nothing we can do about it. I guess. I guess we're done here for the day mentality that I find really weird that we're willing to accept that, that level of outsourcing and that level of like lack of communication, you know?

Brian Lamb:

Yeah. Well, said. I find that puzzling too.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

So, okay. Let's, let's not talk about BigBlue anymore.

Brian Lamb:

We've spent like half of our, a lot of time talking about the one thing that went really wrong, and that was mostly out of our control.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Yes. Fair. And also, yeah, but you're right that it is the thing that people bring up. And I think it's valuable for folks to recognize that we, we did, did take major lessons home from that. And I also think it's worth pointing out and I say this to everyone, Moodle never missed a beat. The kinds of loads we were putting Moodle through this year and it never missed a beat and that's not true of basically the entire province. So, you know we, we do have some pretty robust little services that we look after ourselves. And I think that that's worth remembering, you know, when, when everybody's sort of kicking back for an afternoon because like Office365 is just no longer connecting to the university. But let's talk about, let's talk about some of the more like, sort of teaching and learning lessons we've had from the year.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I think that one of the, I've said this to Carolyn Ives before, like one of the difficult things about this role is that compared with, to something like what Carolyn does is that people come to Carolyn when they're like really like stoked and eager and excited, and they're ready to revive their classroom practice. And people come to us when something is broken or not working. Right. And those are two very different sort of experiences of meeting people where they're at. I'm wondering how you're feeling about how we serve the community this year when it comes to their teaching and learning practice and what we might take away from our experiences of this year as we go forward.

Brian Lamb:

Wow. That's a lot to unpack there. I not to just throw in a platitude and I -- but I can't say anything about this without just expressing my genuine, like, you know, sense of gratitude and respect for what people who were doing the role of frontline support over the past year. Just, just that they're still here and no one quit or, or cause honestly, I, you know, we, as far as I know, we maintained, if not a hundred percent statistically, we answered a hundred percent of tickets, same day, and I know that, you know the tone of communication and the general spirit of service and help, you know, I didn't see a lot of times where that got waiver. I mean, I know, and part of the reason why I even hesitate to talk about this because I know that came at a cost. I know that it was really hard on the group and there were a lot of really hard days, but somehow that didn't get taken out on the students and the faculty. So I don't know if that was the lesson there, but I, I certainly got a very vivid demonstration of how strong that

sense of, of purpose is with, with the group here. And I know our community saw it. Certainly anyone that had dealings with us, you know, even the people who might criticize this thing or that thing, I think, knew we were, we were trying. Now I think you're asking a question though, that's a little more high-minded than that. But I just can't get past that. First of all, it's just that, that, you know just that sense of day to day reality, because everything that happened happened in that kind of context. Yeah. We were -- just overwhelming volume coming in a sense of like, okay, we kind of have this under control, but not really, you know, like in the slightest, you know, disruption could, you know, send us off the rails and then all the things we're doing is in that context. Yeah.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

The feeling of being in control and managing, but knowing that anything extra would be the thing too much. It's, it's a weird it's a weird environment to work in, right. Because it's sort of like, there's just a baseline level of stress constantly in sort of looking over your shoulder and wondering what the thing's going to be that pushes it all over the edge. And somehow it didn't like we, we didn't fall off all year. Touch wood.

Brian Lamb:

Yeah. So then a slightly bigger picture thing, how often a seemingly technical decision, like even literally how a setting -- whether it's setting is on or off -- can actually have really profound implications in terms of the kinds of things that people think of as like academic governance. I don't think our university is unique in this respect. So I, I'm definitely not pointing fingers or anything like that. I think though, I think a lot of times academic leaders, and I'm talking big picture academic leaders, when the technology layer is actually applied and people are actually using these digital environments, that can shape what the experience of how people interact as much as a policy can. And if your policies and your technologies don't align, the technology is going to win in a virtual environment, because that is how the interaction is mediated.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Well. Yes. Yes. And it's one of the big frustrations, right? Is that the community writ large tends to think of the technology more in terms of fixture -- more in terms of fixtures and fittings than in terms of teaching and learning. Right. but it's fascinating. It's one of the reasons why our Thursday Learning Technology Group meeting is one of my favourites. And that's a meeting where our team and the Open Learning side of the house, and IT, all come together to discuss what's going on. And we meet, we used to meet once every two weeks. We meet every week now to keep on top of everything. And those conversations are always really fascinating because someone will say, well, what if we just adjusted this setting? And then it's like, the cascading knock on effects are not usually about the buttons. The cascading knock on effects are like, well, here's how we understand campus faculty use that function versus here's how Open Learning courses are set up versus here's what students expect to happen when they see that. And here's what they're actually seeing. And like, those conversations are really rich and robust. And I, I think that the sort of technical veneer over what we do hides that for a lot of people.

Brian Lamb:

So part of what you're, when you mentioned the Thursday meeting that we do with IT, and this is a lesson learned that I think extends a little bit beyond the horizon of just the past year, but I think something, I think we've collectively learned -- and I include our partners in IT for this -- is how I think we've come a long way and how a group of learning technologists can work with a group of IT people

and neither group really being moved off of their orientation. So IT, they have to think in terms of you know, reducing risk, having redundancies, sustainability, cost, you know compliance, those are types of things. And we care about those things too. Although often through the lens of things like ethics and privacy and care and and autonomy. But so, you know, some of those values end up conflicting.

Brian Lamb:

It's a very common story at a lot of places that learning technologists and then the, the technology people, just because of the competing interests and competing demands and competing expectations, kind of sometimes get put into a natural set of conflicts. And we, one of the things, I mean, and we haven't eliminated those, but I think we've done as a pretty nice job of creating a place where we can talk to one another in a fairly open way and they can talk about what's worrying them and we'll go, gee. Yeah, that, that would be bad if the fact that our, you know, little backups or our Moodle disk size has gotten so big that the system could potentially become unstable. Yeah. We have to do something and work with the community to try to address behaviours, to get this under control. And then on the other hand for them to hear us say, oh yeah, you need to be able to have this flexibility in order for, you know, teachers to serve their students adequately.

Brian Lamb:

And I think it's just been valuable to have ourselves in some common spaces, not only meetings, but within Mattermost, because even if they still think we're a bunch of people who are kind of stars in our eyes and kind of, you know, just kind of, you know, temperamental, troublemakers, I think that they can see us when they see us talking amongst ourselves. And because we let them listen in on it or join in that, I think they know we're sincere and, you know and I think we know that about them too. We know that they, they're not here to try to straightjacket us and prevent us from doing our jobs. They're, they're trying within their, their constraints to do what they can to help us do our jobs.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Yeah, absolutely. And I think those meetings are such a good place because everybody actually genuinely listens to each other, you know? And I've learned like so much, I can actually like troubleshoot issues now in a way that I had no capacity to do before the pandemic. And I think that's as much about listening to how the IT side problem solves and wanting to provide them with useful information when I do have a problem as it is about any sort of just like practical learning I've done on my own, you know? Yeah.

Brian Lamb:

Well, I'll start at two sides of that equation you just described. So first of all, good on you for not being one of those people that just dumps the problem on IT and says IT has to fix it. Like you are willing to take on some ownership there and to say, you know, Hey, I'm trying to figure out how this works. I don't want to keep throwing the same problem at you every week. What do we need to do differently? And then good on IT for engaging that conversation and answering some of the same questions, you know, it's kind of a running joke in our thread. It's like I think I've explained this to you before, you know, we started to pin those posts when we get reminded. I think that, you know, again, given the context of the immense pressures everyone's been under I think -- I don't know what else to say. Other than that I'm, I'm genuinely a little humbled to see that kind of generosity of spirit and willingness to adjust under these conditions from, from, you know, some pretty diverse groups.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

It's one space actually, where I think we've really benefited from the remote meeting environment, because it used to be, we sat in a room in OL and our sys admin was on the phone, and maybe some folks would call in from other areas, but it was never as collaborative feeling as it is now, when you can see everybody's little face on BigBlueButton. And, you know, I feel like I've gotten to know that team so much better through this last year than I had the opportunity to before. So, I mean, I hope we're thinking about that as we get excited about the return to campus. We also think about what processes are actually working better in a remote modality. Cause cause they do exist. This one is definitely one that exists. That is better.

Brian Lamb:

We noticed that immediately when we went virtual, because let's say that there's a behaviour happening on Moodle. That's a little funky. And you know, we're just getting weird reports. You know, people are saying this activity type is not working. And so that comes in and then if we're working the way we used to work at, like it would come to whoever was dealing with it, they'd try to figure it out on their own. They'd make a note. And then next time we have a face to face meeting, they'd bring it up and then someone will go, oh, interesting. I'll look into that. They go away. And then they come back at the next meeting and say, I looked into it. We got it. Exactly. And you know, when we were do this on Mattermost and when we, because we are in the same space, literally, it's like, oh, this behaviour is a little funny. And if our sys admin happens to have a free moment, he might be looking at it before we even identify it as a problem. And then he's like, oh, I just checked, this directory was full. I emptied it. How did it -- try it now? And it was like, we just solved a problem before we knew we had a problem. And I agree with you. I think I understand why people want to come back to campus and there's parts of it I'm going to like too. I'm going to really like going for coffee with certain people after meetings, I'm really going to look forward to being able to read body language and things like that in certain types of conversations and looking, you know, in my role is to be a little bit connected to other functional units on, on campus. And so that's, you know, I'm looking forward to the serendipity effects to kind of know what's going on in the places we don't deal with regularly, but still deal with. But all that said, I'm a little bit concerned that, you know, for example, that we might just go completely back to our face-to-face meetings to do everything. I think a lot of the discourse we've had has been very well served by, by the digital modalities and just, I think we've agreed, for example drop in tech help drop in is going to be probably 90% virtual.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Yeah. Oh, it's so much more efficient to help people with their tech needs for truly, because what would happen in office hours is folks would come in with all good intentions, but they ended up sitting next to us while we solve the problem for them. And then they'd have to come back again. Right. I also think it's just more convenient for people, but it's interesting, you know, cause I wonder if -- I wonder if the message of who is being better served by the online meetings is really being heard. Something that has struck me this year, both in our programming and in meetings and in things like book club is that faculty from Williams Lake in particular and OLFMs as well feel included in the life of campus in a way that they never have before. At least the ones who have been coming to meetings and chatting with me about it. And it's so much different when everybody is in a little square on Teams than when you're the person on the remote phone call on the box in the middle of the desk, right? Like it's such a different experience. And I hope that, you know, for example, committees that do have representation from Williams Lake or from the OLFMS, I hope they consider maintaining a virtual remote meeting structure because yeah, I think there's folks who it serves. I mean, even aside from some of the accessibility concerns and things

that we've talked about on the show before, I just think there's a belongingness aspect to folks who work on our other campus, you know? Absolutely. Yeah. Okay. Well, let's talk with the time we have left, let's take a look at programming. We have a programming meeting tomorrow, so we're not going to be presaging anything cause we don't actually know what's happening. Yeah. But that will become clear in the coming weeks. But I'm wondering if, as it sort of in your, in your overseeing role as director if there's things about programming from this past year that you're looking ahead and, and hoping to, to capitalize on or continue it, I guess I'm wondering what your, what your feeling is. As we look towards a programming year, that's going to be, you know, very different again than anything we've done before.

Brian Lamb:

And I'm sure we'll have to adjust, but I'm taking two lessons out of our summer that I kind of want to roll into fall. One of which is, I think we're going to be challenged to think a little bit differently than the idea of programming being this thing. Like there's a workshop. People come to it, they have an experience for a set period of time and then they go away. And I'm thinking about that in two different ways. I think one of which is, yeah, I mean, by all means, I think we're going to have those kinds of events, but how do we capture elements of that for the people who, for whatever reason, can't be in the room from 12 o'clock till two on a Thursday. And and especially since I have no catering budget this year, so we can't even learn them in that way and as so, but to, to, to, so, you know, just to give one small example our new colleague, Jason Toal's done some really interesting workshops with both Jon on video and on visual thinking with Marie -- the visual thinking one in particular, people have actually said that they're intimidated at the thought of coming live because it involves them potentially drawing and having other people see in their work in real time.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Such a vulnerable thing! This is what, every time I read sorry, I'm totally interjecting. But every time I read Linda Barry's Syllabus, she has this whole premise that like drawing is this thing that we all do so naturally. And we do it from childhood. And so like resp-- reigniting, that spark is the most natural thing in the world. And every time I read that and you know, I've worked in comics studies for a long time with a lot of practitioners who are like, just get people to draw in class as if it's like the easiest thing in the world. And nothing intimidates me more than the idea of having to draw. Like I haven't used those muscles in a very long time. Right. So, sorry. Anyway, that's my Linda Barry rant.

Brian Lamb:

No, don't be sorry. And nothing intimidates me more either. And I hope I remember that feeling when I see people, you know, freaking out at the thought of using WordPress or something like that, those kinds of fears, you know, map across different types of interactions. But so I think we're going to be challenged though. I think, well, I guess just to close the thought I thought is we've seen evidence though, of people not necessarily coming to the scheduled time, but are participating on their own time, not just for convenience sake, but maybe because of the modality, it gives them a little sense of, you know, diminishing that vulnerability. I'd like us to kind of, I, that I've been thinking about a lot and I think, I think taking our traditional program and then thinking about ways we might reshape it and restructure it and reuse it, you know, kind of model what we talk about, you know, with what, you know, open learning materials can be and in, in terms of interactions too. And then modeling that to that. Yeah. We're going to have in physical space together interactions, but how do we compliment that and supplement that with the virtual in a meaningful way. So being thoughtful about that.

Brian Lamb:

And I guess the other piece of thing that I'm hoping we can take from what I'm learning this summer is one of the things I've really liked about this project that you and Jamie are doing the Beyond Moodle series. And, and I did a very modest cohort too, but the number of projects that have come out of that and see the tangible work emerging is really gratifying to me. Like there's very few things, more exciting to me than seeing an instructor going, you know what, I don't want to just use Moodle this time. I'd like to learn about what the affordance of an open technology will let me do and how can I extend this? And then how can we have a public knowledge artifact emerge from it and how can I grow my students? You know confidence and literacies, you know, in building on the web and not just consuming me. That's my that's, that's my thing. Right? And, and it's our thing. It's, it's the team's thing, which is one reason I love working with you. So I'd like to keep going on that. And I've been, I've been really gratified that I think, you know, we kind of weathered the tidal wave of, you know, quiz setting questions and, you know, that's never going away. That's, it's, it's a core part of what we do, but as the volume of that has receded and you know what I think part of it's because our community is actually learning how to use those tools better. It's totally, it's not just because they're using them less it's because they're not needing quite as much as help at least some of them. Yeah, that's really gratifying. Anyway, I think I would like to see us continue to move in that direction to where more of the activities we do are about funneling energy into outputs and projects and activities, and not just talking about things and sharing things.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Yeah. I agree with you. I have really, I don't know, we moved really from a kind of workshop structure where we just shared a lot of information, which was super necessary, right. It was really necessary last summer and it was necessary, I think through the fall and winter, just to help people feel like they had a place where they go and ask some questions. But I've had so much fun this summer on projects and also on those sort of just talking sessions, being more about kind of discussion and big picture kind of conversations about teaching and learning and how technology enabled teaching and learning has promise and also pitfalls and the kinds of conversations around that. Like, I just feel like the crowds are smaller this summer because everybody's not terrified. So I don't have 120 people coming to a BigBlueButton session, but the flip side is I think folks are really getting their hands on things and the learning and the project based learning is so tangible. It's, I've really enjoyed it. And I do hope that that's something, I mean, we'll always need to impart information, right. But seeing how excited it makes people to actually build and play again has been really nice

Brian Lamb:

Not to put you on the spot, but those Post Pandemic Pedagogy sessions you're having, those discussions sessions. Have you, have you had a chance to process what's going on and, and to the point where you could say, what are the themes that are emerging there, or at least for that group of participants, you know, what are we learning about our faculty as we go into fall?

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Yeah, I think that's a fair question. And I would say, you know, the caveat is that there's like, I guess 30 people registered: a rotating cast of anywhere from a dozen to 25 coming week to week. So it doesn't speak for everybody. And it's certainly a pretty engaged cohort of folks, but I think there's a couple of overriding concerns. One very clear concern is, is maintaining equity as we move forward. Thinking about how faculty are going to accommodate students who need to be away for whatever reason and doing it fairly, but also really cognizant of workload and of the different kinds of workloads on campus and how, you know, this faculty load of accommodation that we all kind of know is coming. It's going to hit different for someone who's precarious and gets their course assignment two weeks after the start

date of classes versus someone who's had a chance to teach this exact course last year and has all the materials already in place. Right. and so I'm noticing equity conversations, both when it comes to student experience and when it comes to different constituencies on campus are really top of mind for people in a way that is, I think exciting because it suggests unawareness and a potential for progress, I think. But there's also a lot of anxiety. There's a lot of anxiety about expectations. I think folks feel very much like it's just not clear, right? And we're still waiting for this June go-forward guideline from the province. Like I was really hoping that by the last session, which is today, the 17th of June, I would have something to tell people, but I don't, right? That that document still hasn't released. So I think in many ways there's a comfort in the fact that worst comes to worst. You can walk into the classroom on first day and do the thing you've always done. But a realization that that's not going to be enough in a lot of cases that there's going to be students who won't be in the room, who will need to be, and a real anxiety and stress about what the expectations are on individual faculty. But it kind of just think is like not necessary. Sort of sucks that we just don't have a game plan, not pointing fingers at anyone really directly. Like it's a time of great uncertainty, but I think somewhere along the way, you just have to decide what you're doing and do it. And I know there's so much controversy about the fact that so many Ontario universities made that call and said, we're just going to be online in the fall. Cuz it's too uncertain right now. And I, I totally understand that that's not where most people's hearts are right now, but the flip side is at least they know what they're doing and can plan, right? Like we've only got what 6, 7, 8 weeks left maybe.

Brian Lamb:

Just to go back to a theme, we talked about a little while ago. It'll be unfortunate if these really complex interactions about how we move forward and, and, and what our courses look like just ends up getting mediated by default, by whatever the technology layer happens to be, because we didn't want to interrogate those things and really dig into it. That's a fear. I have something unexpected comes along and, you know, and because we chose not to emphasize planning in that area, you know, then it just, we just use what we have. And then that dictates the interaction. That to me was the hardest part about our first pivot, you know, was just, we kind of had to use what we had and kind of force things into certain channels because we just had no other way to do it. Yeah. That was a drag.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

No, it was a drag. It was. It did shape things for people and, you know, there's this, there's this phrase in teaching and learning circles that never doesn't bother me. Right. Which is you can't let the technology determine the pedagogy. And it's, I guess, I, I mean, I understand what it's getting at, but it's also like untrue and has never been true, right? Like the way I teach in the classroom that has a chalkboard is different than the way I teach in a classroom that doesn't have a chalkboard. Like that's a technology that drives certain pedagogical choices. I worry that that kind of rhetoric -- don't let the technology drive the pedagogy -- invites us to act as if the technology is somehow neutral and invites us to not think critically about how the technology shapes the pedagogy, because, you know, if we were like really interested in teaching and learning, we'd just be focused on the real teaching and learning instead. And I just find that wildly unproductive, given the structure of like the world that we live in, you know?

Brian Lamb:
Yeah. It's naive and, and it, and it almost guarantees unfortunate outcomes.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Yeah. That's exactly it. It's like if you're not willing to have a critical conversation, someone else somewhere with a pen and the authority to sign for things is having an uncritical conversation. Right. That's the one thing I've learned. I think that's the thing I've learned. I won't ask you to comment on that.

Brian Lamb:

I'm not touching it.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

I really appreciate your time. Brian. It's always fun to chat with you. I'm glad we do it once every eight months or so. That's good.

Brian Lamb:

Yeah. We'll have to do our eight month check in again until then. Keep up the good work. If I see around let's say hi.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

Sounds good. Sounds like a plan. We'll talk soon.

Brenna Clarke Gray:

So that is it for episode 33 -- and for Season One -- 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. Of course, you can always comment on individual episodes there. I'm going to leave you today with a Tiny Teaching Tip -- my last one of season one. And it's real, real simple: rest. Go and find some rest. I can tell you right now, it's not going to be enough. Every single person within the sound of my voice has earned a sabbatical. And I'm guessing very few people listening to this have got one starting July 1st, but regardless, find some rest. The fall is going to come at us fast. And it's going to challenge us in brand new ways to meet the needs of our students, to be good colleagues, to each other, to show generosity and care to accommodate each other's needs to include everyone in whatever the future looks like for this institution or any institution wherever you are listening from. And so that's my plan. I'm going to try to find some time to rest between now and the end of August. And I really, really hope that you can do the same until next time. And there will be a next time. Take care of yourselves and take care of each other. Bye-Bye.