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SPEAKERS


Elizabeth Lalonde, Steve Barclay, Lis Malone, Ryan Fleury, Rob Mineault


 Rob Mineault 00:07
Hey and welcome to another episode of AT Banter, Banter, banter. Where's the where's the cowbell? Wow, what happened?

 Ryan Fleury 00:34
I forgot

 Lis Malone 00:37
He got very distracted

 Ryan Fleury 00:38
I lost all train of thought

 Elizabeth Lalonde 00:47
I'm learning a lot about how to do a podcast

 Rob Mineault 00:52
We are professionals at teaching people how not to do one. I'm shocked. That was that's on the heels of last week's show where we we lauded him for his best cowbell strikes ever. And here he is, he completely just forgot.

L Lis Malone 01:09
You gave him a big head. on gave him a big head. Okay, so bad Ryan bad cowboy strikes, we expect more of you.

R Ryan Fleury 01:24
Alright, next time.

L Lis Malone 01:27
Okay, so you know, you got to do the carrot and the stick. Now we're gonna be like, we give him a little stick now.

R Rob Mineault 01:32
Yeah, that's right. See, the audience is like, you know, getting an inside view of podcast discipline. So now you know who actually does all the disciplining of the of the children. She's the bad cop. So how are things?

L Lis Malone 02:06
It's hot.

R Rob Mineault 02:09
Why? Are you in a bit of a heat wave down there in North Carolina? What's going on?

L Lis Malone 02:15
It's a little it's a little sweaty.

R Rob Mineault 02:17
Is it already?

L Lis Malone 02:18
It's a little sticky.

R Rob Mineault 02:19
Already? It's only May.

L Lis Malone 02:24
Yeah, we're in boobs sweat season already.

R Rob Mineault 02:27
Wow. That's not good.

L Lis Malone 02:28
Yeah, no, it's not good. Good luck.

R Rob Mineault 02:33
Well, yeah, that's too bad. I'm sure we'll be joining you soon enough though.

E Elizabeth Lalonde 02:39
I could complain about our weather if you like.

R Rob Mineault 02:48
We'll get there, because we're good at that. We're good at talking about food on this podcast and the weather. So I don't know why we we really should spin out spin off some side podcasts. Well, okay, Ryan, to get down to business.

R Ryan Fleury 03:05
Let's do it.

R Rob Mineault 03:07
Since we've already covered boob sweat.

R Ryan Fleury 03:09
Yeah. I hate that. Walk around your old staining and sweating -- you gotta walk into the grocery

Yeah, I had that walk around your old stadium and sweating -- you gotta walk into the grocery store in the air conditioning is super cold.

R

Rob Mineault 03:23

That's a whole thing. We could just talk about that. But in lieu of talking about that for an entire episode -- Hey, Ryan.

R

Ryan Fleury 03:33

Yeah, Rob.

R

Rob Mineault 03:33

What the heck are we doing today?

R

Ryan Fleury 03:35

Today we are speaking with the executive director and founder of the Pacific Training Center for the Blind, Elizabeth Lalonde. Elizabeth, thanks for joining us.

E

Elizabeth Lalonde 03:44

Well, thanks for having me here.

R

Ryan Fleury 03:46

You know, it's funny we thought we've had you on years ago, and we looked and we looked and we looked and we looked and we looked, and we looked some more. And we've never had you on the show.

E

Elizabeth Lalonde 03:57

It's great. I'm really, really excited about it. Thank you.

R

Rob Mineault 04:00

Yeah, it's what happens when you have a podcast so long, and you have so many episodes where it's just like, you can't actually remember who you've had on. It's it's a thing.

E

Elizabeth Lalonde 04:11



ELIZABETH LALONDE 07:11

Yeah, it's a testament to how much work you guys have been doing.



Rob Mineault 04:14

Well, or we just have crappy memories. One of them.



Elizabeth Lalonde 04:19

You could have asked me, have you ever been on our podcast?



Rob Mineault 04:23

That's right. Well, listen, why don't we get started by maybe just giving us a little bit of a background about yourself and then we'll, we'll we'll dive into talking a little bit about the the Pacific Training Center.



Elizabeth Lalonde 04:35

Sure. So I was born blind. I have an eye condition called retinitis pigmentosa. And I live in Victoria BC, I was went to the regular school through the regular school system. I had a little bit of sight so I could see like letters, big letters, and that was pretty difficult. I can see one letter at a time but I had all the magnifying devices and you name it monoculars. CCTVs, like you all know about that. So then I was taught Braille in high school, but it never really was integrated into my program. So I didn't really become very fast at it until later on in my life. And then I started using all sorts of AT and finally they came up with a talking computer. I'm really ancient. So the first one I had was a smalltalk. And anyway, it changed my life, basically. So I was able to go from getting like C's in my class to getting A's and B's, and made a huge difference to be able to actually, you know, understand my work and be able to, you know, write things myself and, and that sort of things. And I had human readers that I got through, I went to University of Victoria, and I got a bachelor degree in Writing and Anthropology. So that was, I always, I've always loved school, actually. And then I've always been an advocate as well. So the disability and blindness advocate have been positive about my blindness, and felt that I'm here. It sounds a little corny, but I actually have always felt that I'm here for a reason. So I found out that in the States, they have centers where people can go and learn the skills of blindness and realized we don't have that in Canada. And nothing that's that was very intensive. So that's where I got my idea to start a center.



Rob Mineault 06:36

So tell us a little bit about then how the Center sort of started up in this sort of the story behind that.



Elizabeth Lalonde 06:43

For sure. I was very fortunate to get a scholarship to go to the Louisiana Center for the Blind in the States, which is a National Federation of the Blind affiliated, center. And they're fairly famous in terms of their program, some people sort of joke that they're the boot camp for blind people. And I can tell you, it was pretty intense. I went, I took my two children, and took my whole family down there when the kids were little to have this experience. And I went intending to learn the skills so that I could just see how the model that they use and how they did it so that I could come back and start a center in Canada. But it turned out that I actually learned a lot for myself as well. So it was a quite a immersive experience. And that's what they actually call it is blindness immersion. And their program is quite intense. You just learn, you learn how to be blind, really, and you learn alternative techniques, non visual techniques. And I have a little bit of sight so I was using sleep shades, which is like a comfortable blindfold. Well, it's not always comfortable when you're in 100 degree weather. It's not always comfortable because like you were saying this you sweat and I was in Louisiana, of course, pick the hottest place in the world to go, but that's me. I'm I'm kind of like an all or nothing risk taker type person. So the experience was pretty amazing. It had its ups and downs. But I could tell you more about what I did there, for sure. But then about a year later, it took a year for the program and then I came back and you know, then I was like, well, what do I do now? I didn't know how to start an organization or, or anything like that. So I've luckily had some great mentors in my life, blind mentors and people that supported me. And I took a business class as well. So wrote a business plan for starting a nonprofit and just worked. We worked our way up from there. And in our first program, our programs called Blind People In Charge. And the whole metaphor basically for the fact that it's blind people running the program, blind people are in charge. And also we teach blind people and empower blind people to learn to be in charge of their own lives as well. That's where that name comes from.

R

Ryan Fleury 09:23

We've had Schools for the Blind here in Canada, why do you think we've never had centers where people could go to like the Lighthouse Centers or or the when you went to in Louisiana?

E

Elizabeth Lalonde 09:31

I think because the I think the landscape of blindness in Canada is just sort of has just never been equipped or never conceived of having that type of program really. Just not how it's done here.

R

Ryan Fleury 09:47

Is a government funded down there?

E

Elizabeth Lalonde 09:49

It is. Which is kind of ironic because you know, their healthcare is private and everything but, but you do get rehabilitation funding to go to it, to be able to attend a center for six to nine months, if you lose your sight, or even if you are born blind and just want to improve your skills.



10:19

That is a really interesting difference. And it does kind of make you sort of pause and think about kind of the way that that we do things here, and you know, how that can be improved. Certainly, we have like a large blindness organization here, and everything sort of seems to be funneled through them, or at least in terms of the government. And I don't know that that's necessarily the best model.



Elizabeth Lalonde 10:49

I really think that the best model is where there's options for people. And, you know, what we do at our Center, in terms of the intensive program, where people come for several months to really learn the skills. It's not for everybody, you know, there's there's, there's people were more of a short term program is better. And we, at our Center we focus on non visual skills, so we don't teach the low vision techniques. So you know, I'll often refer people to, you know, elsewhere, if they really want to learn the how to use CCTVs, like I was saying earlier, or something like that. So there is opportunity for, for different organizations to be to be very helpful in the in the system, but I do think there needs to be some alternatives.



Rob Mineault 11:41

Yeah, well, I mean, it puts a lot of pressure on that one organization. And that is the one funnel, it's very easy for choke points to happen. They may be really good at serving one particular demographic, but not really all that great for for another because as we know, in disability in general, and certainly, it'd be the same for blindness and low vision, everybody's different. And everybody has different needs, depending on a variety of different variables, like when they lost their sight, or how old are they? Or what kind of needs do they have in order to just sort of live their day to day life? All of that can be very wildly different. And so expecting one organization to fulfill all of that, I don't think is even realistic, even if they were like, really, really funded up the up the wazoo, which, let's face it, they're not.



Elizabeth Lalonde 12:42

No, that's so true. And it and it doesn't, it doesn't do a lot for, like you said, diversity, promoting creativity and in provision of services and learning from other models. So I do think there's a lot of room for and space to have you like, for example, our Center and even other Centers.



Ryan Fleury 13:04

Elizabeth, do you have people that come from across Canada? Because I think you're one of the only if not the only Training Center for the Blind in Canada outside of the schools, are you not?



Elizabeth Lalonde 13:16

Pretty much. I actually I just met with the Executive Director of Balance for Blind Adults, which is based in Ontario, and we just had lunch together because Deborah Golden, she came to Victoria. So we've been talking a lot lately, and just talking about our different programs and how maybe we can support each other, because because we both do similar things, and also different things. So it's that complimentary approach. They used to have a residential style program, but they don't anymore. And we've been around - it's hard to believe but our program Blind People In Charge we're at a 10 year anniversary this year. And we've, we've done a few different versions of it. And one of them was where we did like a Homestay where we found billets for people that would come from out of town. And we had a few students come and take the program and, and live in Victoria and take the program. And that worked somewhat well. But it's not exactly the ideal way. The way to do it is to have apartments or a place for people to stay and take the program, like I did when I went to Louisiana. And we're just we're not. So we do have people come from other parts, but we're not equipped enough yet. And that's what I've been really working strategically the last several months to build up to doing more of that because I think it's so it's so needed in Canada.

R

Rob Mineault 14:52

So how old is the organization?

E

Elizabeth Lalonde 14:56

Well, it was it was incorporated in 2011 and we became a charity in 2013. And we started our first Blind People In Charge, which is our signature program, in 2014. So yeah, so that's 10 years. I can't believe it actually, I don't know where the time is gone. And, and I guess I'll tell you a little bit about. So when I was in Louisiana, the program that I sort of modeled it on, we did all sorts of things that the model - I could tell you about the model that we use is called structured discovery. And that sounds very academic. And basically, all it is, is that we teach people how to problem solve. And so in traditional rehabilitation, it's generally more of a memorizing routes, you know, you go from A to B, you go from school to home, and you learn that route, and then you learn interventions of cane travel, for example, and then you learn how to get back home. But suddenly, well, what if you want to go to your friend, Sarah's house? Well, how do I do that? Well, I have to go back and get someone to help me learn that route. And it becomes, it comes quite cumbersome. And also, it's not always the most empowering, because you don't really feel necessarily that you can figure this stuff out on your own. So that's what we do, we help people learn to navigate on their own by using non visual cues in the environment such as this. I was gonna say, the sound of the sun, the feel the feel of the sun, like what, what direction? We teach cardinal directions, we teach listening to the traffic. Which way is it going? Is it a two way street? Is it a one way street? The textures on the ground? Are we at a driveway or a street? How can you tell that we're, the driveway slopes one way, whereas the street tends to crown in the middle. So there's all of these different, those are just a few examples. And you can see that this actually takes this can take months to really not just learn, but to really integrate into your life, and then be become proficient at it . That's why that's why we say it can take six to nine months to really learn these skills. Because we're not just teaching people how to memorize something, we want this, we want this to be able to last people a lifetime and really learn that they can do it. So for example, I've lost quite a bit of sight over the last few years. I mean, I never had a lot, but I could see shapes. And quite, you know, fairly defined shapes. So I could tell, usually, I could tell that I was on the sidewalk, for example, or on a pathway. But now I can't see that anymore. And you know, if I hadn't gone to

for the training, I would have felt, I don't know if I would have felt scared. But I definitely would have felt, how am I going to do this, I have to have to learn how to do all this non visually. But I know that I've done it, because I did it. In Louisiana, I mean, I got to the point where I was, you know, walking all the way around everywhere around the city. They do drop routes where they take, after you train, they take you somewhere and then they leave you somewhere and then you have to find your way back to the center. But they they only do this when they know that you're capable of doing it. And I did three of those. And I did all of that. Without my sight. I cooked a meal for 40. Without my sight. I learned braille and was reading at 60 words a minute, by the time I left all of these different skills. And so I know even you know, maybe I get a little rusty at something. But I actually know in my own mind that and in my own heart that I can do it. And I guess that's the biggest thing is the skills are important. But the the feeling inside yourself that you can do it. And that you know other blind people who are doing it is really probably the most important aspect of it.

R

Rob Mineault 19:02

I'm really curious about about this model. I want to talk a little bit about this, and how you see it working in tandem with something like say conventional skills, say provided by a larger organization. Because what because I really feel like this is one of the reasons why smaller organizations are important to fill in these gaps. Not only to fill in the gaps but also perhaps apply the information in a bit of a different way. So I'm thinking about O&M and the way that you are describing this, that's probably very different than, say, a conventional O&M experience that you would get where the O&M teachers is somebody who's sighted. And it's just a textbook sort of orientation and they're training you on specific routes, but it's all done in a very way it's through that sighted lens. What you're talking about It is also being able to provide sort of another layer to that, in addition to say conventional O&M it's, you have a bit of a different perspective. And it's, I feel like you would be being taught different things by somebody who has a blind lived experience. Is that kind of how you see it all working together?

E

Elizabeth Lalonde 20:23

Absolutely. You, you actually explained it really, really well. And I think that there's definitely the different models. And that helps, it helps to define the different approaches, but I think it's on a spectrum, actually. So I can't say that we never teach the traditional way. So for example, we may have somebody say, a senior or not, we actually have some really spunky seniors that come. But that's just an example. Or maybe somebody that just has a lot of anxiety, and they just can't sort of shrug it. And maybe we'll do more of a traditional approach where it does help to memorize that route. Sometimes, and for everybody, it helps once in a while to memorize route, right? Like, it depends on the situation there. Sometimes you just need to do that. Even if you don't mean to, you do it. So I like to think that it's on a spectrum and, and so it doesn't work for everybody what we do, but we can adapt it. And we do adapt it. We adapt, we adapt for based on people's life experience. And maybe they have other disabilities as well, that they're that they have in their lives and different things. So it's definitely doable that other organizations can take on this approach and integrate it into what they provide. Now, the blind experience is definitely something that we're, I think we're fairly unique in Canada, especially where it is really blind leading and blind people teaching travel. And if you can believe it, that's actually quite a revolutionary thing that blind people are teaching cane travel. It shouldn't really be, but it is, it is. And there's even been people - not so much now but in the past - that

thought blind people shouldn't be teaching travel, because they said it's not safe. And which is a really interesting, interesting way of looking at it. And, you know, to think that a blind person can't teach another blind person how to get around is ridiculous, because we get around every single day. And I think where that safety concern comes in, is, when a sighted person teaches, say, a sighted a traditional sighted instructor who's doing the traditional approach of own orientation & mobility, they will walk behind the person but maybe quite far behind, say, and they'll monitor them with their eyes. Whereas our teachers, we, if it's a new student, and they're not ready to be on their own, we'll be right behind them all the time. We're right with them crossing the street. It's much more of a, interactive approach. I mean, I always liken it to my children to when my kids were little, and I took them swimming in a pool when they were little, you know, or I took them to Kindergym, all the sighted Moms were along the walls talking to each other. And I was like, probably one of the only Moms that was like running around in the in the gym with my child. And that's, that's a similar idea. It's just a different approach, right? Different way of thinking about it, I guess.

R

Rob Mineault 23:38

Yeah. Well, for sure. And I guess that for some people, they just look at it as one or the other. As opposed to this idea that these things can work together, or help fill in gaps. Because again, you know, going back to this idea that one organization or even one one teacher, one O&M instructor can do everything, throughout the course of somebody's life is a little bit ridiculous. And I think it puts too much pressure on it. We really do need that a branching out of a bunch of different organizations that can can service the community in the very best way possible. To be perfectly honest, Blindness services in Canada have not been the greatest, especially in the last 10 to 20 years. And I think that it is unfair to put all of that pressure on one organization. I just don't think it's realistic.

E

Elizabeth Lalonde 24:39

I totally agree that it has been very limiting for people.

R

Rob Mineault 24:45

Yeah, absolutely.

E

Elizabeth Lalonde 24:47

And the way we teach, is it's building capacity. It's actually helping people build their own capacity to so that then they become able to take care of themselves. I always say independence is about choice. So, you know, say you mean, you may know how to get somewhere on a bus. And that's great. And I think it's important to know how to do that. But, you know, if you want to take a cab one day, that's, that's a choice and but being able to have that choice. You can do all of these things is, is so important. And I think that's what we give people so that, then they don't always even have to come back, you know? Well, like I said earlier, can you teach me how to get here? Can you teach me how to get there? We're actually teaching people that they can, either, you know, figure it out on their own, or they can ask,

they know what to ask for, you know, to find to find these things out. And, yeah, it goes with not just cane travel, I tend to use that as an example. But, you know, can go with other skills as well. And also, the attitude is, can be quite limiting to in some of the more traditional agencies where they blindness is looked at through the medical model of blindness. Where it's seen as a medical condition. Whereas we at our center, we look at blindness more as in the social model construction, as a lot of the challenges around blindness are, what society is created around attitudinal barriers. And of course, physical barriers. Inaccessible websites, those kinds of things. And, and just the way people think about blindness in a negative way, rather than in a way that's more positive.

R

Ryan Fleury 26:38

So how many people go through your program each year?

E

Elizabeth Lalonde 26:41

Well, we it depends on if we're doing the full program, it's, it's maybe, maybe four, five people. Because I'm in Victoria, we also do some local services for people. So we put we can have up to 30 or 40 people come through in terms of learning skills locally. We also have, we also have some support, virtual support as well, that we provide so but in terms of the real intent, the really intensive program, over over periods of time, we've had maybe, you know, five people or six people that I'd like to build that capacity. Oh, and I'm doing my Masters right now to that's another thing that I'm working on. And I'm doing that in public admin and community development. So it's really great because it ties into what I'm doing so, so much with the nonprofit development.



27:36

We'll talk a little bit about that because most of us can imagine, and some of us have seen firsthand, starting up a nonprofit is no easy feat. You know, it takes a long time to really build up. I'm part of an organization that's that, you know, had had very much the same origins as yours. Even just in the past four years that I've been there I've witnessed, you know, some some real major growth, which is great to hear really exciting. But it can be really draining as well.

E

Elizabeth Lalonde 28:14

Oh, for sure. I think for me, it's been this is a dream, it's a passion of mine, it's a dream and a passion almost a calling for. Without sounding arrogant, it's just something I've always felt was so important and so needed, that I never give up, I just have never given up. And I honestly think that's the best advice that we have had. So many challenges, some people probably would have given up by now, you know, in the sense of if you're just looking at it like that, in terms of building up, there's there's all sorts of bureaucratic challenges when you're dealing with getting your charity status. We're doing you're all these the paperwork and the forms and it can be gargantuan at times. Staff, you know, hiring staff and then maybe having it not always working out. And so it's been quite a learning curve for me to learn how to be an

administrator, as well as just providing the program itself with the model that we use. I've had to learn to be an administrator and I luckily, I actually liked that kind of work and I love I also have the communications and writing background so I enjoy the promotion aspect of it as well. So I'm kind of fortunate that I have that I have a versatile interests. And I've been able to so I feel I've been able to contribute to most parts of the of the journey and the things that I haven't been able to do on my own. I've had to reach out for example, I'm not a techie. So I really had to get help with that. And and always need help with with I can do so much myself but then it's like, okay, I can't do this. So you It's knowing what you can do, but it's also knowing what you can't do, and that's okay. Because not one person should do everything anyway.

 Lis Malone 30:08

Totally, it's not about what you can do, it's what it's who you know who can do it.

 Elizabeth Lalonde 30:13

And also, sometimes it takes an effort to say, okay, I got to stop trying to do this myself and find someone else. And that takes a bit of a change and an effort. I'm I'm pretty good at delegating but not everybody is. I'm not a micromanager. So, what if I find somebody that can do something and loves doing it, I'm very flexible in that sense but still maintaining the structure, which is really important. Of course, it's definitely has its ups and downs. But I really view all the challenges as learning experiences for me as an individual, but also just for me as a professional.

 31:00

Yeah, I mean, I think generally when you meet people in the nonprofit space, they, they're the most passionate people that you're going to find because the amount of crap that you have to go through even just being part of a team of a nonprofit, let alone leading one is, is really like you have to be passionate about it in order to stay engaged and just keep fighting the fight. Because a lot of times it can really feel like it's an uphill battle, for sure. And you know, to sort of add on to what you're talking about, pretty much if you're part of a small nonprofit, you are a part of this team where everybody just wears whatever hat needs to be worn, whether or not that falls within your job description, or even your skill set. You just got a everybody on deck kind of attitude.

 Elizabeth Lalonde 31:55

That's what I love about it, to be honest. I've worked in government for a few years now, when I was younger, and, and I actually learned a lot in my experience. But it's very different working for a nonprofit, because yeah, you have a job description. But when when you're a small nonprofit, and you don't have a lot of staff or volunteers, you get to do a little bit of everything. And I actually think that's really wonderful because you you can gain so many different skills and experiences. And I love that part of it.



32:24

Yeah. And I think - everybody that I've sort of worked with in the nonprofit, I mean, it's not a problem, you never hear the words, oh, well, that's not my job or my job description. You don't hear people saying that. And that's not because everybody's just like a saint that works there. But I think that when you are engaged and you're passionate about the organization and the work that you're doing, you just want the organization to succeed. You want to do the work that is going to help people. And so you do make sacrifices, or you just you figure it out, there's that there's that real pull to do that.

E

Elizabeth Lalonde 33:06

I don't think about it really. I'm not saying I never get tired and I need breaks, but I don't really think about it. So much of work I think about it as as yeah, I'm fortunate to really love what I do. I really I really am. So it's just sort of a part of my life. It's not my whole life, but certainly a big part of my life.

R

Rob Mineault 33:30

Now, have you have you talked to anybody else around the country or the province that you know has shown interest in say, like mirroring your model? Taking this idea that you got from this place down in Louisiana, sort of expanding it across the country? Because there are so many of these little organizations that are doing such great work, that really other provinces and other places really need that as well.

E

Elizabeth Lalonde 33:56

They absolutely do. And that's one thing I was talking when, when Deborah Gold and I from Balance were talking and how we can provide things more across the country because it's so needed. And there's an organization in the Prairies and I apologize because I can't remember where but they're, they're called VIRN, which I can't remember what the so silly I can't even remember what that stands for. But VIRN, something about visually impaired. And I've heard that they have a very positive, positive oriented type services. It's small, but they do exist. And that networking is so important. And I think as our program continues to evolve, I think there'll be more, more of that. Like you're talking about mirroring and providing these services, because we can't do it all. In fact, we get so many I get so many inquiries every day. I got two in one day the other day where two people have called that are needing services, they're local, but even just the local is a lot, let alone across Canada. The need is just is tremendous the need for people for help. I can't tell you how many stories I hear all the time, that are almost the same story, really, you know, subtle differences, of course, but the ability to be - seniors that are losing their sight and they don't even know that blind people, what blind people can do, what's available. Oh, you mean, I can use a computer, you mean I can use an iPhone? Oh, I can I can cook by myself or you know, those kinds of things. Or you have people that were blind since birth, and maybe are really good at technology and Braille, but maybe haven't had the life skills experience as much, right. So we have lots of people in that type of situation. And then you have the middle, sort of where people maybe lose their sight, or start to lose their

sight as an adult and maybe want to learn, so they can go back to work or go back to school. So you have all of these different types of situations. But really, the, the stories are very similar, that there isn't enough out there.

R

Ryan Fleury 36:10

Having to wait months for one organization that come and provide services is ludicrous.

R

Rob Mineault 36:16

Yeah, I mean, people can't put their lives on hold. I mean, look at it through the sighted lens, what would a sighted person do if all of a sudden, you know, you were reliant on some organization to be able to teach you how to go to the grocery store? You can't just stop going to the grocery store for three weeks.

E

Elizabeth Lalonde 36:35

And truly, that's what happens to a lot of blind people and low vision people, they don't go to the grocery store for weeks or months, or they never think they can do it anyway. That's the one of the biggest problems is the that lack of education about blindness and what blind people are capable of doing with the training and opportunities. Because that's a vital piece of it.

R

Rob Mineault 36:56

I think that that's why your model is so powerful. Because in a way, yes, there's an element of yeah, it's it's a blind person teaching, say O&M skills, again, we'll go back to that example. You know, teaching them but there's also a mentoring component to that as well, that you have to think about. You're not going to get that from a sighted O&M trainer.

E

Elizabeth Lalonde 37:22

Oh, that's so true. And the mentoring is one of the biggest parts of our program. I love to see it. You get a new student coming in and maybe doesn't have very much confidence and they learn how to do a few things. And then you'll get another new student coming in maybe two months later that others the student that that that's newer but they've been there for two months, then they start helping the person that just came in, and then they're teaching a little bit and build their confidence. Oh my gosh, I was actually able to teach this person how to how to read their money or or how to work with their iPhone, and they their competence just builds from that, too. So it's working together. Our vision statement is blind people empowering each other to be employed independent and free.

R

Rob Mineault 38:12

Love it. Yeah. We need to like about 20 More of the centers, all across the country. We really

do. It's a bit ironic, sorry, Lis, I don't mean to throw your country under the bus. But it is really ironic that they have these the you do have a lot of organizations all across the US that are doing some really important work but your medical system sucks.

L Lis Malone 38:43

I think it's so much better in Canada to wait eight months to see a specialist

E Elizabeth Lalonde 38:50

Not so much. It's getting worse. But that's another topic for another day. I can see

L Lis Malone 38:54

I could see a specialist tomorrow if I needed to.

R Ryan Fleury 38:59

But it's gonna cost.

E Elizabeth Lalonde 39:03

Ya see, that's the thing. It costs money. Yeah. Yeah, no, it's interesting.

R Rob Mineault 39:09

So it goes back to these options. I think that it is really important for blind people that have options, like you said. But but not only that sometimes you do need services right away and maybe it's it's a small section, you need to learn how to go from your house to your school, and you can't wait three months or a year. You're hosting a wedding and you need to learn how to cook a certain meal. All these all these types of special things that can come up where an organization like yours could sort of pick up and help with that, whereas a large organization just isn't going to be able to.

E Elizabeth Lalonde 39:55

Yes absolutely. And and sometimes times I don't even know if some of the other organizations even they think they could. Sometimes they lower the bar too much to you know? Their expectations aren't high enough for people and what they're capable of doing. Not everybody. There are people that you'll find in the different organizations like a bigger organization that does have those high expectations, but it's not necessarily part of the model. Right?

R Rob Mineault 40:30
That's right.

R Ryan Fleury 40:30
Yeah. It's more medical model oriented model.

R Rob Mineault 40:33
Yeah. Well, and the Charity model.

E Elizabeth Lalonde 40:36
Charity model, yes. We're a charity but we don't really run on the charity model.

R Rob Mineault 40:44
No, it's true. And that is problematic. For sure. Yeah. You know, you can't sort of on the one hand have your values be all about empowering. And then, you know, you're adhering to the charity model, which, you know, you're you're putting forth this idea that, you know, poor blind people, they need your help.

E Elizabeth Lalonde 41:05
I refuse to do that. So the way we fundraise or request funding, I mean, we say, we do say that the situation for blind Canadians can be quite bleak. And it's a the unemployment rate we all know is fairly high. You know, it can be there's different statistics, it can be. Some people say it's 75%, it depends. But so we do we do state those things, but we don't, we don't make the blind person look like they're somehow less than or not able to. There's so much possibility and potential and that we need support to be able to do that.

R Ryan Fleury 41:51
Right. Yeah. We're not a World Vision commercial.

R Rob Mineault 41:54
No, exactly. And honestly, all the problems were pretty much created by able bodied people because you built an inaccessible society.



E Elizabeth Lalonde 42:03
That's the more the social, social model of looking at it. Yeah. It's not the person with a disability. It's the society that kind of has almost a disabling way of looking at it way or way of thinking about it.

R Rob Mineault 42:17
Preach it. Well, excellent. Well, thank you, again, for coming on and chatting with us.

E Elizabeth Lalonde 42:25
Thank you for having me.

R Rob Mineault 42:26
Where can people find you if they they're interested in services, or if they want to help?

E Elizabeth Lalonde 42:32
So we have a website, it's www.pacifictrainingcenter.ca. and our phone number is 250-580-4910. And we have a great Facebook page, too. So if you search for Pacific Training Center for the Blind, you'll find us on Facebook. And I do try to keep up with doing lots of posts there. So that's another good way of getting ahold of us. And you can also email us at info@pacifictrainingcenter.ca or elizabeth@pacifictrainingcenter.ca. Well, it was great meeting and great talking to you all. And I hope that you don't get too hot over there Lis.


R Ryan Fleury 43:25
It's hot. It's hot.


E Elizabeth Lalonde 43:29
Have a great night.


R Rob Mineault 43:30
You too.


L Lis Malone 43:33
You're just having so much fun trying to bash the Americans.


 Ryan Fleury 43:37
We were bashing the Americans?


 43:46
I had to do it. I had to get a dig in. But, you know, it's true. Like all the other Lighthouse organizations they seem like really, really good organizations. And you've also got like the NFB and the AFB.


 Lis Malone 43:57
And they've got chapters all across the states.

 Rob Mineault 44:02
It's great. We could learn a lot.

 Ryan Fleury 44:05
Totally.

 Rob Mineault 44:05
We have one. That's it.

 Ryan Fleury 44:08
Just these little grassroots.

 Lis Malone 44:09
What we have in the United States is that blindness rehab programs are all independently managed by each individual state. So you've got the state programs, and then you'll also have that second layer of the the charitable organizations, sometimes charitable organizations work directly with the State and provide the services on behalf of the State. It just It depends on where you live. And a lot of times people will move to particular States based on the services that they offer. Some are just better than others. Make sense?

 44:10

11

44:47

Yeah, it does make sense. But again, you know, it comes back to choice. I mean, at least he you have you have that choice, whereas here it doesn't really doesn't matter. You still have to deal with the same organization in BC, as you do in Alberta, as you do in Manitoba. I mean, yeah, you might have different small little grassroots organizations like Elizabeth's in places. But that's that's kind of really hit and miss. So I yeah, I don't know, I think that we do have a lot to learn. And you know, that's not the first time we've heard a story about somebody going down into the States and seeing a program in action and bringing it back up here. There's an organization that Steve's involved with called the Children's Low Vision Project. And the founder of that got that whole model of of that from some place down in the States. In Virginia. And yeah, so I mean, I guess the lesson there is that we need to, we did send people more people down, down to the States for vacation to go get ideas.

R

Ryan Fleury 45:58

But it just seems like there's so many more rehab services available down in the US.

L

Lis Malone 46:02

Yeah.

R

Rob Mineault 46:04

More opportunity.

L

Lis Malone 46:06

Well, that's capitalism to you know.

R

Rob Mineault 46:08

Yeah. I'm sure that there's a variety of reasons. There's a whole other podcast. I mean, I'm sure you could be talking about population densities, or blah, blah, blah, all of these things. But yeah, at the end of the day, something needs to be done up here. Because I think, you know, we have a host of different social problems, but certainly Disability Services is something that's been sorely lacking in this country for for many years. So some people smarter than the people on this podcast need to be figuring out. I don't know why we're thinking about it, we're a bunch of dummies. All we can come up with is Rynachos.

R

Ryan Fleury 46:50

And Robochos.

 Rob Mineault 46:54

I've been thinking about this all week, because clearly I have no life. And so I've been my mind has been all over right nachos and I'm seriously I was thinking about Italian sausage on nachos. That sounds really good.

 Lis Malone 47:09

I think there is going to be a full Nacho chapter in the cookbook.

 Ryan Fleury 47:15

Yes, we have to do an AT Banter cookbook. Yep.

 47:21

We're gonna start working on it. We should right away. As we get our new website done. That's almost done. All right. But anyways, enough about changing the world. Let's get out of here and go eat some dinner.

 Lis Malone 47:38

Yeppers and go watch a hockey game probably.

 Rob Mineault 47:41

Is there a hockey game?

 Ryan Fleury 47:42

Nope. starts tomorrow night?

 Lis Malone 47:46

I have a game playing right now.

 Rob Mineault 47:52

Who's playing?





Lis Malone 47:53

Well, at this moment this playoff series in round two right now, watching the Carolina Hurricanes and the New York Rangers and right now they are tied to two. This is Game Two with the Rangers.



Ryan Fleury 48:12

Already two games in.



Lis Malone 48:16

We're in the second game. Yeah.



Ryan Fleury 48:18

Round two starts tomorrow. Canucks and Oilers.



Rob Mineault 48:30

it's an exciting time.



Ryan Fleury 48:31

It is indeed. Can't wait. Sure.



Rob Mineault 50:13

Hey Lis?



Lis Malone 50:15

Hey Rob.



Rob Mineault 50:16

Where can people find us?



Lis Malone 50:18

They can find us at www.atbamter.com

R Rob Mineault 50:21
They can also drop us an email if they so desire at cowbell@atbanter.com.

L Lis Malone 50:42
Hey, they can also find us on a variety of social medias including Facebook, X, Mastodon and Instagram

R Ryan Fleury 50:50
and www.imhot.com

R Rob Mineault 50:55
Whatever people do, do not go to that site. Don't go to any of the websites, we are not responsible for the viruses.

R Ryan Fleury 51:13
We need a disclaimer at the beginning of the show.

R Rob Mineault 51:30
At the beginning of every episode.

R Ryan Fleury 51:33
It's going to be awesome.

R Rob Mineault 51:38
And that is going to about do it for us this week. Big thanks, of course to Elizabeth for joining us and we will see everybody next week.

S Steve Barclay 51:52
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