Episode 5: Disability-Informed Open Pedagogy with Arley Cruthers and Samantha Walsh Transcript

[Theme music: "Cool Upbeat Hip Hop Piano" by ItsMochaJones on freesound.org]

Josie Gray: Hello! Welcome to the open knowledge spectrums podcast, which explores questions of epistemic justice, or knowledge equity, in the context of open education and considers different possibilities for making open education and open educational practices more equitable.

My name is Josie Gray, and I am your host. This podcast is my final project for my Masters of Design in Inclusive Design at OCAD University.

In this episode, I speak with Arley and Samantha about their experiences as physically disabled instructors and where they see the potential for disability to be a positive disrupter in open education spaces and for students. We discuss the value of difference and making space for diverse bodies and minds, and the assumptions people make about who will be in a space or use a resource.

Arley Cruthers teaches Applied Communications at Kwantlen Polytechnic University and is passionate about open pedagogy, disability justice, and open education. She is the creator of the OER textbook *Business Writing for Everyone: An Inclusive Guide to Workplace Communications* and is just finishing her term as the Open Education Teaching Fellow at KPU. For her work in inclusive approaches to open, she received an Excellence in Open Education award from BCcampus. Arley has an MFA from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and has also published several novels.

Samantha Walsh is a scholar and activist. She is currently a Doctoral Candidate at the University of Toronto-OISE in the department of Humanities, Social Sciences, and Social Justice Education, formerly Sociology and Equity Studies. Her doctoral research is in interpretive sociology with a focus on disability and social inclusion. She holds a master's degree in Critical Disability Studies from York University, and she completed her undergraduate degree in Sociology at the University of Guelph.

And with that, let's hear from Arley and Samantha.

[Theme music]

Arley Cruthers: My name is Arley Cruthers, and I teach applied Communications at Kwantlen Polytechnic. And before that—which is how I know Sam — I played wheelchair basketball. I was on the national team for, I think, seven years, went to the Paralympics. And yeah, definitely interested in open education. I've written an open textbook called *Business Writing for Everyone* that tries to take a more, sort of, story-driven, inclusive approach to a textbook. And yeah, interested in disability justice, open pedagogy, all sorts of things.

Samantha Walsh: My name is Samantha Walsh. I'm a doctoral candidate at the University of Toronto-OISE. My program is social justice education, and my degree is going to be a PhD in sociology. My research looks at the inclusion of people with physical disabilities in Ontario, using Toronto as a case study. So specifically looking at like, what are we doing post AODA? And moving from inclusion and accommodation as a legal standard to a reflexive politic of difference, where we expected different bodies and different ways of being in the community, and it's not a big deal. And as Arley referenced, we met when we were in high school through wheelchair basketball. And then that has interesting significance because it was—I don't, I can't speak for Arley—but for me, it was my first experience of like peer support for disability, as well as an assemblance of disability pride and valuing my experience as a wheelchair user.

Josie: Thank you. And I was wondering what brought you both to open education, like early on, like, what was your introduction to open education?

Arley: Yeah, so my introduction was basically that I was teaching at University of Illinois. And then I graduated the height of the recession and took basically seven years off from teaching. And when I came back, I was like, "Okay, great. I'll just use the same textbook as I used before," and realize that that textbook had gone from like $40 or $50, to like $250. And so I kind of panicked and assigned something that was not great, and I had a student who had come to every one of my office hours and take the book and go read it, and then bring the book back. And I thought like, there's got to be a better— This is— The book doesn't even really reflect— Like a lot of business communication textbooks are very, like, really directive of like, "Here are the five steps to write a proper email." And I wanted something that was a bit more sort of process based. And so I thought that I would kind of write it myself, and then slowly realized that like a lot of other things that I were doing was open pedagogy and sort of hopped in to the community.

Samantha: My path was both as a student and also a professor. So I have taught a number of contracts at both the university and college level. And it's always been fascinating to me—well, someone else's experience might be different—often, when I show up, the expectation—both in the physical environment as well as the social— is not that the person leading the class would be disabled. And it really gave me poise to think about like, who do we expect to show up as a teacher? Who do we expect to show up as a student? What happens when the person who shows up is not who we expect? And the idea of creating a more accessible, less elitist approach to access an education is something that I'm passionate and excited about, both like, professionally and personally. Additionally, some of the background, I think, in my interest to gravitate to, how do we manipulate the environment and the social context as opposed to change the person? Not only do I use a wheelchair, but I have a number of fairly significant learning disabilities. So I'm also very used to interacting with the idea that I do not perform "student" well. I am often late. I very much don't look like I'm paying attention. I use colloquial language when I lecture. So it's also from a selfish perspective in wanting to create a place for

myself and be able to engage with material in different ways to suit my own learning needs. And I think too, there's also value in making manifest and highlighting disability in different ways of being within pedagogy. It's not always just able-bodied white men.

Josie: Yeah, absolutely. So last year, you were both scheduled to facilitate a session at the Festival of Learning titled "Disability and Open Education," which was unfortunately cancelled due to COVID. But in your session description, you say, and I'm going to quote this directly, "Conversations about disability and open education often focus on accessibility, which is framed as a process done for disabled students by abled instructors or instructional designers. Relatively little attention has been paid to the idea of disabled people as OER content creators, change makers, or disruptors." So I was wondering if you could expand a little bit on the intervention that you'd like to make here. And like, how you want to shift the conversations?

Arley: Well, actually, what's interesting is that I think our kind of original title was actually "Cripping Open Education," and it was changed to "Disability and Open Education." And I think it really sort of speaks to that, that language kind of hasn't yet come into the open education or that, that way of... sort of, thinking about disability hasn't really yet gained traction, even though the idea of cripping is a pretty, you know, in disability studies, you know, circles is sort of pretty well established. But the reason that I had, kind of had the idea for the session is that while we went to an open conference, and besides your presentation, Josie, like, a lot of the presentations that are about accessibility were like, they were not in accessible rooms, they didn't have advanced copies, they didn't, you know, have sort of basic accessibility. And it really made me think about, what's the assumptions that are being made here? And it seemed like the assumption was the people who create the OER are abled, and the people who consume it are often assumed to be abled, and kind of accessibility is sort of this problem to be solved. That we have the small group of students who need it, and so we have to do it for ADA compliance. But there's just sort of this idea that— I hadn't seen a lot of attention paid to the idea of, you know, if we actually sort of centre disability, centred disabled people as content creators, and kind of even reimagine the process of like creating open through the lens of disability. What sort of things would happen? And you know, I'm thinking of books like Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha's book *Care Work: Dreaming Disability Justice,* Aimi Hamraie's work on like, crip time or slowness. So kind of shifting the focus about, you know, what would happen if we, rather than sort of assuming who the content creators are, and who the consumers are, made space for a different way of being, and rethought what assumptions are we making about who's in the room here?

Samantha: I concur with all of Arley's thoughts. it's probably why we decided to work together. One of the things I'm interested in to when we think about creating space for disability or disability perspective in the classroom, is also thinking along with Dorothy Smith, who writes about the concepts of standpoint theory, and the idea of insider knowledge. So the notion that what's understood as like the

dominant or overarching view of the world is not always like the "one monolithic truth." That different experiences and different ways of moving through the world produce different ways of being, different knowledges, different perspectives. And really creating space and opportunity to celebrate those different perspectives, as well as legitimize those perspectives. So I think about like, not glorifying, busy or anxiousness. Or like, I don't have to test you to know your knowledge, like we could do something different. We could do like narratives, or write on our perspectives, things like that. And also shifting the idea of accessibility as something that needs to be, that there's a "norm" and then there's an "accommodation." As opposed to like, the classroom is a community and we create space for the people who turn up in it. And so if that means we're having one less chair because there's a wheelchair user there, or you know, we're not using the blackboard because the prof is short, or in my case, also using a wheelchair. We need to disrupt this idea that disability is like a marginalized, limited thing that will only make appearances in the classroom occasionally, and when it does, it will be like best case scenario, something you can be taught to accommodate, worst case scenario, it will be like a burden. But rather thinking about disability as an open-ended category and a different way of moving through the world. And when I say open ended category, that's from a gentleman named Rene Gadacz who talks about like, it's a category that folks can enter in and out of, or like Tobin Siebers talks about, if we all live long enough, we'll all have the opportunity to be disabled. So the idea that like, this is not actually like a small minority, and this is a way of being that folks move in and out of, so it's best to create space for it in the classroom.

Josie: Mhmm. My introduction to disability and accessibility work in particular, was very much through technical like web accessibility standards. And like that was my understanding and conception of that space for a while. But being introduced to the social model of disability really kind of expanded, quite quickly, my understanding of that area. So I was wondering if one of you could provide people with an introduction to what the social model of disability is.

Samantha: The social model is the idea that the issues with disability come out of, not an individual's problems, or the way they move, but rather the way we've designed society. I like to use the example of the subway. The medical model of disability says, "I wish Sam could walk so she could take the subway. We teach Sam how to walk, then she can take the subway." And the social model says, "Why don't we build a public transportation system that relies on being able to use the stairs?" Or why do we assume that everyone who comes into a room is going to need lights? Or how come there's only one way of opening a door. So the idea that we create the "average" or the expected body through both the environmental spaces we create, as well as the social spaces we create, so the social model is constantly looking at like the interactional part of disability. And the folks to read to learn more about that are Michael Oliver and Tom Shakespeare. And again, it's the idea of like, instead of the only narrative of disability being a medicalized one, like

Sam is disabled because of a birth injury. The social model says like, Sam uses a wheelchair, so how do we create so that there's always space for a wheelchair? And it creates more communal approach to disability rather than a medicalized individual one, where like, it's biology going wrong, or some sort of mishap.

Josie: Mhmm. Yeah, absolutely. Yeah, I think abled people, people who don't have a disability, often only understand disability as something that could be negative or a shortcoming. So I was wondering if you both could share, like, where's the potential for disability to be positive force or offer this critical perspective?

Arley: I mean, I think that, like my feeling about my own disability is basically that, like, it's one of many traits in my body, you know, like, it's kind of like a neutral force. But I think one of the really beautiful things about inviting disability into the conversation is that it draws attention to difference, I think in really interesting ways, and I think it disrupts assumptions in really interesting ways. So you know, Sam and I have often talked about how I got my start in teaching through coaching junior wheelchair basketball. And when you coach junior wheelchair basketball, because it's such a small population group of the 20 athletes, you could have, you know, ranges from age like six to 20, you could have different disabilities, height, sizes, strengths. And so, when you enter into that space, you learn right away to design for difference. If I go into that practice, and say, "Okay everyone. We're going to shoot at 10-foot hoops. Everyone's going to do the same activity," would just fundamentally not work. And so, you know, that logic, I think, is something that has really helped me in my career as a teacher in terms of not making the assumption of, "Okay, everyone's going to have the same skills, the same background. We're going to do the same things," but imagining how can we use that difference, you know, as a strength? How can we put people in positions to be successful? Because you know, this idea that I don't think students have ever really interacted with textbooks, especially, you know, if we're talking about that side of open, the way that instructors think. You know, I've had my students do these projects, where they— For example, we did one semester, the students work together to write a report about textbook barriers. And it was really interesting to me to see how they were using textbooks. Even when they bought textbooks, often they would go Google like, you know, a YouTube tutorial or something. So I think when you invite disability and you invite difference in, you start thinking about how are people actually using this tool? And are they using it the way that I expect? And what do they actually need? And, you know, especially because open is so customizable. What is this group of student's needs? You know, that might be different from what another group of students need. So I think it, it sort of opens... invites really interesting questions.

Samantha: I like the idea Arley was talking about, about like disability just being like one of many character traits. Like, I think that's a really cool way to think about it. I've written papers before where I've lamented, like, you know, someday I hope that like, the refrain is not like, "Why do you use wheelchair?" but rather like, "Hey, cool wheelchair1" like, "Where'd you get it?" Or like, "Why did you pick that

one?" As opposed to being like, "I'm sorry, you're using it." One of the positives—and Arley's kind of already touched on this—is the idea that it it makes manifest and to some extent normalizes difference. I also like the idea that like disability calls into question the fragility of all of our bodies. So I think that one of the things that has been really interesting for me, both in my own kind of personal journey and also teaching and engaging with post-secondary education, has been the idea that like, me existing in this space calls into question the idea that like, your body might be fluid, or it might change, or your situation might change. Or the student who is like "Ah man. Like, tests are hard," or "I'm tired." Like, this person isn't lying. Like these are legitimate pieces. Like there's not a mind-body dualism where we exist one or the other, like these are real pieces of legitimacy. So standing as a hallmark of difference and creating legitimate space to talk about, like, if you think your student is lying about being tired or not understanding, like, would you say the same thing to me? Like, would you be like, "No. You're not tired. You're fibbing." And so I think like I appreciate—on most days, I appreciate how disruptive my body can be to like, the taken for granted. And I like the idea that I often stand outside like cultural expectations. Like, I think... I think there's something really powerful to be a cultural disrupter. On the flip side of that, like, it can also be exhausting. And then one of the things I've been thinking about, as well, it's been fascinating. So I have a professional job. And one of the things that I've had to do for my professional development is, I'm taking a college certificate that is geared towards professionals. And I've been super fascinated by the fact that like, I didn't request any accommodations, because why not. But all of the accommodations that have been extended to folks under the guise that they are busy professionals who have busy lives, are the same accommodations that I had to produce, like, massive amounts of paperwork in undergrad to receive. So the idea of like, it's no trouble to email a professor in this context and be like, "Hey, work went long. My assignment is going to be supes late"—I don't use the phrase "supes" in my professional life. *[Laughter]* And the professor to respond back with like, "No problem. I understand. like, it's been a busy time," or like, "Sorry, I had to take care of the kids." Like, these are all things that— Like it is assumed that everyone is busy. It is assumed that everyone is, you know, an active member of their family. And I think about like, I had a very good undergrad experience and was, for the most part, very well supported. But I still had to produce quite a bit of documentation to get those supports. And I know— I can think of at least twice where I emailed a professor being like, "The wheels came off. Like, I can't do this right now." And they've basically written back, "Well, life is hard. And like, you're here to learn that." And I think it's fascinating that like, we are able to accommodate hallmarks of disability if we understand them as being for a different reason. Versus, there seems to be a lot of concern about whether or not disability is a legitimate reason to do things differently. And I've just, it's been really fascinating. Like, I find it's far easier to get accommodations and make reasons for my lack of time management skills, as someone who is perceived as almost 40 and working in a professional capacity, versus when I was 21. There was a large focus on like, "You're going to suffer the

consequences of your lack of executive function." My disability provides me with the opportunity to think deeply about these things. And I don't think that I would if I didn't have one.

Josie: Yeah, that's such an interesting observation. For the inclusive design program that I'm in, at least when we were in person, it was a, kind of like a hi-flex model. So you could attend in person or you could attend remotely. And the remote option was advertised as something for like, working professionals and to allow people outside of Greater Toronto Area to attend that program. But being able to attend online is a huge accommodation that disabled people have been trying to get for their education for a long time and have generally not been permitted, in a lot of those standard classrooms. Yeah, a great example of when those accommodations are made, and for what reasons.

Arley: I think it's really interesting to that, like, you know, I see sort of two sides of the coin of sometimes people make the case that say things like universal design for learning benefit all students, and that is erasing disability. And so therefore, we should only focus on sort of, like the needs of disabled students. But I think that, you know, you can both honor that, like, disabled people should be accommodated and deserve to be in that space. And also, that, you know, the ways that universities have traditionally been set up, don't work for a lot of groups, and doing some of these simple accommodations benefit everyone. You know, like, they benefit so many groups.

Samantha: Yeah. Snd part of the purpose of the presentation Arley and I wanted to do is to also think about like, also questioning like a bit of the pedagogy and the tools we use to track pedagogy. So, I had a story relayed to me by one of my friends who also works in post-secondary education, who talked about— She was really proud of herself, because there was no timed test in her course, so you can take as long as you wanted to finish your exam. And a student with a disability came to her and said, "You know, it's still not fair because I'm going to use the full three hours to do this, and my friend who also takes three hours, is just going to use the full three hours, to once they're finished writing, they're going to go through and edit, they're going to find different things." She was like, like it takes the stress off, because they don't have to, you know, get a doctor's note and provide a letter from the accommodation's office. But like, it's never going to be even. And at that point, like, I think if we're looking for like, performing social justice and education, we also need to start to think about not just how can we create a level playing field, but like, maybe we shouldn't burn the playing field down, maybe we should change how we do things. We need to find better ways to perform knowledge and engage with people from a pedagogical perspective. We're interested in structural justice. I don't have a lot of great ways to do that other than, like, differentiated instruction. In the classes that I've taught, I've always tried to give people the option of like, "you can write a test. You can write an essay." Things of that nature.

Josie: Right, giving people more options to actually do something that plays to their strengths, rather than everyone having to do the same thing, recognizing that equality is not the same as equity. So you mentioned earlier about how your original title for the session was about cripping open education. So could you talk a little bit about what does it mean to crip something? And like how you think that concept can disrupt or shift our understandings and approaches to open education and open pedagogy?

Arley: Yeah, so I think in our sort of proposal, we use the Hutcheon & Wolbring's definition, which defines cripping as "A verb to describe a process of critique disruption and reimagining, that's deployed and redeployed for political purposes as a way to reimagine conceptual boundaries, relationship, communities, cultural representations, and power structures." I think we've touched on a lot of, sort of, how we're using cripping, but basically, as a way, you know, thinking about the open community, is how can we use disability as a way to, you know, think about making more spaces for different types of bodies, different types of brains. You know, first if we're designing textbooks and open pedagogy assignments, that are still predicated on the assumption that there's like, one way of moving through the world, or one way of interacting with the text, you know, it has to be reading or it has to be kind of dense, you know, paragraphs. Often, we can reproduce norms. Or if we're saying, "Okay, we have to publish on this schedule," or, you know, "We have to use this type of language." Inviting disability in really does disrupt a lot of systems, you know, you begin to think about grading, you begin to think about your workflow, you begin to think about who you're inviting in, and how you're compensating them. And, yeah, so rather than viewing accessibility as like, kind of a one-way street, or you know, thinking about expanding the conversation using disability to look at, like, the entire open community.

Samantha: Yeah, I would say like, if it lines up to some extent, although perhaps more politicized and more radical, with, like inclusive design, or concepts of universal design. But like, what I think stands out for me or like, differentiates it from those things, is cripping also is a reclaiming and like a... validating—that's that word—of the disabled body being like legitimate and one that should rightfully take up space.

Josie: Yeah, for sure. How does disability and openness inform and show up in your own teaching practices?

Arley: Well, I think disability has sort of been, you know, it both in implicit and sort of explicit ways. You know, I've moved through disability categories a lot through my life. So I started teaching when I walked on forearm crutches and used wheelchair. And then I sort of reentered teaching again—I had a couple years where I could kind of pas as able bodied. And so I had a couple of years where I really was not very visibly disabled. And, you know, now I'm back to walking on forearm crutches. And I'm a lot more explicit about my disability. And so I think on sort of a basic level, I am not able to lecture. So I can't stand for more than like 20

minutes. I've always had to look for a different way to do things. So I kind of got into experiential, you know, sort of more hands-on approaches. Both because I came from a coaching background, where that is how you coach. And then also, because I just couldn't do it, right. Like, I can't stand for 60 minutes, so I'm not going to just stand and then talk at you. So I think my disabled body sort of informed my pedagogy early on in really interesting ways.

I think now, I am trying to be a lot more intentional about actually claiming identity as disabled. I sort of realized based on some of the conversations I have with Sam is that, you know, my body doesn't really critique systems in the same way that Sam's does. You know, like, I don't show up in a wheelchair. I have to, especially when I was teaching before I went back to using forearm crutches. You know, I'm tall, I can reach things, I don't really disrupt that space. And so I've tried to be a lot more intentional about talking about my disability to students, and really accessing, trying to access, accommodations, and thinking a lot more about how I can invite other disabled— like how to make it easier on the next disabled instructor who comes after me.

But, you know, I think that a lot of my teaching practice is about— I think I, you know, I already gave the example of starting my introduction to pedagogy really being from coaching, and being about trying to accommodate and make a practice, where students from a wide range of backgrounds, and abilities, and ages, and stuff, could thrive. But I also think that disability kind of shows up, in the sense of— A lot of the principles of Universal Design for Learning I sort of was doing accidentally. And then when I learned that there was actually a word for it, then you can actually access a community of people who are doing it, and you can be more intentional. It's not just like, "Oh, I've noticed that when I give students options in terms of assignments, they produce richer work." You can actually be like, "Oh, other people have been working in this space for a really long time. And I can, I can learn from that." But yeah, I think that it's connected to my experience with open, in the sense of really being cognizant of the time pressures that my students are under, and feeling like, if we're going to do something, like, let's try to make something that's meaningful to students. And let's try to figure out together, what's meaningful, and what we want to do here, and how we can show our work in the best way. Because I have definitely had spaces in academia where, you know, my experience was about sort of trying to normalize myself rather than, be like, "Hey, this is what I need." And because I can pass as able bodied in certain spaces, it's very easy to sort of normalize and mask and be like, "No, no. I'm— It doesn't impact me at all." Now, I'm trying to be more explicit about how it does.

Samantha: Could you just repeat the question?

Josie: Yeah, no problem. The question was, how does disability and openness inform and show up in your own teaching practices.

Samantha: So it does so by default, for the most part. So Arley pointed out that I don't necessarily have a choice to be able to pass. And much like Arley, by virtue of

the fact that I can't do a lot of the like, really traditional things that teachers do, I've had to find different ways to make things manifest or make things happen. And I have been successful in this. I have also failed spectacularly. But one of the things that it has really made salient to me, is that my experience of teaching becomes incredibly symbiotic and more community based by the fact that, because I don't show up in normative ways to be an expected teacher, where I have the most success is when I am able to work with students and we've all collectively agreed, that like, I will be the teacher, regardless of what supports I need. And it's been really interesting to me to have that. And in some ways, it creates a really accessible learning environment for my students, because I'm able to ground that in my own lived experience of like, "I'm different. So like, I appreciate how like, this could be hard for you or this could happen." It's also like from a positive perspective created really, really rich kind of conversations. In particular, I'm thinking of—I taught sociology of mental health for a while, and I used the social model and inclusive design principles to talk about, "Is it important that we all think and act the same? Or like, have we oriented ourselves such that you need to be able to wake up at 8am and work seven hours to survive?" And like, is that where the problem is? And it was super interesting with mental health—and I think, hopefully, there'll be a point where someone is listening to this and this won't be true—a lot of students were somewhat bewildered by the idea that like, you could just think, or be, or feel, differently, or be erratic, and that that might be okay. But then when I was able to be like, "How many people here would be like, 'We should never build the ramp'? Or like, 'Accessible parking is silly'?" And everyone was like, "No, like, ramps for everyone. Accessible parking everywhere." And then I was able to be like, "You know, how does that translate into like supporting someone with an invisible disability? Or supporting someone who identifies as having a mental health diagnosis?" So just even in grounding my pedagogy and creating space, I think is how it shows up in my own teaching. I've talked about differentiated instruction, like I do that both for the benefit of my students, but I've also done it for the benefit of myself. So marking is often overwhelming for me. So if there's the option to do group presentations or YouTube videos, I can mark those things faster than I could like a 100-page essay. I like to mark things online, where I have access to spellcheck and grammar check, because the like significant learning disabilities, if I had to do it with like pen and paper, I don't know that it would translate as well. So again, like my own accommodations create supports and differences for my students.

Josie: Mhmm. So you've kind of both touched on, like, one potential here is to make space for more diverse and pluralistic ways of knowing, and to actually bring that into the classroom, and to make that valid. Could you maybe expand a little bit more about what that would look like?

Arley: I mean, I can expand like, in my, in my sort of own practice, a lot of my pedagogy involves, I guess, as Sam said, sort of offering multiple ways of accessing, you know, materials. A lot of it also involves collaboration with students

and really working with students to say, "Okay, what do we all need to be successful here?" Like, what are the, what are the things that are going to help us learn, in this community, this moment, this group of students. And I also think with my work and kind of creating open textbooks, the nice thing about doing some of the open pedagogy projects where I'm co designing with students, is that it also helps me kind of test my own assumptions. So for example, my students this semester are creating—we decided that we want to create an instruction book, because it covers a lot of the learning outcomes of the class. And it was interesting to sort of see it evolve, where I had sort of thought initially it would be a kind of a more traditional, like, everyone's going to kind of write on the same topics. But it was interesting to see the project emerge, and how students really wanted to create lessons that they had learned from the pandemic. And so we actually turned that into an alternative assignment where they could write reflection letters to their pre-pandemic selves and reflect on what they learned and why. And you know how some of them—even though I hadn't explicitly said, like, I had expected to get a bunch of letters in a written format—many of them produced videos, some of them produced cartoons. Like really, really kind of making space for that beautiful work and giving students permission to... That they have some agency and that they can transform learning. You know, I think sort of on the basic level as well, with my textbook, is trying to involve student narratives and really centre disabled people as well. So I have tried really hard in my open textbook to de-centre whiteness specifically. So you know, if I am adapting something, I'm trying to take out sort of the more like, "We have to learn ethos, pathos, and logos." And, you know, make space for different types of scholars and the scholars from outside the Academy. I got a grant to work with someone from the Kwantlen Nation to share about how she uses the seven teachings of the Kwantlen Nation in her business practices. So really trying to kind of disrupt what a textbook is supposed to be, and think hard about what knowledges I am valuing, and which ones I'm upholding. And like, I'm also making room for the fact that I'm not perfect, like, I try to talk a lot about failure. And, you know, times when it's like, "Oh, I gotta get this textbook thing done, I got to teach it," and looking back and being like, oh, shoot, I actually included tables there. And that's not a super accessible format. I need to go back and fix that. So, you know, I think a lot more attention to thinking about failure and making space for failure, and making space for— the learning might not happen in the step and the ways that I expected to happen. So it might not happen in 13 weeks, we might need an incomplete contract to extend it. It might not happen in the middle of the semester, but it might happen towards the end. Like just thinking—trying to be willing to disrupt systems.

Samantha: Yeah, I tend to agree with a lot of that. I think for me, too, like the recognizing that inclusion and accessibility aren't necessarily going to be a destination. Like it's constantly going to be in flux, depending on, like, who shows up to the classroom.

Josie: Mhmm. Absolutely. Arley, do you want to share a little bit about the UDL project that you're working on?

Arley: Yeah, so I am working with Lilach Marom and Seanna Takacs. Seanna Takacs is a UDL specialist, and they're both wonderful colleagues of mine. And so we are working on—there's a lot of UDL guides that are kind of, "Here's how you implement UDL." And we wanted to take more of a narrative approach. So our resources going to first foreground the experience of disabled students. You know, I think that often— When BCcampus hosted that Studio20 and I had hosted a panel of disabled students talking about their experiences. And, you know, when you uplift the voices of disabled students as experts and learners who are navigating these systems that are hostile to them, I think it really, you know, you can really learn a lot from their expertise. You know, that students are able to talk about all of the things they do in order to thrive in these systems that aren't necessarily set up for them. You know I think that's an important perspective to have. So the goal is that the students will be— We'll be paying them to sort of share these stories in whatever format is accessible for them. They can kind of create whatever they want. But we're also going to be sharing stories of student teachers who are navigating UDL to just give that richness as sort of, what challenges are they coming up with? How is their understanding shifting? Really taking a kind of story approach. And we'll be building it in a WordPress site, so that people can move through it in the way that is right for them. So you can do it as kind of a traditional module. But you can also say, like, I just want to read the stories about from the students, or I really want to just read the student teacher story. So that the idea is to again, complicate, you know, who we centre as an expert? That, you know, we could centre students as experts and value that expertise.

Josie: Yeah. I'm really excited to see what you— what you all pull together. I think it really fills a gap, for sure. So maybe as a final question to wrap us up, given your experiences, what are your dreams for education to make it more inclusive?

Arley: I mean, I think my main dream is, is just getting people to really think about what systems need to be disrupted. You know, I think, obviously, the pandemic highlighted a lot of these systems. And it's been really interesting to see some faculty kind of going in the direction of, "Okay, I've— You know, I'm going to be more sort of compassionate. Or I'm going to, you know, take up these UDL principles. Or I'm going to rethink how I do it." And others just really feeling that fear and trying to say, "No. We have— I have to do exactly what I did face to face in this online environment. It has to be exactly the same. And I have to use proctoring software." And, you know, really kind of looking for that control. Like I think it... My hope is that we are able to make systems that are more equitable. And like, I think often a lot of the conversations about teachers should do this to students. But, you know, it is often, you know, how do we do this without burning people out? You know, how do we do this in a sustainable way? You know, I think a lot about, for example, we don't have a degree in applied communications at Kwantlen. And so everyone I teach are students where it's either an elective or it is

a required course that's outside of their major. And so when you are the person who is giving the extensions and providing, you know, the feedback and the flexibility and the patience, you're doing that in the system that is often where other professors are more inflexible. And so you're taking kind of the full burden. You're the one who students are coming to when they have mental health crises, or... And so, how do we sort of spread that load out? Because right now I see that there's a small percentage of faculty who are doing a lot of this work, and often they're precarious. How do we spread that load out? How do we value that work? How do we value the care work that's going on in higher education? How do we compensate faculty for this work? How do we do it in tenure? How do we make it so that it is, you know, supporting adjunct faculty? Like I think that right now is sort of, the focus is like, you can do this in your own teaching practice. But I would love, my dream would be to move to a system where some of the systemic barriers are removed, rather than me just having to be like, "Sure, here's an extension. Here, you can do this, you can do that." So that it's more equitably distributed.

Samantha: That was really good, Arley. That was very eloquent. I would really like to see like a disruption of like, stereotypical or traditional elitism in post-secondary education. Snd I think open education and the themes of this podcast really speak to that, that disruption. And it's interesting that you're from the inclusive design master's program, because one of the things that was really impressive to me about how that program is designed, although it may have changed, is they're not necessarily looking for someone with like, the highest grades or a master's degree. They're looking for someone who is passionate about design and has had an interesting life and like, cool things to share with their community. And I, I like that disruption of stereotypical elitism, because I think there's such value in welcoming other voices to the discourse, who are not necessarily going to perform, like, "student" well, or like the hallmarks of someone who is like, quite academic or book-smart. I think about for myself, like, I made it and it was good. But I had a lot of professors and teachers who were really engaged with like, the ideas I was thinking, and were able to, like, not focus on the fact that my grammar was terrible til I did my masters, or like, I still can't spell, and I'm gonna be 15 minutes late every class. And I think about— there are so many people who just never get to engage with all of these emancipatory concepts and ideas or think about their disability differently because they don't perform "student," or because they don't... There's an individual I'm thinking of an Ontario, whose sole reason for not being able to access post-secondary education is that the amount of work they would have to do to coordinate public transportation to the school they go to is it's too much, like it's, it's a suburb of Toronto. So, he has to take the suburb paratransit to the Toronto paratransit to the other side of Toronto where there's another paratransit system. And it's just, it's too much. And I think there's such value in disrupting that elitism. So more people can think deep thoughts about society and how we organize things. And that's, that's I think, what is most exciting about open education and some of the work that Arley and I do.

[Theme music]

Josie: In the show notes I have linked to Arley's OER called *Business Writing for Everyone* and also a recent piece that she published in *Voices of Practice*, which is titled "An Incomplete History of My Teaching Body" which I would highly recommend.

You can learn more about this podcast at knowledgespectrums.opened.ca. On the website, you can find all episodes and transcripts, along with many other resources and information related to this project.

You can connect with me on Twitter @josiea_g and you can tweet about the podcast using the hashtag #OKSPodcast

I record this podcast on the traditional and unceded territories of the ləkʷəŋən Peoples, now known as the Songhees and Esquimalt Nations, and the territories of the W̱SÁNEĆ Peoples.

The theme song is "Cool Upbeat Hip Hop Piano" by ItsMochaJones on freesound.org and shared under a Creative Commons Attribution License.

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This has been Open Knowledge Spectrums. Thanks for listening.

[Music fades out]

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