



## ADVERTISEMENT:

### HOST:

Most of the discussion when it comes to education these days is whether students should be in classrooms or learning virtually, but who they are learning from is an ongoing issue, one that needs to be fixed at the root level. Or it will continue to effect both learners and teachers post-pandemic.

Who is teaching? Who gets to go to University? Who gets tenure? And who is leading academia?

This is the Conversation Piece. Here is Deb Saucier, President and Vice-Chancellor of Vancouver Island University.

### DEB SAUCIER:

The federal government defines four groups that they would target over the last 20 years or so for equity, diversity and inclusion. And these include women, people of colour, uh, individuals with disability and Indigenous people. So, I'm going to tell you right now, as a woman, Indigenous person and a scientist, I check off a lot of HR boxes for you. So, you know, as the president of a university, then, uh, because I exist, universities must be doing a great job.

But really how are we doing well?

In the 2016 census, we found out that 41% of all Canadian women have a baccalaureate degree. And actually for the first time ever women get more than half of all PhDs in Canada. And that really is the table stakes to become me. You have to have a PhD to get a job in the academy, and then you go through the ranks and away you go and you become me. So, we're obviously doing really well because we have an Indigenous woman president in front of you. Well, I'm going to tell you that at the entrance to academia, women are about 50/50 with men. But by the time you get to the highest level of academia, that is the, uh, full professor hahaha. Um, that ratio is three to one. There are three times as many men as there are women full professors in Canada. There are about 11,500 full professors in Canada, and there are about 3,500 women.

Now, to be a university president, you have to be a full professor. So, let's say that the three to one ratio holds. So, obviously there are then of the 96 universities in Canada. There are obviously 32 women presidents because there's a three to one ratio.



There are not.

There are about 20 or 21 at any given time women presidents in Canada. And you say, "well, you know, Deb, this is just a recent thing, associate professors become full professors, become presidents." And I'm here to tell you that that number hasn't changed since 1996.

So why?

Where are the women going? You will have heard about the leaky pipeline. I'd actually like to say that actually, you know, we have not a leaky pipeline, but rather a glass steeple chase. And that is that we know that there are differences in women's willingness to apply for jobs, especially if they don't think they're a hundred percent qualified. We know that there are differences in letters of reference for women compared to men. Women are team players and nice; men are brilliant and independent. We know that there are differences in how we evaluate success. If you put my name on a vitae and send it out to our grant application, I'm 17% less likely with exactly the same vitae to get the money that somebody with a man's name on it would have.

And on top of it all, people of colour, disabled people, and women, are evaluated more harshly by their students.

As well we heard, uh, one of our other speakers talk about unrecognised service. If you are a woman faculty member, you do all kinds of service that's not even recognised as such. But enough about us, because actually you haven't heard me speak about any of the three other groups. And what I'm here to tell you is, is that in fact, we don't collect those data or if we do those numbers are so small, we can only tell you about them in very large pieces.

So, what I would like to say is that actually, maybe the pipeline isn't broken and the glass steeple chase is there, but many of us jump over it. Rather. I think there's a problem with who gets to go to university or college. Most of the people in front of you here today know that a baccalaureate is table stakes for what you do. So we know that the best and the brightest get to go to university, right? That's cool. And we encourage Indigenous people to go to university. What about Indigenous women? Well, yeah, we should do that. What about Indigenous women with four children under 10?



What about an Indigenous woman with four children under 10, who is living with the legacy of residential school? What about the same woman who has an undiagnosed reading problem? What about the same woman who was diagnosed at birth with foetal alcohol syndrome?

Many of us recognise that for many people in the middle, there is an issue with maybe finances, time resources, etc. But for people with cognitive disabilities or other types of disabilities, university, or post-secondary might be impossible.

Even for those with physical disabilities, let me just tell you shortly that VIU from its top to its bottom, because we're on a hill has 409 stairs.

From the very top to the bottom. And I'll tell you when I'm at the bottom, I'd like to funicular. 409 stairs is a lot of cardio. But that being said, that's a physical barrier to going to VIU.

We know we have an ageing society. We know that ageing people are going to need different supports at universities than others. We know that we need to, as we move to full employment in Canada include people who haven't been included in university before.

And so I'd like to offer you a radical proposal. How about we democratise post-secondary? Change about how we think about who gets to go to university. And we can do that by changing delivery modes, to remote locations, just in time programming, dual credit.

I can tell you I'm tickled that VIU with its dual credit programmes. We have a number of students who graduate VIU before they finished high school. By focusing on barriers to inclusion, by changing our hiring practises through unconscious bias training and the like we can actually change who is on university campuses. And by developing programmes like our West programme, which is aimed at including people with all kinds of cognitive disabilities in university programming, partnering with our communities, we can change who gets to go to university and thereby change, who you get to hire. Many, many of our people, uh, at VIU can demonstrate great success. And I'll tell you about that at break if you'd like. I can go on and on and on, but I have four seconds. So how would I say this universities typically are defined by who they exclude, who doesn't get to go to them. I'm proud to say at VIU, we define ourselves by who we include. Thank you so very much.



HOST: Deb Saucier spoke at The Walrus Talks Inclusion in 2019, and she's just one of the over 800 fantastic Canadians who have walked, wheeled and webcammed onto a stage at The Walrus Talks.

If you enjoyed this podcast, consider donating to The Walrus. We are a registered charity that relies on our community of donors and sponsors to produce compelling journalism, events and podcasts. Learn more about how your support can make an impact at [thewalrus.ca/donate](http://thewalrus.ca/donate).