MM: Welcome to the fifth episode of the Conversational Métis Sash. This episode took place virtually with substitute teacher and doctoral student, Dana Chaulk. Dana is an emerging Métis scholar and experienced classroom teacher that cares deeply about supporting her community all in Métis-based ways. In this episode, Dana expands on how she applied what she learned from listening to the previous podcast episodes of Dr. Jennifer Markides, Dr. Lucy Delgado, Dr. Yvonne Poitras-Pratt, and Dr. Laura Forsythe. She applied everything that she learned into her pedagogies, practices, and overall life, all amplifying Métis-specific outcomes in addressing Truth Before Reconciliation and combating settler colonialism, as well as other findings. Maarsii for joining us.

Kih-chi maarsii so much, Dana, for being able to join me today. I am so excited to learn about your sharings, about what you have experienced with now listening to the four episodes from all of the doctors of teaching the teachers how to teach First Nations, Métis, and Inuit education, and further how it intercepts within your teaching practices as you teach children and youth, and further within your experiences, too, also being a doctorate student as well. So, I'm really excited for our conversation today. And thank you so much for being able to join me.

DC Well, it's nice to see you again.

MM: I know as Michif, we do best (laughter) to be able to introduce ourselves in our own ways. Would it please be possible if you could please introduce yourself?

DC: Okay, my name is Dana Chaulk. My last name was Sanregret before I got married. And my Sanregret side is the Métis side. My grandmother was a Laliberte. And on the Laliberte side, they had Fishers. And there was a Scottish branch as well. I'm more familiar with my grandfather's side because I've just started doing some research into, into that side of the family. My grandfather's side was Carrier and Grant, Ross, and Collins, I believe.

So I'm kind of starting a project looking into the experiences of those relatives. My father died quite young. He was 51. So, we didn't learn a lot about the Métis culture because at that time, in the early 2000s, it wasn't really a time of talking and discussing. And an aunt of mine, she said that as she was growing up, it was even more so not a conversation to be had in public or with other relatives present. So still in that hidden Métis history.

I've been teaching for over 20 years. And I taught in First Nations communities. I taught in a behaviour specialist capacity. So, an inclusive education with students with diverse needs. And that was my focus in university as well. And when I did my master's, I was also involved with learning about neurodiversity and how to help students, given the increasing complexity within classrooms that I was seeing. So, the majority of my career was working with ELL students. Which was very interesting because these students and the families were recent immigrants to Canada. So, they didn't have the background that support a systemic racist attitude.

MM: Mmmm.

DC: So, learning about First Nations, Métis, and not Inuit as much because it's not one of my strengths of knowledge. They were very open to all experiences that we were able to provide. And so, as the only Métis teacher in the school, I was the only one who was bringing in different cultural experiences for the students.

MM: Wow.

DC: But I was supported. And administration supported pretty much every idea I came up with or I came up with as a part of a team. And we also approached it from physical activity and artistic endeavours.

MM: Wow, what were some of the artistic examples, if any comes up to your mind?

DC: Well, we brought in the 'We Are Treaty People' play. And then the teachers followed up. So I don't know if you were ever in Alberta at the time when that play was being presented.

MM: Was it the making of Treaty 7?

DC: It was, yes.

MM: Oh, brilliant. Okay, yes.

DC: We Are Treaty People

MM: Yes, yes (with laughter).

DC: And it really brought that information, like the social studies teachers said, it really brought that information to life for the students.

MM: Yeah.

DC: You know, and they were coming at this from unprejudiced, unbiased views because they weren't aware of Canadian history. So, it was very interesting. I also did an art project with a grant from the Alberta Fine Arts. And it involved bringing a First Nations artist, Lana Whiskeyjack, into the school.

MM: Oh wow.

DC: And using her documentary, 'Lana Gets Her Talk'. We used that documentary to do a parallel project. She used art to express her feelings, emotions, experiences, and story of a relative of hers. So, in Grade 8, they were able to look at their personal histories, talk to their family, and kind of identify who they wanted their art piece to be about or what they wanted a piece of art to be about. And to show their connection to their heritage. So, Lana came in and she taught them the skills. So, the application process, how to paint, how to prepare your canvas, and all the things necessary to do a painting. And then also provided that background information and connection to her documentary.

MM: Ohhhh.

DC: Another technical expert in our school, and someone with an education technology background, she put it all together in a video.

MM: Brilliant.

DC: Which was amazing. Yes. And it really showed that connection. So, using that, like paralleling their experiences as newcomers to Canada with struggles that First Nations people are having. Because there's trauma on both sides and/or changes, family changes, you know, like big, big events happening in these little people's lives. That might not be happening in your average student.

MM: Right.

DC: So it was very good. We also did a hoop, a hoop dancing workshop.

MM: Oh, fun.

DC: Yeah. So, every class was able to learn a hoop dance. And then we did a round dance at the end with all of their elementary kids.

MM: Love that. Love roundies. That's good (laughter).

DC: Yeah, it was really good. And it was, we were able to incorporate that right when our phys ed program.

MM: Yep.

DC: What I see in other schools is, is not that same effort.

MM: Mmmm.

DC: Like you don't see that same drive to bring culture in and in that kind of a way where it's an extended learning experience.

MM: Right. I'm looking forward to, to further extending what you're sharing by this too. But in relation to all of your educational experiences, what have been the grades that you have previously taught, but also have taught recently as well?

DC: Primarily, I have focused in division one and two. So recently I was teaching in a Grade 2 classroom. And last year I was teaching in a Grade 5/6 classroom.

MM: And what have you been noticing in relation to teaching, you know, the students and say, for example, 5 and 6 about First Nations, Métis, Inuit curriculum compared to Grade 2. How has that been?

DC: With the Grade 5s and 6s, it was, I think, a little more difficult to bring in specific teachings. We used the Seven, the Seven [Grandfather] Teachings as part of a, like an approach to understanding the virtues and how to behave in a community, how to be a community, a positive

community member in the classroom. So, when things were happening, where maybe somebody was not treating somebody else respectfully, you could bring those teachings in. So, I would say that is more how I would apply my knowledge, my experiences of Métis ways of knowing, is more through that connection piece.

MM: Mmmmm.

DC: And not necessarily applied within curriculum. So, with Grade 2s, the curriculum is connected to Métis history and First Nations histories because they study community groups and how communities work together, as well as some of the historical events of the area where they live and nearby areas. So, it was a little easier to incorporate activities that were in line with curriculum objectives.

MM: Right.

DC: We also did some practices like a sharing time, usually on Monday mornings and once or twice throughout the week and Fridays, you know, where we would sit together and listen to each other and share, you know, what's happening in our lives. And where they'd have to practice that active listening, and they often showed their caring for each other and actual listening by, you know, I have a cat, and my cat does this. Oh, I have a cat too. And then if someone has a sad story, there's usually a sad story about someone's pet. Then they'd empathize with their, oh yeah. And I know my, my Kukum's cat also died last weekend. And by giving them the opportunity to talk to each person, have an opportunity to talk and then to be able to respond to each other.

MM: Mmmhmm.

DC: I think that is a, is a good way of, of fostering that understanding of *wahkotowin*.

MM: I love that. I love that. That's such a realistic way to employ our values inside this way. I really appreciate you sharing this and even the applicable process of it too, and how it worked, and also how the kids responded.

DC: Mmmhmm. They were a little more drawn in when you connected the curriculum content to where they were, where they are.

MM: Right.

DC: You know, how they're living and how their parents lived or how their grandparents lived. You know, because I was teaching on a settlement, in a settlement school. So, in Alberta, there's, I think there's eight settlements. So, there's a different experience, right? Being in a group where it's like everybody in the school is Métis versus, well, and I said a few kids may be treaty.

MM: Right.

DC: Like First Nations from a cousin or from a different, there's a lot of First Nations groups and communities around where we live. So, I think it made it more meaningful, like to connect them with events that actually happened, where they live.

MM: Mmmm. It's living history. They're living their history.

DC: Exactly, exactly.

MM: Wow. Thank you for sharing. In relation to all this, too, and from what you've now been expressing as well, what does being Michif mean to you? What does being Métis mean to you?

DC: It's one of those things where I always knew we were Métis, you know, and it was part of who we were, but not the cultural aspect. So, I would say as an adult looking back and as a researcher who's looking into who the Métis were, who the Métis are, and how people are coming to understand themselves as a Métis person. You can identify the ways of being in a community, I think, with like how I was brought up. We weren't brought up to notice the difference in how people looked. So, and where I lived, it was, you know, it was, you had White people and Indigenous people and only the occasional other person from a different culture. So, there wasn't a lot of immigration, a lot of diversity of cultures in the community where I grew up. But I, I never had any other experience than, well, people are people. It doesn't really matter what they look like. It's, you know, everybody's treated the same. It doesn't matter who your friends are. And so, I didn't under, I didn't really even understand what racism was [Dana is speaking from this time and her experience, she is aware of what racism was and is to this day and the privileges afforded to those who are White and/or White-passing]. You know, you know, the definition, but I hadn't seen it or experienced it while I was growing up.

So, coming into a deeper understanding of Métis identity and culture in the past few years has allowed me to be reflective of that experience. And understand that, okay, it is like, we were always with cousins. We were always visiting. We were, you know, we always went to church and then went to grandma's house. So being connected to our relatives was, was important to my parents. And so, it was a way of life for us. And then also for me, relationships in classrooms has always been important to me. And I've always had relationships with everyone that I work with, you know, and I'm kind of a quiet, shy person initially. And then, you know, as soon as the door is open, then I'm, you know, I'm available to talk (MM laughter). So, the people I would see most often would be people in my grade team and the caretakers at the school. And my kids had a relationship because I, when you're first teaching, you spend a lot of time at the school. And when my kids were little, they, they were, they had relationships with the caretakers at the school.

MM: Riiight.

DC: You know, which might not be common. But I'm like, these are the people that, that help me in my life. And these are the people that we connect with. And so, you know, I'm hoping that when they're adults, they'll reflect on us too. That, oh, hey, we're just friends with people. And

we're kind to people because we value everybody and what they bring to your conversations. Because everybody has different experiences.

MM: Mmmm, I love that because it's really just treating everyone equally, treating everyone equitably, even. But also understanding who is actually a part of your school community as well. And it really is everyone too. It is the caretakers. It's the janitorial staff. It's also the bus drivers. It's, you know, it's, it's everyone. Not, not only just the admin too, of course, and the folks at the front office, but it's also the teachers, of course, too. But it really is everyone and everything.

DC: Yeah, and if you're, if you have that openness, then, then you, you have a deeper understanding of who belongs in your school. Because oftentimes, like in the schools that I've been at, the secretaries, the education assistants, all the support staff often come from the community. So, in developing relationships with everybody, you get a better understanding of, of how the community, what the community values. And I think you find more reciprocity where people will be more willing to help you out with how to approach things that might be tricky. You know, like if, if you're going along on a mission of connecting with somebody to solve a problem, and you have these relationships with your staff, with this other staff members, you get the value of awareness if you might approach something in the wrong way.

MM: Mmmmm.

DC: So, even though they're Métis, I'm Métis, there may be something that is a better way of doing things that I wouldn't have learned, except for the fact that I have had multiple conversations with different staff members. They know that they know that they can tell me, “Hey, when you're talking to this person, you may want to do it in person, or you may want to make a phone call because they, they prefer to talk over the phone. They do not like to come into the school.”

MM: Yeah. What being Métis means to us.

DC: Yeah.

MM: And this is what it means, is community, it's-

DC: It's relationships.

MM: Exactly. And meeting others where they're also at, but also having that opportunity within oneself to also learn more, and be respectful of that and be accountable to that too. That's also what I'm envisioning from what you're sharing too, is the accountability metric as well.

DC: Right. And they also learn about you as a person. Like, I, when I first started in this school, I had a, a volatile experience with a parent because they didn't know who I was. And, and, and assumptions were made that I wasn't understanding of whatever it was that this student was going through. And, and so, over time, they came to know who I am as a person, and that I was talking with the student because I care about the student.

You know, initially, you, you come in without any assumptions, and so your job is to help support what they're learning. You know, if people are going through something else, like, because I replaced a teacher, the child was feeling that loss of that person. And so, they weren't eager to accept me in their place.

MM: Right.

DC: You know, so, once they figured out that, you know, I want you to do your work, because I want you to be learning, and I'm here to help you in whichever way is going to help you. And then our relationship, I was able to, you know, like, help that relationship to grow. And I think that's something that that teachers have to face is that some, some parents will have had a negative experience with other teachers. And so, or they're not used to teachers that are available to build relationships.

MM: Mmmhmm.

DC: You know, like, some teachers might be all business, I guess, where they're not ready to meet the kids where they're at. And so, it's hard to, hard to do that right away, to try to figure out where kids are at when you, when you step into a role, like a mid, a mid-year role. Because, so that's what I had to do last year, was I stepped into a mid-year role, and trying to, for everybody to, to figure out how, how we learn best. Yeah, it was, it was complicated.

MM: Yeah.

DC: It was complicated. And so, by valuing the relationships, it was, you know, eventually ironed itself out. Speaking with the parents and letting them know, like, “I care about your child. You know, I know I'm new to the situation, but as a teacher, my first, I take a job because I want to help. I want to help a student learn.” I want to help the teacher or whoever was working with the students before. I'm not, I'm not, I'm not starting something to change something, you know, but I have to figure out what's, how they were learning, what they were doing before in order to, to move forward. So…

MM: To know how to help them.

DC: To know how to help them. Yeah.

MM: Brilliant.

DC: Yeah.

MM: Wow. Thank you so much for sharing that experience too, and how you were able to also come through it with the parent, it's sounding. After that trust was then built and created and honoured.

DC: And it was very different from working in the school with families from other countries, countries where the teacher was the automatic authority and it was harder to get them to, to even talk about themselves. Right. a different, a completely different situation. And I mean, it's a valuable experience that I can look, see both sides at parents that question everything, and the parents that accept everything when you're hoping for somebody who's in the middle, where they, they want to work with you to, to help their child or help their grandchild. Yeah.

MM: Wow. Thank you. Well, I feel as though you've already answered this already within some of the responses you've also been sharing, but in what ways do you infuse your Michif cultural identity into your teaching practices and or teaching philosophy?

DC: It's the relationship building piece and flexibility and adaptability, being understanding of the fact that all students are not coming to your class with the same experiences with the same knowledge, and so teaching in a way that allows the students to be themselves. And to guide students in a caring way.

So, I guess putting the, the child as a person first over the pressure of achieving your curriculum objectives and your, um, meeting all of your teaching professional goals. And this is as an experienced teacher, more easily able to balance that.

As a first-year teacher, I would say it was more difficult to find that balance between all the pressures of, of delivering the curriculum and ensuring that your students are reaching the goals and that you've assessed them appropriately to, to make sure that they're learning what they need to learn versus spending the time in getting to know the students as people. So, I think that's something that I didn't have a hard time with, but I did have to - it is a skill that you have to learn, you know, because you can't do too much of one and not enough of the other.

MM: Balance.

DC: Balance, yeah. I, and I think that's, that would probably be the biggest, the, if I had to pick one word, one word to describe my teaching philosophy, it would be balance.

MM: Oh, I love that. I love that. So, what would good balance look like for you then (laughter of MM)?

DC: Good balance? Well, ordinarily I would spend time, you spend time in the morning, you spend time after a break, where you have a chance to talk to somebody who wants to be talked to (laughter of MM and DC). Knowing that this is not, this student is not the one who's going to want to talk to you right now.

MM: Yeah.

DC: Or this student is the one who will talk to you when you're in this space. I've been lucky in the fact that I haven't had to struggle with more than 25 kids in a class.

MM: Yeah.

DC: So, and the classes, the classes at the school I've been at recently have been considerably smaller. So, you're able to get to know a lot, a lot, the students a lot more quickly. And I think it's important, as a, if you're in that situation where you're teaching more students is to find activities that provide that balance between emotional, social connections and learning and skill-building activities. So, finding that balance so that they have the opportunity to actually show how they're learning.

You know, some kids, they learn by, by writing out what they see or drawing what they see or discussing what they,

MM: Yeah.

DC: What they're doing. And some of them do better with talking with their peer, with their friends. And you have to be able to trust that they're talking about what they're learning and not, and not, you know, talking about what they're doing on the weekend.

MM: Right (laughter).

DC: Yeah. So. And balancing also, like, there's a lot of good education pedagogies that involve the brain breaks and the physical, the social and your physical, academic, emotional, like you're - the parts of the person.

MM: Right.

DC: So, that's another way of balancing your practice. Or I balance my practice as attending to the fact that, you know, a person is not just one thing. They have multiple aspects that need to be, multiple needs that need to be met. So, it's a reason for time to talk to each other. A reason for letting somebody have time alone or, or put their (ring chimes from phone) head down because, you know, that they've had something going on at home. And they just can't deal with any more pressure or any more learning. They're not learning. So, you may as well give them that space to deal with the pressing need in their life.

MM: Yeah. Within your space. I see what you mean. Yeah, offering that safety.

DC: Well, because, you know, like, if someone is acting out of character, you know, like, there's somebody who's usually talkative or whatever, but they're withdrawn. Then, when you know your students, you can recognize that. You can support by giving them space or giving them their time and attention.

MM: Right.

DC: And then, and then a personal balance. You're balancing what your family life is, how your family life is, with how much energy you're spending at school. So, you have to have also that personal, that personal balance. And that's something that listening to the podcasts brought, brought, was brought to my attention as, as somebody who's teaching other teachers that you

don't stretch yourself too thin. You know, you have to try to find that balance between supporting other teachers and supporting yourself so that you can continue doing the work.

MM: Right.

DC: And not face, you know, too much stress and you can't do it anymore. So, and teachers, I think there's a lot of different ways teachers are going at this point in our education system where some teachers are burning out and some teachers are not putting in, putting themselves as much into the job. They're doing it. They're treating it as a job rather than as their profession, if you know what I mean.

MM: Oh, oh, interesting. I've never heard it formed in that way. Job versus profession. And where there's profession, there's passion.

DC: Right. Exactly.

MM: Interesting.

DC: Mmmhmm. And, the people that live to teach may burn themselves out more quickly than the people that teach for, “This is what I'm trained to do. This is what I'm doing. This is my job.” And not expending that extra emotional energy. I've seen some teachers balance it well. And, you know, like I've seen all kinds of different approaches to it.

MM: Right.

DC: And teachers that teach for a long time, like the teachers that put in 30 years, often have that ability to balance their passion with their personal care.

MM: Mmmmm.

DC: And I, and I, and I think listening to, I, I think all four of the professional educators, professors, I don't know what you want to call them (laughter of MM), brought that, brought that up where it's like this - when you're doing the work of bringing Métis culture and awareness out to other Métis people and to allies or First Nations, that it is a very big job. It is a very big job. And there can be, there can be a lot of pushback and in certain spaces. So, it's knowing how to ensure that it's being brought into the school, that it is the importance of knowledge and awareness of the First Nations and Métis cultures into our, into our school system is important but if you push too hard, you're not to, you’re not going to be successful.

Some people push hard with the negative aspects, knowledge of residential schools and all of the traumatic events. And a lot of things that I've been learning about recently, the histories of how the West was settled. It's a lot. And you don't also want to just do the surface teaching, you know? So, again, finding that balance and it's a long-term process, right? A long-term process. I think it's important to find, find supports for the teacher by connecting, having like as a Métis teacher, connecting with other Métis teachers, I think is very important to balance your, what your responsibility is, with your actions. What can you do?

MM: Mmmmm.

DC: What can you do to bring about change in a system that's very slow to change? And I drifted off topic again (laughter).

MM: Very still on topic. You're just beautifully weaving through the questions, I feel, which naturally occurs. Because they're all connected (laughter of both MM and DC). But you've also already mentioned some key teachings that you've listened to through the four conversations previous to this one. Being with Dr. Lucy Delgado, Dr. Jennifer Markides, Dr. Yvonne Poitras Pratt, and, of course, Dr. Laura Forsythe. So, with these previous conversations and intertwining from you listening to now us holding this conversation, because you had some time to play and to learn and to take away each aspect of each of those previous conversations into your personal practices, your pedagogies, all these beautiful things. So, I'm really curious to learn. What did you take from each conversation with the teacher educators? And further, how have you applied each conversation into your teaching practices?

DC: I think one of the key things is bringing awareness into your classroom of where Métis history, knowledge, and values, where they fit in during your day. So, how can you bring that into your... Bringing awareness to your students in a gentle way? You're not, you know, want to be, you know, oh, well, "That's a Métis way of doing this," to every situation.

So, with kindergarteners, I found that bringing stories of Métis with Métis content helped a lot because you're not dealing with the deep, the deeper history or explaining what the values are is a little bit above where they're thinking, maybe. So, teaching through stories, I think, was helpful with that Grade 1 and kindergarten age students.

With the Grade 2s, you could be a little bit more direct. And like I said, we had... They learn about Métis culture as a historical connection between their community now and their community in the past. And I would use resources from Rupertsland Institute. They have a lot of good resources for that age group. And if it's funny, they're even more engaged. So, they have some videos that help kids to understand language was the... Was one focus that we had while I was teaching was a combination of Cree and Michif words because the area is, is more like a Métis Cree community. So, then we could bring some of those Cree words into the classroom. *Astam.* 'Come. Come here', or I want to say *apiw*. That's 'to sit'. And the colour words. I guess that was another one they used was colour words. Bringing language in as this is a language of the Métis of your community.

MM: So, from Dr. Delgado's conversation...

DC: Oh, okay.

MM: What would be a key takeaway?

DC: From the podcast with Dr. Delgado, Dr. Lucy (laughter of MM), one thing I connected with that was something that I also applied in my teaching, but I applied to myself, was her discussion about the Métis Finishing School.

MM: Yeah.

DC: And how embracing my growth as ah, of cultural awareness, I also embraced a lot of the textile arts.

MM: Mmmmm.

DC: So, learning how to bead became a way that I dealt with my stress. And with, you know, when I'm home and I need a breather, I need to take time for myself, I often bead or I do embroidery. I also have, or sew, hand sew, and I find it as a very calming practice. So, when I was teaching the older students, we did some beading, we did some embroidery, and some sewing in their CTF classes. It's their option classes.

MM: Yeah.

DC: And all the teachers kind of decide what skill you're going to teach a group of kids, and you teach it with different age groups.

MM: Yeah.

DC: So, I think it was the Grade 7s that they engaged really well with the embroidery. And so, and the whole thing, like, felt reminiscent of sewing circles that I had read about.

MM: Ahhhhh.

DC: Sewing circles with, you know, how Métis women would have gotten together to create their work. They wouldn't have done it in isolation.

MM: Right.

DC: And so, watching the kids, we had a video also that was kind of showing different ways to embroider flowers. And while we're doing this, and I'm like, okay, we've got to learn to embroider your name on your work. And there's different conversations being held as we're, because it's something that you have to do slowly. It's the same thing you're doing over and over again. So, your mind is free, and your mouth is free…

MM: Right.

DC: To have conversations with your classmates. So, it was, so everybody was visiting.

MM: Ahhh I love that.

DC: So, it was like an opportunity to visit while learning a skill. It was really fun. And there's usually one student who is super keen on, on what you're doing. And so, I was able to get to that,

to know that student more because she was interested in learning how to, like, she was kind of moving past the beginning level and doing, you know, wanting to know how to do a few different things.

MM: Right.

DC: So, she sat with me instead of with her classmates. And so, we visited while we, while I showed her how to do some other techniques.

MM: I love that.

DC: Yeah. So, there's a place for the Métis Finishing School (laughter of MM and DC).

DC: Then you can bring it in.

MM: That's right. That's right.

DC: Yeah.

MM: Thank you for sharing that. And then from Dr. Markides, what was, what was really key from that conversation?

DC: From her conversation, it was that idea of incorporating Métis activities whenever, wherever it fits in.

MM: Right.

DC: So, if you're doing your brain break, why not do it through jigging? You know, why not bring in a game that's, you know, related to, to a historical game of Métis origins.

MM: Right.

DC: I can't think of one now other than jigging (laughter of MM). But, but incorporating those Métis activities within the classroom and understanding if someone's taught you something, then it's your responsibility to pass that knowledge on. I had learned to bead through a workshop with Métis women. And so, I took that time to, you know, teach some of the older students about, about beading. And when you learn something, it's important to pass it on when you have an opportunity.

MM: Thank you for sharing that. And for Dr. Poitras Pratt?

DC: From what she was talking about, that ability to be, to have the courage to introduce new things. Like the courage to try new things that you might not be personally good at, but to acknowledge your Métis-ness. And not be afraid to bring your understandings into, into your spaces with your colleagues or with students.

In a different situation, I think I would be able to apply some of that more easily. When you're in a new situation, like she also mentioned about not pushing too hard or not creating, not

animosity, but a negative feeling. You don't want to foster that negativity when you're trying to encourage people to try new things that are founded in a, in a belief or practice that, that comes from a Métis background. For example, if you're looking at the history of, let's say, road allowance, road allowance communities. You might not bring the most horrific events into the conversation without laying some groundwork. So, lay the groundwork of the fact that road allowances existed, and this is what they were. Or maybe bring in, oh, well, this, this Métis scholar is doing work in this area. And this is what they found, rather than bringing attention to the fact that some communities were packed up on a train and, and had their communities burnt down. So I'm not saying don't tell that, but give some of the background first. And I, I think that was sage advice. Just the fact of bringing people into knowledge, not forcing them into it.

MM: I deeply appreciate that distinction as well. Cause we want folks to understand our histories in the ways that we also feel comfortably and safely to also tell them within, especially as Michif. Cause it's also traumatic on us to also retell and retell and retell.

DC: Mmmhmm.

MM: So, we ought to be very mindful of even the way that we present information to others and ensuring that it's also not necessarily in pain-based narratives, but rather in our brilliance and in our ability to be resistors to colonialism. That's why it's the resistance. And the resistance is almost still occurring to this day…

DC: It is, it is…

MM: … in our own ways, right?

DC: Yeah. And you see that with how the legal aspect of certain things are evolving, where Métis people were impacted by, by similar events as First Nations people, but they're not treated equally. So, and the same with, if you look at like some, I was speaking with my aunt about the impact, how her parents experienced residential schools. And the fact that it was a choice for them, you know, it was a choice whether they attended or not attended, they did not have to attend. So, and there's history behind that, why it was a choice for Métis versus First Nations people. So, and the fact that every Métis experience is, is so different, right? You have, there's so much difference between the experiences of Métis people. My guess is because of all of the mobility, people moving, you know, from, from different locations across Canada, that their experiences are not the same. Métis were not wanted. They, sometimes they just felt forced to pack up and move on to some other location. Yeah. I think it's, it's important to bring awareness in your classroom and with your colleagues in a mindful way. And I think listening, listening to [Doctor] Yvonne made it more understandable of how you could approach this in a good way.

MM: Thank you. Thank you for sharing. And for Dr. Laura Forsythe, what were, what were some key takeaways even from, from her conversation?

DC: For me, it was the reciprocity. And I, I find that I've, like, I've always taken on student teachers. So, I've always had that kind of in a, in my personal choices, my professional choices, that if I can give back, I do give back. If I can teach something, I teach something. You know, if I can support a colleague with something, then I, then I do.

It was interesting to, to hear how that connects with the, with the Métis history, with Métis values and, you know, how it's part of who I am and, and strongly connects with this community, with the Métis community. And then not one and done. Right. I don't know if she said that, but that was my feeling from her is that it's a, not a one-and-done thing. You need to come back to it. And then if someone wants more information, then you, you should find the time to try to help, help that person continue with their learning or understanding.

MM: I agree. I, what I also appreciated about her sharing too, is that we ought to be very mindful of the projects we also say yes to because these projects can be like, it could actually be 10 years long (laughter). So, you have to be very thoughtful about your, even your capacities, but also what it means to be a part of community. Cause it might not also be in ways that are open really for you to engage with at all times. Sometimes it's going to be at times that might not work for you time-wise, but you got to do it because you said yes. And that's also your responsibility and your accountability also to and with community. So I thought that was an excellent reminder of even for ourselves and how we engage with each other from this moment, even for moving forward, even in relation to this podcast, this conversation, this community that we're also bridging and building together too. And what I owe to you folks and vice versa, what we owe to each other. So I thought that was just a beautiful. And it's also honoring what you you're sharing too, is this is what it means to be a part of community. It's not always going to be pretty. It's going to be messy and that's okay. That's just what makes us Michif, that's just what makes us, *us*, which is really beautiful.

DC: Well, and I think it's something that could be brought into classrooms as, as a value, as a way of being, right? Because it's not really addressed. Like you focus a lot on, on respect, on caring and kindness, compassion, honesty, you, you focus on, but the reciprocity is not really brought in because it's not really connected with character building, professional development in a general education program, I don't think. And I'm not sure how teachers like new teachers are being educated if they are being brought into character development as part of their learning. I know as coming into different school environments, there is generally a values program in place, a character education. So, I think that being mindful of that reciprocity would be a good way of showing kids a better way of living, a better way of, of interacting with each other. We're not just taking something from somebody and using it. If you're taking something from somebody, then you should feel like, “Well, next time, if I have a chance, I am going to show you that same kindness by sharing with you,” you know, and same with skill-based. Like if you have a student that is as good at solving math problems and they work, somebody who's not good at serving math problems, then you could put those students together again in a situation where the other student might be strong at, you know, another skill and has the opportunity to share that skill

with the person who taught them their math, their math skill. So, making those opportunities for it, for kids to be able to have a reciprocal relationship.

MM: It honours each of our gifts in those ways, too.

DC: Right.

MM: Which is really beautiful. And we also want our kids to feel good about themselves inside this way. Cause this is not only is it beneficial to the person you're helping, but it's also beneficial for you in good ways.

DC: Mmmhmm.

MM: You just help someone out. And that's a beautiful characteristic that we want our kids to take away with them as they graduate too, is to always be mindful of how we help each other and help each other grow. And some people are going to be lacking in other places, but that's where you can come in and support and help support folks within your community in these ways.

DC: Well, you have to foster that feeling because there's the feeling you get from helping somebody else. You can't teach that. You have to provide the opportunity for that person to be able to feel that positive reaction to being able to help somebody else. And then the obligation to do something that you don't want to do. Right. You don't want to do, but it's your responsibility. So, so there, I think there's, there's lots of ways to, to bring attention to that, that, you know, the relationship beyond just the social, social support, but the working relationship within a community.

MM: Mmmm. There's something there. There's something to that.

DC: Mmmhmm. There is. And I think it's, it's that awareness piece, right? Where you, you're aware of, you know, how things work, but putting a, putting a word to it, putting a, not a definition, but something that you can carry forward and teach to somebody else. So you're aware of, you know, you're aware of how, how good relationships are, but you don't say, “Well, my relationship with this person is good because…” You know, “I help them with this and they help me with that.” You just might, “I just like this person.”

MM: Yeah.

DC: And then, and, and the kids are like that. They'll be like, they like somebody or they don't like somebody, but they don't know why. Because they haven't, they haven't thought about what, how did that, how did your positive feelings grow with that person?

MM: Right.

DC: Your positive feelings grow because you, you engaged in something meaningful together.

MM: Right.

DC: So, I think that's listening to the podcast, I think encourages me as an educator to think about things in different ways. So, I would listen to a podcast as I was driving to work. And I would think about, you know, what knowledge this person has presented throughout the day. You might find an opportunity where that makes something click, where you're like, “Oh, I, you know, I understand that better because I can see that happening in this situation.”

MM: I love that. And I also love how you just shared to the, you listen to them as you were going in to work too. Cause then it's really, I don't know. There's something with that even too. Can you, can you share a little bit more about even what that experience looked like?

DC: Where I'm working, I had a good half an hour drive. So, a good half an hour drive. And I had started listening to audiobooks, you know, the previous year. So, so instead I was listening to the podcasts and just kind of cycling through them. And because there's so much to think about, right. There's so much to think about as you're preparing yourself for your day. Right? And I found like, I didn't really listen to them after work. I listened to them as I was going in and I kind of felt uplifted, uplifted and, and “Oh, well, I could do this and this, this would help me to teach them this value or this idea, without being that this is the Métis way.” And also, I could observe things that I'm like, because this is a Métis community in which I was teaching.

MM: Mmmhmm.

DC: I was able to observe the ways that some of the students interacted and be like, “Oh, that's so interesting because that is, that reminds me of, you know, what Dr. Laura was saying about type of relationship” or whatever, you know, whatever.

MM: Right.

DC: I had been listening to that morning or the previous morning, you know, whatever has stuck in my mind. Because I definitely saw differences in, in how the students were interacting there. I found there was more interactions between students of different grade levels.

MM: Yeah.

DC: You know, where they're either playing together or helping each other or talking to each other instead of just with their own peer age groups.

MM: Hmm.

DC: And I saw, I was in another community, a Métis school previously, and it was a similar thing. And I mean, some people might think they're just because they're relatives or cousins, but it's like not, that wasn't always the case.

MM: Right.

DC: It was just, you know, like they, they built relationships between each other, even though they may not have seen each other outside of school, but it was the way it was or the way it is

that there's no separation. If you have a similar interest, then that's a person that you might hang out with.

MM: Right.

DC: And talk with.

MM: Right. Very cool. Very interesting. Thank you so much for sharing. I just have a couple more questions for you, but they're more intertwining to what I also asked the teacher educators, the professors. And I was really curious about what your thoughts now are too, in relation to all of this, because I think we all have a responsibility and an impact in these ways. But what does Truth Before Reconciliation mean to you?

DC: Bringing awareness to the historical events of the past has to be done in a mindful way. So, so that the people that are hearing this, that are, that may be, you know, the descendants of settlers or people, maybe even new to Canada, who aren't aware of these things happening. Understand that you're not putting the blame on them. Right. You're bringing awareness to this is the actual events that happened, and they weren't addressed at the time. They weren't addressed in my time in school. And I think that's another thing is we're not talking about way, way, way, way back in the past. I'm not a super old person. I'm not an Elder. And my experience and what I learned in school was not the truth. It was not what actually happened. And, and it was ignored in the community where I lived. There are residential schools within two hours of where I grew up. And we were not made aware of this happening. And some of it you're not aware of, because how would you tell children that you're so-and-so is in a foster care program because they were taken away from their parents. I knew kids that were not, that were living within foster care, but you just, oh, they're living with somebody else. Like you don't actually understand that they were removed from their family, and they are living with someone else. And that's what the foster care system is.

There was a lot of reasons it was done in the past that were not legitimate. So, I think through, through telling some of the stories and building that knowledge, you can acknowledge that some horrific things have happened. And this is why it's so important for people to be made aware of this history, history, you know, and it's not just about a few different things that are the high news items. There's a lot of history that is not told. So, when possible, if it can be brought to location, your space, where you are, this is where I live. This is where the school exists. And these are the Indigenous communities around the school. These are your nearby neighbours. And this is what happened. And this is how they were brought here, right? This is how these people ended up in this place.

And so, I'm more aware of what's happened in this area, but there's not a lot of resources that are available for teaching that local history of why certain families came to be in certain places. That is where there's more happening. Île-à-la-Crosse in Saskatchewan, St. Paul de Métis. There's some books about those communities, and they're very informative without being triggering of a

lot of traumatic events. So, it's like, yes, there are those events that are a part of the problem, but here's the bigger, the bigger picture of, you know, how, how these people will move from this place to this place. And it wasn't a choice. So, and I think if you are aware of this knowledge, if you do have this knowledge, then you have a responsibility to become a part of helping that reconciliation effort. So that's your responsibility. If you're aware of it and you can come to know more about it, there's a lot of work to be done. So, you know, you can't expect people to go to university and take one Indigenous course and know everything that's happened. And again, you don't have to stretch yourself so, so far and so thin, but you should pick a priority as an educator.

Pick a priority of, you know, this is what I'm going to do in my effort of reconciliation, of bringing the truth and awareness to that I find meaningful. And I think if you can narrow your, your feeling of responsibility, right? If instead of feeling like, well, it's such a huge thing. How can I, what can I do in this huge problem with this huge gap in everybody's understanding, bring it in, bring it in close and see what can you do. What can you do that's manageable that will, you'll be able to balance it in your life? Because like, again, like what Dr. Laura was saying that you're bringing attention to this aspect. Well, you're not going to do a one-and-done. You need to continue with whatever your effort is. If you're focusing on one topic or one aspect of, of the history that concerned you, you know, what can you do to successfully bring awareness or successfully, you know, because you need to feel like you've actually made a difference with what you're doing, you know, a drop in the bucket. Well, what's your cup? You know, like you got a big bucket (laughter of MM). Well, this is my cup and I'm going to fill my cup by___ I feel good when I bring ____. Have a culture club at lunch, and kids that are interested, I do this ___. And then maybe I, I bring in a colleague and say, “Okay, well, you know, I can teach you about this part, and then we can engage in this type of project. And has this connects to this part of the Métis history or culture or identity.”

MM: Right.

DC: Or all of it.

MM: Right (laughter of MM and DC).

MM: The whole kit and caboodle.

DC: Yeah.

MM: Wow. Thank you. I love the idea of just narrowing it down. Cause it can feel so overwhelming. So what a, what a brilliant tip that is I think for listeners who will also be listening to this conversation too, I think that's really notable and thoughtful and hopefully helpful too, for folks. How do you address settler colonialism in curriculum and or within your teaching practices? Or if you do so at all.

DC: It's a difficult concept to understand because it's, it's something that's perpetuated society for so long. And it, and you really have to be reflective of, of your experiences and identify what,

what's the impact of this settler colonialism, because there's so much to it. When you think about what people were taught in school, or if you look at the current curriculum, there is not a lot of attention paid to bringing in First Nations and Métis objectives. I don't think everybody has an understanding of what settler colonialism is. You understand that there's settlers and people came into Canada with the idea that they're starting a new life. And what they were told by the government is, was not in line with reality of how the Indigenous people were pushed around and pushed out of where, of the spaces that they were in. And that the agreements that were made were often not followed through for whatever reason.

You know, like promises were made to help First Nations and Métis people to learn how to farm, how to learn to be sustainable while staying in one location, transitioning from a nomadic lifestyle for, for some people, right. And people were coming in, the settlers were coming in to farm and to, you know, establish their homesteads or to, and creating towns in the process. So I don't know how many people are aware of what that might've looked like, you know, as an Indigenous person, as a Métis person. And I think there's some literature that's available now. There's more kids books that show a little bit of what life was like, but they're not really addressing the fact of pushing of communities out of areas for the settlers to come in because it was wide open spaces and people would move where the, like in a harvesting capacity, moving from one place to another place. And it was a completely different lifestyle than what the people who were coming into Canada were expecting. So, you got two completely different lifestyles that didn't mesh together. So, how do you make the educators aware of this and then be able to apply that to your teaching?

MM: Right.

DC: So as I've been examining resources as a doctoral student, I looked at a lot of different, mostly books, picture books, novels, and different things. And it's like, you can do it. You can bring in a novel that shows, you know, from the perspective of a child, a youth, what it was like when this group of people came into their community, you know, and they had to move. Their other aspect of it is, is how the laws were made and how the schools were structured and how the processes for different things are of a European nature. So, there's kind of that adult way of analyzing things versus how, how can you bring that into your classroom? I think you can bring it in as you go along. And I think in the social studies curriculum, it's, you know, I'm not as familiar with the new curriculum as with previous curriculum. And there was, there was attention paid to like the Iroquois Confederacy, like in Grade 6, where it showed how they made decisions and whatnot, showed that kind of governing structures, like how they did things. I don't know if they, if there's anything similar for, for the area of Western Canada.

MM: Right.

DC: It's such a big gap that it's hard to pinpoint what viewpoint you're using. If you're using the viewpoint of an administrator, then you might be considering different things than as a classroom teacher.

MM: Right. That's a really important perspective. So very policy-based viewpoint based, but further acknowledging the displacement of people's locations, which is ultimately very traumatic.

DC: Right.

MM: As well. But it's such an interesting gap that you also just shared too, where we understand the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, understanding their structures more than even the Métis, or even being shared with, because again, we're geopolitical as peoples. So, wouldn't you think more of our, more curriculum connections would also go towards more of our policies, our politics, how the province of Manitoba was made too, like these…

DC: Exactly.

MM: … these things in relation to it. And that's addressing settler colonialism as well.

DC: Mmmhmmm. Yeah. And I think, I think you could bring it in as a comparison, the development of the Manitoba Act, and then compare it to the structures that are outlined in the curriculum.

MM: So interesting. Thank you. I think a lot, a lot to think about in relation to this.

DC: Mmmhmm.

MM: And ongoing ways.

DC: It's weaving the knowledge through historical events of how things evolved. And the fact that as the settlers came in, the governing structures were kind of torn apart within Métis communities. So, yeah. So, so I, again, like these are huge, huge areas to address that could be scaffolded within the curriculum.

MM: Okay. Dana, I only have two questions left for you. again, this is another question that I've asked everyone as well. But what does the Métis sash mean to you? And, or are there other Métis-based cultural symbols, items, that inspire you value-wise?

DC: It's interesting because listening to the podcasts on how, and everybody's different experiences with the sashes. I was kind of let, in line with, with Dr. Jennifer in that I didn't receive a sash until I graduated from my master's program, and I received my first sash. And so, when I enter spaces of community, community where we're working towards a goal, I will wear my sash and/or I wear another symbol to me, which would be, you know, my beadwork or my ribbon skirt. And I acknowledge the space of being in a Métis community by wearing either Métis, something with the Métis colours or a traditional type of garment. And the sash is usually I wear for the dinner or the, the formal part of a meeting. So, I tend to go to workshops that are like two or three days. And so, either as an introductory, like depending on how it's, how it's set up, but for the more formal events, I would wear a sash. And for a gathering, when I'm working with other Métis people, I wear more (laughter of MM) Métis-inspired attire. And it's interesting because other people do the same thing. So, you feel like we are a part of a community, you

know, you can, you physically recognize it. And I think it, it, it connects people when you, when you see those, those representations.

MM: Yeah.

DC: Of culture. One of my goals for this year was: I wanted to get to earn a purple sash.

MM: Oh, I love that. Oh yes.

DC: I wanted to earn a purple sash. So I was, so I looked for opportunities to connect with Les Femmes Michif Otipemisiwak, and I was able to go to the spring forum to hear what was happening in, across Canada at that forum. And I was gifted a sash after participating in the discussions, they were engaging citizens and Métis people with the projects that they were spearheading. So, there's like four main topics and people engaged in conversations to share their ideas related to each topic. And so, you really feel like you earned the sash because you have contributed to building knowledge.

MM: Right.

DC: So, to me, the sash is meaningful when it is associated with something that you're doing that is benefiting your Métis community.

MM: Oh, I love that.

DC: And the other, the other one, I bought a sash and the sash I bought after attending a scholarly conference in Winnipeg in September [2024], you know, I had a little bit of extra time. So, I thought, well, I'll drive home, and I'm going to go to Duck Lake.

MM: Oh, wow. Yeah!

DC: Which is where my grandfather had been, where they had lived at one point. So, and then Batoche was not very far from there. So, I did a tour. I went to Batoche and then across the river into Duck Lake. And luckily, the museum was open. So, at the museum, I visited with a lady who was one of the people running the museum and shared different information. She had a black sash for sale in their gift shop. And I, and I purchased that black sash. And to me, it was, it's a meaningful sash because it's acknowledging the, the history of the resistance.

MM: Right.

DC: And the fact that my family was a part of that experience, and then not staying in Batoche because of all the negative events following the resistance. Like, so I've attributed that meaning to the sash, and I would wear that sash in something that's related to that. Like if you're looking at Métis injustice.

So, to me, a sash needs to have meaning.

MM: Right.

DC: It's something of significance. It's to me different. It's a more of a ceremonial attire.

MM: Right.

DC: Right. Like it's not, it's not something they just wear around.

MM: Right!

DC: To hold my pants up or (laughter of MM and DC).

MM: Yeah. I mean, you could, but… (more laughter of MM and DC).

DC: You know, so, but the other, the other items you wear, as, you know, to acknowledge and to feel part of a community.

MM: Right. Thank you. Thank you for sharing. And also, alongside your stories to this too. And the work you also have done also with Les Femmes [Michif] Otipemisiwak as well. Like that's just so beautiful to hear that you've received your purple sash and kih-chi maarsii also on behalf of us for your work and contributions too, because it helps all of us. So kih-chi maarsii also for that too. Oh, Dana, we have made it to the last question. And just know how much I've deeply appreciated this time with you. Truly thank you for everything that you've also shared as well. And, and for listeners too, I'm certain that this is going to be really beautiful for them to also be listening and hopefully learning alongside us, too. But what did you learn most from this whole experience of listening to the podcast episodes, even to this conversation, and what you hope, you know, what folks can take also with them for moving forward?

DC: I am not a person who listens to podcasts. So, the first thing to take away is the value of listening to a podcast. And so that basic thing of, oh, I really took a lot away from this, of listening to this conversation, listening to you and other Métis women talking about these different topics, using them to inspire what I'm doing and things to think about.

I think I would continue to look for podcasts that are related to Métis content and First Nations content too, because it's different than what I thought it would be, because you're listening to that engagement between two people that is more fluid, I guess. Like it's not, it's not transcribed. Like it's, you're not reading from something, but it's a, a peek into this reality.

I think sharing, sharing your understanding provides other people with like that inspiration to engage in, in similar work or to avoid the pitfalls of, of their experiences where, you know, signing up for too many things or, not acknowledging when someone is going against what your beliefs are. [Doctor] Yvonne had described a story about an attitude that she had seen in one of her classes. And she addressed it head-on.

Like, let's stop the problem before it starts.

MM: Right.

DC: Right. So, you know, like these little parts of the conversation can have a, like have an impact on how you're thinking about things and, and how you might handle things in the future. And listening to them more than once, I think is important because you're, I took different things away from listening to the conversations more than once. And I think it also has to do with whatever frame of mind you're in, you know, like if you're, I found it very positive to be listening while I'm preparing what I'm going to be doing.

MM: Right.

DC: Right. So, you know, like I can see referring back to, to these podcasts when I'm working on my own research. Again, not a one-and-done (laughter of MM and DC).

MM: It's continuous and continual.

DC: Yes.

MM: Thank you. Thank you so much. You have no idea how much this has meant to me. Also, for you to even be taking the time that you have as a busy educator, also as a busy doctoral student. On this beautiful path, also on this beautiful journey. So, Dana, kih-chi maarsii, but with the whole heart, truly for doing this and being alongside this journey with all of us. It's meant the world to all of us, actually, for you to be doing this. So kih-chi maarsii.

DC: Yes. And thank you for this opportunity to hear and listen to wise women. I don't know if they'd like to be referred to as wise women (more laughter of MM), but they've had a different experience than I have had as an educator. So, it really is valuable. So, thank you as well.

MM: Of course.

DC: Maarsii.

MM: Maarsii, maarsii.