

Season 3 – Episode 16

**Walter Nowlan: 00:00**

Hello and welcome to this episode of the coaching podcast from British Canoeing Awarding Body. So I'm Walter Nowlan a digital learning designer here at British Canoeing and I'm really excited to be hosting this episode on Inclusion in coaching and to welcome all three guests. Today we've got Lina Patel, Dave Hunt and my colleague Helena Russo. So before we begin with our questions and our discussion, I just wondered if we could just introduce ourselves a little bit.

So Lina, shall we start with you? Tell us a little about your background and your interest in coaching and instructing.

**Lina Patel 00:00:52**

Hi. Yeah, nice to be doing this podcast with you guys. Thank you for asking. I've been working within outdoor education for about 30 years. I started in London when I was 16. I'm now 52 and I live in North Wales, so the environment is very different in terms. If you were talking about diversity, I think it would be interesting.

I'll go on to that kind of afterwards and I went to Liverpool, John Moores University when I was 22 to do an outdoor degree, outdoor teaching degree. And I've worked in the UK and I've worked in America doing some outdoor, different types of outdoor, doing stuff in both of them. And my experience is quite varied in that it's not just paddle sports like most people that work in the outdoors, we have many bows to our strength, to our bows.

Um, I've done some pretty, pretty fun sailing tall ships, sailing trips and some, some pretty lovely canoeing expeditions. And most a lot of the stuff I did when I was a teacher or what it was, was with pupil referral units. So I've got that kind of background. And then last year I after some thought, I decided to help out and do the #shepaddles initiative up in North Wales.

But my, my reasoning for that was I wanted to actually do it to bring on families because I think things change if you can do stuff as a family unit and that doesn't matter what the family looks like. Yeah, that's how I wanted to bring my experience into #shepaddles was to have an inclusive unit and I think actually that says it all.

I think if we're going to talk about diversity and inclusiveness, we need to be that. And I think there's a line with programmes as well. So we'll talk about that in a little while. But that's my introduction.

**Walter Nowlan: 00:03:02:06**

That's perfect Lina. Thank you so much. Dave, how about you give us a little bit of your background as well please?

**Dave Hunt 00:03:08**

Yeah, thanks. Well, again thanks for inviting me to do this. It's really excited about getting involved in this podcast. My, my sort of outdoor experience. Outdoor Leader experience started in late 1990s, so again well over 20 years ago. And I've worked across a range of

disciplines. So climbing, mountain biking, mountaineering and probably have always been known as a paddling specialist among my colleagues.

First of of worked again a lot of the time I've worked in pupil referral units, young people who've been excluded from school, you know, working with them in the outdoors, which, which has sort of shaped my philosophy around inclusion and diversity and celebrating diversity. And, you know, the range of individuals I worked with in that sector of, you know, I've worked in various various countries.

I've worked as a sea kayak guide in New Zealand. I've worked on canoeing, canoeing expeditions in Ghana, which was on a youth development charity. That was an amazing experience. And currently I work for Carnegie great outdoors, which is part of Leeds Beckett University. And we run lots of different sort of commercial paddling activities and adventurous activities.

But my main role there is working on the outdoor degree courses, and so there's lots of opportunities for sort of embedding the importance of, you know, inclusion and diversity within within that work with with degrees students. So yeah, that's a bit of an intro to me are a lot of an intro to me.

**Walter Nowlan 00;05;20**

Fantastic. Thanks Dave. Helena, would you like to tell us a little about your your role?

**Helena Russo 00;05;25**

I would love to. Thank you. Yeah. I have joined one of the podcasts before, so I'm delighted to be back and talking about this area of work again, especially with two fantastic guests. So I'm Helena. So I am the equality, diversity and inclusion lead for the organisation. So I look after everything to do with those particular topics, and that might be within coaching like it is today, but it also is within things like our club network, the competitions we might run and all those kinds of great things.

So I'm also a coach myself, not in paddlesport, but I am hopefully bringing some kind of coaching understanding and expertize into the space and also very much a lover of the outdoors. So I'm a standup paddleboarder, but I also do lots of walking and also a fair bit of outdoor swimming. So a big lover of the outdoors too.

So yeah, really excited to be joining here and helping facilitate this conversation.

**Walter Nowlan 00;06;19**

Thanks so much, Helena. And thanks again to you all for taking part today. So, Helena, I think you wanted to just introduce this topic of inclusion, representation and accessibility. So yeah, just giving us a bit of an introduction here.

**Helena Russo 00;06;38**

Yeah, absolutely. So this podcast today really is going to be looking more at lived experiences and platforming more diverse voices in this space to really understand what inclusive delivery looks like in coaching and what that practice can really, you know, what difference that can

make. So, you know, we've talked more generally about inclusion and coaching on a previous podcast.

We've done, you know, we've looked at Black History Month in the context of the experiences of Black communities on another podcast. So yeah, this is really, I think within this particular episode is to look out more about what practice looks like, what are some of the things that coaches have learned and what have their lived experiences been that then shaped that coaching philosophy?

That means inclusion is at the heart of it. So hopefully looking at some practical examples that both Lina and Dave can bring today and yeah, hopefully some really implementable takeaways from today as well. So yeah, that's kind of what we're going to cover today.

**Walter Nowlan 00;07;35**

Fantastic. Yeah. Excited. Yeah, fantastic. So you let's let's kick off with you both, Dave. I mean, you both mentioned your philosophies in your introductions. You know, what inclusivity means to you and you've touched on that. So maybe if we start with you again, Lina, what does inclusion in coaching mean to you?

**Lina Patel 00;07;56**

Oh, so it seems like a simple question that really but it's quite erm there's many levels to it. And in an ideal world, I don't even think we should be asking that question. I don't think we live in an ideal world. Well, that's a strong phrase. I think we just live in a world and that is the world we live in.

So inclusion really should be ultimately something that just happens. But in order for something to just happen, I think we sometimes have to process things and consciously make things happen. So quite often I hear the phrase of things like, I don't notice this, I don't notice colour, I don't notice gender, I don't notice disability, I don't notice this and that.

And I kind of think that for me, in my experience, I don't think that's true. I think people do. But what they do with that, that it's different. So in coaching, for example, I'm going to find it quite difficult to split this with just paddle sport. So in my introduction, I talked about the outdoors and that's what I operate in is the outdoors, not paddle sports.

So I was sitting there thinking and looking at some of the other questions and going, okay, in paddle sport and paddle sport. But some of my bigger initiatives have happened in the moment in the hills, and not that I'm a great walker or what have you, but within climbing and train the trainer kind of programs which haven't been for paddle sport.

So but I will try and keep it to paddle sport. So inclusion is something that we need to think about because we're a diverse world. People come from very different socio economic backgrounds, different cultures, different belief structures, different religions, all sorts of things. And to be honest, we can't think about them all the time. We can't think about everything on every level.

So I think it's about intention and I think intention for me is the is the question as opposed to inclusion. So what's the intention of what we're doing? And this this whole thing's pushing lots of buttons for me if I be deadly honest and that's because of my experiences in the outdoors and not just in the outdoors, but questions that were asked of me in my interviews at university, for example, which I think they might have been, questions that other people may not have got, which changed how how I interacted with the outdoors at the university that I was that it just I can be quite a hothead. And if I think there's something unjust and if I don't calm myself I can be quite reactive. But the reaction is usually to my detriment, not anybody else's. And what I mean about that is I took myself out coaching in the outdoor world for a lot of the time because I felt that was very double standard. But I keep coming back to it because it's something that I love.

Yeah, and I really only agreed or not agreed. Yeah, I did. To do this because I have a mixed race daughter and she's, she's well, she's a, she's a girl at the moment. She's only 12. And I wanted to actually have a positive influence or a positive voice as opposed to an angry voice. So. And I don't think there's anything wrong with being angry.

I think what works better is this. It could be turned into a passion that can make change if change is needed, as opposed to going you know what, I don't want to be part of that anymore. I'm no longer going to deliver all this stuff. That was really why I decided to do this.

So I think inclusion in coaching is more about your intention really. And are you doing inclusion because policy says you have to do inclusion or do you believe in inclusivity?

**Helena Russo 00;12;19**

Yeah. And do you think do you think those experience that you've explained, that you've kind of gone into a little bit. Do you feel that your philosophy when you were starting out your degree, for example, in coaching is vastly different to how it is now? Do you think it's just been an extension of that due to some of the experiences that you've had, or do you think it's changed massively, put you on the spot?

**Lina Patel 00;12;39**

I think I've matured so, you know, I'm no longer 16, you know, and but but also I live in a very different part of the country now. So, you know, so when I started out working at the boat club in inner city London, the demographic is very different to living in a village in North Wales up the hill without any with no neighbours.

**Helena Russo 00;13;07**

Couldn't be more be different. Yeah.

**Lina Patel 00;13;09**

It's polarized. You know. So the coaching I do, or the experiences that I have for people directly reflects on the community that I live in. So when I'm talking about inclusion, you know, I did talk about ethnicity, color, gender, all of those sort of things as and disabilities. I mean, I worked at Churchtown Farm, which is a centre for people with disabilities and how we used to do things.

They were, were more about enabling experiences. You know, that's inclusion. I worked doing rock climbing with Asian, Asian women and Muslim communities and the centre that I was with, there were a lot of people that were saying they didn't want to do that because the whole attire was dangerous, to rope work. But I'll try not to swear here, but that's not necessarily true.

You know, in terms of helmets and people having to, you know, it's things can be adapted, changed to make experiences possible. You know, and and this is what I mean by what does inclusion look we shouldn't even need to have to ask that question but we do so yeah. You know, I mean my first ever job was with young Asian women in inner city London and it was one of hardest things I've ever done.

I don't actually necessarily want to do that. So I was only 17 years old. I was a youngster, in Islington. And, you know, and you would have to enroll the whole the whole family and have a trust. The family would need to trust you in order to take their daughters out on adventure. You know, I'm talking 30 years ago, things have changed to a level, but not that massively.

So, you know, it's really interesting.

**Helena Russo 00;14;59**

Thanks, Lina.

**Walter Nowlan 00;15;00**

Yeah, absolutely brilliant Lina. I really love that you said that you need to process things to make things happen there Lina, that you've got to of that there's something you've got to change your coaching style. So it's something within you to react to that context. Absolutely. Brilliant. Thank you so much.

And how about you, Dave? Do any of those points that Lina make resonate with you or is that something different in your particular coaching context that that makes inclusive? What does it mean for you?

**Dave Hunt 00;15;43**

Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. Some very interesting points that Lina made and definitely some of those things, you know, cross crossover and mirror my views on this. the first thing I think with with inclusion is for me being prepared to give every individual what they need to succeed or to take part or to engage. And that's going to be different for every person, obviously.

So it's what it comes down to, to identifying barriers, identifying the barriers that that people might be facing to participation and actively seeking out ways to to overcome those barriers, you know, so that the intention that Lina was talking about having that intention to to go the extra mile, to seek out the ways to overcome the the barriers that that people might be facing.

And we know that sort of barriers might be, you know, ability or disability or medical condition. The barriers that people face might might be cultural, it might be gender based. But, you know, again, even even with those things in mind, it's different for every individual.

Lina mentioned that trust, you know, trust, trust might be that that barrier that we have to find a way to overcome.

And another barrier that I mean, in my experience, people will face in paddling, in paddle spots is a sort of a bit of a fear, you know, if they're getting involved with it for the first time in groups I work with, pretty much every group in this group is a bit nervous. Somebody in each group is a bit nervous about something, you know, is it that is it that somebody tell them, Oh, you've got to get your feet stuck in them?

You've got to tip upside down and tap on the bottom three times before you can get out, which is a relic of of sort of maybe how coaching as evolved. You know, and I'm I'm positive that you know that used to be the first the first thing that people was were made to do. So you know, if people are scared, if people if people are scared or they're going to get stuck in it or, you know, whatever, they then, you know, it's up to us to to sort of show them, to guide them and support them and show them that that's not going to be the case.

Yeah. You know sit on top kayak for me is has been a massive, massive sort of boost for inclusivity. You know, you know, it's not it's not the best fit for everything, but it's great for it for accessibility.

**Helena Russo 00;18;45**

I think the point you made there Dave as well, sorry to come in, around fair. I think from my coaching philosophy and the experience I've had, when you exist within a community, you have an identity or you you live in a body that is potentially marginalized. There's an additional factor that arisen out of fear. Like you, you don't know if you have a physical disability, for example, whether you're actually going to be able to access a venue that's an additional layer of fear.

You don't know if you are accidentally going to be outed because somebody asks you about your wife when you actually have a husband, you know, like when you exist within a community that feels in not included that, you know, there's almost an additional step in that or that that additional barrier that they have to overcome. And we can we can address a lot of that through our coaching.

I think and I think both of the points that you and Lina have both covered in your kind of, your philosophies really attest to that is that is our responsibility as coaches to not just be thinking about, you know, that one single factor of actually can they get out on their craft. There's all of this stuff that comes before hand that's related to their identity.

So I think, you know, it's been a real consistency for me. I think that both you and Lina have have, right. So yeah.

**Dave Hunt 00;19;59**

So I think just a couple couple more points. This this thing about perceived perceived barriers that exist and that that might not be true. You know, I can't go on that because people like me don't go and do that with maybe a perceived barrier that somebody has. But that's still a barrier, you know, still that it's something that exists in that person.

So that's something that we need to overcome, you know, so education, reaching out to people, you know, sort of chipping away at those things, better communication, role models, all of those things go a long way, I think, to to sort of, you know, breaking down those barriers that that people might face.

**Walter Nowlan 00;20;43**

Fantastic. Yeah. And I think I think we've touched on this a little bit from what you've said already, but it seems that representation and accessibility keeps coming up across the board where we talk about lack of diversity and inclusion across paddlesport. What's your experience of that, Dave? Can you just give us a little bit of some examples of that?

**Dave Hunt 00;21;11**

Yeah. Yeah, I mean, I think that sort of grassroots level at taster session level, we do we do see a very, very diverse sort of demographic, really, whether it's school groups, charities, youth groups. You know, in my experience, you know, we see a lot of really sort of a range of backgrounds, a range of people coming through through paddling.

I mean, if you take NCS national citizenship Service, for example, just a quick sort of Google of that, and it's like 200,000 people are going through that scheme each year and that the people we see on that are really diverse, you know? So if the question is, can a range of people access paddlesports, then I think the answer is yes.

The sort of next the next step that may be need to addressed is how do we grab the ones that have been on those sessions? And they're going, wow, I want to do that again. You know, not everybody is leaving that session going, yeah, paddlings for me and I want to, I want to go and get involved in, you know, some of them are going and going you know, I'm not bothered about doing that again, and that's fair enough.

But how do we as coaches, as a as a sport as a governing body, how do we grab those people and inspire these people and offer them pathways to continue in the sport, you know, and and overcome whatever other barriers they might face? You know, that's that's something that I think we are trying to address.

You know, British Canoeing with the inclusivity group, you know, and again the communication and different initiatives that might grab people to continue that representation of a diverse demographic of people throughout the sport, you know, is the sort of maybe whether there is areas for development.

**Helena Russo 00;23;16**

I think from my side as well. When we talk about diversity and inclusion, paddling in coaching, sorry is there's two sides to, isn't it? There's an ability for a coach to deliver sessions that are welcoming and inclusive and safe spaces for people to be supported. And then there's the representation in the coaching workforce and the diversity that exists within that.

So I suppose this is a question of almost both Dave and Lina, really, because you both had, you know, decades of experience and whether you've seen big changes in that, small changes in

the in the groups that you've worked with or where you see there being real issues in that space. So Dave, don't know if we start kind of start with you just because you answered and then we'll go to Lina.

But yeah, representation and accessibility for coaching pathways, you know, across the board. What's, what's your kind of view on that or what have you noticed within that space, if anything?

**Dave Hunt 00;24;11**

I don't know what the, what the what the stats are on people going through, through the the coaching route. But there are people who are from varied backgrounds within the coaching community and that's that's great to to have that representation. Always sort of including of some initiatives again to to develop that.

**Helena Russo 00;24;37**

And Lina, from your perspective has your view in that changed?

**Lina Patel 00;24;42**

I'm just trying to manage my thoughts here and how could I express myself because for those people that know me, I kind of can be a little bit harsh. I'm just going to give you a little example of one of my experiences or two of them, and then I hope that will settle me down to be able to explain things in a bit more cohesive, useful fashion.

Because at the moment things are spinning around my head, which has taken me off topic. So we talk about inclusion and diversity. I in theory went to one of the best back in the day outdoor education establishments for training people to work in the outdoors. And the question that I asked at my first at my interview is why do I want to do that and not be a doctor or a lawyer?

Because I'm Asian, right? And that kind of annoyed me because I thought what right should be that? And I actually swore at my interviewer and told him because I can and why you do what you do right type thing so that's that's kind of one thing and we could we could, you know, we could take the me put me on the bones of that a lot too.

But I'm just saying that's what's how these sort of thoughts hold me back. And this is what took me away from being in the outdoors. These are supposed to be smart people that are moulding coaches or teachers to go out there and work with the community in the wider thing. But yet, in my eyes, they're so naive that they keep certain things alive by the daft questions that they ask.

Right? And then there was another university. When I used to live up in the Lake District, I was asked to go to a, you know, I'm going to try not to name and shame organizations, but really I want to. But it's probably not useful. To go with another Asian woman and talk to their students about gender and diversity.

And one of the first questions we ask is like, does anybody have a prejudice? The only people that put their arms up was me and my colleague, and we talked about that. But then

throughout this this whole session, one of the one one of the young men on it said, this is really useful that you've come to do this, but our assignments have already been handed in.

Right. So that again.

**Helena Russo 00;27;06**

Like it's not useful anyway!

**Lina Patel 00;27;08**

Well, a bag of trolley, these all these higher educational, all these places are because they do this because they have to do not because they understand or they've been told to. And they, they belittle people like myself and play games with us saying, can you come and do this? But yeah, they're not actually interested in a particular... this is just my feeling right point of view, because you've asked us to come in, but they've already handed in their assignments.

How does that work? Right. It's a representation of accessibility across the board. We talk about lack of diversity and inclusion across paddlesport. It's a bit like and this is again why I was like do I really want to do this. This is going to be another one of those. And I kind of had to talk to myself and say, You know what, Lina, it's 20 years on.

Give yourself and other people a break. It might not really be that. Yeah, but it hooks me because other things have happened where you get people from middle class people because that can speak really well. Not saying that people that aren't. It's just the sound. You know what I mean? Yeah, that's what I'm saying. But they've got a job.

They're writing policies and then I'll get private messages and there's good intention. But my, my, my conversation in my head is like, well, actually, you're being paid for this. Why, you asked me to then give you my time and everything for free. Well, you're being paid as a consultant. Pay me as a consultant. You know that's loaded. I know, but it's just trying to. I need to say this in order for me to move on because these are my experiences. Yeah.

**Helena Russo 00;28;49**

And I. Yeah, I think your, your experiences hold us to account in that space. I think that's, you know, we, we want to use this platform to platform your voice rather than us telling your story or us using you in a way that feels inauthentic. And I obviously hope that that you know that. Yeah. Yeah, inauthentic. Yeah, absolutely.

And you know, that is something I think all organisations and you know, whether that's us is British Canoeing, whether it's individuals, whether it's, you know, groups and others that, you know, that's the question they should be asking themselves. You know, what is the intention? It goes back to that initial point. You raised Lina, isn't it, that you know what?

What is the purpose of this? And actually, have we done this in a way that is meaningful and is going to effect change? And I think, you know, these experiences often are ploughed over, you know, they're not listened to in a way that then helps us to move forward in a productive and, you know, positive manner. So I know this is absolutely the space for us to hear those.

So, yeah, thank you for sharing because I know they must be hard, obviously, you know, go over them and share them again. So I think it you know, it's very valuable to hear them today. Thank you.

**Walter Nowlan 00:29:53**

Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. Lina, thanks so much for sharing that. And going back to the idea of intention. And I think the intention of our podcast today is to get that lived experience from you and from Dave as well, but importantly to get kind of like some practical, you know, examples, you know, of what you have done to support paddlers from perhaps underrepresented backgrounds so that they get out on the water.

So, Lina, could you give us some examples of that please?

**Lina Patel 00:30:28**

Yeah, I guess I could. So as as a self-employed employed coach, I did put on sessions for, for women and girls, but I don't I didn't totally buy into that. If that kind of makes sense is so I've been I've been involved in a few different things organized where I used to be a developer for the Duke of Edinburgh award in Liverpool.

And a lot of the stuff I did and why they wanted me to do that was to increase participation among underrepresented groups within Liverpool. And for me at that time and for the organization, those were groups like young offenders, people with disabilities, people of colour, girls, and they put on sessions that I don't know if they were truly successful, but we made an attempt to put on sessions which would have long term participation.

What I find is there's a lot of programs that happen and I've been involved with a lot of these that are very short term based, they're funding based and outcomes are required. But after that happened, the longevity I mean, I don't look at research anymore. I very rarely read papers anymore. Again, because it's my disillusionment and a lot of things stop me doing that.

But what the consequence of that is, I no longer have my finger on the pulse. And this is about reflection. So in order to put on programs that might make a difference, one has to do that and be willing to answer and look at the hard stuff to make change and not just sugarcoat things because they're easier conversations to have.

Right? So I used to work at Braeday Hall a long time ago. I was an associate trainer and there was a program that we put on and it was actually with a woman called Pammy Johal and it was at the company called Backbone. But it is women training to become trainers for their communities in mountaineering, cycling and climbing.

And the intention for me later on was to do it in paddle sport and why I supported that program because I wanted to change it into paddlesport. But then I just got really quite cross halfway through. I decided I'm actually not going to do that. So that was thought because it took a lot of work and I just found a lot of people talk and there was no real intention to make any difference.

But as I've watched Backbone grow from afar, I think there's been lots of movements. But this company is now in Scotland and it's a little bit far for me to go. And it but what it's done is reengage me into think can actually I will do something within paddle sport and again this is part of doing this podcast with you guys.

I have run sessions in Llangollen for women and their girls and they they were well received they also done #shepaddles ambassador and what I decided or what I decided to decide is a word which is like final. It means that for me it means there's no more thought process. Right? I've decided, therefore I don't need to review or things don't need to change because it's a decision is finite.

So I'm starting to try and live life in this sort of choice basis, which is a bit more fluid. And I said, I'll become an ambassador, but the way I want to do it is run family sessions, not sessions mainly for women. Because I think if they're not done well then I hope this doesn't come across badly. We just we just create a ghetto of a place for people to. I'm trying not to swear, but not be nice. Does does that make sense?

Therefore, how you hold them sessions and structure them in order for them to grow is very important. Otherwise you could just have a club and that's okay. There's nothing wrong with that. I think it's beautiful and wonderful and there is a place for it. But why I said I want to do #shepaddles. And sadly, actually, I didn't get to do as much with it as I wanted to. And there was lots of other things that happened.

But I did run my own family sessions before I became a #shepaddles ambassador and they were really well received. And the point being with this, the what you have to be within a family is you just had to be a female so mum or daughter and it could be because as I say, families don't look how they might have did with what's them old school books.

**Walter Nowlan 00:35:10**

Oh like Jill and John

**Lina Patel 00:35:13**

Yeah. You know what I mean. That, that they're beautiful, they're just really different and it needed to be open to that. But because it was #shepaddles, I was like, there has to be someone that identifies or is a female within that. And some people got quite angry with that and they said, I just want to do women's work, work with women only groups.

I said, That's cool. There's hundreds of them out there. Go and join one. A lot of the men that came along, what happened was they said, look, the one thing I said had to happen that the coaches had to be women, but it didn't mean just women. But the the voice had to be the female voice because structurally what happens in sessions or when when I've seen things happen is some women become much quieter and their voice goes.

And it's not necessarily because the man's doing anything wrong or isn't understanding or doesn't have whatever it is. It's not necessarily their fault. It's the cultural way that society is being, you know? So it's not like I'm looking at blame here, there, anywhere. It's not. It just is. And that's why I wanted the the the woman to to be the lead.

**Helena Russo 00;36;22**

Central

**Lina Patel 00;36;24**

That's the word, there you go! Help me with me vocabulary, that would be amazing. Another thing, and it's not my my program, it's my partner's. So there's a symposium that happens. A symposium. We quite often have female coaches say, can we run women only sessions? And at the heart of what we say here is, no, we don't want that. What we want is coaches to be brilliant coaches and you coach everybody.

And what they they then get to see is that this woman is an amazing coach, like the other bloke is an amazing coach and they can run great sessions. And not just like an introductory session, which is a women only session, which tends to kind of happen when I've been other organizations. So I hope I've kind of explained a little bit where I'm coming from because I think.

**Helena Russo 00;37;17**

That's the summary there. I think the takeaway that I've just gotten from that is that that point of being a great coach for the person in front of you, which I think is what Dave was saying kind of towards the beginning and having that understanding of a person and their experience because I've had conversations, you know, taking your point, Lina, around women and girls.

I've had conversations with people that are saying that, you know, this girl can is not a good programme, which, you know, for some people they still can't. It's it's not it's not a programme that speaks to every single woman and go for me. I've been active my whole life. It's not something that I have necessarily struggled with to a great extent.

Yes, I've had some difficult conversations, particularly as a coach. And, you know, like that's all part of my personal experience. But I see the value in you know #shepaddles and women you know, that this girl can program because for some communities that is absolutely hits the nail on the head. But I think for us as coaches, it's about absorbing all of that, understanding all of that kind of almost cultural intelligence, isn't it, of trying to see what we can offer across the board for as many different groups of people so that everybody can access what we love doing in that space.

I think, yeah, everything you said there 100% hit the nail on the head for me so yeah. Thanks. Thanks Lina that's awesome.

**Walter Nowlan 00;38;38**

Yeah. Brilliant Lina thank you so much. Dave I just wanted to if you had any comments on that or any other experiences of how you can bring and support paddlers from underrepresented backgrounds to get onto the water.

**Dave Hunt 00;38;54**

Yeah, I think an exempla I did want to share on this podcast is relating to a sort of quite a specific, specific example that I've been involved in recently. And it was, it was on the degree

course, outdoor studies degree course that I work on. And, and this student enrolled on the course and she, great girl.

She, she, you know, really enthusiastic and she, she have this has this condition where she she has seizures periodically, sometimes more than others. And basically, you know, talking about barriers, this is this is a barrier that she had faced in the past. This condition, she'd she'd been to outdoor activity centres in the past. All right. You know, we don't know if you're going to have a seizure. If you do, we can't really deal with it. So you're going off to sit on the side.

So her experience was really, really negative and, you know, obviously she was on a degree of the three years. And when we got that information, a lot of people were sort of going, well, she can't go paddling, can she. What if it happens in then, she can't go gorge walk ing.

She can't go anywhere remote, you know. So all of these things, all of these things, the experiences that the students have on the course, these are barriers were being placed by other people in the way. And I was, you know, massively, massively keen that we would enable her to do all the things and the way that we did that was sort of work backwards.

Right? So she's going she's going up Scafell Pike. Right. So how can we how can we what can we get in place to deal with that if it does happen? All right. So we so we thought about right. Well, maybe we have an extra staff member with it with a grab bag of kit that we can we can provide if it does happen happen.

So I'm trying to I'm trying to summarize it over the over the years. She came and did loads of stuff with us, you know, river, river journeys in kayaks, you know, on gorge walking, independent journeys and camping and what we, what we just had to do was, was really challenge our ways of working to include her to be inclusive, to, to enable her to take part in all these and all these different activities.

I drew upon a sort of wide range of experts and advice and people to to sort of shape that. So it wasn't just me. So we've got good tech advisors. Chris Brain and, and Chucky who are well known, they're our tech advisors so I speak to them regularly and they sort of come up with ideas I hadn't thought of.

But also speaking to Darryll Shaw from British Canoeing about the situation. Right. This is this is the person that we're working with. What can we do to ensure that she gets the best experience and we do what we can to look after her so that lots of areas of information to sort of help inform that decision and that sort of really, really developed when I, I run Paddlesport instructor award, and I sort of put on a course, which was the students that I worked with could access and I knew it would happen.

And Chiana, the girl I'm talking about, when I put out this Paddlesport Instructor Award, she was the first person to put her name forward to do this course. I was like, All right, okay, now, now that changes the goalposts again. So how how can we make this happen? You know, and we were we worked with her and she was brilliant on this FSRT course, the safety and rescue course, where maybe in the past we were like, all right, she can't go in the water. system.

She's on an FSRT course, the whole day you're in the water. So things were changing all the time, but we made it happen and she got her Paddlesport Instructor Award. And you know, she's a great Paddlesport instructor. And for me, that epitomized the real challenge of how we can be inclusive, what the things we might need to do to actually enable these things to happen.

You know, and and going, you know, really go into that to get to know the person. And sometimes, you know, I was there when she she had seizures on a number of occasions and I sort of knew it was happening before she did sort of get things prepped like a roll mat down and go, right, sit on there, do that, and then and then carry on.

**Helena Russo 00:43:47**

That's amazing, that's awesome.

**Dave Hunt 00:43:49**

Challenge, but really inspiring, you know, and I think that, you know, an and interesting thing when your notion of being inclusive and an inclusive practitioner is really challenged in that way can you find can we find ways to to make things happen like that?

**Helena Russo 00:44:10**

I think there's two things I would take away from that example you've given that, Dave. I think it's amazing. The first is that if you don't know, ask and the best person that probably knows how to answer the answer that question first and foremost is the person sitting in front of you. And if they don't, there are ways and means of finding that information out.

And it doesn't matter that we don't know straight away. That's all part of, you know, learning an inclusive agenda and or, you know, committing to an inclusive practice. And the second that for me, which I think again epitomizes the power of what a welcoming and valued person looks, you know what I can do? She went from not being told that she couldn't do any paddling activity whatsoever to being the first person to put her hand up for an instructor course.

Like what a transformation in that space that actually suddenly, despite the fact that she has a health condition that may have prevented her, it prevents presented barriers previously to being involved in paddling. Actually, now she's able to use that skill for herself, you know, to deliver. And hopefully within her scope, she can learn all the things that she's learned from you and the way that you've delivered sessions and made adjustments for her that that can then be you know, it just is it's that self-fulfilling prophecy, isn't it, that once people have that experience where they feel valued and respected, actually, you know, the lengths to which they can then go in that space is maximised completely. It's it's awesome. So. Yeah. Thank you. That's such a great, great example. Thank you for sharing. That's awesome.

**Walter Nowlan 00:45:42**

Yeah. Dave Yeah. I think what I took about that is the need for creativity, which takes us back to Lina's point about, you know, you need to process things to make things happen, you know. So really thank you both for those excellent contributions. But we are running out of time and.

**Helena Russo 00:46:02**

So much to get through.

**Walter Nowlan 00:46:03**

But maybe just one last question to wrap up, is that what would you want coaches listening to this podcast to take away when it comes to the ideas of inclusion in and around coaching? And Dave, should we start with you this time?

**Dave Hunt 00:46:23**

Thanks. Well, I think we've touched on it. They're in a bit of a bit of a summary about that, about case study, you know, maybe need maybe things need flipping on its head sometimes and you sort of go right, if that happens, can we work backwards from that? And what things what things need to be in place?

You know, if if this person was in that situation, you know, I think some some things that Lina mentioned earlier about intention, you know, having a positive a positive voice in the area is massive. You know, everyone everyone can have some influence. And if everyone if everyone involved in coaching and in paddling has, you know, some influence on people, then I think things gradually progress for sure.

**Walter Nowlan 00:47:18**

Thanks, Lina, how about you? What would you want coaches listening to the podcast to take away?

**Lina Patel 00:47:25**

Well, I've just jotted down a couple of things for people to think about. What's your own belief structures and how do they impact your delivery, which would allow for a thought process to happen, which helps intention. And then it's like and that's what I mean. It's like, what are your intentions? And try and be true to those intention.

But they have to if we're in the domain of inclusivity here and diversity. So that's the domain in which I'm talking about how they're going to impact that. And how bothered are you really? And that the question I'm leaving you with!

**Helena Russo 00:48:11**

Whole other podcast episode!

**Walter Nowlan 00:48:13**

Part two!

**Helena Russo 00:48:15**

Great great question. Yeah and definitely links back to intention piece. Lina, Dave, thank you so much for your time and your expertise and your insight into this. I think it's, you know, I can't thank you enough and it's been really, really interesting to hear you talk about this and bring your own lived experiences and challenges into this space.

This is what we want. You know, we want to have some of those maybe more challenging and difficult conversations, but, you know, really have that affect some change, which I hope, you know, will be taken very well across the coaching fraternities. So thank you very much for your time.

**Lina Patel 00;48;47**

Yes, you're welcome. And nice to meet you visually, everybody.

**Walter Nowlan 00;48;54**

Thanks from me and thanks to you Helena as well.

**Helena Russo 00;48;57**

You're very welcome.

**Walter Nowlan 00;48;58**

Thanks so much, everyone.

Thanks for listening. We hope you'll join us for the next episode. Remember to review, rate and subscribe. Bye for now.