Before you started your business, do you wanna walk me through a little bit what you were doing before you started your consulting?

0:0:17.200 --> 0:0:17.400  
Melissa Blair  
Right.

0:0:12.920 --> 0:0:17.560  
Emma Bergin  
I don't know if it's an agency or a firm, but then we can get into all about your business and what you do.

0:0:18.360 --> 0:0:19.330  
Melissa Blair  
Yeah, sure.

0:0:19.960 --> 0:0:31.610  
Melissa Blair  
So I have worked in the space of consulting or providing strategic guidance for nonprofits, foundations, and those working in social change for essentially the entirety of my career.

0:0:32.240 --> 0:1:2.350  
Melissa Blair  
I grew up in Ontario, in Canada and then I studied in the UK and then I lived in Toronto, Melbourne and most recently five years in the US have just moved back to Canada after 10 years being overseas and throughout all that time, as I mentioned, I've been working in social impact, creating change on a number of different issues from end of life planning to gender equity, domestic violence reduction to voting rights and reduction of shark culling to food security.

0:1:2.360 --> 0:1:5.950  
Melissa Blair  
So a number of sort of social issues from different angles.

0:1:6.620 --> 0:1:12.460  
Melissa Blair  
I did take a 3 year stint in the middle of that where I actually had a startup that was.

0:1:12.520 --> 0:1:18.910  
Melissa Blair  
I started in Australia and then grew and expanded it to the US, which is how I ended up there and I started was a bit of a left turn.

0:1:18.920 --> 0:1:20.250  
Melissa Blair  
It was called sports host.

0:1:20.330 --> 0:1:21.570  
Melissa Blair  
Yeah, sports host. Excuse me.

0:1:21.980 --> 0:1:25.390  
Melissa Blair  
And what we did is connect visitors with local fans to see live games together.

0:1:25.680 --> 0:1:34.160  
Melissa Blair  
So if you landed in Melbourne and wanted to see an Aussie rules football game go in our app, connect with locals, go for beers together and then go to the game together.

0:1:34.170 --> 0:1:43.220  
Melissa Blair  
So it's a great way for those that are traveling to meet locals and have that local experience and those that are passionate fans of teams to show up their team, their sport and their city.

0:1:43.390 --> 0:1:46.230  
Melissa Blair  
So we partnered with Major League teams Umm.

0:1:46.320 --> 0:1:52.680  
Melissa Blair  
And when we expand to the US, you know, we partner with Brooklyn Nets and then we signed San Francisco Giants and then I ended up in Denver because of the two coasts.

0:1:53.810 --> 0:2:10.760  
Melissa Blair  
So those experiences, you know, where I think probably like the biggest risk risk I've taken in my entrepreneurial journey and you know, I loved the space and energy that you could create when you're just developing something from your own from scratch, there's no path to follow.

0:2:10.770 --> 0:2:21.920  
Melissa Blair  
You just kind of have to figure it out as you go, and then since then I've returned to Canada as I mentioned and I've just been honing in on one of the issues that the what are the issues that the Canadians are facing right now?

0:2:21.970 --> 0:2:25.770  
Melissa Blair  
What are the biggest sort of social problems that we're contending with?

0:2:25.960 --> 0:2:34.400  
Melissa Blair  
And with that, I've been exploring sort of different spaces and places to be consulting in to Canadian nonprofits, foundations and government clients.

0:2:35.310 --> 0:2:35.820  
Emma Bergin  
Using.

0:2:36.450 --> 0:2:43.550  
Emma Bergin  
That's so funny because I am also from Ontario and then I moved to Toronto and then I also moved to Melbourne and now I'm in BC.

0:2:44.340 --> 0:2:45.90  
Melissa Blair  
Wow, how crazy.

0:2:45.530 --> 0:2:46.440  
Emma Bergin  
Yeah, that's funny.

0:2:46.210 --> 0:2:47.100  
Melissa Blair  
That is so cool.

0:2:47.510 --> 0:2:47.970  
Emma Bergin  
Umm.

0:2:47.450 --> 0:2:48.470  
Melissa Blair  
How long were you mourn for?

0:2:52.790 --> 0:2:53.30  
Melissa Blair  
Ohh.

0:2:57.180 --> 0:2:57.600  
Melissa Blair  
Very cool.

0:2:49.120 --> 0:2:59.240  
Emma Bergin  
Only for a year I did the working holiday visa, so I was an old here for a while and then I just backpacked and it was less of a business experience.

0:2:59.250 --> 0:3:0.330  
Emma Bergin  
But just weren't fun.

0:3:0.750 --> 0:3:1.240  
Melissa Blair  
Yeah.

0:3:1.250 --> 0:3:2.480  
Melissa Blair  
So great, I I love going.

0:3:3.320 --> 0:3:3.560  
Emma Bergin  
You.

0:3:5.320 --> 0:3:5.480  
Emma Bergin  
Yeah.

0:3:2.490 --> 0:3:7.210  
Melissa Blair  
When I was about five years and deeply miss it, that's great.

0:3:6.420 --> 0:3:7.350  
Emma Bergin  
What's up, fun?

0:3:7.920 --> 0:3:9.250  
Emma Bergin  
Anyways, yeah, that's funny.

0:3:7.570 --> 0:3:9.960  
Melissa Blair  
Hmm, that is so cool.

0:3:9.780 --> 0:3:12.380  
Emma Bergin  
OK, where are you from in Ontario?

0:3:13.170 --> 0:3:14.590  
Melissa Blair  
I would say London Ish.

0:3:14.790 --> 0:3:15.330  
Melissa Blair  
Where are you from?

0:3:14.840 --> 0:3:15.730  
Emma Bergin  
OK, cool.

0:3:15.880 --> 0:3:16.990  
Emma Bergin  
Kind of outside.

0:3:17.40 --> 0:3:21.320  
Emma Bergin  
Not really, Barry, but like I just tell people because it's like one of those kind of random small towns.

0:3:21.620 --> 0:3:22.50  
Melissa Blair  
Yeah.

0:3:22.100 --> 0:3:22.300  
Melissa Blair  
Nice.

0:3:23.120 --> 0:3:23.620  
Melissa Blair  
That's awesome.

0:3:23.20 --> 0:3:24.130  
Emma Bergin  
Yeah. OK.

0:3:24.180 --> 0:3:25.80  
Emma Bergin  
Yeah, that's fine.

0:3:25.180 --> 0:3:25.910  
Emma Bergin  
OK.

0:3:25.970 --> 0:3:36.510  
Emma Bergin  
So umm, just through your kind of different consulting journey and then owning your startup like, did you always envision yourself being a business owner?

0:3:36.520 --> 0:3:44.560  
Emma Bergin  
Is that something that was kind of in your plans or something that you just kind of decided when you wanted to move back to BC or move to BC?

0:3:45.180 --> 0:3:49.410  
Melissa Blair  
Yeah, I mean, I always had a goal that before I turned 30, I wanted to own my own business.

0:3:49.420 --> 0:3:54.830  
Melissa Blair  
And so I was really grateful with the opportunity with that startup to to go out and to do that.

0:3:55.580 --> 0:4:3.470  
Melissa Blair  
Then through that learning experience and then going back into a company now where I've landed, I'm like sort of got a foot in two doors.

0:4:3.480 --> 0:4:14.290  
Melissa Blair  
I'm working like a normal 9 to 5, but then it also pursuing my own consulting and freelance on the side with potentially the intention to just go fully freelance.

0:4:14.300 --> 0:4:17.520  
Melissa Blair  
But for now, I'd like the balance between the two, umm.

0:4:17.950 --> 0:4:27.460  
Melissa Blair  
And with my freelance, now I I don't have a team to manage, so that's a big difference, you know, depending on how big you wanna be or where you wanna scale.

0:4:33.860 --> 0:4:34.60  
Emma Bergin  
Yeah.

0:4:27.770 --> 0:4:42.410  
Melissa Blair  
I'm independently consulting at the moment and so all I have to worry about is me in my own to do is and my own accountability and deliverables to the client versus the fun and stress that comes with growing, scaling, and managing a team.

0:4:43.260 --> 0:4:44.350  
Emma Bergin  
Yeah, that makes sense.

0:4:53.920 --> 0:4:54.810  
Melissa Blair  
Yes, exactly.

0:4:54.860 --> 0:4:55.80  
Melissa Blair  
Yeah.

0:4:44.500 --> 0:4:55.780  
Emma Bergin  
So you're working just to make sure I understand correctly, you have another kind of like a full time job and then your consulting just by yourself, OK, OK.

0:4:55.90 --> 0:4:58.580  
Melissa Blair  
So I'm working like a 9 to 5 and then I'm working like a 5 to 9.

0:4:59.660 --> 0:5:0.290  
Emma Bergin  
Wow.

0:5:0.360 --> 0:5:0.570  
Emma Bergin  
Really.

0:5:1.230 --> 0:5:1.930  
Melissa Blair  
It's exhausting.

0:5:0.690 --> 0:5:2.710  
Emma Bergin  
And umm yeah.

0:5:6.810 --> 0:5:7.180  
Melissa Blair  
Umm.

0:5:4.290 --> 0:5:9.720  
Emma Bergin  
Well, hopefully you can get a little bit of break during the holidays and fingers crossed. OK.

0:5:9.730 --> 0:5:17.640  
Emma Bergin  
So then what made you kind of take that next step to start consulting on your own and kind of what made you motivated to start your own business?

0:5:18.240 --> 0:5:51.750  
Melissa Blair  
Yeah, I feel like the combination of my global and global experience, particularly across three different Commonwealth countries with the lens of social impact and then working in the US with the lens of social impact has just put me in a really right position of so many different skill sets to be able to offer to clients and that sort of globalization approach of what the future of philanthropy needs to look like, what the future of social impact and measurement needs to look like with the future of sustainability in nonprofits needs to look like.

0:5:51.760 --> 0:6:11.370  
Melissa Blair  
So I think when I as I started to put my feelers out there, when I returned to Canada to understand what's going on in the current landscape, I started to identify some really big gaps of what I had seen and built in other countries and really identified that there's an opportunity here for me to bring that skill set and expertise to the clients.

0:6:11.490 --> 0:6:13.90  
Melissa Blair  
They're located here trying to make change.

0:6:13.690 --> 0:6:14.740  
Emma Bergin  
Yeah, that makes sense.

0:6:14.990 --> 0:6:19.530  
Emma Bergin  
And so do you wanna share a little bit about what you currently do with your clients?

0:6:21.840 --> 0:6:22.20  
Melissa Blair  
Yeah.

0:6:19.700 --> 0:6:27.100  
Emma Bergin  
I don't know how much you're allowed to share, but kind of like what services you provide if you're allowed to share anyone you work with and kind of like how you find your clients.

0:6:27.970 --> 0:6:29.760  
Emma Bergin  
Just so I can learn a little bit more about your business.

0:6:30.370 --> 0:6:31.240  
Melissa Blair  
Yeah, sure.

0:6:31.690 --> 0:6:38.540  
Melissa Blair  
So a lot of it is just through relationship building and networking and so tapping into different networks that are focused in social impact.

0:6:38.550 --> 0:6:43.620  
Melissa Blair  
So there's the association of Flint Tony for association of fundraising professionals.

0:6:43.630 --> 0:6:51.80  
Melissa Blair  
AFP, Umm there's others are nonprofit networks like Vantage Point and Collective.

0:6:51.90 --> 0:6:53.960  
Melissa Blair  
It's called collective impact or excuse me, collective action.

0:6:54.30 --> 0:7:2.960  
Melissa Blair  
And So what I've done is just tapped into those networks and just started to build relationships and contacts with people I've always believed in networking without a cause.

0:7:3.30 --> 0:7:5.450  
Melissa Blair  
So I'm not going out there trying to secure business.

0:7:5.460 --> 0:7:14.650  
Melissa Blair  
I'm going out there just trying to build relationships and inevitably those relationships snowball into a conversation with somebody else and then somebody else, which leads to the opportunity to work together.

0:7:15.260 --> 0:7:21.570  
Melissa Blair  
So I'd say my core focus and services at the moment, it's sort of a few different angles at the social impact space.

0:7:21.660 --> 0:7:27.270  
Melissa Blair  
One of them, which has been really unique is event production with specifically the lens of social impact.

0:7:27.600 --> 0:7:27.850  
Emma Bergin  
You.

0:7:27.620 --> 0:7:40.210  
Melissa Blair  
So I helped to produce the event that we just held here recently in Kelowna, called CONNECT money impact, which is an impact investors event bringing together social entrepreneurs, ecosystem builders and impact investors in a room together.

0:7:40.350 --> 0:7:49.90  
Melissa Blair  
And my role is sort of making sure that that happens in a flawless experience from start to finish and has a very cognizant lens of social of social impact.

0:7:49.100 --> 0:8:4.160  
Melissa Blair  
Meaning every supplier we brought in, every food, drink sort of soap that was used at the event was socially procured, meaning that it came from a B Corp or social enterprise and we were very cognizant again of like sustainability, waste management, things like that.

0:8:4.600 --> 0:8:9.70  
Melissa Blair  
So I've got another three event contracts coming up in 2024.

0:8:9.510 --> 0:8:11.50  
Melissa Blair  
And so, yeah, sort of.

0:8:11.60 --> 0:8:14.170  
Melissa Blair  
I'm like a event producer in social change.

0:8:15.710 --> 0:8:19.700  
Melissa Blair  
And that was actually some of the work that I had done in the US which led to that knowledge and skill set.

0:8:20.390 --> 0:8:36.650  
Melissa Blair  
The other big piece I'm really focusing in on is collective impact, which I've alluded to a couple of times, which is playing the facilitator or backbone role for a collaborative or coalition of people that are coming together to sit around and build a table to create some larger change at a systems level.

0:8:37.390 --> 0:8:45.210  
Melissa Blair  
So in the US I did some work in digital privacy rights and in food security and making the food system more equitable.

0:8:45.220 --> 0:8:57.720  
Melissa Blair  
And just here in Canada, I'm starting to work towards the same thing, offering the backbone facilitation support for food security initiative across Kelowna and as well for substance abuse.

0:8:57.770 --> 0:8:58.230  
Melissa Blair  
Excuse me?

0:8:58.240 --> 0:9:0.710  
Melissa Blair  
Substance use try to use that language as much as I can.

0:9:0.720 --> 0:9:5.740  
Melissa Blair  
Substance use and addiction support services across the lower mainland so.

0:9:7.210 --> 0:9:16.310  
Melissa Blair  
That that's like it takes like again it's a very unique skill set that I've been able to hone in on the last three years, which is the deep sort of.

0:9:18.500 --> 0:9:30.500  
Melissa Blair  
Thoughtful facilitation and strategic agenda building so that when somebody, when these individuals that are really busy, these experts in their field are coming to the table, that they're coming with, you know, the the right resources that they need.

0:9:30.510 --> 0:9:40.420  
Melissa Blair  
The meeting itself is facilitated in a way that's like bringing out the right voices, connecting people in the right way, moving at the speed of trust, and then also the lens of the expertise of whatever the issue is.

0:9:40.430 --> 0:9:43.820  
Melissa Blair  
And they actual strategic ability to move that issue forward.

0:9:44.80 --> 0:9:48.190  
Melissa Blair  
The other thing that's really important within collective impact is unlikely partners at the table.

0:9:48.620 --> 0:10:0.250  
Melissa Blair  
So it's not just bringing nonprofit leaders together, it's about creating a sustainable group of funders and managing the dynamic between funders and the nonprofit leaders and thinking about who else in the community actually impacts the system.

0:10:0.390 --> 0:10:7.80  
Melissa Blair  
So with food, you know, that's the producers, it's the farmers, it's the markets, it's the restaurant owners, it's the event venues.

0:10:7.90 --> 0:10:8.940  
Melissa Blair  
So it's the Uber eat.

0:10:8.950 --> 0:10:15.240  
Melissa Blair  
So food, food is so much bigger and broader than just the nonprofit folks that are focused in on the food bank.

0:10:15.990 --> 0:10:22.630  
Melissa Blair  
So I think what I also helped to bring is that we bring in unlikely partners and help to start to really motivate the business community to move things forward.

0:10:23.500 --> 0:10:23.640  
Emma Bergin  
Yeah.

0:10:26.10 --> 0:10:26.570  
Emma Bergin  
Yes, that's OK.

0:10:24.430 --> 0:10:28.160  
Melissa Blair  
And then sorry, the final started major skills that I have is in like health behavior change.

0:10:28.950 --> 0:10:29.150  
Emma Bergin  
Umm.

0:10:28.910 --> 0:10:39.550  
Melissa Blair  
And what I would call a social marketing or social change marketing, which is using essentially the principles of commercial marketing, but for individual behavior change or influencing behavior.

0:10:40.440 --> 0:10:54.710  
Melissa Blair  
So I actually teach a master's course in this at Brock University of and teaching it for about 8 years and and I use a lot of those skill sets in the work with my clients about how do we actually think really strategically about who the audience is?

0:10:54.830 --> 0:10:56.310  
Melissa Blair  
What is the singular behavior?

0:10:56.320 --> 0:10:59.710  
Melissa Blair  
Ask we're making of them and then how do we put in place all the right?

0:10:59.720 --> 0:11:2.790  
Melissa Blair  
Sort of strategic underpinnings to make that behavior achievable.

0:11:4.630 --> 0:11:6.750  
Emma Bergin  
Using sounds like a full plate.

0:11:7.380 --> 0:11:7.710  
Melissa Blair  
Is.

0:11:7.140 --> 0:11:9.740  
Emma Bergin  
Umm, OK.

0:11:9.750 --> 0:11:17.880  
Emma Bergin  
And then you mentioned a little bit during that like you, you kind of focus on different like sustainability and different options that are being taken.

0:11:17.890 --> 0:11:29.50  
Emma Bergin  
So is that something you kind of always been interested in and leaning towards in your career like making a positive change and working with different groups too, I guess improve places that you're living or interested in?

0:11:29.830 --> 0:11:30.590  
Melissa Blair  
Yeah, for sure.

0:11:30.600 --> 0:11:34.910  
Melissa Blair  
I mean like I identified this space really early on.

0:11:34.920 --> 0:11:38.450  
Melissa Blair  
I'm so grateful that it came together for me in the way that it did.

0:11:38.460 --> 0:11:45.30  
Melissa Blair  
I did my undergrad and Health Sciences and then a minor in business and people were really confused like why I was combining those two worlds.

0:11:45.300 --> 0:11:49.830  
Melissa Blair  
But in health, science and public health, they're trying to create change and have a healthier population.

0:11:49.840 --> 0:11:56.710  
Melissa Blair  
And in business, they're trying to create money and use strategic paths to get people to buy products and earn more money.

0:11:56.960 --> 0:12:8.590  
Melissa Blair  
And so there was a blending of those two worlds that I uncovered in my undergrad and then realized, you know, if I have this strategic business skill set, I should be applying it to creating good in the world.

0:12:8.760 --> 0:12:12.340  
Melissa Blair  
Like I don't need to be going working for Coca Cola or PwC.

0:12:12.350 --> 0:12:20.760  
Melissa Blair  
So from the outset, when I was able to, like, uncover, there's a world to combine these two, I've been focused and working in that.

0:12:20.850 --> 0:12:24.620  
Melissa Blair  
It's interesting to see now how insanely massive that world has grown.

0:12:24.860 --> 0:12:25.100  
Emma Bergin  
Yeah.

0:12:24.950 --> 0:12:32.200  
Melissa Blair  
Like when I told my parents I wanted to go do my masters in social change marketing there, like where you going to get a job?

0:12:32.210 --> 0:12:32.670  
Melissa Blair  
How is this?

0:12:32.680 --> 0:12:35.650  
Melissa Blair  
This isn't important like this is like this is 2010.

0:12:36.780 --> 0:12:39.250  
Melissa Blair  
And the industries weren't as like prevalent as I would say.

0:12:39.260 --> 0:12:52.420  
Melissa Blair  
Now there's such, just like a massive societal shift and global consciousness awareness that we need to be much more sustainable in everything that we do and sustainability.

0:12:52.540 --> 0:12:57.850  
Melissa Blair  
There's the lens of it from the environment climate, but there's the lens of it, from funding and resourcing.

0:12:57.860 --> 0:13:6.860  
Melissa Blair  
And when I talk about sustainability in nonprofits, it's that the most nonprofits are still dependent on donor fund donor funding or grant funding.

0:13:7.110 --> 0:13:8.240  
Melissa Blair  
And that's disparate.

0:13:8.290 --> 0:13:12.80  
Melissa Blair  
It's, you know, it has a runway to it.

0:13:12.250 --> 0:13:19.900  
Melissa Blair  
You constantly have to be focusing on getting more and securing more versus moving towards more social enterprise models where they can get more sustainability.

0:13:19.910 --> 0:13:26.950  
Melissa Blair  
They can build a revenue stream that's consistent and reliable and helps them to to fund the good work that they're doing for their beneficiaries.

0:13:28.120 --> 0:13:28.940  
Emma Bergin  
No musing.

0:13:29.880 --> 0:13:48.820  
Emma Bergin  
And do you feel like, well, I know you kind of do an extra 95 to nine of your business, but do you feel like there's any kind of like really big lessons that you've learned or any big takeaway since you either started your business or have been, you know, even your startup journey as well?

0:13:49.630 --> 0:13:50.150  
Melissa Blair  
Yeah.

0:13:50.160 --> 0:13:53.580  
Melissa Blair  
I mean, I think one of the biggest things I'm focused right now on is social innovation.

0:13:54.150 --> 0:14:0.80  
Melissa Blair  
And I've been like sort of setting out on this mission to think about what does Canada look like in 2034?

0:14:0.410 --> 0:14:4.680  
Melissa Blair  
I originally thought about 2050 and then I was like, let's just bring it back actually 10 years from now.

0:14:4.830 --> 0:14:8.660  
Melissa Blair  
We're about to enter 2024 and I keep thinking ahead, OK, what is 2024?

0:14:8.760 --> 0:14:9.770  
Melissa Blair  
Excuse me, what is 2020?

0:14:9.780 --> 0:14:21.150  
Melissa Blair  
What is 2034 going to look like for us here in Canada and right now we're at this incredible convergence of massive shifting variables that have a huge impact on our lives.

0:14:21.480 --> 0:14:23.870  
Melissa Blair  
We've got inflation that's out of control.

0:14:24.120 --> 0:14:27.170  
Melissa Blair  
The housing crisis and affordability is out of control.

0:14:27.320 --> 0:14:36.510  
Melissa Blair  
The climate crisis is real and it's here and we've got technology moving at an exponential speed faster than the last year than it has in the last 10 years.

0:14:36.520 --> 0:14:45.780  
Melissa Blair  
So with the with the surgeons of AI and the potential and the fear that comes with that, it's like this incredible convergence.

0:15:2.380 --> 0:15:2.560  
Emma Bergin  
Yep.

0:14:45.790 --> 0:15:4.780  
Melissa Blair  
And so when I think about that with the systems lens and with an innovation lens that it's it's how are we going to prepare ourselves to be a resilient, healthy, prosperous population across the board collectively in 10 years from now?

0:15:4.830 --> 0:15:6.40  
Melissa Blair  
What does that even look like?

0:15:6.490 --> 0:15:21.0  
Melissa Blair  
I think for the first time in in many years, people are people aren't thinking ahead and looking ahead as much as it's sort of feels like there was this look towards 2020 or you know, 2025 and some of the goals even like the Paris Agreement and there's nothing beyond that.

0:15:21.10 --> 0:15:23.500  
Melissa Blair  
It's like where, where and what comes after this.

0:15:24.200 --> 0:15:29.290  
Melissa Blair  
And so I think thinking about social impact has never been more important.

0:15:29.920 --> 0:15:30.80  
Emma Bergin  
Yeah.

0:15:31.250 --> 0:15:32.120  
Emma Bergin  
Interesting.

0:15:32.220 --> 0:15:36.120  
Emma Bergin  
And do you think that, UM, like your work right now?

0:15:36.490 --> 0:15:44.520  
Emma Bergin  
Do you find that you're just more focused on some supporting the community that you live in, or do you think it kind of impacts Canada as a whole?

0:15:46.370 --> 0:15:51.540  
Melissa Blair  
Yeah, it's a really great question in my 9 to 5 work, I have the privilege of working with a number of different municipalities.

0:15:52.250 --> 0:15:52.680  
Melissa Blair  
Umm.

0:15:53.30 --> 0:16:4.790  
Melissa Blair  
Building strategies around reducing homelessness, substance use, poverty, food and with those were in such a unique position that we're working with, you know, 40 different municipalities in the course of a year.

0:16:5.860 --> 0:16:9.370  
Melissa Blair  
And so while there's an incredible need at a place based.

0:16:11.440 --> 0:16:13.830  
Melissa Blair  
Support and strategic thinking.

0:16:14.0 --> 0:16:28.230  
Melissa Blair  
There's also an incredible opportunity to to pull out further and to say OK, each one of these communities is facing very similar problems around not enough shelters on affordability of homes, increase of the toxic drug crisis.

0:16:28.420 --> 0:16:30.930  
Melissa Blair  
What are the common themes that we're seeing across these communities?

0:16:30.940 --> 0:16:41.180  
Melissa Blair  
What can we actually implement that is, having them spend less time and money trying to figure out what to do and actually just starting to put things into action that can work?

0:16:41.250 --> 0:16:44.520  
Melissa Blair  
So how can we do that on a like a a broader, bigger scale?

0:16:44.610 --> 0:16:51.100  
Melissa Blair  
And then what do we think about the things are that are tweaked for localized needs and how can we then adjust that?

0:16:51.210 --> 0:16:55.790  
Melissa Blair  
The interesting thing in the social impact space is particularly in government, you've got municipal, provincial and federal.

0:16:56.50 --> 0:17:9.620  
Melissa Blair  
They all sort of point fingers at one another, and it's strange because no one really sort of takes ownership and responsibility for creating change, particularly in housing, housing, such a unique beast, and it's trying to be tackled from so many different angles.

0:17:9.630 --> 0:17:15.810  
Melissa Blair  
But the municipalities you know, sometimes don't even feel like they haven't necessarily role to play in combating homelessness.

0:17:15.900 --> 0:17:19.730  
Melissa Blair  
And then they think, OK, it's BC housing that's supposed to feed and fuel this.

0:17:19.780 --> 0:17:21.470  
Melissa Blair  
OK, then it's actually the federal government.

0:17:21.480 --> 0:17:28.350  
Melissa Blair  
And so there's no actually coordination between the three and then coordination between even bordering municipalities.

0:17:28.360 --> 0:17:30.30  
Melissa Blair  
Municipalities aren't talking to one other.

0:17:40.830 --> 0:17:41.10  
Emma Bergin  
Yeah.

0:17:30.140 --> 0:17:49.890  
Melissa Blair  
So where I see again the opportunity is looking at it from a systems lens and and with this unique position thing that I mean in my 9 to 5 is that we can actually start to connect the dots and we can start to see, OK, where they're common themes, where can we create efficiencies, where can we actually move faster and more innovatively and then where does it need to have a very place based localized approach.

0:17:50.720 --> 0:17:58.290  
Emma Bergin  
Yeah, missing and then coming next for you, do you?

0:17:58.880 --> 0:18:0.500  
Emma Bergin  
What's your kind of plan for the future?

0:18:0.510 --> 0:18:7.900  
Emma Bergin  
Do you plan to kind of keep it as is or focus just on your business and kind of make that your your 9 to 5?

0:18:8.860 --> 0:18:9.390  
Melissa Blair  
Yeah.

0:18:9.400 --> 0:18:12.640  
Melissa Blair  
My my goal is actually to go back to get my doctorate.

0:18:14.310 --> 0:18:16.600  
Melissa Blair  
I'd like to be able to.

0:18:17.330 --> 0:18:48.560  
Melissa Blair  
I already teach at the masters level, but the I'm the only person in my department that doesn't have my doctorate and it's always been like fine, but it limits me from being able to expand that teaching ability in a broader scale, and also what I'd like to do is become like, evolve my skill set to become a academically credentialed expert so that I can continue to consult and have a foot in the field of academia.

0:18:48.730 --> 0:18:55.520  
Melissa Blair  
I think there's a lot of incredible work happening in academia around social impact, behavior, change, social innovation.

0:18:56.110 --> 0:19:11.320  
Melissa Blair  
But again, there's sort of a bridge that needs to be created or built upon of knowledge translation of this incredible research being put into our practice, and particularly at the level in which they could be put into practice like municipalities that have funding and resources and reach.

0:19:11.430 --> 0:19:24.960  
Melissa Blair  
So my longer term goal is to a doctorate and to be play the role of bridging the gap between the two, which would be expanding my consulting business and at the same time helping to influence academia.

0:19:25.820 --> 0:19:26.210  
Emma Bergin  
Yeah.

0:19:26.300 --> 0:19:27.970  
Emma Bergin  
Amazing, but that's exciting.

0:19:28.760 --> 0:19:31.60  
Melissa Blair  
Hmm, it's just really expensive.

0:19:32.20 --> 0:19:34.530  
Emma Bergin  
Yes, not cheap and a lot of work.

0:19:35.440 --> 0:19:35.630  
Melissa Blair  
Mm-hmm.

0:19:34.540 --> 0:19:36.530  
Emma Bergin  
So yeah, it's a great call.

0:19:37.60 --> 0:19:37.530  
Emma Bergin  
OK.

0:19:37.540 --> 0:19:40.630  
Emma Bergin  
And then let's chat a little bit about your experience with we BC.

0:19:40.640 --> 0:19:47.670  
Emma Bergin  
So do you wanna chat through kind of how you found them and then why you decided to join the program?

0:19:47.780 --> 0:19:48.810  
Emma Bergin  
Yeah, just walking through that.

0:19:49.320 --> 0:19:50.10  
Melissa Blair  
Yeah.

0:19:50.480 --> 0:19:56.530  
Melissa Blair  
So I was looking for entrepreneurial support in BC and that's how I stumbled upon BC.

0:19:57.20 --> 0:20:0.160  
Melissa Blair  
Like I said, I'd love to tap into the neck, the networks that already exist.

0:20:0.170 --> 0:20:4.120  
Melissa Blair  
I've always found a lot of success and connecting in where people are already converging.

0:20:4.780 --> 0:20:5.210  
Melissa Blair  
Umm.

0:20:5.520 --> 0:20:11.920  
Melissa Blair  
And so I was able to join the mentorship program, which was and like an 8 week program.

0:20:11.930 --> 0:20:13.90  
Melissa Blair  
I can even remember now.

0:20:13.450 --> 0:20:15.520  
Melissa Blair  
It was so incredible.

0:20:15.820 --> 0:20:21.410  
Melissa Blair  
The Group of women that came together, we came together every Wednesday morning was just phenomenal.

0:20:21.420 --> 0:20:38.620  
Melissa Blair  
They were all so brilliantly smart, but so vulnerable and open and kind as well, and so we created this really beautiful space for one another to just be truly, authentically ourselves, to share the things that are keeping us up at night.

0:20:38.750 --> 0:20:43.690  
Melissa Blair  
And those obviously they, they digress further than your professional day to day, right.

0:20:43.700 --> 0:20:52.230  
Melissa Blair  
Like we are whole humans and we were able to show up as whole humans and to share things that are stressing us in our personal life that then bleed into our professional life or vice versa.

0:20:52.380 --> 0:20:54.810  
Melissa Blair  
And so it was just an incredible container.

0:20:55.310 --> 0:21:3.600  
Melissa Blair  
Umm of like sharing and connection and advice and I feel like I just took away so much from it.

0:21:3.610 --> 0:21:4.690  
Melissa Blair  
So very grateful for it.

0:21:5.210 --> 0:21:6.440  
Emma Bergin  
Yeah, that's amazing.

0:21:6.530 --> 0:21:8.890  
Emma Bergin  
And you mentioned a little bit about advice.

0:21:8.900 --> 0:21:14.700  
Emma Bergin  
So did you feel like there was anything that was really impactful for you to take away from and to apply to your business?

0:21:15.650 --> 0:21:16.470  
Melissa Blair  
Yeah, I mean.

0:21:19.380 --> 0:21:19.630  
Melissa Blair  
Yeah.

0:21:19.640 --> 0:21:24.80  
Melissa Blair  
The greatest advice that I've been continuing to get is just about slowing down.

0:21:24.730 --> 0:21:26.850  
Melissa Blair  
Umm, about creating more balance?

0:21:28.750 --> 0:21:39.570  
Melissa Blair  
About I had some interesting professional experiences at the end of my work visa in the US and also working in the US was like totally different beast.

0:21:39.900 --> 0:21:53.40  
Melissa Blair  
It's such a competitive environment and every man for themselves and so, uh, I think I've been combating a bit of PTSD of coming back from that environment into the Canadian environment.

0:21:53.50 --> 0:22:1.310  
Melissa Blair  
So they just helped me just sort of unpack umm things that I've had in the past and how to leave those behind and not let them influence.

0:22:1.320 --> 0:22:4.270  
Melissa Blair  
Sort of the present moment that I'm in and and the the theme.

0:22:11.550 --> 0:22:11.860  
Emma Bergin  
Yeah.

0:22:21.30 --> 0:22:21.180  
Emma Bergin  
No.

0:22:4.280 --> 0:22:21.430  
Melissa Blair  
I would say that was coming up for me in that moment with that group and in my personal life was just maintaining myself in the present, like not stressing about the past, not stressing about the future, but enjoying the present moment for what it is and just actually reveling and all the work that I've done and just being there being present for it.

0:22:22.130 --> 0:22:23.520  
Emma Bergin  
Yeah, that's awesome.

0:22:23.970 --> 0:22:41.30  
Emma Bergin  
And and then anything else that was coming out of the program, like, did you feel like there was anything that they provided you that you could take away from like a business application standpoint or did you kind of find that it was more just like a really great group to chat to kind of unpack with your different struggles?

0:22:41.890 --> 0:22:42.110  
Melissa Blair  
Yeah.

0:22:44.270 --> 0:22:45.890  
Melissa Blair  
I think my business is so unique. So.

0:22:47.30 --> 0:22:58.800  
Melissa Blair  
Uh, I mean, I feel like I was able to add value to some other folks there around startup life like fundraising and fundraising decks and managing investors and different funds available.

0:22:59.770 --> 0:23:10.230  
Melissa Blair  
I just feel like the women provided, if anything, is just like a reminder again that we are whole humans in our work and that that you have to that feminine.

0:23:10.240 --> 0:23:27.220  
Melissa Blair  
The like a big, I guess, another big theme and something that I love is like your feminine powers are incredibly potent and important and like undermining for moving too much into your masculine in business is actually not serving you.

0:23:27.230 --> 0:23:49.700  
Melissa Blair  
You need to to work and be in the masculine energy, but the feminine energy is just as important, and so there was a lot of like female empowerment and recognition and acknowledgement of to stay in the feminine and how that that serves each of us and like, you know, all of us were talking about different combative relationships, combative I should like.

0:23:50.900 --> 0:23:51.790  
Melissa Blair  
Com confrontational.

0:23:54.470 --> 0:23:54.740  
Emma Bergin  
Umm.

0:23:51.800 --> 0:23:57.40  
Melissa Blair  
Potentially, relationships with male colleagues and how showing up in rooms and what it's like.

0:23:57.50 --> 0:24:3.810  
Melissa Blair  
And there was one woman that had some conflict with two her startup cofounder and another executive at their startup.

0:24:3.820 --> 0:24:15.990  
Melissa Blair  
And we worked through a lot of that and I guess the biggest reminder again was that actually like your feminine power is the best way to approach a situation like talking about emotions is OK, being honest and open is OK, like, doesn't.

0:24:16.80 --> 0:24:20.50  
Melissa Blair  
There's a cultural norm that you have to erase all those things as soon as you enter an office.

0:24:20.60 --> 0:24:22.290  
Melissa Blair  
And but I love is the social revolution.

0:24:22.300 --> 0:24:23.270  
Melissa Blair  
That that's not true anymore.

0:24:23.910 --> 0:24:24.300  
Emma Bergin  
Yeah.

0:24:24.350 --> 0:24:26.610  
Emma Bergin  
Well, that OK, great.

0:24:27.190 --> 0:24:37.0  
Emma Bergin  
And then in terms of what we see was that the only program you did and do you plan on kind of joining anymore or was that kind of just like a a test for you to see how it went?

0:24:37.780 --> 0:24:39.980  
Melissa Blair  
That was the only program formally I've done.

0:24:39.990 --> 0:24:40.840  
Melissa Blair  
I've participated in.

0:24:44.800 --> 0:24:45.150  
Emma Bergin  
Wait.

0:24:40.850 --> 0:24:48.700  
Melissa Blair  
That's the webinars and watch that lots of the resources they have that group we're actually maintaining contact together in an informal way.

0:24:49.450 --> 0:24:49.640  
Emma Bergin  
Yes.

0:24:49.360 --> 0:24:52.210  
Melissa Blair  
Umm, so I'll just continue to connect with them.

0:24:52.220 --> 0:24:52.990  
Melissa Blair  
But yeah, I mean, I'm.

0:24:53.0 --> 0:25:2.580  
Melissa Blair  
I'll just keeping an eye out umm for what else is out there and how else I could continue to like tap in and then also just trying to balance the things I'm like.

0:25:3.270 --> 0:25:4.750  
Emma Bergin  
Yes, yes, of course.

0:25:5.140 --> 0:25:5.370  
Melissa Blair  
Yeah.

0:25:5.390 --> 0:25:6.680  
Emma Bergin  
OK, now we're at times.

0:25:6.690 --> 0:25:9.100  
Emma Bergin  
So do you have a minute or two for one more question?

0:25:9.510 --> 0:25:9.880  
Melissa Blair  
Yeah.

0:25:9.930 --> 0:25:10.330  
Melissa Blair  
Yeah, I do.

0:25:10.290 --> 0:25:11.320  
Emma Bergin  
OK, perfect.

0:25:11.330 --> 0:25:14.60  
Emma Bergin  
So my last question is my favorite question.

0:25:14.70 --> 0:25:19.350  
Emma Bergin  
So if you were gonna give advice to someone who is going to start their own business, what advice would you give?

0:25:22.400 --> 0:25:22.570  
Melissa Blair  
Who?

0:25:22.920 --> 0:25:23.470  
Melissa Blair  
Good question.

0:25:25.260 --> 0:25:25.710  
Melissa Blair  
Umm.

0:25:34.380 --> 0:25:42.970  
Melissa Blair  
I think having a really deep alignment of your core values and your self care.

0:25:45.180 --> 0:25:48.180  
Melissa Blair  
Because it doesn't matter how great you are at what you're doing.

0:25:48.190 --> 0:26:9.560  
Melissa Blair  
If you're going to come across people that are going to offer you money or provide ideas or push you in a certain direction, and unless you have a very clear alignment of your core values, it's going to be hard to say no to those things O like very deep alignment with your core values and what and what feels good and bright for you and right for your business.

0:26:9.570 --> 0:26:13.800  
Melissa Blair  
And you'll know that because your gut will tell you that you have to just stay in tune with that.

0:26:14.90 --> 0:26:19.0  
Melissa Blair  
And the best way to stay in tune with that is having a really strong self care practice that allows an increase that space.

0:26:20.650 --> 0:26:20.940  
Emma Bergin  
Amazing.

0:26:20.950 --> 0:26:21.960  
Emma Bergin  
That's a really good answer.

0:26:22.390 --> 0:26:23.890  
Emma Bergin  
Haven't gotten that one before, so I like that.

0:26:25.180 --> 0:26:27.330  
Melissa Blair  
It's less, it's less business practical.

0:26:27.340 --> 0:26:29.20  
Melissa Blair  
It's more just like the self.

0:26:25.180 --> 0:26:31.650  
Emma Bergin  
And yeah, I think I always hear like do a business plan.

0:26:32.60 --> 0:26:33.380  
Emma Bergin  
So that's a classic.

0:26:35.160 --> 0:26:35.390  
Emma Bergin  
Yeah.

0:26:38.980 --> 0:26:39.530  
Emma Bergin  
Take care of.

0:26:34.20 --> 0:26:40.620  
Melissa Blair  
I mean that's great, but then you need to make sure that you can like stay on track with that business plan, yeah.

0:26:41.310 --> 0:26:42.280  
Emma Bergin  
I got in OK.

0:26:42.570 --> 0:26:44.200  
Emma Bergin  
Is there anything else that I miss?

0:26:44.210 --> 0:26:45.960  
Emma Bergin  
Anything I didn't ask that you wanna share?

0:26:47.990 --> 0:26:48.810  
Melissa Blair  
No, I'm just curious.

0:26:48.820 --> 0:26:49.140  
Melissa Blair  
Is it a?

0:26:49.150 --> 0:26:52.720  
Melissa Blair  
Is it OK that like I have the weird bizarre business?

0:26:53.420 --> 0:26:55.350  
Emma Bergin  
Yeah, totally.

0:26:52.730 --> 0:26:56.210  
Melissa Blair  
Because I have my 9 to 5 already at or OK.

0:27:16.50 --> 0:27:16.250  
Melissa Blair  
OK.

0:26:56.820 --> 0:27:18.370  
Emma Bergin  
Yeah, I think the way that I'll probably just frame it, look kind of been my head is like you are someone who has a lot going on and like really dedicated to both like what you do in your day to day and then you're also teaching like I think there's a lot of things that we can kind of pull from that and then I'll focus a little bit about what your direct business.

0:27:18.610 --> 0:27:18.790  
Melissa Blair  
OK.

0:27:19.80 --> 0:27:22.550  
Emma Bergin  
So hopefully maybe someone will see it or maybe reach out to you.

0:27:23.860 --> 0:27:24.90  
Melissa Blair  
Ohh.

0:27:22.560 --> 0:27:24.490  
Emma Bergin  
There's always that opportunity there.

0:27:31.320 --> 0:27:31.560  
Melissa Blair  
Uh.

0:27:24.590 --> 0:27:35.860  
Emma Bergin  
And then the last portion is kind of like a Q&A, so I'll go through some of these last questions that I asked you just to share a little bit more about we BC, the advice that you would give an expertly great quotes in here.

0:27:36.560 --> 0:27:36.800  
Melissa Blair  
OK.

0:27:35.870 --> 0:27:37.110  
Emma Bergin  
So it'll be super.

0:27:38.920 --> 0:27:39.160  
Melissa Blair  
Yeah.

0:27:39.170 --> 0:27:52.370  
Melissa Blair  
The last thing I would just say is that you know the world is a vastly, incredibly challenging and changing place and that we all in our businesses have an opportunity to create change and to serve society.

0:27:52.380 --> 0:28:4.380  
Melissa Blair  
And so, you know, I would just encourage, you know, all we BC entrepreneurs to consider like, what is their social impact and imprint and how can they create businesses that are sustainable but also can get back.

0:28:5.280 --> 0:28:6.390  
Emma Bergin  
Yeah, that's great.

0:28:6.460 --> 0:28:8.780  
Emma Bergin  
I love that, OK.

0:28:8.510 --> 0:28:8.820  
Melissa Blair  
OK.

0:28:8.830 --> 0:28:9.320  
Melissa Blair  
Thank you.

0:28:9.330 --> 0:28:9.600  
Melissa Blair  
Thanks.

0:28:9.610 --> 0:28:10.340  
Melissa Blair  
So nice to meet you.

0:28:10.350 --> 0:28:11.840  
Melissa Blair  
And yeah, I love our letter.

0:28:11.850 --> 0:28:13.710  
Melissa Blair  
Like Pastor connected, where are you based in BC?