

Season 2, Episode 1

[00:00:00] **Hannah Konschuh:** Welcome to the first episode of season two of the diversity imperative, a podcast dedicated to unearthing the agriculture sectors potential. I'm your co-host Hannah and I'm a grain farmer from Southern Alberta

Erin Gowriluk: And I'm Erin Gowriluk, your other co-host. And I lead a national grower association in the nation's capital.

Our goal each episode is to date into great conversation that seeks to inspire a broader dialogue about diversity, equity and inclusion in the agriculture sector. We look forward to considering a variety of perspectives and exploring ways to overcome barriers, to make this a topic that everyone is comfortable talking about.

Hannah Konschuh: At the top of season two, we first want to take a moment to thank our sponsor and partner Syngenta for continuing to support the diversity imperative podcast, which allows us to dialogue about diversity, equity and inclusion and belonging in this way. And to be able to share it with you.

[00:01:00] **Erin Gowriluk:** Yes, big, thank you to Syngenta. And also a big thank you to our listeners who are along for the ride and who want to engage and learn with Hannah. And I thank you for your support, your feedback and ongoing words of encouragement.

Hannah Konschuh: Yes. And on that note, Thinking about feedback. Of course we would love if you would continue to, or for the first time, give the diversity imperative, a rating or review on whatever podcast platform you like to listen from.

So a recent development, if you listen to on Spotify, you can now provide a star rating after you listened. So if you like what you heard and you feel so inclined, please leave us a rating or a review or share with a friend. We'd so appreciate.

Erin Gowriluk: And we now have an email list. So if you'd like Hannah and I, to sneak into your inbox, to let you know when episodes drop or to be the first to hear about podcast updates, head over to diversityimperative.com to sign up.

This is where you can find resources mentioned and any show notes that we have for each episode.

[00:02:00] **Hannah Konschuh:** And of course, if you have a topic that you think is worth exploring on the podcast or a guest that you think that we should speak with, let us know you can find us on Instagram or Facebook at diversity imperative or on Twitter at diversity and egg, or there's a way to get in touch with us through our website.

We'd love to hear it.

Erin Gowriluk: So here we are Hannah. We have nine, nine episodes under our belt from season one and the summer series nine conversations, which sought to explore the concept of diversity, equity and inclusion in its many forms.

Hannah Konschuh: Erin, we were talking about how best to build on those concepts that we explored as part of season one and how to move the conversation to a more practical conversation and to discuss ways to put those concepts into practice.

[00:03:00] **Erin Gowriluk:** Yeah. And that's why the next six episodes are going to be dedicated to discover. Resources tools and strategies intended to help you transform your organizational culture. And today we have the perfect guest to help us do that. I'm really pleased to be joined by Melissa Horne, who is the director of client experience, a dialectic and organization that helps transform companies and their leadership and organizational culture.

Melissa received her PhD in modern us and African-American history from Rutgers university. She has worked in both Canada and the us helping make workplaces more diverse, inclusive, and equitable at dialectic. Melissa Dora drives the client experience serving as the client champion on all projects. Her passion is working to solve the most challenging problems facing your business.

Her ability to develop a deep relationship driven, understanding of your core business. Unparalleled allowing Melissa to uncover new insights and then relentlessly advocate for solutions that are actionable, measurable, and effective. She's also the host of just one Q a podcast where DEI professionals and thought leaders discuss the latest trends in the field of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Welcome to the diversity imperative, Melissa. [00:04:00] I

Dr. Melissa Horne: thank you so much for having me. I'm really excited to be here. It's fun being on the other side of, of the microphone, so to speak. So I'm really, really grateful that you've invited me on. Great.

Erin Gowriluk: Your, your background, Melissa. Quite interesting PhD in history.

So before we get started, I was wondering if you could tell us a bit about how your experience informs the work that you do, because I think that this connection isn't necessarily intuitive for everyone.

Dr. Melissa Horne: Yeah. It's it's, it's funny. I don't, I don't often get asked sort of, well, I mean, I do, but I don't about like, what is it that, you know, led you from history to DEI?

My, my research and I won't get into the minutia of it, but focused on the early history of black student activism at historically black colleges and universities in the U S and what I think I bring from that to my day to day workplaces. Looking [00:05:00] at the ways in which students sought to affect change within unjust systems.

So while these were historically black colleges and universities specifically set up for black students they were very much patriarchal. They were very much led by often well-meaning white people, but they were you know, very paternalistic as well. And so looking at how students sought to bring about change.

You can see that a lot of the techniques, solutions and practices are still very much useful today. So how do you use how to use the media? And at that time it was newspapers. How do you gather, you know, grassroots. And how do you effectively push leadership for change? Whether it is by, in this case, it was having black presidents leading.

So, you know, we hear often representation matters and it mattered then, and it still matters. Now. The other thing that I think really informed. My move into diversity equity inclusion in the workplace [00:06:00] was that I had the privilege of being and living in studying in the U S during the Obama administration.

And you know, it was it was an amazing time. I, I lived in DC and I volunteered for an LGBTQ plus organization, the national center for lesbian rights, who was fighting for marriage equality. They also worked on a number of other issues around gender equity and especially transgender rights in the workplace.

And so really sort of that coming together of sort of the, the past and the present made me think that there's a lot that I could take from what I'd learned from my

research and, and continue to support workplaces to become better for the, for the people who work there. So. Once I graduated, I kind of knew I wanted to continue to to, to work in workplaces.

And so I made that shift out of academia. And that's kind of how I got here today. So that was a great question. Thanks for asking

Hannah Korschuh: So I think it would be great if you could introduce our listeners to dialectic. Tell us a bit about what dialectic does as an [00:07:00] organization and the work that.

Dr. Melissa Horne: Yeah. So dialectic has been around for about 10 years now and we focus on three areas.

So we create custom e-learning experiences. We focus on consulting. So we work with organizations to uncover a workplace culture. And we work from consultation to implementation and that happens across various lines. And then we also have a a new sort of product that we've developed called DTI learning snippets.

And those are micro learning scenarios. The custom e-learning stuff that we do we've done stuff. Working with pet food veterinary veterinarians, we've done stuff from the healthcare sector. We've worked in corporate spaces and really it's about Focusing on how best we can support the end user.

So it ends up being a that we create all sorts of. Cool. E-learning and it's not your typical click and quiz, and it's really scenario [00:08:00] driven. That sort of, I think are our differentiating differentiating factors that we really care about how we can help people do their jobs better. And that, that happens in myriad different ways.

And yeah, so it's been fun. I actually started out on the research and design team. I was sort of in between jobs and found an ad for a, I think a position that I wasn't qualified for from dialectic. And, but when I saw the I went to the about us and I saw that there was a few other. What, what did we call is we're sort of rogue, PhDs.

It's other folks who are non-practicing in their disciplines there. And I, and I saw the mission and, and the approach to learning and training and the values of the company. I thought this, these are my people. So I did this thing where I don't normally do, but I reached out to Erin, who's our, who's our president and founder.

And I said, I got to work with you guys. And he brought me in on this small little project and hasn't been able to get rid of me since, so. I love

[00:09:00] **Hannah Korschuh:** that. So the snip. Yeah, we can go back to those for a sec. That's actually kind of how I think I really got onto dialectic. I actually heard, I think I heard Erin, the founder that you just mentioned on the radio, he was on the Daniel Smith show out here in Alberta, which is no longer a and then I ended up kind of working with him and I think your other colleague, Barb on an initiative that I was involved in.

So that's kind of how it. Story connects with dialectic, but the learning step is, is what really sort of captivated me because it's it, the content of them is quite relevant, but it's also sort of the format. And I think you called them micro learning, whereas you use most of micro learning snippets, but yeah.

So tell us about those and what sort of the, the the research and the data is that supports that.

Dr. Melissa Horne: Yeah. So I'm going to go to the, to the beginning because I'm a historian and I think our origin story of the snippets origin story is one that's important. Our company dialectic was actually founded on Erin going out and delivering critical thinking sessions and critical thinking and unconscious bias [00:10:00] session turned it more into unconscious bias sessions.

And and I think what we learned as we sort of moved through the years was that. While they were super effective in the moment. And people took a lot away from them. They effectively were sort of one and done. There wasn't anything that could be done after those sessions. So what do we do? We've we've we understand that we have unconscious biases.

These are the ways that we, that they pop up in the workplace, but how do we mitigate them? What do we, what do we do now that we have this information? And we realized that much, like a lot of other folks, we were doing this all wrong. That it's okay to that. It's good to sort of surface these issues, but without sort of practicing the skills to mitigate unconscious bias or deal with it, when it happens, we were kind of letting folks down and we weren't really practicing what we, what we preach is that, you know, we really focus on how to help people do their jobs better.

So what we, what we know about I think. Diversity equity inclusion is that a lot of folks [00:11:00] want to do better, but they don't know how they don't have the confidence. They don't know what to say. They don't have those behaviors

modeled. And so when we design our larger e-learning, we modeled the behaviors and we model and allow people to practice through scenarios the skills that they're supposed to be doing in their workplace.

And so Similarly with diversity equity inclusion, it's really around skills. It's around being able to identify when either your biases are at play or maybe a colleague and being able to have those conversations. So learning snippets Basically are, are based on a couple of things. One obviously scenarios.

And we know that as we just mentioned, that when people are able to practice in a safe place they're able to gain that expertise and able to apply it on the job. The other thing that we do is that rather than what we were doing before, which was having these, you know a one and done session people were impacted in the moment, but there's this thing called the forgetting [00:12:00] curve.

And you may not, you probably see Erin nodding and th the most of what we learn you know, I think we learn about, we do lose. We lose like half of what we've learned after the first time. You know, and then it just keeps going from there. So by taking the content that we would have delivered in a two hour, three hour, half day session and breaking it up over a period of time, spaced out, we allow people the time to reflect.

We, we, we overcome this forgetting curve. And so each learning snippet takes about two minutes to complete. We walk people through a scenario you're able to decide how you would handle it. And then you get feedback based on, on the answer that you choose. And so, well, the way we think about this as it's not that there's sort of a right or wrong way to handle.

Situation, but there are sort of certain outcomes that are going to happen depending on how you answer them. And you get that feedback in the moment and you have the ability to think, do I want to proceed down this path or do I want to rethink my answer? And what we're finding is that [00:13:00] folks are Are, you know, sometimes surprised they're debating the answers.

They're having conversations around what was this, what we would do in our workplace. Or I think this is how my work would want me to handle it, but I don't know if this is the most inclusive way. And we're having people sort of thinking about this and reflecting and, and raising these issues with their colleagues.

And we're starting to see that, you know, we can have. We can start to see shifts in behaviors just by sort of doing these two minute exercises on a weekly basis.

Erin Gowriluk: So encouraging conversation, I think, which is what's so important in this space and learning from one another's experience. Thanks, Melissa.

So as mentioned earlier, you know, our goal this season is going to be to give our listeners some, some tools that they can implement to take actionable steps. Towards contributing to their organization's culture of inclusivity. And so we wanted to dig into one of dialectics, Instagram blogs for ways to lead more inclusively, because we know that this is a theme that dialectic is tackling right now.

So can you provide a bit of an overview of the four ways, but also talk a bit about what happens when you take an inclusive approach to leadership.

[00:14:00] **Dr. Melissa Horne:** Yeah. So the way that we, I mean, there's a lot of different ways that you can lead inclusively, but I think there's sort of, we can boil it down to a few things.

One is to check in with your employees. Two is being able to admit mistakes. Three is to be authentic and vocal and, and forced to be able to empower your employees. So let me go back a little bit. I'll tell you a secret, a lot of what what makes a great inclusive leader makes a great leader.

[00:15:00] These are a lot of the same, same skills. And so I think a lot of people sort of shy away from this topic because they think I'm going to have to learn a whole new set of skills. And you don't much of what you do if you're a great leader, is that you check in on your employees. And when you were thinking about how do we do this from an inclusive leadership perspective, we're thinking about you know, all the different ways that their identities can impact how they're feeling.

So And, and how, you know, how that might be impacting their work. And so, you know, if we know that someone has caregiving responsibilities, obviously through the pandemic, for folks who have young children and folks who have older adults that they're caring for it, this has been a really stressful time.

Right. And that is that is something that is leading inclusively just by checking and asking, how are you doing about that? By checking in and, and, you know we know there was there was well, in Alberta last night, there was a or there was a recent shooting. The black man in Calgary, checking in with your employees and just saying like, this is an ups, this is upsetting.

You know, how are we all feeling today? That's leading inclusively, so it's not, this is nothing to these grand things, but it's being intentional about, about that. And also creating a space and sharing how you're feeling about these things as well. Right. Showing that vulnerability. It's really important and allowing for folks to have the space to share how they're feeling and that, and that it not [be.

[00:16:00] Sort of used against them, right. Being such that, you know, if someone says I'm really struggling, there's a lot going on. I might need some time and being okay with that and allowing for that to happen. So that's, I think that checking in the other thing is around admitting mistakes. I think we're, we're really afraid right now to admit mistakes because there has been such a backlash, right.

I think you know, when organizations admit that they've made mistakes, often the public can react negatively. But I think, you know, when we sort of admit these mistakes and ask for help and understanding what we don't know. You know, I think that that really, again, shows, shows vulnerability. And we would do that with a whole bunch of different things, not just you know, diversity, equity, inclusion, if we don't know something as a leader and we ask our, our, our ask our employees, our direct reports for clarification, you know, we don't, we don't shy away from that.

[00:17:00] But when we get, when we think about diversity equity, inclusion issues, we're often afraid to ask. So, but it's important to admit maybe when we haven't yet. The right move and be okay with that and be transparent and show that we're going to work to make take different actions and steps next time.

So that leads into the third point around being authentic and vocal. So that means holding yourself accountable and your employees, right. Working on your own cultural intelligence, you know, I, I love the saying, we don't know what we don't know. And that's true. But once when we do get feedback from the world or from employees then it behooves us to go out and start to learn.

Right. And there's a ton of podcasts. You know, there are resources out there where you can start to improve your own culture. And, and I think the other thing too is, is then empowering your employees, right? We want to recognize the value in diversity of thinking. And I think that kind of leads back into that first one, too, about checking in and creating that culture where people can be open and honest and can feel that.

Voices are being heard and that it you, you know, that it matters as well. So it's really important to invite your employees to, to share. And I think one of the

ways you can do that is to look around the room and think about whose voices aren't being heard. Are we making enough space for everyone?

You know, taking, taking, taking stock and meetings, and probing and asking folks, right. Who you may not often ask, and it may not necessarily be in that meeting, but you can reach out to them as well. Right. In one-on-ones and, and understanding sort of you know what if they're not comfortable speaking up in a meeting then yet reaching out one-to-one as well as is a great way to sort of empower your employees.

Erin Gowriluk: Thanks, Melissa. I think you know, as someone who studied organizational leadership, as part of my master's, I would agree with you that these are not necessarily new concepts in leadership, but I, I think what you're suggesting to us is that these are our areas or maybe practices where an inclusion lens can be applied.

So this is something a good leader is already doing. You're asking us to consider, to bring another perspective in to that particular practice. I appreciate that. Thank you.

[00:19:00] **Hannah Konschuh:** Yeah. And so as we've been discussing this, Melissa, I think what I think is remarkable, it's remarkable, but also simple in a sense that dialectic has taken how we learn about other things and then sort of taken the inclusion and diversity learning and sort of put it into that same model because of course, why wouldn't we be learning.

Diversity equity and inclusion and how to put that into place the same way we would, any other types of learning that we do. So I think that's really wonderful. So I want to go back to the one of those four ways you can lead more inclusively, which is about being authentic and vocal and investing in holding yourself accountable and your, your fellow employees and colleagues.

[00:20:00] So. What do you think that looks like maybe you could give us an example of what that looks like in the workplace. So what would maybe be a, sort of a theoretical example of how you might hold yourself accountable and or maybe a colleague? This is something that Erin and I are, are big on the diversity of Saratoga, because it's sort of comes back to showing your work, right?

So are you really sort of getting into the trenches and doing the hard stuff?

[00:18:00] **Dr. Melissa Horne:** Yeah, absolutely. I think there's a number of ways that this comes up and, you know, I think one, you know, we're really focused on. On, you know, this is, it's not a shame or guilt based, right? Again, like these are skills that we haven't really practiced, or we haven't thought about practicing through.

I think I liked how you phrase that Erin, like through a diversity lens, through an equity lens, right? It's just, it's putting a different lens on a lot of the skills and behaviors that you have. But if you haven't, if you haven't practiced this, if, if you. You know, out of practice or you've, you haven't seen these behaviors modeled, it can feel really uncomfortable.

And we often sort of shy away. We all know when we, we sort of see [00:21:00] something that. So well with us. Right. And what we're, what we're asking folks to do is once you've sort of seen how how these situations could be handled in a more inclusive equitable way that you then sort of practice that with your, with, with folks.

So I'll give you an example of, of a way when You can sort of hold yourself accountable. So imagine that you've, you know, or your new leader and you've just been hired into a new position and as one of your initiatives you're going to put together a mentorship group and the group is to with the purpose of helping support a diverse.

So, if you, you know, you go full steam ahead, you've put a lot of time and effort into it, and you've got a list of, of the mentors. And you show it to a colleague and a colleague says to you, this is a great group of people, but have you noticed that they're all sort of at the same seniority level, we're all around the same age and they.

[00:22:00] All look the same. If your goal is to sort of put together a mentorship group to support diverse employees you know, th we haven't really achieved this. So you have a, you know, you have an option at this point. You've put in a lot of time, a lot of energy resources, and this is your first big initiative.

So, what would you do in this, in this case of colleague has pointed out that your group is not very diverse and you know, you can either stop and rethink, you could potentially sprinkle in some diversity and say, okay, give me a list of a few other mentors who are, you know racialized or members of the LGBTQ plus community, you know, throw some sprinklings of diversity or you can leave it as it is.

No carry on. The person who holds themselves accountable, who shows a visible commitment to diversity would be the person who stops the program and rethinks the whole process. Even though, even though they put in all [00:23:00] that time, admitting that, you know, Going sort of full steam ahead and not asking, you know sort of their, their employees or other folks for input would have been the better way to go, like holding yourself accountable and saying I've made a mistake.

And I need to rethink this whole thing and I need other folks help. It's really hard. It kind of goes against a lot of what organizations do. It's like, we've, we've, we've invested in this there's lots of time, but ultimately when we admit mistakes, when we are transparent, when we show. To go back and rethink this, the outcomes, the know the, the, not sure is that true, authentic commitment because you realize that you've done it wrong and that's okay.

Like we all make mistakes. Right. But going back and starting from the beginning and doing it right. Shows a willingness to employees and to colleagues that like we are truly invested in. So I think that's kind of how you can hold yourself accountable. It's really hard to do that, right. That's sort of one example I can tell.

[00:24:00] **Hannah Konschuh:** That's such a great example. And I, I, I'm going to call on the great Bernay brown right now, because I think it's her line where she says it's not about being right. It's about getting it right. And we're, we're in this culture of always wanting to be right and have the answer. But really in your example was, if you just it's, it's about extra effort and extra time.

Right. And then that, that project that you had you're bringing forward is going to be that much better. So, yeah, that's just such a good exam.

[00:25:00] **Dr. Melissa Horne:** No, I just, I think the one thing I want to if I can, you know, talk about inclusive leadership, that this is a journey and that, you know, someone who has spent.

You know, 20 years studying the history of race and racism who has spent years involved in LGBTQ plus movement who you know, lives in breezes on a, on a daily basis. I make mistakes. I make. I will say the wrong thing there. I have blind spots. There are areas that I am not as well-versed in as others.

And you know, so that being able to admit those mistakes being open and willing to continuously learn Being okay. To receive that feedback. And then having a plan of how you can continuously learn and improve that that's really, I

think, at the core of leading inclusively and you know you know, you don't know what you don't know, but once you, you know learn what you don't know, then it does, you know behoove you to go out and start to gather more information, seek feedback and, and impart that into your life.

Both professionally and personally. So that's what I'd like to say is just that it is a, it is a journey. And, and we're all, you know we all have areas where we can continuously improve and, and, but the fact that being willing to do that, I think is the really important step. And to continuously do that is what's going to make you a great inclusive leader.

[00:26:00] **Erin Gowriluk:** I, and I love Hannah that you brought that, that Bernay brown quote in that's one that I wasn't familiar with, but I think it's a good summation of what Melissa has been talking about here. And that is, there is a tremendous pressure on leaders to get it right, to do the right thing. But I love how you've reframed that.

And you've provided examples of that, Melissa. And that is, it's not about being. It's about making a commitment to getting it right. And that's just a completely different way of looking at how we have to, we have a responsibility to, to do the right thing.

Hannah Korschuh: Couldn't have said it better. I think that's a great place to end you too.

So I want to thank you, Melissa, for, for joining us today and for sharing your insights. Do you think that you could close us off by telling our listeners a bit more about where they can find you in dialectic? And of course your podcast.

[00:27:00] **Dr. Melissa Horne:** Absolutely. Yeah. So you can find me on LinkedIn. You can find the podcast the, [00:27:00] just one Q podcast anywhere where you listen to your podcast and you can find dialectic @ www.dialectic.solutions

Hannah Korschuh: perfect. And also an exciting side note. Erin and I are. Just super pumped. We're super jazzed to be able to join Melissa on just one too soon. So check us out over on Willis's podcasts.

Erin Gowriluk: Thanks, Hannah. Thanks Melissa. And thank you to our listeners for tuning into another episode of the diversity imperative.

Hannah and I look forward to our next conversation in a few weeks time until then please visit our website diversityimperative.com where you'll find past episodes, resources, and a place to sign up for email updates. And as always, we'd love to hear from you rate and review the diversity imperative through your favorite podcast platform and connect with us on social media.

Find us on Twitter at [diversity in ag](https://twitter.com/diversityinag) and on Facebook and Instagram at [diversity imperative](https://www.facebook.com/diversityimperative). Or reach us by email through our website, talk soon.