

Nicole ([00:00](#)):

Welcome to our first episode of, into the open a podcast focused on open education. We're calling this one, the beginnings, because we thought it would be best to start off by situating ourselves and somewhat explaining how I talked, Dr. Roberts and Heather into all us,. My name is Nicole and alongside with Heather and Verena (AKA Dr. Roberts) we're planning on navigating the waters of open education and doing so through podcasting so that you can join with us. #GO-GN and the Hewlett foundation have provided us with the opportunity to explore the world of open through this medium. So a big. Thank you. Goes out to them. So come join us on this journey and maybe start pondering your new pirate name. You'll see the odd boat metaphor show up in this episode. Let's jump into introductions.

Verena ([00:56](#)):

Okay. That makes more sense. Okay. Why are we doing this then? The why of why are we connecting? Okay, got it. I'm good. My name is Dr. Verena Roberts. I'm an adjunct associate professor with the University of Calgary Werklund school of Education. So that means that I get to teach some sessional courses as well as do some research at the university. I'm also an instructional designer with Thompson Rivers University, and that means I create, online, I build and design. I don't just create design online courses, a synchronous courses with faculty across British Columbia. My focus area is in, open learning specifically zero textbook cost program. So that means that everything that I designed with my instructors and faculty is an open educational resource. And I also promote open educational practices. I recently left my position at Rocky view schools in February as an online high school teacher so I have taught in the K-12 system for over 20 years, on and off different grades. So my background and experience is really in K-12 and higher ed and course design. And that's what we're going to be talking about.

Heather ([02:29](#)):

I'm Heather van Struan and I am well, I'm a mom to Matilda and then a dog named Frodo and a wife to Simon and a friend and a colleague. And I work with elk island Catholic schools. I've been teaching for over 15 years. I started out in high school and then most of my time was at the junior high level, predominantly grade nine, but I loved the smattering of seven and eight content and all core subjects. And then I took a position with elk island to be their ed tech consultant, which has transformed to be a curriculum consultant. so that includes secondary numeracy are in Alberta. We have the Caney program, the knowledge and employability program. So I help teachers with that and, and comes with that is the differentiation. I'm all about data analysis and all the data that we get within our division and help support, my assistant superintendent with that., I just finished my master's program with the, with the UFC, um, in interdisciplinary studies. And I know we'll talk a little bit more about that, but my studies were in neuroscience and technology and then it turned out to be a little bit of wellness in the last little bit. And, yeah. And that's, well, I know we're going to get there, but that's where I started learning more about OER.

Nicole ([04:19](#)):

Yes. I have to tell you a bit about me too. So same thing as Heather, I just finished my master's at UFC. Yay. It was a three-year slug, but we made it through and same thing. I actually know Heather from our master's program because I also did neuroscience, educational neuroscience and educational technology. I've taught for a little bit less than both of you, but about eight, nine years now, but most of

that's been international overseas. So I did teach in Alberta for awhile, and then I fled to south America to Irvine. I taught there for LA and then the middle east in Japan. So I'm currently in BC and working as an instructional designer and e-learning specialist for a couple of different companies. So same as marina. We have some connections. There is I build online courses and online learning modules. yeah. And we can get a little bit into how we're connected.

Nicole ([05:17](#)):

Uh, do you want to start? We're all connected, I think, through, through Dr. Roberts somehow So you brought us, I thank you. I brought you together, but then you keep bringing us together. So I think that's really neat. So yeah, I might've been the initial node of learning as they say, and connectivist terms that the catalyst was even more interesting. I also want to do a quick land acknowledgement because I'm coming in from Beaconsfield Quebec, and I actually am learning about the ancestral lands. So I am not going to, destroy anyone's name right now, especially any indigenous, names. I just want to point out that as I'm learning as a Canadian educator about land acknowledgements, it's really important to say what action I'm going to be taking, as opposed to just putting out a name or, or explaining where I might be. , as part of this project is, is also figuring out where we are at in terms of our place and our space and our, and our learning medium., I'm based out of Beaconsfield Quebec, which is by Montreal. but I'm not sure of my ancestral names yet.

Heather ([06:41](#)):

Well, I can do I'm within treaty six.

Verena ([06:45](#)):

Yeah. I was treaty seven in Calgary that's I didn't

Heather ([06:47](#)):

Know. And I know that, we are on the traditional meeting ground of the CRI the, so to the Denny, the Blackfoot, the Nakota Sioux and the mate tea. And, I really liked that. You said you also take, you gotta take an action. You don't just say a land acknowledgement and recognize it and check the box and move on. And I know, especially right now, it's, it's, it's something, a lot of people are more aware of because of, of what's been happening in our news and, and the, especially with the residential schools and the end in Alberta, the new curriculum, there's a lot of talk about, the whole reconciliation process. And so I know that, especially for right now, it's a matter of just listening to people and recognizing their truth, their stories and their heritage. Yeah.

Verena ([07:43](#)):

Which I think will be a big part of this project. Yeah. Sorry. Yeah. I think I'm going to say action for me would be to see the best way of including that voice into this project, because I think that's kind of an action for, for all of us and an intention for sure. no for sure. And the, but the reason that we are connected is because of a course that I had the pleasure of teaching called ed tech ethics. We'll actually, I named it ed tech ethics. It was actually called ethics and educational technology, I think technically, and in the course, we learned about open educational resources and we learned about open learning. Although I learned that those weren't necessarily the words that my students might use to describe their learning or what they thought they learned. and the two, two of the students in that original

course, uh, are Heather and Nicole. And so that's how we are originally connected, I think. And then you two know each other differently though, as well.

Heather ([08:53](#)):

Yeah. Yeah. We actually met within our first year, our very first course of our masters and we were put into a group for our very first assignment and it was myself, Nicole and three other people. And we ended up, as much as we could throughout our, that first year to try and be a group again, because we worked so well together and just clicked. And that was the dream team. It was like, I don't know. And we all came from different areas. Like there was we're smattering of within Alberta and then south America, with Nicole. And then when we moved from neuroscience into our second year, it was, Nicole actually went into a different course and I said, come, come into leading and learning in the digital age with me. And Nicole is like, really? And I'm like, yeah, come in. Like I saw the actual first syllabus and, the instructor who I hadn't met Dr. R brown and it looked awesome and I'm like ditch whatever ship you're on and come into my little boat. And then she, she switched. Yeah. She switched. , and from there we did a whole year of that leading and learning, and that's where we met you. And then final year that's Matilda. I have a bag of marshmallows on standby. So that's what that giggle was, was like a whole bag of marshmallows for me. This is a bad choice.

Nicole ([10:27](#)):

Yeah. I was sitting on a beach in Hawaii. I'd actually gone back to Hawaii for this summer and I'd started into a different topic and it was not going so hot so well, I'd done my first, first course and I messaged Heather and she was like, come over to the dark side. So I got special permission to switch out of the topic I was in and move into, educational technology, which I am incredibly grateful. I'm actually curious because Heather and I can speak to it first if you want, but, how were you first introduced to open education? The secret? So I was working with a school district and actually I was working with a business company for a school district, which is contentious in itself, but it was in British Columbia. And the business company was, offering and delivering online courses to China for students.

Verena ([11:28](#)):

The goal was that they would take some online courses in China, from us. So BC certified courses. And, but they would have to come over for their English, like 30 or grade 12 English and social studies, English grade 12 in the community. So they would come over. So they, the, the goal was to make them more successful and confident in English before they came over by using online learning. So it was an online blended type approach. And the principal of that school was named Dean coder. And one day he sat me down and he's like, this is great. This is working, but I want to know where the future of online learning is going. I want, I want to know what's going on in the world and not just in our small little satellite company. So he pushed and challenged me to find the bleeding edge of online learning.

Verena ([12:20](#)):

So I went off and did my own little inquiry and discovered, this course in 2000, and it might've been 2009, 2010 now, so a while ago, and it, was called change and it was a MOOC, but it wasn't a MOOC before the 2012 MOOCs. It was a MOOC based on connectivism and every week they had a different person come in and do a webinar and on a different topic. And we all had to get blogs and we all had to learn what an RSS feed was right away and make those connections. And we all had to get on Twitter to

be a part of this. And it was with Steven Downs and, George Siemens, they were leading it at the time. I just jumped right in. And one week I was in a webinar. So you also got to jump in halfway through, it didn't matter.

Verena ([13:07](#)):

So I jumped in and Alec, Dr. Alec Carlos was doing a session and he was just talking about open and network learning. And I wrote a little message in the chat. I was so nervous, but I thought I needed to ask a question. And all he did was say, oh, so Verena is asking. I can't remember even what I asked, but the fact that he identified me in such a global way, which I thought the whole world was hearing my name and I was all embarrassed. And it, it just hit me in a really different way than anything I've ever done before. And I was completely hooked and transformed and thought, what is this open network learning that he's talking about? And, uh, I went from there, but yeah, there you go. That's how I got in.

Heather ([13:52](#)):

It totally reminds me. Maybe it's foundational in like child programming, but like romper room when she held up the mirror. And she said, like, I see Verena, I seen a call. Yeah. I, uh, that's the first image I think of when you mentioned that. And then also how excited I know I get when it's recognized that I'm there. Right. And I have something to say or question or contributed,

Verena ([14:18](#)):

Or that you're a human being. It was, I was like, oh my goodness. He recognized me as a learner and you didn't make me feel stupid. He just, it was so encouraging. And all he did was say, you know, hi Frieda, that's a good question. Really higher ed though. Cause you're so used to just being a number. You're one person I remember in my program, I'm one person in the class is 600 for some of those. And so to be acknowledged like, yeah, it's fancy. It's scary though. It's nerve wracking. I can, I can relate to that being like cool to put yourself out and put that first, like open, like tweet or message. That's, that's scary, super scary. And you've all done it in very different ways. And actually that's, that's my I'm going to listen to what your first ones were. So then I'm wondering if there's a theme here, but a common characteristics. Yeah. Go for it. When is the first

Heather ([15:14](#)):

Into open education? Truly, I would say within the ed tech ethics course, like overall that I'm, I know their smatterings or like an amuse-bouche within other things that we've done where, you know, like I've S I've searched for resources myself, or if there was something that I've wanted to learn, I've looked it up, right? Like I've, I've done that. Or, you know, the one-off options within a class where you can pick your topic and then create your presentation based on that. I think it's like, it's, it's a S it's like maybe the foundation's leading up to what it, what it truly is. But I think overall it's within our ed, um, ed tech ethics course of really diving in and giving so much freedom in what, what we can do and how we research it and how we like what we write on and all that.

Heather ([16:14](#)):

then, then the connections, like, you know, it's, it's interesting hearing you say that, Verena about what you were exposed to because you brought that within our course as well. we had the connections on Twitter, right. And we had an, an experience with that and reflection. I think that's the other thing is

how much reflection we had in this course, really brought to light my experiences and what I was doing as a student, compared to other courses, other courses, other from even kindergarten to grade 12, like you do the assignment, you check the list, you check the boxes and you move on and you do the test and you move on. Right. Whereas like I'm still reflective of the chapter that I wrote. And I'm really curious as to what's happened with that chapter, if other people have taken it and done stuff with it, right. Like I'm in, I'm invested. I don't think I've ever been as,

Nicole ([17:12](#)):

I mean,, put it into context a little bit because I think if people are listening, they're a bit confused probably as to what the course was and what we had to do. So as students, in the course, we got to pick a topic out, uh, like in, within the genre of educational technology, ethics of educational technology. And then we contributed our writing. We wrote eight chapter on our topic for an open press book. So an open educational, we created an open educational resource and it was set up with a whole bunch of open educational practices and participatory activities that pushed us to dip toes into different, uh, open networks. Did I kind of sum that up in a fairly appropriate way, or you want to add anything to that? That's cool. That's the way you summed it up. Yeah, no, but I think like, like OER which are open educational resources can just be created or designed, but I believe that the way to do it is to go through experiences and that's what, or to build upon experiences in order to design or create an open educational resource.

Nicole ([18:17](#)):

This course was the same thing for me. It was my first introduction into open education. Chances are, I probably had dipped my toes in at some other point. But like you said and mentioned, I probably didn't have the vocabulary from, for it or know what on earth I was doing. So for me, I think I still, it took me a long time to realize and understand I'm still figuring out what open is. I'm still a bit confused by it. And that'll kind of lead us into probably why we're doing this podcast. But I think halfway through that course, I finally hit a breaking point and I had a sit down chat with Dr. Roberts with marina. And it dawned on me that you were doing to us, what I do with my students in writer's workshop, where it was just an inquiry and authentic, and I wasn't going to fail.

Nicole ([19:04](#)):

based on the fact I was doing some exploring and building connections. And so I think it took me seeing that I had done this to, to my own elementary students for it to click. And I was like, oh, I get it. Okay. I feel safe. And then I was able to kind of understand what was going on again. I think I'm still like many people trying to wrap my head around exactly what open education is and all of like it's open pedagogy, open educational practices. There are about 4,000 terms And so I'm, I'm still discovering, but then I first kind of tastes. And the first time I'd probably put the word open education, the words, open education to what we were doing was definitely in the, ed tech ethics course. So thank you for that.

Heather ([19:53](#)):

And I will add, I'll add to that is the fact it was uncomfortable. It was very uncomfortable. Oh

Nicole ([20:01](#)):

Goodness. I'm still unclear. Right.

Heather (20:03):

Like, I feel like that's part of, part of what we're talking about is like navigating it because we've been brought up and exposed to learning education, creation, like in, in a traditional sense and, and, you know, Verena you rocked our boats. Like you like the little boat that I got Nicole in with me, I think we've felt like we were in a squall of like, what, what do I do? And I know with, with the safety that you've created for us with, you know, the check-ins and the, the amount of formative assessments, it was quieting the squall and helping us navigate through it. Yeah. It's through that uncomfortableness to, to get to where we are now. Right. And, and, and I think that's what a lot of people who are introduced to, to this is uncomfortable and it brings up a lot of like, what is happening? How does that work? How do I get there? Like, where is this ship going? Right.

Nicole (21:08):

I'm laughing. Because I think when we did our first blog reflections, I used a gift that was like grounding. So I'm like, yeah, that was pretty much the feeling for the start of it. So I think that actually leads into kind of why do this as a podcast and why we're doing it. I still have so many questions and I'm still really confused in so many areas, but I definitely have gone more into researching open education. And so I think that's kind of where this comes from as a podcast. Cause I don't think I'm alone in that. I think if you're just starting to navigate and look at open education, you probably have some of the same questions or concerns or hesitations or confusions that we would have. So I thought maybe convincing Dr. Roberts (Verena) to do a podcast and then talking Heather into it because I mean, she pulled me into the shift to start with, so I thought, well, maybe we could do it together. We could through podcasting, explore this whole journey into the open. Heather, do you want to talk about why podcast? Well,

Heather (22:17):

And we, we process through conversation like, and you know, talking about our history, right? Like it was a matter of always meeting, getting together, talking it through bouncing different ideas and we have clearly have different perspectives. And this is where like bringing up what we were talking about earlier, when we talked about the land acknowledgement and reconciliation, it's listening to people and processing and, and that's like, the medium of podcast is awesome because if anyone or whoever's listening, I'm hoping we have lots of listeners that, you know, you're reflecting too. And you're like, yeah, I totally agree. Or noir completely disagree with that, or I'm going to ponder that. Or I wish I could've jumped in that conversation. Right. Like that's the beauty of podcasts is you're listening, you're reflecting. You're like, yeah. And, and, and hearing these is versus reading it or watching it as something different.

Nicole (23:12):

I was just thinking, we should probably mention the reason we're doing this is because there is a fellowship by GO-GN and go GN is a hashtag. Again, I love that. We're all talking to hashtags every time we say EdTech ethics, it's a hashtag it's hashtag at, at tech ethics, but it still exists. And it made it on like edgy this year. It made it on things to do or like things to listen to in terms of education. It made it on Thursday nights. And I was like, that was just fluke. That was the one time we did the webinar. But the reason we're doing this is the global open graduate network. And it is funded by the Hewlett foundation. And, uh, I was given a fellowship, due to the challenge set by Nicole to think about podcasting. And in

open context, we, all we wanted to do was to start a podcast and we were, we're expected to do four different podcasts, but what we're going to talk about is like, why, why we're choosing the topic we did.

Verena ([24:14](#)):

We've decided to focus really on open learning. And specifically we want to look at the students of people who have been in courses like mine, where I think I am using open educational practices, or I, I say that I'm using open educational practices and what's the impact on students and what do they think and what, what, what is, what is their future as a result of using as, as result of me using open educational practices. So what are the results? What are the implications? what are some of the questions, some of the perils, some of the challenges, any of that we get, we can talk about. But my favorite part is the skepticism that I get from my students and wondering what is she doing? But I do find it interesting. This nautical theme has come up multiple times, the, the drowning, the, the being a boat, the pulling it together. So I don't want to be a captain by any means, but I'll be part of the journey with you.

Heather ([25:20](#)):

I say you were like the navigator, the compass, the there's gotta be a role on the ship that somebody's responsible for, like the cartography or whatever it is, right. Like,

Verena ([25:31](#)):

Yeah. But I will move I'm the navigator, but I will go where you want me to go, which I say, as the instructor, it's awfully scary to use open educational practices, because you don't know if your students are actually, you know, you don't know if they're going to get to the end or not. You can only guide them. So I listened to your story as a floundering and drowning, and I'm like, you really could have, you could have, but I wasn't, I did everything I could to make sure you did it. Yeah. Because really it's always up to you like, and that that's pretty scary for me.

Nicole ([26:08](#)):

Audience wise. I think it is good to bring students who've experienced this or are just starting to experience it in because anyone who's designing for open or creating open, or even in the middle of being in a course that they're starting to introduce open or is like the instructors like we're using or creating an, an OER,, I think would benefit from this because I think there are a lot of questions and hesitations and, and just a lack of understanding. And we haven't, like Heather said, we've come through traditional educational system. I've never been asked to do something like this before. And so I think it's starting to swing, but I'm definitely, I'm curious in the meantime as to what the impact is.

Nicole ([26:53](#)):

So if you're also curious and have about 1,000,001 questions about open learning, open pedagogy and everything that encompasses open education, then this just might be your podcast. Thanks for starting this journey off with us to navigate the waters of open and for jumping aboard our ship in the next episodes. We want to take a look at concepts and themes such as sharing is caring. Are we actually better together? What sort of skills does one need to navigate these open connections in digital networks and the whole concept of reciprocity? So what goes around, comes around, how do we actually give back and not just take in order to keep these sustainable communities going another giant,



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thank you to #GO-GN , if you're interested in getting involved or connecting with the open educational networks, that's the community for you? Trust me, they're super supportive. They'll answer all your questions.

Nicole ([27:47](#)):

And for a newbie like me, they definitely have helped me in my journey and understanding and getting into the level where I'm at now with open. So go check, #Go-GN out there, sponsored. And this is sponsored by the Hewlett foundation. So again, another great organization too, to go check out who are very, very supportive of the open movement. This podcast was created by Dr. Verena Roberts and Heather Van Struan and produced and edited by myself, the whole night's link. So thank you so much for joining us today. We look forward to connecting in the future and learning more together.