

Transcript for Moving from Men as Allies and to Men as Stakeholders
BCcampus webinar held on January 27, 2022
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Moderator: Robynne Devine

ROBYNNE:

Awesome. And now I'm going to hand it over to Jake, who is our facilitator.

JAKE:

Thanks so much, Robynne. Hi everyone. My name is Jake Stika I use he/him pronouns and I am the co-founder and executive director of a non-profit organization called next-gen men. We're working towards a future where boys and men feel less pain and cause less harm. The way that we're doing that is by engaging, educating, empowering boys and around gender and equality among youth in communities and workplaces across Canada. And just to kind of like set the stage where we're kinda just after the lunch hour here. We're in year three of a global pandemic and it's starting to feel a little bit like Groundhog Day. I'd love to know in the chat what's giving you hope right now? So for me, from my corner office that I have here, I can see a cherry tree and I know or I hope that when that cherry tree blossoms in the five to six weeks, hopefully the world will be a better place where we're hopefully at the beginning, the end here. So that's what's giving me hope. And I'd love to know in the chat what's giving you hope. And then just to set the stage for the rest of the conversation. I don't really like talking at people. It kind of sucks looking at my Logitech webcam and thinking that that's all that's out there. I like to talk with people, so feel free to use the chat. I've got it open. I can't promise that I'll see everything, but I'll try to engage with what's going on there as we go through as well too. So I'm just checking. What's giving hope. Sunshine. People willing to join together like this to have a conversation. Absolutely. Spring is coming. Mary's on the same page about cherry blossoms. Christine, resiliency of people I work with. I love that. I honest, finding ways to engage with other people remotely or in-person. Absolutely. Looking at the picture, my beautiful son on my desktop, awesome. I'm doing the best, build a better world for him even if the small a that gives me hope. So hopefully after today's session you'll have some more ideas. The sunshine is out, always good. In BC. Actually, on the note of in BC, I did forget. I also wanted to acknowledge that I'm grateful to be joining you all from the unseated territories of the Coast Salish people, Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-waututh. Always really important whether we're in person or whether we're online too, to acknowledge the lines that were on. I almost forgot there, so thanks for the gentle reminder there. All right. So let's jump into it.

Over the last 70 plus years under the banner of feminism, we've been having a really brilliant conversation about women's roles and identities in society. We've made a lot of progress and we know that there's still a lot of progress to be made. However, by not having a parallel conversation for, with and about men, about their roles and identities and society. We're simultaneously pushing the gas pedal and holding break. And we know when we drive a car that when we do that we're spinning our tires, right? So it may feel like lots of stuff is happening, but we're not necessarily making the forward progress that we'd hope to. So I think that by having conversations about men and boys and their role and identities and society, we're releasing that break so that we can make progress together.

And to give you a sense of really grounding quotes that guides a lot of the ideology that next gen men kinda work through, through is a quote from the recently deceased Bell Hooks from her book, will to change on men masculinity, love. And Bell says, the first act of violence that patriarchy demands of males is not violence towards women. Instead, patriarchy demands all males that they engage in acts of psychic self-mutilation, that they kill off the emotional parts of themselves. And if an individual is not successfully in emotional, not successful in emotionally crippling himself, he can count on patriarchal men to enact rituals of power that will assault his self esteem. And when I read that, I was really shook and really kind of understood that lived experience as someone born male and socialized male and identifies as male. It's hard to tell on, on the Zoom screen here, but I'm six foot eight. I was a former semi-pro basketball player. When we think about cultures of the boys, I absolutely was one I grew up in locker rooms. And I felt those experiences for sure. And you know, some of the catalysts about starting next gen men, despite, you know, tall, straight, white male, all those privileges. I struggled with depression in my late teens and early 20s. And when I was 19, my coping mechanisms where binge drinking and fistfights and when I was 22, it was self-harm which landed me in counseling and therapy. And from that coming to understand that it was this masculine script. You gotta be tough. You can't show emotion, you can't ask help. That was really harming me and nobody externally was telling me those things. It was my own internal programming that I'd absorbed over a lifetime. And one of my co-founders and my best friend from University, unfortunately lost a 13 year old brother to suicide in 2007. He was a young black, possibly gay, youth. And he experienced bullying. And so my lived experience struggling with depression, the loss of his brother were really catalysts in wanting to start this organization and its work with youth and the next generation. And this quote really grounds us in that as well.

So engaging men and boys, you know, you need to do it. But how's it going? Right? And it's, it's a conversation that in gender equity, social justice spaces is being bantered around a lot. Nobody seems to know what it is, how to do it, how to do it well, how to do it effectively. And you know, I even experienced this in and putting this workshop together with BCcampus. There was a lot of questions about kind of intentions and tone and language, a lot of skepticism in even engaging in these types of conversations. And if that's happening in this space, It's happening everywhere as well too, right? So we have to give ourselves tools and structures of principles to help guide those conversations in a productive manner. And that's a lot of what I hope to cover in this conversation today.

And one thing that I predominantly want to share is this idea of a culture of competition and domination. And competition can be really healthy, healthy, right? Where, you know, aside from the geopolitics were on the cusp of the Winter Olympics in China. And the Olympics are always a great moments where the best athletes from all the countries around the world compete in. See how dedicated and committed these people are to their craft. And that type of competition can be incredibly inspiring. But within a patriarchal society, that competition often slips into domination, right? It starts with exclusion of people of other, of other sexes about the genders. And, and then even just the competition and domination in and amongst ourselves as male identified individuals, which Raewyn Connell highlighted really well in her hierarchy of masculinities.

And so forgive me if I'm preaching to the choir, and you've all seen this before, but this is always a really helpful tool to think about. Not only the competition and domination of men in a patriarchal society. Vis a vie women and trans and non-binary individuals. But men in competition, Domination with each other and themselves.

So there's the definitions for you. But when I think about this idea, let's say hegemonic masculinity. I think about 007, James Bond, right? He's got fast cars, attractive women, never short on money, cool gadgets, super fit. That's kind of what's upheld in society as like the pinnacle of masculinity, the top of the pyramid. But we know when we climb a pyramid, There's only so much space at the top. So there's a lot of elbow pushing, shoving to, to kinda get to that point and a lot of competition in order to, to, to get to that. And then one step beneath that is complicit masculinity, which is a lot of men who have, maybe access to some of those hegemonic characteristics but aren't necessarily able to for whatever reason, to kind of get to that top pinnacle piece. And they'd benefit from it, right? They benefit from, from that societal perception that there near the top. Beneath that we see marginalized masculinity. And this, this then starts to really dig into why intersectionality and looking at these things through. Race-based lens, faith-based lens, socioeconomic lens really is important in these conversations because on the one hand, when we take, again me being a basketball player, someone like LeBron James and like his masculinity and how he's held up in society and those kinds of things, you'd say, okay, pretty much at the top of the pyramid. But then when we put a white supremacy lens on it like he's a black man, so he's marginalized. He's not necessarily able to attain that level of status. So these are where the systems and structures start to play into each other. And then lastly, kind of at the bottom of the pyramid we see subordinate masculine. And those are men, male born male identifying individuals who just say screw this masculinity game. I don't want to participate in the hierarchy. You know, they, they don't necessarily engage in that competition that we're all kinda socialized and steeped with it.

And so, you know, that goes to show a little bit of the environment within men and boys, right? And some of the conceptual, high-level theoretical jockeying for position that goes on there. But I want to try to bring it down into a lived experience. And I'm going to tell a bit of a sensationalized story. And no means is this story intended to be broad strokes. Everyone experiences this, but hopefully through the story, you can see enough of your family, your friends, your community in the story that it kind of resonates with you.

And this story starts before birth. It starts at what we call the gender reveal party, which I always make a note to correct people that it's actually a sex reveal party. Right? Blue, pink. What happened to purple? What happened to yellow? green? These are all great colors. Why are we not giving people access to that, right? So it starts with these ideas that we have been at around it. And this resonates with me incredibly. One of my best friends just yesterday had his first daughter. And even just knowing he was going to have a daughter, he started with thinking about the world that she was going to grow up and her lived experiences. And thinking about me and my work and the impact that we hope to have on the world that she'll come up in and those kinds of things. So these stories before birth matter once we figure that out.

And then before age five, we see boys affectionate, hugging, holding hands, right? reaching out for that affection. But at some point in time, and it often starts from father figures, male identified individuals in their lives. We stop snuggling boys, we stop holding them close. We start to distance our physical affection and they get confused. But we're thinking, Oh well, we need to teach them how to be a man. And girls don't necessarily experienced that at the same time as boys do. And yet these boys need that physical affection. Excuse me. The way that they start seeking that physical affection is through rough housing because it's a permissible way to be touching one another without any of those negative connotations necessarily. So then the seeds of boys will be boys. Rough housing gets planted in us.

And so then we put them in a school based system where we expect them to sit still, pay attention and learn. And historically, girls and women haven't had the same opportunities afforded to them within workplace settings or educational settings unless they were twice as good to go half as far, right? And so we've taken that lesson in of those outcomes and we've socialized girls to be prim and proper and the Hague themselves in these learning environments so that they can succeed. In the, meanwhile, we've started the note of boys will be boys and they act out and they're so energetic. And what do I do with these, these wild boys? And then we put them in that setting. And then we wonder why boys educational outcomes aren't succeeding to the standard of the level of their peers. And, you know, oftentimes and, you know, I'm not a doctor, so I'm not going to talk about this. We judge them and we get them diagnosed with ADHD or learning behavioral issues at a disproportionate rate, that maybe they're not succeeding because of those things. But I've learnt a lot from the accessibility movement within disability because when we're talking about accessibility, it flips it that it's not the individual that doesn't fit the setting, it's setting that doesn't fit the individual. And I think that that's what's happening with a lot of young boys within the socialization structure. We're setting them up for failure within the system that we're plugging them into. And they might start absorbing some of these things that they're, they're broken or dysfunctional and they might get upset about, they may cry out. And then at some point in time we say, well, don't worry about that. Boys don't cry, right? So we've already learned boys will be boys and then boys don't cry.

And then we introduce them to the world of sports. And I know this especially running youth programs for the last 78 years. When you go to a lot of educational settings. There are a lot of other programs for Girls Learning Code, girls in business, girls in whatever or than we have so g spaces where it's for trans and non-binary youth and those types of things. Meanwhile, boys get sports, for the most part. And within those contexts, we talked about that culture, competition, domination. That's our first initiation into that culture of competition and domination. And as well beyond that, many of our early sports coaches are our first male role models that are not our fathers or men in our family. For the most part, early education is dominated by women in the educational sphere. And so when you start playing sports and you see a coach, that is another role model of masculinity that is not your father or your grandfather or your own, right. And so there's a really important role to play there. But within that, it's one of the only permissible spaces that men get the permission to be around young children that are not their own, because there's a lot of stigma in men being involved in education. And so there's a lot of toxic masculinity that might get passed around in those spaces. But if left unchecked or on challenge because it is a male dominance based in and around that. And so you're participating in this competition and domination. I know, I did myself with with basketball and volleyball. Soccer. And maybe you hurt yourself on the field and you fall down. And you want some empathy for this pain that you're feeling. And this coach who hasn't really thought critically about it tells you to man up. So by the time you're 15, you've learned boys will be boys. Boys don't cry and man up.

And then you get to an age where we start learning to understand that's becoming a man. Do to maybe other like rights of passage or those kinds of things. You think that hey, losing, losing your virginity is what will make me a man. And so then your lens based on your social settings and culture around you. Really all of your interactions with the opposite sex or through that lens of losing my virginity will make me a man. And you know, should you get into a space where a young woman might entertain the idea of being intimate with you and you get to that moment and she may feel uncomfortable. We know that majority of women's first sexual encounters are unwanted, not necessarily assaults, but not how they

had imagined. So they get uncomfortable and they feel like it's not the way that they had imagined it, and they communicate that to you. And meanwhile, whenever you felt emotions in your life, you've been told to man up, to push through that people don't care what you think or feel, right? And so your entire socialization up until that point is to get to the means to the end of the competition and the domination to win your goal. Right? And so that is a socialization that is contributing to those lived experiences and outcomes.

And then we go to these post-secondary education, BCcampus we're talking about here. And we get these brilliant experiences and we get these skills and then we go out into the workforce and, you know, entry level jobs, for the most part are pretty gender equitable. And we've put our nose to the grindstone and we start working on our careers and those kinds of things. But because we've been steeped in this culture of competition and domination, it becomes really hard for us to connect with our colleagues without seeing them as competition for the raise, the promotion, the next opportunity. As well as understanding at some point in time we might be starting our families and, you know, I need to earn a certain amount of income so that I can sustain our family and maybe she'll take leave and those kinds of things. These are a lot of the narratives that we have in our early years.

And then we get to age 40, which I skipped over. Maybe something that happens in our 30s. That I think is also important to note once we consider our 40s through our 30s were often pairing off into relationships and starting families and those kinds of things. And there's often a subtle narrative that happens in male centric friend groups of Uh-huh. We lost one when he goes and he gets engaged or gets married. Uh-huh. We lost one when he has a child. And then eventually the whole friend group kinda gets to that point. But what happens that flips on that when you're in your 40s is marriages start pulling apart, relations to start pulling apart. And men start getting divorced and isolated. And then they disconnect from their pair communities and those kinds of things. And they get, they get more isolated and around that. And it gets really hard for men to make new friendships or relationships. Because there exists a social narrative, let's say my partner and I went out with a double date, on a double date with one of her friends, her female friends and female friends partner. And we had a great double date. At the end of it, I say, hey man, had a great time. Can I get your number? Saying that out loud to you now is normal. But in a social situation, there's a level of weirdness about that, where many men wouldn't even cross that threshold. They'd say, Oh, I don't want to come off as needy like, he's Cool, I'll see him around. Those are some of those scripts that we've inherited and around those kinds of things. And it makes it really hard for us to make social connections later in life.

And then after age 40, you know, we'll, we'll talk about some of the statistics here shortly. But suicide is one of the number one causes of death for men and Canada. And it is the number one cause of death of a teenage male identified. But the actual largest proportion of men dying by suicide is actually from 45 to 65. And those are men who have had sensitizing experiences, as we call it, mental health crises, divorce, job loss, lack of purpose and identity in their life. And so I think it's really worrying that isolation that happens over, over a course of time.

And as I just alluded to, men, are three out of four suicides, men live on average four to five years less than women, due to a lack of health seeking and help-seeking, as well as increased risk-taking behaviors. Men are the primary perpetrators of all forms of violence. And if we actually remove gender-based violence from the equation manner, the primary victims of all other forms of violence. Men are 75% of opioid overdoses or drug drugged poisoning deaths. And men are reflected in 83 percent and 92% of

incarceration provincially in federal. And so those are all really extreme outcomes of this story that I just told. And like I said, I don't think that all those stages and all those specific experiences happened to every single man. But hopefully within that sensationalized story, you can start to pick out and piece out experiences that happened to boys and men in your life, in your community or yourself. Because I see myself in those stories as well too.

And so when I think about this narrative and you know, where we're going around the engaging men and boys Thing. I think there's a lot at stake for us here. And the title of this webinar was moving from men as allies to men as stakeholders. Why not allies? I don't want to throw the baby out with the bathwater. When people say male allies, I get it. But when we talk about allyship, we're essentially saying, Hey, you, you have more power and privilege than this other person. Use that power and privilege to support. And what happens is in male allies spaces that turns into almost a benevolent sexism where women and girls, and if we're extra woke, trans and non-binary individuals need to be protected and elevated and these kinds of things. But there's no self-reflection there. There's no deconstructing of the system that ends up giving us that power and privilege that were then tasked to use to support these other groups. And so, when we can find and deconstruct and reconstruct with narrative in a way that answers that fundamental human question of what's in it for me? We move from allies to stakeholders, but better than stakeholders, we become cold beneficiaries, we become co-conspirators. Right? We are in this because of ourselves, but also others, right? Don't get me wrong. If there's a male father of a female daughter, it's an entry point for a lot of men and carrying about gender-based issues. But it's kind of a benevolent one. How can we make sure that those individuals are coming? Because they see a rule in deconstructing patriarchy for themselves to.

And so just some lessons learned from the seven years of engaging men and boys and meeting them where they are that I'd like to share. And then I'm really hoping this has sparked a lot of stuff. Can we can, we can have a discussion and a back and forth.

But the non-profit and charitable sector exists through a programs for problems framework. Here's the beginning of the journey, Here's the middle of the journey. Here's what we expect to happen over the journey. Here's how we'll evaluate it. Can we please have some money to do this? And, you know, that's, that's how we expect to do this work. It's non programmatic. We can build some capacity. We can maybe shift some attitudes and beliefs. But what happens when we have? Positive masculinities, workshops, training seminars. Those individuals might be moved or transformed. But then when we pop them back into those male dominant settings where they still practice a lot of patriarchal masculinity. They don't always have the social capital or the skills to shift and move those settings. And so, even if they individually believe something that they expect that their peers won't necessarily do that. I'm paraphrasing a little bit here, but there was some research done where if there's a group of seven individuals and they hear something that they don't necessarily agree with. They often think that they're the only in that group of seven who feel that way. Whereas the reality is probably four or five out of seven. And so we need to give these aspiring allies or even better co-conspirators, co beneficiaries. The skills to understand where their peers stand and have conversations about that through different entry points to better understand it and culture change happens within those settings. So I don't care about allies or even my, myself when I'm on a webinar, I'm gaining social capital right now. But when I'm in the pub, when I'm in a locker room, when I'm out in the oil patch. Those are the spaces where it's important for me to have the skills to navigate those things because allyship should cost me something. It should

cost me my time, my energy, my social capital. So how do we build people with that agility to, to navigate that and the skills to do so.

Secondly, this work is anti patriarchal and I loved the ability, thanks to the organizers, to, to know some of your questions kind of coming in and whatnot then. And there was some, some comments and thoughts about feminism. I identify as a feminist. We are a next gen men as a pro feminist organization. But doing this work and often leading with that, it becomes a giant F-word and people don't want to engage with it. And so for me, when I can get men and boys to understand the harms that patriarchy levies against them. Remember going back to that bell hooks quote. The first act of violence of patriarchy acid men is not that against women, but that against themselves. Okay, That's what patriarchy is doing to you. Your mental health sucks your relationships, suck. Your, you have all the, all these things. Shouldn't you care about transforming that for yourself? Great, Okay, your anti patriarchal. Oh And this is also the experience of women and girls and trans and non-binary individuals in a patriarchal society. Oh, I have empathy for that now, right? So I think, you know, trying to position and this anti patriarchal work is an entry point into feminist conversations. Even if people won't necessarily self-identify with that or identify those conversations. Such.

Next is a great quote from Rachel Gieses book: Boys. What it means to become a man. I'm glad we've begun to raise our daughters more like our sons, but it'll never work until we raise our sons to be more like our daughters. Right? And I think that's the magic of it here, is, you know, whenever we hear Girl Boss or things targeted at women and girls to thrive in these male dominant spaces. And one of our arms is working in male dominant industries. Finance, tech, resource extraction, construction. You know, great individuals can lean in and act more like men to succeed in those spaces. But those spaces will remain toxic and exclusive. And so how can we transform those spaces to be more inclusive of people of all genders? Not necessarily for the benefit of specifically women and girls, although we definitely want to move the needle on that. But we know that those structures and those spaces are harming the men that exist within them. So can we transform it for their betterment and then we all have better experiences out of it as well too. So definitely, we need to raise our sons more like our daughters as well too.

And those are some of the quick principles. And this is a really engaged group, just like with the pre questions and kind of setting this up. And I'd love to know how you're experiencing this in your work on your campus. Not naming names or institutions per, per Robynne's conversation there. But how can this conversation support you and what you're trying to do in your space? This is what I'd love to know. And if you're curious and looking more, there's all the contact details. And now I get to stare into the void and look at the chat. Clint, thank you for the compliments on the vulnerability. Feel free to unmute. Come on. Come on camera. Hello, Rachel. Hello, Tim.

SPEAKER:

Jake, I have a question for you. Yes. You mentioned just a little while ago when you're out in the oil patch. Are you a trades person? And if you are, how has this philosophy that you have and the trajectory you're on affected you, your trade and those who practice their skill around you?

JAKE:

Yeah. I am not a trades person personally. I have worked through college and university as a truck driver and did manual labor type roles in those settings. But I have no trade and had not worked professionally

necessarily in that capacity. But over the years we've worked with several organizations. Imperial Oil, enter pipeline, PCL construction, the City of Vancouver way, sewers, those kinds of things in those spaces. And the entry points are really different. You know, like when we talk about meeting men and boys, where they're at, you know, it gets thrown around a lot in our space. But if we come from like an academic or an activist understanding and we want to be intersectional and anti oppressive and all these kinds of things. And we find ourselves in those spaces. They have not had the same privilege of the learning journey to get to that understanding with those frameworks. So we need to really do the work and the humility of meeting them where they're at and what's going on for that. And a great example is we're working with a different municipality right now in their wastewater services. Roughly about 600 people, 96% male. At 1 point in time it was 40% percent unvaccinated. Hopefully that's changed a little bit, but, you know, there was some narratives and around these kinds of things. And we sat with them and the municipality wants that, wants it to be an intersectional workplace and antidepressant workplace, these kinds of things. And we sat with them and we're like, What's cultural issue for you? And they have, they identified snitch culture that, you know, when something happens in the workplace, one rats them out to HR, to leadership or those kind of things. And so they issue that they're having a psychological safety because they can't be vulnerable to say, Hey, this is unsafe work or hey, this, I need help doing this. Or hey, like, I don't appreciate when you call me that, right? And so we have to take all of these things that on a really high level. I just ran through in 30 minutes with you all and and sit with them and meet with them and make it practical to them. Look like how this is working in your culture, in your workplace. What are the consequences when we can't have those conversations? What, what, what's at play for us? What can we stand to gain from these types of things? And so that's where I think going back to that idea of like programs for problems like we have to have the agility to meet in an academic setting, understand these kinds of things, but then go into a workshop and understand how they're living it, right? What does it mean for their lived experiences and their fears and hesitation, those type of things about it. So I was a very rambling answer, but maybe, maybe there's a nugget of a response to your question. Tim?

SPEAKER:

Thanks Jake.

JAKE:

Yannis, I see your hand up.

SPEAKER:

Hi, Jake. Thank you for your presentation. And it's like I'm certainly appreciate the challenge of trying to kind of encapsulates such a complex kind of subjects in February next. So really, really appreciate your efforts and your feedback. In terms of the statement. You just gave, I think what kind of comes out for me is where does the responsibility of the organization and be the leadership of organization stands versus individual, individual responsibility within organizations. So on some level, we do speak about our individual responsibility, kind of investing on self awareness, self transformation. So that you can empathize with people. People who have been affected by faculty more directly. But on another level, the question I'm trying to ask you is in your experience What kind of actions can organizations take to infuse the kind of cultural chains and help its employees its parties, to kind of change their minds as well because I can imagine this example you have just given If an organization condone hating, then it will

keep on happening. If they, they kind of accept that kind of feedback and then just take it and punish others, then it will keep them happy.

JAKE:

Yeah, that's a great question. Also, I had a little pop up that came up that said your Internet is unstable. So if, if I get choppy or anything, just drop a note in the chat. There was a lot there, there was like four questions probably. But I'll do my best. You know, I think it really depends on the setting as well too, and the experiences that we come with us, right? Like right now I'm talking to BCcampus. You know, post-secondary higher education. I would probably classify those of us on this call as knowledge workers, right? And with the knowledge workers, there's a lot of that individual learning and unlearning, self-development, systemic thought, those kinds of things. In other spaces. There. Historically those jobs have evolved to be task-oriented, right? And so there's not a lot of thought of self other than the performance of the task. And so, you know, when you've been socialized to do that task over a period of time, you've almost removed your personal beliefs or thoughts from that task. And you feel like if I do the task that I'm doing my job well. And so how can we create opportunities in spaces where they can take a step back from that task and see how they fit into the broader organization and what they're trying to achieve collected via the team. And that's where we can start to imbue some of that self-reflection, self-awareness, invitation to grow and change. And that's also where we get innovation, right? And when we can take that step back. So it really just depends on the setting a lot. And I think as leaders, it comes down to us to create those opportunities in those spaces where they may or may not exist. And, and, you know, This feels maybe a bit of a non sequitur, but I'm hoping that there's a little bit of an answer in here. Patriarchy by definition, if we take the word, it's patēr and arkhē. patēr, "father", arkhē, power. So it's the power we inherit from our fathers. And if I think about my grandfathers who grew up in communist Czechoslovakia, and my father who grew up in communist Czechoslovakia and ran away with, with me and my mother to Canada. There's been a lot of generational change in that sense. And I don't know, like both my grandfather passed away now, but I don't know how I'd have this conversation with them. Right. And so how do we try to fill in the blanks of that transformation of the world around us, I think is a big challenge at all to work this. I talked about it in the familial contexts, but in institutions that have existed for a long period of time. That's also there, right? It's, it's, it's startups. It's the new things that are starting now that don't have to carry that burden of how it was. And they can, they can start from first principles where a lot of organizations don't have that advantage. So hopefully there's something useful back. Yeah. I saw Reems hand up and then we'd have a question from Darryn in the chat, so I'll go in that order. So hi Reems.

SPEAKER:

Thanks so much for your presentation. I just want to hear your perspectives on something I've been seeing a lot in working with metapopulation on. This is that you will do a workshop, will have conversation people are really stoked. And then the next thing here is that this is a situation that happens someone will challenge it, but no one else will back them up. And so I'm just wondering about this piece around you talked about having social capital to make that change. Just wondering about that relational aspects. You talk about bystander training. and you're delegating all these pieces. And I'm just wondering what your perspective is and thoughts about how do you, especially when you are in that group with males. How do you build that, that relational piece so they back each other up. And the

importance of that and like I feel like it's such a sticky piece even though they are in relationship with each other in all different spaces and different ways that I see yeah,

JAKE:

but, but the relationships are different. Like it's, not to stereotype, but like so many male relationships and communication is so transactional and light. And it even, and even when we talk about subject matter, whether it be sports or the stock market hey, bitcoin, well I actually know about this, more about Bitcoin. So we put that like competition and domination into the subject area that we talk about. Right? Like it's never like how do you feel about Bitcoin? And like, you know, like so, you know, when we have when they're sure they are in relationship, but if they're not having a level of quality or connection within that relationship, doesn't really matter necessarily, right? And so, and this is where the tension with the programmatic stuff that you're really trying to do and build those skills in comes into conflict with the reality of culture. And it's hard. Great, they have the skills in that, in that moment and they can do that. But like a workplace setting, the example that I would use is okay, so there was a setting and the boss or someone with more power, That's something really shitty to someone who is identified in that space. And you didn't speak up. And then you go to her after and you say, Oh, I'm really sorry that that happened to you. And she gets fed up. Like Why the hell didn't you say something? Right. And so then you're like, oh, well that it was actually a waste to go and empathize with her because, you know, that probably triggered her distrust more. So the actual thing that you should do is look at who else grimaced and was like, ooh, right? Go to them after the meeting and say, Hey, next time that happens, I'm going to say something, do you have my back? Right? And so can we create spaces and those male friend groups that if a conversation comes up and you see that your peer is just as bothered as that, as you are. That you have that pre conversation, that pre-commitment of like Will you have my back? Right? And in doing it, to get to that point, you have to have conversations about values and beliefs and those kinds of things, right? And normalize that outside of a programmatic setting, right? And so, not easy work, It's easier for me to say than to do, but that's kind of what I would think about it. And I mean, for us, soft plug here, but we created a deck of cards called cards for masculinity. And it's like 50 cards with like here I'll pull one. Which messages associated with guys being guys do you think are most harmful? Right. And it's just I didn't ask the question the card ask the question like, what do you think, man, right? And so, you know, what kind of opportunities for connection and conversation and deepening relationship can we do to get to that point? Would be my thought. Winston, I see your hand. I'm gonna answer Darryn's question first and I'll get to it. So give me one sec. Okay. Darryn, I see you on the screen. I don't know if you want to chat this out.

SPEAKER:

I think the question pretty much covered everything I wanted to say. I really enjoyed the presentation. And this is just for me something that I, I think I struggled most because in the classroom setting as I kind of implied or yeah, I guess I stated I have time to expand around some of these things, but in personal conversations I just find that I get shut down really quickly. And people are, you know, they make the comments, oh, that sounds feministic. Which is not really language that we use, but it's immediately shut down if you use that kind of language. So I'm just wondering if you have any suggestions on how to kind of mobilize outside in spaces where we may not have that time to dedicate to the issues. And also, I wanted to show you all this because I turn behind me and I'm like, oh, this is so appropriate. A friend gave it to me.

JAKE:

I love it. This is the tough part where I think that goes back to my idea around like having the agility to have these conversations and not, not enough people do unfortunately, like I'll give you hope on one hand and maybe despair on the other. Pre-pandemic. We worked with the federal government's Ministry for women and gender equality. And we did the first part of a project to lay the foundation of a national network of people engaging men and boys and around gender-based issues. And so I flew basically almost every city in Canada. The only one I didn't make it to as Halifax before the pandemic started it. But there's not that many people, especially male identified individuals like, right, so we need to invite them into these spaces and for a long time, and this is where we can get into. I'm talking to a gender studies prof like waves of feminism in which feminisms, right? And for a long time, it hasn't been inclusive of men and boys necessarily, and they're fight, right? But when we, when we make and understanding that feminism is about gendered constructs nor in stereotype system. Things. Men have gender too, and so they're part of that conversation so we can invite them in. And part of that invitation and don't get me wrong. I, I, I have a lot of empathy for women and trans and non-binary individuals experiences. Like, where have you been? Boo-hoo it's been hard for you, like, right? There's no not a lot of patience. I get that. But when we can't sit with them and understand their experiences in it, we're just not really going to make a lot of progress and we're going to be in that that antagonist position. So long-winded answer, the principle that I would say that helps with that is really having yes and conversations versus no but conversations because, you know, men's rights activism example, right? Oh, women have these kinds of issues. Well no but men have these issues, right? But if we look at it through a feminist lens, then we say, women have these issues, yes, and men have these issues, and we can care about two things at the same time. And, you know, when I whenever I find myself in that dialogue, you know, let's say around fathers custody, right? And they want to say, oh, it's the feminist system and all these kinds of things. And that's why I'm losing my children and whatnot. I can say with them and I can say, I have empathy and understanding for that. But this actually like a patriarchal issue because who built and runs that system? Men. Right? And there's a benevolent sexism that says women are better caregivers. So therefore women get that right. And so can we use that principle is kinda like a jujitsu to like flip them and kind of sit with them and lead with that empathy and understand it. And then once we give someone empathy and we say, I've heard you, now, Can you hear me too, right? That's a that's a better place to be. Rather than shouting over each other and Twitter, we all know what Twitter is. So yeah, anyway, I hope that's helpful.

SPEAKER:

Yeah, I mean, I think it's just something that that comes for me. I've been working on some of the things he said like that sort of verbal or dialogue base jujitsu where you're trying to find the right way of moving in without being too aggressive. And you're sort of doing this matrix thing in your conversation. And I'm I'm getting better at it with practice. And I hear you. Yeah. JAKE: And the tough part is I have to acknowledge my male privilege as a freaking tall white dude have in these conversations, right? When he comes from me, it doesn't come from someone complaining about the issues, right. It's like There's a male privilege and doing that work alongside. So that's an unfortunate dynamic in those conversations as well, too. Winston.

SPEAKER:

Can you hear me okay. Yeah. Cool. Thank you. Thank you for your presentation. It was really informative and helpful. My question has to do with, I enter within my progressive organizations. How to, I guess account for conventional and potentially toxic masculine drive, such as like ambition, competition, these kinds of things, and how to know when to eliminate them and when to try to integrate them. And I, and I ask you just knowing that you're involved in this and next, next gen and I, and I'm trying to start a student group on my campus that's focused on deconstructing toxic masculinity and focusing on engineering healthy masculinity But I even like I'm constantly aware of either within myself, like the fact that there's like this ambitious drive that kind of runs through every edition that I have for any kind of progressive movement or any involvement I might had a progressive movement like picture of myself at the top. Every, like, that I'll be the executive director of whatever group I end up starting all the way to get this notoriety data sets. Yeah, so that's, that's that's the context to my question and then the actual question.

JAKE:

Yeah. I mean, there's so much to unpack there. Like, I don't think ambition itself is inherently toxic. And I don't necessarily think competition itself is inherently toxic, right? Like, you know, going back to my sporting days, like playing a game of physical game and at the end of it, grabbing the guy's hand, pulling in for a hug and being like, good fight, fight and win, loss. That feels good, right? Like we did something, right? The tough part I think. And this is again where these other competing systems get into play as well also live in a capitalistic society. And through that, we often get socialized around scarce resources and zeros sum in terms of leadership. Like we, we don't, we have hierarchical leadership. We don't celebrate, distributed, or are leadership by committee and those types of things. And I think Darryn's point in the chat to just be like conscientious and thoughtful about that. Like so many people are not, right. And so it's kinda the same thing like if you have imposter syndrome and you feel like an imposter, then chances are you're probably not an imposter because you're thinking about that. Which is a tough thing. But I think it's something that we have to struggle with. Myself being executive director, co-founder, like I get a platform, I get a microphone, I get to do these kinds of things and, you know, checking yourself and saying, this is the work, it's not special. I'm not special because of it, but this is the work to get to the vision and the mission plays a role. And then in terms of like organizations and structures. Yeah, I mean, I think it's like a really an organizational culture thing. You know, people are obsessed with this idea of meritocracy. It doesn't exist. So like, if it doesn't exist, how can we move towards it, right? How can we do that? And we have to acknowledge that there is the motherhood penalty. And, you know, there there's the missing bottom round. It's not necessarily about glass ceilings anymore, but you know, what structures are at play. And we need to be realistic with the goals that we're setting. Because just yesterday I was talking with a mining company. They're currently. 21% female representation. And they made a commitment that I think within three years and maybe five years, there'll be a 37 percent representation. And to me, that's just there. So they're setting themselves up for failure through that. Because on the one hand, great like set a three to 5% goal, work towards it. You have to build the pipeline, those kinds of things. But we also have to acknowledge that. And this goes back to the principle of like raising your, uh, your son's like your daughters. You know, yeah, we're pushing women to male dominant fields, but we're not simultaneously pushing men into female dominant fields. So we're perpetuating a 0 sum narrative because you feel like, oh, I don't belong here and I can't get it here. But if we paid those female dominant fields and we value them and society equivalent, then maybe we'd see a little bit of a shift in those kinds of things, but we're not doing that.

So we have to be realistic around what our goals are and the barriers case. It's we can't put the diversity horse diversity card ahead of the inclusion horse, right? Because great, we get the numbers in and they come and they're like, this culture sucks. I don't want to be here and they're gone within 24 months like great. You had them for a period of time, No, you need to transform that culture so it works for everyone and the culture itself becomes a Recruiting recruiting tool. Yeah, it's a mining company, but we have a great time here. Everyone gets along. The sure. There's a paintball events, but there's also a knitting events and all of us are visible, right? Like how do we work towards balance? That doesn't necessarily mean parity, if that makes sense.

SPEAKER:

Yeah, thank you. I think I've painted a pretty broad picture above like a lot of different moving parts in that in that kind of sphere. Yeah. Especially helpful for me to know that you're the executive director or the founder of next gen men? Yeah. I'm curious if you would be willing to speak maybe personally just for just for a moment about like how you kind of work to find that balance within yourself or like anything it's adding. Would you see yourself kind of like stepping down from that role if it meant It was in the interest of equity or like how do you kind of couple with some of those challenges internally? I think that's totally good. So I actually had two co-founders and so there was three of us when we started. I, tall, straight white male, my best friend, Jamal, black male, and then Jason, an Asian male. So we had great diverse representation in that sense. And when we started, I was in Calgary, Jamal was in Toronto. Jason was in New York and we were all kind of contributing and kind of moving things along. I was more part time. Jamal is more full time. He got to a point in his life where we're doing patchwork grants and kind of trying to make it happen. But he got married, wanted to get a mortgage on a house and this kind of thing and we couldn't pay him in that sense. So he kind of stepped out in that. And then Jason, because of these issues and those kinds of things, I had to take on the role. A lot of the leadership kind of consolidated with me. And when I take a step back and think about that, it's probably because I'm a straight white male because if I failed at this, I could pick up something else. And the consequences weren't the same for me as it was for them. Right? And so again, to that earlier point, like a lot of people would just be like, Oh, I guess I got that, but I have to think about why I ended up that way, right? And it's been a whole process of implementing a board that sits above me and could fire me and my own founding role if there wasn't that. And, you know, what is the makeup of that board? Gender wise, race wise, socioeconomically, age wise, those kinds of things trying to get representation and governance with that. Being thoughtful within that being thoughtful within my own team. How we pay, how we promote, how we train and invest and those kinds of things. And I can't say that I'm doing everything right or perfectly, but I'm thinking about it all the time, right? And a lot of these decisions I think always come off. There's not really a right or wrong, It's trade-offs. And what happens when it's tradeoffs. Your values guide your trade-offs, right? And so that's where I think that the importance lies.

SPEAKER:

Thanks and that's really helpful.

JAKE:

Yeah, my pleasure. Robynne, I think we're we're almost at time here. I don't know if you had anything to close on.

ROBYNNE:

Yeah. No. Thanks so much, Jake, for an awesome session and thanks to everybody else that showed up in and ask really thoughtful questions, it's always hard to come into these spaces and have really vulnerable conversations. So thank you, everybody for showing up and and participating with us today.

JAKE:

Yeah, my my gratitude as well and I don't want to shame people who didn't come on camera, but people who did thank you extra because it always feels nice not talking to the voids. Thank you. And if you want to get in touch, it's jake@nextgenmen.ca I invite you to sign up for our newsletter, future of masculinity.com and reach out if you have any questions or thoughts.

ROBYNNE:

And Jake, Darryn had asked if you go into classes to do presentations. You probably do stuff like that?

JAKE:

Totally could. Yeah. Awesome.

ROBYNNE:

Thanks, everybody. Have a great night.

JAKE:

Bye everyone.