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MBS ([00:00](#)):

As I write and record the introduction to this interview with Bob Joseph, I'm actually in Australia, and we're about two weeks out from a national referendum, a referendum about whether to change the Australian constitution to recognize the First Peoples of Australia by establishing a body called the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice. I'm embarrassed to say that it doesn't look likely to pass. By the time you're listening to this, we're going to know for sure.

([00:28](#)):

There's been all sorts of scaremongering and weasel words from people who I'm frustrated by. But perhaps even more profoundly worrying, there's just a general lack of energy and empathy among most Australians. I thought I'd see T-shirts, I thought I'd see banners, I thought I'd see more, and it's really quiet. It feels to me like a once-in-a-generation opportunity for reconciliation, empowerment, and healing is being missed.



[\(00:58\)](#):

It's confronting, recognizing that so many of us live, and this is how we might put it in Canada, on unseated territories of First Nations. It's not always, maybe it's not ever, easy to know what to do about it. So I'm really grateful to the people doing the work to give the rest of us the chance to do the right things and to make the braver choices.

[\(01:24\)](#):

Welcome to 2 Pages with MBS, the podcast where brilliant people read the best two pages from a favorite book, a book that has moved them, a book that has shaped them. Bob Joseph is the president and the CEO of a company called Indigenous Corporate Training, and it focuses on teaching people how to work effectively with those people who are native to a land; in this case, Canada.

[\(01:47\)](#):

He's the author of a perpetual bestseller in Canada, 21 Things You May Not Know About the Indian Act, published through my publisher, actually, 2 Pages, which I'm really proud of. Or Page Two. I always get that confused. Page Two is my publisher. Honestly, Bob has been changing the world steadily for decades now.

Bob [\(02:05\)](#):

I feel like lots of other people were talking about mid-career changes and that kind of stuff. I often wondered how people would judge me. "Wow, he's done the same thing since 1994. He hasn't moved off of that." And I'm glad I stuck with it.

MBS [\(02:22\)](#):

Malcolm Gladwell talked about two types of artists. Matisse, who painted the same two pictures, a mountain and apples. He painted those his whole career and became evermore masterful. And Picasso, who kept reinventing his style



cubist and the blue period and whatever else. It's clear Bob Joseph is a Matisse, and the origin of this work rests in part in ceremony.

Bob ([02:48](#)):

I come from a potlatch family, part of the Kwakwaka'wakw peoples, Northwest Coast, British Columbia, Canada. Potlatch is a gift-giving ceremony, and we transfer names, songs, crests, titles, to territory. We celebrate birth, death, puberty, marriage. Everything happens in one of our potlatches.

MBS ([03:08](#)):

Bob talks in more detail later on about a potlatch. It's clearly a crucial cultural celebration and ceremony, and one that was almost obliterated.

Bob ([03:18](#)):

We underwent an assimilation process of this country, and we tried to stamp out the potlatch and get rid of hereditary chiefs like myself. So my dad's a hereditary chief. I'm going to inherit his chieftainship when he dies.

MBS ([03:34](#)):

One thing that transcends cultures is the need for the passing, metaphorically, sometimes literally, of the torch from one generation to the next. What's nice is this can happen while both generations are alive.

Bob ([03:49](#)):

One day, about two years ago, I asked them if... I said, "It's too bad you have to die for me to be able to inherit your chieftainship. I would love to do something with you. It's too bad there's no way to do that."

([04:00](#)):

So he went and consulted with some of the other chiefs and came back a couple of months later. And he said, "Hey, I found a way." He said, "I have some vacant seats as well that I haven't been able to put people into. There's this idea



that I can give you one of those vacant chieftainships and you don't have to wait till I die anymore. We can do it while alive together."

[\(04:22\)](#):

And so that was pretty cool. That was really a leadership issue for me, because he's such a knowledgeable person. He's got incredible political, social support. I thought it would be great if we could do something because he's like the muscle for me. You know what I mean?

MBS [\(04:42\)](#):

Yeah. Well, then, may I ask you, in stepping into being a chief and also knowing that you have that hereditary chief role that you will inherit from your father, who was the first person who role-modeled what being a chief meant, and what did you learn from them?

Bob [\(05:06\)](#):

Oh, gosh. There's so many people I would have to acknowledge. But having gone to potlatches and just watched different people, I was impressed by the young chiefs who were having to come into their own. It was all around all the different rites of passage. So admiring those folks and how complicated it is to carry the weight of the nation on your shoulders, make sure the language and the culture and the social and economic and all of that stuff is working.

[\(05:42\)](#):

Largely, I volunteer for those guys and to watch them at a young age. People like William Masden Jr., for example. He was very high regarded, and everybody supported him, and really just trying to figure out how the heck did he do that. Then there where Bill Kramer and my dad, they've been working together in the potlatch. They MC a lot of the ceremonies, and watching those two work together individually. How do you keep an event going that's going to run from 10:00 in the morning to maybe 2:00 in the morning? You've got chiefs and



matriarchs sitting there, trying to keep it all flowing. You've got to feed people. We're talking about 1,100, 1,200 people, sometimes.

MBS ([06:36](#)):

Yeah. It's a microcosm of a bigger responsibility.

Bob ([06:40](#)):

Yeah. I was like, "How do you make all of this work? It just seems to work." And then, of course, we have a number of vast societies. If you're a Kwakwaka'wakw person, you would belong to a society.

([06:58](#)):

So I actually was part of the Hamatsa society, which really is a leadership society, and working with some of the other Hamatsas. And the ones that were clearly ahead of me, they were the previous generation, but they're going to inherit sooner, and watching how they think and conduct themselves. Yeah, so there were a lot of people to draw on.

([07:21](#)):

And there were indigenous leaders from other cultures, too, that were very impressive. Chieftain George and some of those other folks were... Yeah, you just saw their passion for people.

MBS ([07:34](#)):

You talked about their ability to carry the weight of a nation. How do you carry the weight of a nation?

Bob ([07:47](#)):

I think, well, there's lots of ways. You got to keep exercising the culture, though. You got to keep practicing. You got to keep potlatching. You've got to motivate people. A lot of it is based on hard work. A lot of our stuff is storytelling through



singing and songs and reciting oral history, and there's so much that goes into that.

[\(08:16\)](#):

In front of potlatch, as I've been with my dad for a few years, following him, getting him to teach me what do we do here. We'll go to the artist's shed and we'll talk to the artists, and you'll just say thank you for all you guys do in keeping the nation going. He works with the people who are interested in language. "Hey, you guys are awesome. Keep it up. If you need me to record it, I'll come and record with you." It's being there when the old people are getting ready to pass away. He does a lot. It's a big role.

MBS [\(08:55\)](#):

I guess I'm curious, also, how you sit with the weight of that responsibility. I understand some of those actions; maintaining the potlatch ceremony, language, dance, ceremony around becoming a man or passing on, all of those are the waft and the weave that make up this tapestry of a community, of a nation. But the weight feels that it would just sit with that. How do you build capacity for that responsibility?

Bob [\(09:33\)](#):

Well, I think there's a number of things. Probably one of my primary motivators... And my dad has a big set of shoes to fill. I've always thought there's no way I'm going to be that good, and I'm not going to fill those shoes, but I'm going to have to go through that. There will always be comparisons that I'm not him. And I've worked hard, career-wise, to put some distance between us that way, and to take a different track. I went really corporate. He was really cultural, community. I thought I'm going to try to be the best I can in the corporate world, and start at the bottom and claw my way to the top like everybody else,



and stumbled upon this work, working for a company where I do indigenous awareness training and reconciliation training, those kinds of things.

[\(10:30\)](#):

Carrying the weight, I didn't... How should I say this in a way? I knew I had to, but as long as he was there, I was really... He's got this, I don't have to worry so much. And I could focus on that career, because potlatching is a gift-giving ceremony. It means I actually have to give gifts at the end of the ceremony. Let's say I want to give my son a name, a Hamatsa; we do that in front of the nation, and they all witness, and at the end, I distribute gifts to them. If they accept the gifts, they accept that I had the right to do that, and so it's so integral.

[\(11:07\)](#):

So a potlatch would be 40, 50, 80 grand of my own money, plus my family chips in. We've got to feed 1,100 of the closest relatives, give them all gifts. We've got to pay chiefs and matriarchs, singers, and dancers, and fire keepers and door keepers. They're big, expensive events. So I thought, I'm not going to worry about it too much, because early in my career I was like, "I'm never going to be able to do this anyways. I don't know how this is..." It's like when you were a kid, maybe a lot of people can relate to this, where we were looking at it, thinking, "I am never going to be able to afford an \$80,000 house." Because that my dad's house was worth when I was 16. I'm like, I'm not even going to bother.

MBS [\(11:51\)](#):

Exactly. It's impossible. What is that number? It makes no sense.

Bob [\(11:53\)](#):

It does. For my kid today in Victoria, it's a million dollar townhouse. How's he going to afford that?



(12:03):

And so there was some of that going on, and then a really big motivator... I don't know what the syndrome would be. There's probably a name for it. I wish we had May Cabor here or somebody, where they could talk about it. Because I just think about those chiefs that went to jail for practicing potlatching, cutting their regalia sieves, donated into public collections and all of those things. I think, "Hm, that's why I got to do this."

MBS (12:33):

Right.

Bob (12:33):

Yeah.

MBS (12:35):

Let me ask you one other question before I ask you about the book you've chosen. How has the landscape you grew up in shaped the man you've become?

Bob (12:46):

Oh, gosh. So I grew up in a little logger commercial fishing town on the West Coast, not without its challenges, especially with regards to indigenous peoples. I think that was probably the big piece. High school was pretty rough when you come from a marginalized community.

(13:17):

Of course, indigenous issues in Canada, for those listeners who aren't here, they sometimes make the news. And if you're indigenous, if it makes the news, it makes your life at some point in that couple of days. There might be a fishing issue playing out on the evening news; I go to school the next day and, "Why do you guys have to have special rights?" That kind of stuff, really, really grates on



you. I was like, "I don't know. It doesn't seem to affect me." I didn't understand the policies and regulations and the views that Canada and provinces had. But I understood the views they were sharing, which really was about equality. "Why do you have to be different? Why can't you be like everybody else?" And so I call those the equality views. Honestly, I would get strangers coming up to me on the street. "I wish you guys would pay taxes," and I'd be working in a job where I was paying taxes. It was just the stereotypes that were so ingrained.

[\(14:20\)](#):

So to have this opportunity in the corporate sector to start to address stereotypes as part of an employment contract, I started to realize, hey, we can make a difference here, having to learn about it from an employment/employer perspective. I've got to get in front of these people and they're going to ask me, because they asked me when I was on the SkyTrain and on airplanes; now, I get a chance to respond without the fear of getting the tar beat out of me for responding.

MBS [\(14:54\)](#):

You've been a champion for reconciliation. If you were fully successful, what would reconciliation look like?

Bob [\(15:05\)](#):

For the listeners, again, it's going to take a while. It took us 137 years to get into this mess. I'm hoping it won't take us 137 to get out.

MBS [\(15:14\)](#):

I hope not.

Bob [\(15:15\)](#):

But we're taking a long-term view of reconciliation. We're not resting it on governments, we're resting it on people like your listeners. We're hoping that



they will pick up the flag and march it forward in their families, communities, church groups, and places of business.

[\(15:34\)](#):

When I was promoting my book, 21 Things You May Not Know About the Indian Act, people would say, "What do you want the government to do?" And I'm like, you know what? They got us into this mess. I would not discourage the government for doing good stuff on reconciliation, and I wish they would, and to keep that commitment going for as long as it takes. But I'm really hanging my hat on Canadians. I would bet on Canadians any day to do the right thing.

[\(16:02\)](#):

So we're a ways away from reconciliation, but in a reconciled world, we'd just be respectful of each other and our differences. It's Canadiana. Well, it's Canadiana as we see it since the patriated constitution. We're these different peoples, we've come to this country, and some of us didn't come from anywhere, but that's a whole nother conversation. But we're respectful of those differences, and so in the future, I can see where we're not looked on as warps of the crown and some of those really negative stereotypes. I think we're starting to see that now. We're hearing land acknowledgements across corporations and sporting events and all of that stuff. And so I think things are really starting to change.

[\(17:00\)](#):

But, ultimately, we're going to get to a place that I call the three selfs, and the first self is a self that is what I call self-determination, which means... Currently, I'm a status Indian. So I'm legally, racially defined in Canada right now. I won't tell you what my status number is. It was designed to assimilate. But I was given that identity by the federal government, who needed a KPI to know when I've assimilated. They needed a key performance indicator, so they legally, racially define me.

[\(17:34\)](#):



And so what we do in potlatches, and it was always been part of the struggle, if I can, for lack of a better term, was to continue to give our kids names and our community people and the people that we married. My wife, who's not indigenous, we gave her a very important name, because we believe in an inherent right to self-determination, which means the government of Canada doesn't grant us the right to tell us who our people are. We do that. It was given to us by the creator, so that's where we're coming from.

[\(18:08\)](#):

And so self-determination simply is, nobody in Ottawa gets to tell us who our people are.

MBS [\(18:13\)](#):

Right. That's the first one.

Bob [\(18:14\)](#):

That's a very political statement.

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

The next one is self-government. So remember before contact, hereditary chiefs governed everything. Birth, death, puberty marriage; they did all of the work of the government. Our big house was our place of government, the chiefs were the politicians, and then driven by matriarchs. And so we were all in self-governing communities.

[\(18:43\)](#):

I really struggled when you told me I had to pick a book and read. I was like, I really wanted to talk about some of the self-government stuff.

MBS [\(18:51\)](#):

Yeah, yeah.

Bob [\(18:54\)](#):



So we were self-governing, but along comes the federal government and says, "Look, Bob, the way you're governing yourselves, it's backwards. It's wrong. You need to elect the chief and council just like we're all doing." It's funny, because they completely ignored the fact that we're a constitutional monarchy with a federal basis, right? "We don't like your traditional government," is what they were saying. "We're going to replace it with a duly elected." But that's not good for us, that's only good for you. So it really was an overthrow, a dispossession of our leadership by these band chief and councils.

[\(19:31\)](#):

We saw that in the Wet'suwet'en hereditary chief, Coastal GasLink debacle that was just the hereditary chief for saying, "Hey, no, we govern. These are rights given to us by the Creator. These are resources to us given by the Creator, and so we're going to govern." The government was always out there with, "We have signed agreements with all of the elected councils, all along the pipeline." It was like, "Yeah, so that's the wrong people, but if you're feeling good about hanging your hat there."

[\(20:05\)](#):

It ended up to be, it's a three, four, \$5 billion pipeline. But when you had the protests, the blockades of railways and Port Metro Vancouver and all of that stuff, it's probably a \$24 billion pipeline, when you really start to factor that. And nobody's done a study. I've been waiting for somebody to say, "What were the economic impacts of Coastal GasLink Wet'suwet'en conversation?" Because I think that'll open the door to this notion. I think our premier at the time, Horgan, said, "We're not going to do this again in the future the way we've done this. We're implementing the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples," which was all messaging to say, "We're going to work with hereditary chiefs," and that kind of stuff.

[\(20:54\)](#):



So that's the self-government piece. So then the self-reliance piece. So right now we're pretty reliant. All the funding for healthcare, housing, and education comes from Indian Affairs. If you've ever wondered what that funding looks like, most people see it as a Shangri-la of free housing and just stuff like that. But the reality is more Kashechewan water crisis, and all of the communities without clean drinking water, and the population of status Indians who actually live on reserve is only about 40%. 60% are in Toronto and Vancouver and [inaudible 00:21:31]. They're spread out across the country because the federal government doesn't provide enough funding.

[\(21:38\)](#):

So that's the self-reliance piece, then, is how do we... And the Nisga'a, were really good at this. So the Nisga'a have a final treaty here in British Columbia, and they were saying, "Give us some lands and resources because we think you have a responsibility and a legal obligation to. Give us the ability to make decisions about those lands and resources, and we will participate in the political and economic mainstream of this country, but in a way that protects our cultures."

[\(22:07\)](#):

And so if I could give you the seven-second sound bite for dealing with stuff that we haven't dealt with, land claims and treaties, and that kind of stuff: I think in the future, a reconciled future, there'll be governments where we go to get things; and in exchange, those governments will ask for revenue sharing in stumpage fees, which is something that's already happening in BC. Forest company cuts down a tree, they pay stumpage to the province, the province takes up a percentage of those stumpage fees, and transfers them back to First Nations to fulfill their consultation or accommodation obligations. So that could be forest streamlining, oil, gas, natural resource revenue sharing. I think Victoria opened the door to an idea, which I think is on its way, where they said, "Here's an extra box, here. If you want to contribute more money, we'll transfer that to First Nations and whose territory we've been able to live in."

[\(23:05\)](#):



So that gets us out of the dependency in Indian Affairs and the whims of politicians and political ideology and participating, and actually makes a lot of sense. If they're in Ontario, 88 First Nations are involved in the power line business. They have equity in the power lines. So guess who's not fighting new power line construction? Because-

MBS ([23:32](#)):

There's 88 tribes. There's 88 Nations.

Bob ([23:34](#)):

Yeah.

MBS ([23:35](#)):

This is such a great setup, but I'm curious to know about the book you've chosen for us.

Bob ([23:39](#)):

Yeah. Yeah.

MBS ([23:41](#)):

What have you picked?

Bob ([23:44](#)):

There were so many. First of all, this was tough. I was all over the place. That was probably the toughest part of this.

MBS ([23:51](#)):

And you're not the first guest to have said that. Part of what I love about this is having people who love books come, "Agh! It was hard. How do I pick?"

Bob ([24:00](#)):



Do I pick one on indigenous history in the Western Hemisphere? The other book I wrestled with was the 4-Hour Workweek with-

MBS ([24:10](#)):

Oh, yeah. Tim Ferriss.

Bob ([24:12](#)):

Tim Ferriss. And Donald Miller, Business Made Simple.

MBS ([24:16](#)):

I loved Donald Miller stuff. I'm about to go and hang out at his ranch in a couple of months' time, so that's great.

Bob ([24:21](#)):

Wow. Right on. I'd love to hear how it goes because I'm a big fan. I'm implementing all of his stuff because I really want the work that we're doing in this company to continue on. Like I said, I'm 60. I think I can go another 10 years. I love what I do, but at some point, I'm really starting to think about the future.

([24:42](#)):

And so I've had to go from a management by chaos style because we've got-

MBS ([24:48](#)):

I recognize that,

Bob ([24:49](#)):

... yeah, we've got eight or nine people running around keeping three, four, five trainers really busy and blogging, and all of the things that you have to do to run a good business. And so I chose a book and I'm always looking at leadership and then trying to apply. Or I'm comparing a lot of times; I wonder how does this compare with how we view the world as Kwakwaka'wakw people?



(25:15):

So I picked *Be Different or Be Dead*, and the author-

MBS (25:19):

A bold statement.

Bob (25:20):

Yeah, Roy Osing. It's really a book that I think is helpful to me, because, really, I have to be different, if the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions calls to action. They said a lot of those calls said, "We need Canadians and companies, and government should make resources available for people to learn about the history, culture." Since the TRC, there's been a lot of shingles been hung out from people that are doing this important work, and that's great. I appreciate it. I like the competition. I like the spirit of trying to change the world that they're all doing.

(26:03):

In the spirit of competition, though, I want to win. In a way that is respectful, obviously.

MBS (26:13):

Yes. How did you come across this book? Did you just pick it up as part of the leadership quest for good books, or did it come into your life in a different way?

Bob (26:23):

Yeah, a friend of mine recommended it to me. He runs a Delta Business Chamber of Commerce. He's like, "Hey, I met this guy. He's working with us, and he has a great book. I want to share a copy with you." And so he shipped me a copy and I read through it. It was just timely, because I'm going from management by chaos to I want to build a performance company that will continue into the future. And so thinking about those kinds of things, and I think



it'll help me with my community work, too. And so there was lots of good stuff, like strategic planning. Some of the things that I really liked, you've got to have an only statement. We're the only company that has trainers from academia, government. And so I've been really working hard so that when people are looking at all the shingles, who's doing indigenous awareness training, they look at it and I make their choice really tough.

MBS ([27:23](#)):

So, yeah, Don Miller. Is it StoryBrand positioning stuff?

Bob ([27:28](#)):

Yeah.

MBS ([27:30](#)):

Claim your spot, name the problem you solve, explain how you do it in a way that's unique.

Bob ([27:35](#)):

I love it. You know what really resonates with me about Donald Miller, is the whole story itself. The hero has a challenge. I think to all of the things that we shared in our potlatch, they're all stories, heroic stories.

([27:49](#)):

We have the legend of Siwidi, and he was an unperforming character in our history. One day, he gets dragged under the water, and he comes back with the lord of the sea's box of treasures and becomes an important person. It's just like watching that play out. Now, it plays out in front of 1,100 people. There's 40, 45 masks. The song goes on for half an hour, an hour. It's like a play within a... Just for an analogy's sake, but we're recounting a history.

I'm just thinking, yeah, I'd love to be able to tell those stories, and I've said this before, but we're pretty closed on it. I think the adventures that he goes on, I



think they'd be up there with Harry Potter and Lord of the Rings. But it's actual history to us, and families have the rights to it, and there'd be so many issues trying to get that story out. But it's a great story. I love the StoryBrand.

MBS ([28:51](#)):

I'm just reading a book on Australian Aboriginal indigenous wisdom, and there's a similar conversation in this book, which is around, "We've got some great stories." But the stories that can be shared with somebody like me are like, as they say in the book, the kids' versions of the stories. The simplified, cut down. And then as you become a more important person or you take on different responsibilities, you get access to deeper versions of each of those stories. But yeah, it's like, hearing the kids' stories is amazing enough.

Bob ([29:26](#)):

Yeah.

MBS ([29:26](#)):

Let's talk about these two pages. Which two pages have you chosen?

Bob ([29:29](#)):

Yeah. There were lots of two pages that I could have picked from. Like I say, it was really tough, even in Roy's book. But he talks about taking a small company and turning it into a billion-dollar company, and whether we're trying to build a company or trying to build a movement for reconciliation, really, it comes down to people. And so Roy starts to talk about people in his book and what he looks for in hiring people. Or I think of it as recruiting, because some of the people, they take our training and they're leading the charge inside their company, whether it's Fortis or ATCO, or any of these companies, at church groups or wherever they happen to be.



(30:21):

Part of it is finding those people and then really nurturing them, supporting them. And so that, to me, is the big piece, whether it's for your company or for what I consider a broad political movement to change the country and how we relate to each other and how prosperous we come, I'm just passionate. I believe that if we get to the three selfs, it will unleash the real potential of this country. If we fight it, it's our biggest downfall. We saw how close we came on, say, Trans Mountain, where the federal government actually had to buy the project to save it. They bought it, not just to save the project, but to actually save the economy. Because if you can't build that, you can't do anything. Why would global investors look at Canada as a viable option?

(31:12):

So for me, I picked these two pages because I really wanted to focus on what Roy was talking about, which was how do you hire? How you find those people? You get stacks of resumes. Even if you're not recruiting them to your business to be a worker in it, you're recruiting them to pick up the flag and charge reconciliation forward.

MBS (31:36):

That's right.

Bob (31:36):

And so how do you look for people? So that's what I'm going to read from.

MBS (31:39):

Beautiful.

Bob (31:42):

I don't want to do the spoiler just yet.

MBS (31:46):



Okay, I'm excited. So Bob Joseph reading from Roy Osing's book, Be Different or Be Dead. Over to you, Bob.

Bob ([31:52](#)):

Thank you, thank you.

([31:55](#)):

Roy talks about in Move 10... So he's got an interesting book, he talks about moves. He's an interesting writer. I won't read the first paragraph, but he starts to talk about in the second paragraph, hiring the right person. So that's where I'm going to pick up from.

MBS ([32:12](#)):

Lovely.

Bob ([32:16](#)):

The key in 99.99% of the cases is to hire the right person into a service position, if you want to dazzle the customer or leave them breathless from the service experience they've had with you. I'm not impressed with the people recruited into customer services positions, because many of them are incapable of delivering even a mediocre service experience. Why? Well, many of them have been placed in a position because they're seniority in the company or because they're looking for a career move and they want to try customer service. As a result, these people find that they really don't like customers with all the complications they bring, and they would rather be doing something that didn't involve interacting with humans.

([33:05](#)):

The decision-making process to select people for service jobs is imprecise and securely flawed. And in too many cases, unqualified and unwilling people are let loose with your most precious asset, your customer. And so how do you fix the problem? How does an organization ensure that they're hiring individuals who



are not only capable of delivering mind-blowing service, but also want to, with every fabric of their body, really help people?

[\(33:33\)](#):

Then his next big bullet point is, training people to like humans is futile. And so many would say, "You can train people to do it." Certainly, that's what human resource managers generally believe. Why else would they use seniority as a criterion to place people in service operations? The fact is, however, despite all of the good intentions of cross-training, you simply can't train somebody to like somebody else. You can give them smile training and have them grin at others and use tools intended to deal with customers better, but you can't train a person to bring all the honest emotional energy to the table that is required to create a memorable experience for another person. You can train people to smile, but you can't train them to love.

[\(34:19\)](#):

Human being lovers are born to do it, and the challenge is to discover them and embrace them in your organization as they're truly the custodians of the loyalty moment when a customer decides to continue doing business with you, and to tell you and others how great your organization is or leave it for another service provider.

[\(34:39\)](#):

So this next big bullet point is recruiting lovers. So how do you spot these people who naturally care for other humans? You must start with the usual task of filtering through the profiles of potential candidates, looking for the content that relates to serving customers as opposed to merely stressing academic achievements or other hard accomplishments. Most people avoid what they believe is the soft stuff as it relates to their background; but for the delivery of a remarkable service, the soft stuff is essential. Check their references to see if others commented on the candidate's ability to effectively deal with others with care and affection.



[\(35:19\)](#):

The interview. But the critical element of the hiring process as the personal interview. I discovered an effective tool to separate the individuals who could really create magical experiences for others who talked a good game but didn't have the attitude or inclination to deliver it. Ask the multimillion-dollar question, "Do you love humans?"

[\(35:45\)](#):

I would ask the candidate this question straight out. As you would expect, their first response is to question as confusion. But after I provided clarification on what I meant by the question, they would usually answer, "Yes," or, "Sure," or, "Of course." I would then follow up, "Tell me a story that would illustrate just how much you care for your fellow human beings."

[\(36:09\)](#):

He said: When you start to hear those answers, and he has it sort of separated as a sentence - he said, if you feel goosebumps when they're telling you the story, you've got what you're looking at, a lover. He said: That's a question that separated the people who really got what it took to dazzle others from those who only had theoretical understanding of what it took to be a caregiver. Those that didn't have an innate desire to move people emotionally left me cold with their response, and I would just thank them for their time.

[\(36:40\)](#):

And so goosebumps, that's what he said. Those that were born to serve, on the other hand, left me with goosebumps while they told their story. Their story was rich with detail, and the threads that bind it together were all about the importance of connecting with people on the emotional level, and their authenticity poured out with every word. These individuals were the real deal. I hired them with less interest in their other qualifications, and they always did me proud by the way they dealt with their customers and their fellow employees. Many eventually found their way into higher level positions in the



customer service organization to provide leadership necessary to sustain this strategy that was extremely effective in gaining and maintaining competitive advantage for our organization. So if you really want to achieve a service strategy based on remarkable and memorable experiences, hire for the goosebumps.

[\(37:36\)](#):

This idea crept up in me, which was a leadership idea. I can't do all of this myself. There's no way. And being a trainer, as you would know, you are in a leadership position, you can teach people to do stuff faster. And so although I joined training, it was just my next career move, I could see that in delivering the awareness training and talking about the business case and giving them practical hints and ideas, that it really could change the world.

[\(38:08\)](#):

Probably the best example was I trained a bunch of our people. One of the First Nations had called all of the linear transition corridor companies to a meeting. So it was the electricity, utility, the rail companies, the telecommunications, and they just wanted to save time and talk to us all at the same time. I had trained our guys... Here's the history. I said, "You need to know the history because that puts you on the same page. That lessens a chance of miscommunication, if you're on the same page, you have the same history. Makes a big deal. And then here's what to say and not say, and be sure to do the protocol, the land acknowledgement."

[\(38:50\)](#):

And so the other four companies that were present in the room were paying attention. One of them called us after the meeting and said, "Hey, can we come and talk to you about that meeting we were all just at?" Yep, we invited them to our office.

[\(39:05\)](#):



They said, "So we were all just at the same meeting, and we noticed that your guys weren't getting beat up as badly, and we're wondering why." I said, "Yeah, my job was to provide them training, give them a lot of history and help them with what to say and what not to say. And so what you saw was that they were effective, and they were doing things, and they were prepared to go places that they hadn't gone before, and do things that hadn't been done before." But they didn't have to because that was a big argument. "Bob, we don't do that differently for anybody." "Well, if you do this differently, here's the benefits," and I would just tell them that. And so that came through.

[\(39:44\)](#):

At the end of that meeting, this railway company said, "Would you train our people?" And that was my aha moment. So they see the impact, they saw the difference, they wanted to get on board. Here's a chance to help a 4,000 person organization get into this conversation. My view was a lot of people doing a lot of little things adds up to pretty big change.

MBS [\(40:09\)](#):

Well, I would ask you, because I've done my version of this conversation, I've read some good stuff. I'm really good at training it. I'm really good at training it, in part because I designed it to play to all of my strengths and avoid all of my weaknesses. It's obvious now, certainly to me, that nobody can deliver my training as well as I can deliver my training. I'm the best.

Bob [\(40:36\)](#):

The best of the best.

MBS [\(40:38\)](#):

I'm the best of the best. I'm lucky as a custom fit to all of who I am.

Bob [\(40:43\)](#):

There could be only one. Yes.



MBS ([40:45](#)):

Well, I want there to be more than one, and part of what I've had to learn is how to watch other people do not such a good job with my stuff. I'm curious to know how you have learned what to control and what to let go of.

Bob ([41:10](#)):

Yeah, right now, we have some great trainers. We have a great lady who's done amazing work in local government and First Nations or indigenous peoples. We've got an academic who's working, he's a doctoral candidate. We have an entrepreneur who, he's just such a fabulous trainer. And we've got a hereditary chief who's also a former-elected chief, so we've got this. They're all different, and they all have these amazing strengths.

([41:42](#)):

So what I try to do is just put together the package of information, and then I tell them, "Look, this is what we've committed to liberty. We're going to talk about residential schools. We're going to talk about treaties." And so you can talk about that, and I really work with them just to say, "You're you. I can't tell you what to say." But whatever we say, it has to be valid and reliable. We're not making anything up. I really hate giving advice. I tell them all, "I really hate giving advice," and I know you tell people you should hate that in your-

MBS ([42:18](#)):

That's right.

Bob ([42:20](#)):

But they're always going to ask you for advice, so here's how I handle that. I give just a whole bunch of viewpoints and let them filter through which is the best, which is the best viewpoint to land on; that way I'm not trying to convince them.

([42:39](#)):



The other part is, as I was doing all of the research for the history piece, I stumbled upon a quote. I didn't know who it was attributed to, but it said, "Whosoever sets themselves up as an administrator of truth and justice is shipwrecked by the laughter of the gods." I thought, what a quote, man, I don't know who this person is, but they've worked with indigenous people. Then I started to look for who it was attributed to, and it was Albert Einstein. And so Einstein - just so many lessons out of Einstein - Einstein understood.

[\(43:15\)](#):

This is what I took from it: I feel that I'm the best at this. In those days, I was one of maybe two in the country, and the other one wasn't this good. I still compete with them to this day. I changed my website; theirs is copied and better within two days. You know what I mean? We've had this running battle. It's been healthy, and I've never met them personally, but I'm trying to win.

MBS [\(43:39\)](#):

You're elevating each other to be better.

Bob [\(43:41\)](#):

Yeah, yeah. There you go. That's a good way to look at it, actually. I'm like, "Dang him. Why can't he get his own ideas?"

[\(43:50\)](#):

And so I try to keep that in mind, too, and I try to just realize, I've learned. And so for us, I really do look at the evaluation forms afterwards. What did you like? Didn't like? How did you like your trainer and the format of the course? And so I do pay attention to those.

[\(44:09\)](#):

The other thing that really helps me evaluate whether I think they're doing a great job and delivering experiences that aren't exactly the same as mine is repeats. Flavio is one of our trainers. Mom's Anishinaabe, dad's Italian, obviously. He goes in and he's like 4s and 5s. You know what I mean? 4.8 out of 5 overall



rating. He's super awesome. He's better than me. I tell everybody, anybody who will listen, but he doesn't do it. I do it at all. He's almost 180 degrees opposite.

MBS ([44:47](#)):

That's so interesting.

Bob ([44:47](#)):

He rates higher than me all the time. And so back to Albert Einstein, I can't be the administrator of truth and justice. I just need to get this out there and build this army of trainers, and help those practitioners out there move the needle quickly in their worlds.

MBS ([45:08](#)):

Bob, at the start of our conversation, as you're introducing yourself, you're like, "I've been doing this for many years now. I haven't had a career change. I haven't lost focus. I've been committed to this one drum beat." How do you stay patient?

Bob ([45:33](#)):

You know what? It's watching for the little victories and really celebrating those. The big one, for me, is really not even in my lifetime.

([45:48](#)):

We had a problem, for example, when I was working for my first employer where I did this. Somebody said, "How do we do this? How do we fix this?" They tell us they don't get money from Indian Affairs to talk to us. We need them to talk to us, because it ties up all our projects. And so taking a look at it, I said, "So what does it cost you, Michael, for your project? When's your completion date?" "May 2025." "Okay. What happens if you miss it?" "\$5 million a month."

"Okay. So we know what that is. So your \$5 million a month, it's got to be complete by... And it's a \$400 million project, right? So I'm asking you to



provide them with funding, maybe a hundred grand for them to hire a scientist who can review all of your technical studies. You're telling me you don't do it for anybody. It's not right. It's not fair, it's not equal. To me, it's a hill that's like the dumbest hill you could die on here. Because what it's going to end up doing is, they will do a thing called a judicial review. The minute you get your permit, Michael, they're going to sue you for lack of adequate, meaningful consultation. It won't be you. They're going to be fighting with the government. But you're Frodo. If you don't understand your role in this whole conversation, you're Frodo in Lord of the Rings. These First Nations and governments are duking it out, and you're just Frodo in all of that. And so that's going to be a three to five year legal process. You told me that it's going to cost you five mil. That happens the moment you get your permit. Three to five more years waiting, and you look at every major project, that's what's happened. Unless they're on site, and you don't even hear about those. They're involved with equity positions and that kind of stuff.

"So three years, let's say their lawyers are really lousy. That's going to be \$180 million in cash. I don't think going to them with \$50 million, or no... Yeah, \$180 million in cash, going to them with a \$50 million offer. Right now, I'm only asking you for a hundred grand for them to be able to hire a technical person to do the readings for them, somebody that they trust. I don't think it's a lot of money in the grand scheme of things. I personally don't. But it's your business, Michael. I'm going to let you make whatever decision."

[\(48:12\)](#):

And they would take that and they would go, "What am I doing? I've got to get off of these hills." And they would-

MBS [\(48:19\)](#):

What game am I playing here? What does success really look like?

Bob [\(48:22\)](#):



Yeah. You're thinking checkers, they're playing chess. You just need economic certainty. So that's what I actually sell, is economic certainty.

[\(48:30\)](#):

And so I give them that, and they would go do amazing things, like just 180 degree turns. "Yes, we acknowledge we did harm in the past. We don't always get this right. We'd love to figure how to do it. We can do capacity funding for you, and if you need a lawyer, we'll help you hire." Stuff they would never think of doing, once you gave them a really solid business reason, they would go and do. And it would be these little battles, and they would do it. And then other companies would be modeling, benchmarking, and they'd be like, just like that railway company coming in, "Why'd you do that?" And we'd give them the explanation, they'd buy our training.

[\(49:08\)](#):

And so it was the little battles. I'm like, man, if you gave that to a policy person, can you go build a policy that would allow managers to provide funding for capacity built? Two years so watered down and... You know what I mean? I don't even know why. Yeah, I got to try not to beat up the policy people here too badly, but it just... No.

MBS [\(49:34\)](#):

This has been such a great conversation. I'm sad to have to bring it to an end, but I'm going to. I've got a final question for you. What needs to be said that hasn't yet been said for you and me to be complete in this conversation?

Bob [\(49:48\)](#):

Oh, gosh. I don't think there's actually much to be said. I feel like we've had a really good conversation. You've got an idea of what I'm trying to achieve. I need good people, whether they're working for my company or good people just to pick up the reconciliation flag.

[\(50:13\)](#):



So the leadership stuff is so critical. I think if I were to close with something, it would be more of a cultural thing, and it really is about the people. I don't differentiate between indigenous and non-indigenous. I think about it in Canadian terms, but I do work internationally in that, too.

[\(50:31\)](#):

This is all about helping people. And I think maybe I close on somebody like Zig Ziglar. You're probably a big reader too. Zig Ziglar, *Secrets of the Sale*. Zig Ziglar shared a line in that, which was, "If I can help enough people get what they want, I can have anything I want."

[\(50:53\)](#):

And so I would just tell all of your leader listeners, that's really what you're trying to do. You need good people providing great service and experience to help you get what you want. And we're doing it for the good of all people, not just one subset or another. I think that reconciliation process, it'll change you, but it'll actually be in a positive way. We've tried work paid 40 hours a week, but working 60, 80 and... you know what I mean? We've tried that way. I think that's pretty fair. We tried your way.

MBS [\(51:30\)](#):

Giving it a good shot, yeah.

Bob [\(51:31\)](#):

Yeah. I can tell you before contact where I come from, we were fish people. Scientists have studied us and they've said, "These people were working less than nine weeks a year to get through Maslow's first two levels of the hierarchy of needs, food and shelter, and leaving the rest of the year to do their winter ceremonies." Potlatching were months and months of celebrations, and that kind of stuff.



[\(51:59\)](#):

I remember I talked to my dad about this, "Hey, they keep bringing up this question. You were primitive cultures and you lived short, brutish lives. How do you respond?" He said, "Really? They say that. Tell them we were working less than nine weeks a year and we weren't paying taxes, and ask them how what they have is better." And I'd love to hear that.

[\(52:16\)](#):

So I honestly think reconciliation will bring a lot of value to the human race. We have a word for that [Kwakwala 00:52:24]. We're all one. And I think if we reconcile and can learn from each other, think about the world differently, it actually will be helpful.

MBS [\(52:35\)](#):

The favorite question I asked Bob was, how do you stay patient? I mean, when I think about what I'm up to in the world, the work I do plays to such a shorter timeline than his. I write a book, I try and build training around it, I launch it to the world, I try and bring people into this world, and then set it up so it runs well. Bob is playing a much longer game, a much bigger game. He's trying to reconcile 140 years or more of injustice.

[\(53:03\)](#):

I really appreciate his patience of how he keeps doing the work as he makes sure what important gets passed along, and how he figures out what's the next important thing to tackle. For me, he's a role model, I think, and I hope we all find our worthy goals, something that's for the good of all the people. I love that what he said at the end, the good of all the people. I hope we're all patient. I hope we're all willing to do the work.

[\(53:31\)](#):

Thank you for listening. If you'd like more on Bob's work, his corporate training is at ictinc.ca, I-C-T-I-N-C dot C-A, and you'll find all the socials that you want



there. The website, I love the website. It's very clean. It's very easy to navigate. And so many resources there, not just for corporations, but for all of us.

[\(53:54\)](#):

Bob has also spent his time giving back by creating content like eBooks, What to Say and What Not to Say, is an example of one, which is clearly and aptly named. He loves people, and that fuels the work that he does and the patience that he has. I'm so delighted to talk to him.

[\(54:11\)](#):

Thank you for listening to this conversation. If you'd like it, you can show your love in the usual ways, a thumbs up on your favorite podcast platform review. Even sweeter, passing it on to somebody going, "Hey, you should listen to this. This is a good conversation. You might like it." That's the real caliber of people who come and grow our audience by word-of-mouth.

[\(54:32\)](#):

Thank you. You're awesome and you're doing great.