

LeaderImpact Podcast Ep. 17 - Bill Adsit - How to move past hurt, anger, and adversity to achieve success

Lisa Peters

Welcome to the LeaderImpact Podcast. We are a community of leaders with a network in over 350 cities around the world dedicated to optimizing our personal, professional, and spiritual lives to have impact. This show is where we have a chance to listen and engage with leaders who are living this out. We love talking with leaders so if you have any questions, comments, or suggestions to make the show even better please let us know. The best way to stay connected in Canada is through our newsletter at leaderimpact.ca or on social media @leaderimpact and if you're listening from outside of Canada check out our website at leaderimpact.com.

I'm your host Lisa Peters and our guest today is Bill Adsit. For his first 5 years of life, Bill was exposed to a violent father and two alcoholic parents. From age 5 to 15 he was in a residential school in the Yukon year-round.

He went on to serve 37 years in the federal government in various departments before assuming his role with his own band, the Tahltan First Nation. As the former President and CEO of the Tahltan (TAHL TAN) Nation Development Corporation, he established 30 joint venture operations with Canadian corporations. Under his leadership, gross revenue grew from \$9 million per annum to more than \$55 million.

Bill is currently a consultant with Arrow Transport and has a deep passion to help First Nations grow economically, collectively, and personally. Bill Adsit is a residential school conqueror. Join us now as he shares how his faith has moved him past deep hurt, anger, and adversity to achieve success in his business and personal life.

Thanks for joining us, Bill.

Bill Adsit

You're welcome.

Lisa Peters

The last time I saw you was March 13, 2018. And I remember seeing you and you had this positive air about you and I found your message so...it was filled with so much hope. And I remember leaving there thinking I have so many questions. So it's taken me about 4 years to get back to you to ask the questions. because I remember we get Q&A but I need that time to digest but 4 years is a little long. So thank you for joining us I'm excited to get going with you. So I really just want to ask you now I mean you have a story to share and it's very powerful. So I would like you to just start sharing. Your story.

Bill Adsit

Yeah, as you mentioned both my parents were alcoholics. Father was extremely violent and they split when I was 5. My mother took my 2 sisters and moved to Wrangell, Alaska which is just down the Stikine River from Telegraph Creek. And my dad took my brother and me to Whitehorse, Yukon, and dropped us off at the residential school so we were in there from age 5 until I was 15 I believe just about 16 when I left.

Lisa Peters

So how did that drop-off go? Like was it hard?

Bill Adsit

I've been thinking about it and I still remember the day. When my dad took us to the residential school. All I remember is he's off talking to this the principal of the school and then the next thing I knew he turned around to walk away and left me there. I just remember running up and grabbing his leg and holding on as tight as I can crying and didn't know what was going on and he just kind of peeled me off of his leg and walked away. And I didn't see him more than maybe 2 or 3 times in the next ten years.

Lisa Peters

Wow! That's tough as a child, as a parent. Thank you for answering that question. I wondered how that went. Like how does that happen? I'll let you continue.

Bill Adsit

I was in the school as I mentioned for 10 years. My brother and I were one of the four kids that never went home year-round. I was there year-round except for 1 or 2 summers when I went with a supervisor for the summer. The rest of the time I was there but never with family, really. My brother, although he was younger, he had the opportunity. An aunt came and picked him up and took him but I was left there for the duration.

And when I think about the residential school I think of...I've thought about this often lately. During my tenure there I'm guessing there were about 150 kids at the school. So during this time, I'm guessing there was probably 50 to 70 staff that were involved in teaching, supervising whatever administration. But out of all of them, there were only 2 or 3 that sexually abused me. So when I think back about this, I think that most of them were good but your experience as a child being sexually abused, that's all you think about. I mean I don't think about the good, what other people did. So to me and that affected me quite a bit.

I mean not everything was bad. We had a supervisor by the name of Ruben Huber that was really into sports. So we got us playing hockey. So because we were all at this same school for years like from age five until I was 15 all of us played hockey together so we were a pretty good hockey team. So and add it to your stay at the school even though there were bad experiences.

Lisa Peters

So of the three that didn't make your experience good, there were lots that did. But I think just in every sense I mean were you treated. Did you get enough food? Did you like at nights...and I don't know. I just...did you ever feel like the other 50 people that were taking care of you, did they do a good job or just a job?

Bill Adsit

A few of them did a good job but I mean we're always hungry. I can always remember they had a pantry there and they always baked bread every day and I remember us guys we had to empty the garbage. So what we would do is we go in the pantry and put the bread into paper bags throw it in the garbage can haul it out to the dump and we would dump them then we take the bread back and we'd eat that at night so that was one thing we did.

Another thing we did was, in the pantry they had cases of Click and Spam from years ago so we used to go steal it by the case and after hours we'd hand out this meat to everybody. The funny part of this is when they tore the school down, all the empty cans we used to throw them into the attic, and when they tore the school down they pulled down the ceiling, there were tons of cans. (Laughing)

Lisa Peters

You had to hide the evidence.

Bill Adsit

So that part of it...Yeah, you're always hungry. But I mean...yeah.

Lisa Peters

So were there...you said you went home I think twice a supervisor took you home for the summer. Someone reached out to you, someone cared for you. Were there other people? Because I mean if we fast forward how many years you're a successful business person. Someone and I think of and I wrote it down, Proverbs 12, we talk about course correction. Someone corrected the course. Someone reached out to you. Someone...can you talk about some of the people that moved you forward?

Bill Adsit

Yeah, my first experience was when they shut their residential school down. They just kind of put me out on the street and they got me a place to live. A renovated attic with a bed and a hot plate. Now supposedly at 15, I was supposed to look after myself. But I didn't have a clue about how to do anything. So somehow the local RCMP found out that a young kid was wandering around Whitehorse unsupervised. I was 15 years old. So anyway they picked me up and held me overnight and the next day they made me a ward of the court and put me into a foster home. Into a Christian foster home by a lady by the name named Carol Gates. So and on top of that, they found me a summer job working at it's called Hogan's Store Whitehorse, in

the sports department, to keep me out of trouble so it was very providential that things worked out like that.

Lisa Peters

So I have to ask you because your name is Bill and I don't think that's an indigenous name. And I think there was a story you have told about you had someone reach out to you and say we can't have you named Bill or we can't have you named your real name.

Bill Adsit

Well, what happened was I moved into their house and her husband died so because she was living in government housing she had to leave and she moved and went back to Rimbey, Alberta, south of Edmonton. So I was going from foster home to foster home and ended up working in Cassiar, BC for the summer. And I got a letter asking if I would be willing to go to Rimbey, Alberta to finish my high school so I didn't have any options so I took it.

So that was quite interesting because on my first day in school I got a call into the office by the principal and he said to me, coming to this school, he says you've already got three strikes against you. I said oh okay, wow! What's the problem? And he looked at me and he said well you're the only Indian kid in this school. And those days he used to use Indian all the time and instead of aboriginal or whatever. So as I looked around sure enough it's true I was the only Indian kid in school. And then the second thing is said to me, you're older than everybody else in your class, which is true. It's quite surprising, I only found out years later when I went through the residential school hearing, and finally got my look at my report cards, I had failed grade 1 or grade 2 twice. So that's why I was behind. Then they said the third thing, your name Belfry will never work in this school. From now on your Bill Adsit. So I've been Bill Adsit ever since.

Lisa Peters

So was your last name Adsit?

Bill Adsit

Yes Adsit, Bill Adsit.

Lisa Peters

So Adsit was always your last name.

Bill Adsit

Yeah, they just changed my first name from Belfry to Bill. And it's been a problem all my life.

Lisa Peters

Has it?

Bill Adsit

Yes, created problems with my passport because anyway yeah. It's been a challenge.

Lisa Peters

And you never went back?

Bill Adsit

To Belfry? No. Because after I left I went to the military and then my career with the federal government and because everybody knew me as Bill I just used Bill.

Lisa Peters

Bill. It's easy.

Bill Adsit

Yeah, it is.

Lisa Peters

So did you ever go back? You mentioned you went back to the school. Was that for what reason did you go back to the residential school?

Bill Adsit

You mean after Rimbey I never went back to the residential school after they closed it down. I ended up in foster homes as I mentioned.

Lisa Peters

So you went back for...were they ripping it down or was there something...?

Bill Adsit

Oh no, it's just I just heard that heard the story.

Lisa Peters

So how did you feel? How did you feel when you went back? What were you thinking?

Bill Adsit

Well I mean this is quite a ways in my story. They had a reunion of the residential schools in Whitehorse oh about eight or nine years ago all the kids got talking about what went on there.

Lisa Peters

So I had a couple of questions before I was going to move to a little bit about your professional, where you're working right now. Because I know, I mean you're on this podcast because you are a Christian. And when I go back to what happened at the schools, where were you with God at that point?

Bill Adsit

Well when you think about it when I got out of the residential school at age 15, there are what they call adverse childhood experiences. There are 10 of them like we just talked about alcoholism, violence, separation emotional physical neglect and, incarceration is mentioned abandonment. But there are 10 adverse childhood experiences and by my calculation, I figured I had 9 out of 10. So when you look at the stats about that, what they say is if you have more than 5 years in deep trouble. So I ended up with 9 out of 10. And sometimes I think at 10 out of 10 so obviously, I was an angry, lost, lonely, young kid when I got out of the school.

Lisa Peters

Yeah, and I mean maybe we'll we will talk about it later. Yeah, I'm sure you'll bring it up. We'll talk a little bit about that. So you and flip my notes here. You served 37 years in the federal government in various departments before assuming your role with your own band, the Tahltan First Nation. As the former president and CEO, you grew the gross revenue from \$9,000,000 per annum to \$55,000,000. That's an incredible amount of growth for any company well I think. Did the corporations struggle with such a fast growth?

Bill Adsit

Well, when I hadn't really been involved with my first nation. That was the first time I was back. The only reason I got involved is because I was working with Aboriginal Business Canada and one of the board members that worked with ABC was a guy by the name of Jerry Asp, who was a Tahltan. And he had heard through the grapevine that a Tahltan was working as a business development officer in Alberta so they contacted me and asked me if I'd be willing to go up to Dease Lake which is close to Telegraph Creek to help them develop an economic strategy for the nation.

So the ABC gave me permission to do that and that's how I started getting involved. So I was there for a while and then the next thing I know they asked me if I would sit on the board, which I did. And then while I was still with the federal government they asked me if I'd be the interim CFO, which I did. And then when I retired they ask if I take on the job as president of Tahltan Nation Development Corporation, which I did.

And when I was there for a few days because I know numbers very well I looked at the financial statements and this company was technically bankrupt. It didn't have any money had the contract. It was \$13,000,000 in debt. So my first suggestion was okay, let's shut this down and start a gain and nobody wanted to do that because the company's been there for already 20 years. So I said okay. I took it on. So what I did was I phoned all the credits and said TNDC is going into bankruptcy. I said I'll make you a deal I'll guarantee you 50% on the dollar if you let us survive. So they all did. So within a week, we went from \$13,000,000 to \$6.5 million. That's all we had. That's our debt.

And then the previous CEO went and had purchased 6 brand new. Hitachi backhoes out of Prince George and they never used them. They were sitting all over the province. So I phoned

Prince George and said to the dealership, I said I have two options for you. I said I'm going to stop payment on all the equipment. You can come and pick it up. They're scattered all over BC. And then he said oh what's the second option? I said well this is the second option I'm going to stop payment but I'll deliver them to your office in Prince George. So they said deliver them. So we did. Then we end up sending my crew down there. We end up cleaning them all up, sold them for...we got most of our money back. So that was another \$3.5 million. So out of that now we owe \$3,000,000 after about a month's work.

So after that, we still didn't have any money. So I phoned Barrick Gold in Salt Lake City and talked to the CEO because that's the only contract we had. And I told him to look TNDC is going bankrupt because you guys have underpaid us all these years and we can't afford it. And it's going to look really bad for the only First Nation working for Barrick to go bankrupt because he underpaid us. And then he says to me says, Well what do you want me to do? I said why don't you just give us the same rate, except pay for all our fuel. Because we had a lot of equipment out there. We said okay deal. So then when they that was the first deal.

And then I went back and we still didn't have any money. So I phoned Barrick back the following week and said, Look I still need help. I need a \$750,000 loan. And he says to me says so what collateral do you have? I said well we don't have any collateral except all that old equipment sitting at your site that's been there for years. And he said okay, we'll take that.

So we signed over the equipment and he gave us the money. And after that things started turning around simply because our contract was starting to make money. And then all kinds of development are happening during my tenure which I can't take credit for but it's just very fortunate. We had Nova Gold there. We had AltaGas with their micro hydro project. We had the NTL powerline. There are lots of projects.

So because of all of that work in there, we didn't have any companies. So I thought to myself we have to give our Tahltan members the option of other jobs other than driving trucks or looking at camp and catering. So that was the reason why I set up the 30 different contracts. I set up contracts with bridge companies, road building companies, helicopter companies, everything, trailers all of that. Simply because I wanted our people to have options of other jobs and trading all the agreements we signed. We signed to share in the profit share jobs and training. And it changed the whole direction of our nation from we had really high unemployment. There are lots of people out of work. After that, we had 100% employment. Everybody who wanted a job at a job. And as I mentioned, our income went from \$6,000,000 to \$55,000,000 just on TNDC but a \$100,000,000 when you include all the joint venture income that we got a share of too.

So it was a real change, even to this day, Tahltan Nation Development Corporation is still doing well. They're still maintaining some of the joint ventures that I set up years ago and they're still doing well.

Lisa Peters

And you still are employing? I mean every...you still have like 100% employment on your nation?

Bill Adsit

Oh yeah, for sure I'm pretty sure it is. Everybody who wants a job up in the Tahltan Territory has a job because I mean that part of...I don't know where it's located. It's located in the northwest corner of BC and it's referred to as the golden triangle because of all the mining activity up there. So Everybody's got a job

Lisa Peters

Wow. Was growth that fast hard? I mean, we just recently had someone win a lot of money and we all sit back and go, that person's going to come into a lot of money. I hope they know how to deal with it.

Bill Adsit

Yeah, well I mean you're right. The saving grace was that we had all these joint venture agreements. And under the joint venture agreements, the way it worked is, that I gave permission to manage it. All we had a say in it. So that took away a lot of the work. My biggest problem was with Tahltan Nation, hiring and buying equipment right away because we had all these contracts. Yes, it was. It was quick growth but it was very worthwhile.

Lisa Peters

Well incredibly exciting.

Bill Adsit

Oh yeah, no it was an exciting time.

Lisa Peters

You brought so much to your First Nation group. So you are currently a consultant with Arrow Transport Systems and you work with 129 First Nations right now. What are you seeing or experiencing with those groups?

Bill Adsit

Yes. Well my job with Arrow, I mean what I do with Arrow was because I was president of Tahltan Nation Development Corporation I got to know many of the mining companies. So they hired me after I retired from that job to help them with working with reclamation projects from other mines. So basically that's all I do.

And the other job I had and as I mentioned I worked with the, it's called in Indigenous Advisory Monitoring Committee set up by the federal government to monitor the building of the TMX pipeline from Edmonton to Burnaby. So along that line was 129 First Nations and my job was economic development to help them access contracts on the TMX pipeline. But recently they moved me from that. I am now still with the federal government on contract. But

now I'm working with the 29 marine First Nations. 25 on the island and four on the mainland. So and again is to do with that TMX pipeline.

Lisa Peters

Okay, so just securing contracts.

Bill Adsit

Securing contracts and I'm helping to access the government funding for various initiatives that they have

Lisa Peters

Wow! You retired from 1 job and you sound busier than ever before.

Bill Adsit

Well, I have about six jobs. I'm chair of the Tahltan heritage trust and we've done well. And I sit on a couple of boards one with Manulife and Axiom and another with Primrose Lake Trust as I'm an independent trustee and well I do lots really.

Lisa Peters

Yeah, what would you say, I mean do you have any struggles? And I'm trying to think of the question...like it can't be all roses or can it be?

Bill Adsit

Well I mean as an aboriginal person, I guess what I struggle with recently is as you've heard about these graves that have been discovered, unmarked graves that been discovered in Kamloops and Williams Lake. And it's been...when that came out I was struggling with that. It brings back a lot of memories of what happened and even though we didn't go to the Catholic Church still the experience that they had whether it's in the Catholic Church or the Anglican whatever church group in a lot of cases it was the same and they weren't treated well. So I mean and then I struggle because I see the struggles that a lot of First Nations have. Especially you get to know their situation 129, I talk to most of them. But I really don't know all of their struggles. But in general, I can see First Nations most of them don't have the capacity on the reserves to run these development corporations. Yeah, economically it's a struggle for them. I mean not only economically but socially and emotionally because I mean it's only recent history that residential schools closed down. I think the last one closed down in 1997. So as my generation right now I mean that took the brunt of that.

Lisa Peters

Do you talk about the First Nations that you work with, do you ever share your own story with them because you I feel you have a...There's a good success to your story. You took some of those people that reached out to help you and you took it.

Bill Adsit

No, I don't really, I mean when you think about Christianity and the First Nations, I mean I've thought about it quite often. To me, it was a diabolical scheme when you think of John A McDonald using the churches to run the residential schools. So because of all of this that's happened to First Nations across Canada, a lot of churches don't have a very good reputation. And it's very, very difficult. I don't push it myself because I know how people feel about Christianity. I mean I do my job to the best of my ability. I treat them with respect. I just know what my people went through and I'm the last one that's gonna ever abuse them in any way. So I mean I don't talk to them much about it unless I'm asked. And not many people ask.

Lisa Peters

I was going to ask you, do you share it because people will ask you. You have a very...your presence is very positive. Your stories are very good. You laugh. I know a little bit about your life. You've raised some good children. People have got to ask you, like how'd you do it?

Bill Adsit

Well I mean I get that more from, not from the aboriginal committee (community), but more from the non-aboriginal committee (community) about it.

Lisa Peters

All right so I think I would like to ask you...oh, I had 1 more question about your professional because...I will wait for that I'm gonna skip...we're gonna move to hear a little bit about your spiritual story. We've talked a little bit about it. You've dripped on us a little bit but can you share a little more about your spiritual journey and your healing? How did the healing begin for you?

Bill Adsit

Well I mean as I mentioned, when I got out of the residential school I was an angry, angry young man. And when I ended up going to Rimbey to high school, I mean I tried my best to fit in. And I did pretty good but during my time in high school there, that's when all of this rebellion started to kick in. And I kicked over the ??? and quit school and joined the military and got married to a beautiful lady, Val. We've been married for maybe 56 years this year. So that's another story I'll have to tell you. So anyway, because of all of this anger I was violent and I ended up getting picked up and taken to Edmonton to the municipal jail for the weekend.

And I got it, it was there that I finally started thinking, I hated Christianity because of what happened to me. But they did tell you the story about Christ and God and how he's available if we ever need him. Well, at this point in my life when I was in jail I got to really thinking about life. I had so many regrets about the way I have lived. I'm facing time in jail. I could lose my job, lose my family, lose everything. And I finally decided that there must be some truth to Christianity. So that's the first time in my life I prayed.

And I am just...when I think back about it, I just think, what changed? What made me change? But I think it's the fact that I asked for forgiveness. And the other thing is to me, it was an attitude change. An instant attitude change, All right I got to do better. Somehow, I mean it's a mystery. It's a mystery really how God works in the person's heart. But anyway, since then it's been a long growth, a slow growth. But over time I think the only way anybody heals is to forgive. You can't carry this anger around in you all your life and expect to change. You can't. You can't.

So I've forgiven people who abused me. There's another story can tell you about that how I but I did there too. But to me, that was...and then that as you mentioned earlier, people. The support that we had, Val and I. When we both became Christians, I should just mention, when I came back out of jail, went back to Uranium City, and told my wife I became a Christian in jail and she says to me, she says I always wanted to go to church. But I knew if we started doing that you would leave. So we both changed. She was waiting. She was waiting for me to change.

Lisa Peters

How old were you?

Bill Adsit

28 yeah, yeah, so yes, very good. So yeah, so any way that.

Lisa Peters

28. Wow! Val's pretty awesome!

Bill Adsit

Oh, no kidding. I mean another thing, I should tell you this story too! Even though I had become a Christian I was still angry and I was a scrapper. I wanted to fight. So in Uranium City, I took Taekwondo for 10 years just to be tough. But what I found out was I wasn't as tough as I thought I was. (Laughing) I always got beat up. So I tell you after 10 years of this I am not fighting anymore. So. I haven't come near it for years so that was good. And when I think about it I just what a strange way God works at times.

Lisa Peters

I don't know much about taekwondo but I think there's much more than the fighting. It's like there's much more to that. So you were sent there for 10 years for a reason to Taekwondo.

Bill Adsit

Yeah, I mean the guy that taught us wasn't so much into the spiritual aspect of Taekwondo. He just taught you Taekwondo and it was. It was good. He was very good. Changed my whole attitude.

Lisa Peters

Now just a little bit about you said something about you had a story on forgiveness in people.

Bill Adsit

So. Oh yeah, yeah. I had tried to find my abuser when I worked for CRA. And at the time I couldn't find him. I couldn't find him anywhere. Then when the internet came up I typed his name and I found him. And I wasn't sure what to do with it. At the time we were living in Sherwood Park, going to the Sherwood Park Alliance Church here. And there was a group that was run by this young kid compared to me. I was about 40 some he was 23 years old. He was head of the group. Smart young man and he had lots of problems he went through. So I told him I found the guy. I was gonna phone him and really give him heck. He said don't be surprised if he tells you it was all your fault. Don't come back crying next week and say you're all brokenhearted because the guy wouldn't accept it. And it's exactly what happened.

When I phoned him, told him who I was, and I told him what he did to me. And he said to me, well you said it was okay. I said but I was only nine years old. I just couldn't get an apology. No nothing. So but I mean again, you still have to forgive.

Lisa Peters

Yeah, that would have been hard.

Bill Adsit

It was hard. It was hard. But he was wise when he said don't come back crying if you get that response.

Lisa Peters

Because forgiveness is up to you.

Bill Adsit

So well, exactly it's up to you. You can't...

Lisa Peters

Wow. Now you had talked a lot about forgiveness. And you suggest people seek forgiveness. You talk about joy. You have an acronym for joy.

Bill Adsit

Yes. I was trying to put some semblance of really what happened and how does a person change? What changes you? So in my life, I mean and I'm sure it's true of everybody else's life if you're gonna change you need help right? So in my case when I say joy, I mean Jesus first. That's the only thing. That is the first step in my healing was that. Accepting Christ. Asking forgiveness. Forgiving others. The attitude change. That to me that was the starting point. Without that, it's very difficult to change on your own.

And then when I mentioned others, I think of the J O. Others. I think of a first of all. Other people, my wife first of all. She was so patient with me. And I'm going to tell you this other story when we met all we did was party. So we really did not know each other very well. So because of that, I was such a handful, we got talking about one day and I told her about my residential school experience and why I was it like I was. And she had her problems too so she got talking it says, Well I just got out of reform school when we met. So here we were, she was 16 and I was 21 and we got married when she was 17 I was 22 and both with problem backgrounds. So we always say if there was ever a straw vote taken at the beginning of marriage we would have been voted the most likely not to succeed. So here we are today, still married.

Lisa Peters

That's because when I think about...I talk a lot about surrounding yourself with people. And here you are, you marry someone that has the problems like...you guys are coming together. You both have problems. Whereas it's interesting that you both changed. I mean you came home and said I want to be a follower of Jesus and she's like I've been waiting for you. It's good because sometimes there are people right in front of us.

Bill Adsit

That's right. So when you think about others, she was the first. And then during my career, it is amazing how the Lord has put people...First of all, I mentioned about the RCMP picking me up in the foster home. And when I was in the military I was still a rebel and we had a Christian sergeant that took me under his wing and kind of tried to help me. Made me go to school during the days and work in the evening so I get most of my grade 12. And then when I was in CRA...No, I was in Transport Canada after the military. Again, I had people there that I still remember. Dennis out of Winnipeg, I can't remember his last name. He was so good and helped me with education, etc. And then went to CRA. A guy by the name of Don Massey helped me, they arranged for me to go to university to finish my degree at the U of A to get my B. Comm. major and accounting so that I can get a promotion. And then Aboriginal Business Canada was good, great. There are people there that I still remember to this day. There's...so everywhere I went the Lord put others there to help.

Lisa Peters

I love how you identify people. Like you have named them. Have you ever reached out to them and thank them?

Bill Adsit

You know what, I don't think so because I mean when I think back some of these guys have passed. Yeah, and then the acronym, Y, Yourself. Yeah, I come to the conclusion, what's the saying, you can lead a horse to water but you can't make them drink? All of this, whether I became a Christian, I got these people helping me, I still had to do it. You have to take it in yourself to do the work. You have to make the change yourself. Like in education I didn't even finish grade 12 and the only university that would take me when I wanted to leave Transport

Canada was Trinity Western on probation as an adult. So I quit my job and moved there for 2 years, on probation for one semester I had to work hard because the fear of failure was a driving force I could not afford to fail. I've got a wife and 3 kids to worry about.

So then I went to transfer after my first 2 years to Edmonton worked for Canada Revenue Agency and they put me through university. And that was a struggle because I never had grade 12 but I got through. So I mean yeah, the effort to do that and the effort to change is always a struggle. I mean, I read so much about it. People and in with adverse childhood experiences, they say you never get over it. I always tell people I think I'm 99% good it's the 1% I worry about.

Lisa Peters

I love that you have so much humor. You are a joy. So that's just joy. Jesus, Others, and Yourself. So your joy and your changes, you changed the whole direction of your family because you could have went, you and Val could've went one way, and the choices you made, and Jesus, others, yourself...everything changed that direction. What advice would you give others who are feeling limited to choice like I can't do that? I don't know oh that's probably they I don't know. What's your advice?

Bill Adsit

Well for me, it was an attitude change. I struggle with this with the First Nations. How do you begin to get people to change? And there's always all of these programs across Canada about helping First Nations change, but programs don't work. It's an individual decision. In my case, it was an individual decision to accept Christ to change my attitude and because of that, my attitude changed my family. We brought up our family different. All our kids all do well. So now we have eight grandkids and or nine grandkids and eight great-grandkids and all of them, we've got them in to go to Christian schools. And it's change. As an aboriginal family, I think we're doing well.

I just wanted to mention it to you too. I hope you asked me the question about my experience going through the hearing in the Yukon about the residential school.

Lisa Peters

Oh yes! Were you invited to attend? Were you part...how did that happen? And then tell us.

Bill Adsit

Yeah, because of the reconciliation, under that I was the first one to be asked in the Yukon to be interviewed about the residential schools. So that's the first time I had to sit down and really think about my experience and write it down so that you can do your presentation to them. And to me, that was a very, very moving experience. Just going through that's where I found out all of this information about myself, about my school records, and all of this. I didn't know anything about that.

So anyway I go through the whole hearing and he asked me all these questions. There was a lot to do with the abuse. They concentrated, on that because it was a dollar value that they were setting on that. So anyway at the end his name was John he says to me Bill, he says I am so glad to see that you're a residential school survivor. And I said you know what John? I hate that word survivor. To me, it sounds like a victim mentality word. I said who wants to be a survivor? That doesn't sound good. And he says what do you call yourself? And that's where it came from, I said I'm a residential school conqueror. And he says I've never heard that before! (Laughing)

Lisa Peters

I was texting my daughter today that I was talking to you and I said he's a residential school conqueror. I said those are his words. She's like I can't wait to listen. So I think you kind of answered this but because I think I believe you were in jail for the weekend and you decided I want to follow Jesus but and so the question is, at what point did you decide your past circumstances would stop defining your present future?

Bill Adsit

Right then. That's what I say. I don't understand it. How the attitude can change over the weekend. I mean I'm not saying that my life is perfect after that, but it was an attitude change.

Lisa Peters

Yeah, and for me, I feel like you have put in a lot of work. And you can correct me but I don't know if you're the guy, do you read all the leadership books or are you the guy that you talk to people you ask for help? You do the work.

Bill Adsit

I don't think I've read any leadership books that I can remember. I don't know. I mean I took leadership when I was at a university. But I mean and I don't know. I just do what I do!

Lisa Peters

I mean I think that's amazing. Just your attitude, you made the change. Because I think there are some people who just, I'll read the book. No, do the work.

Bill Adsit

Well yeah exactly. I mean I don't know. I just think God gave me a brain for numbers and I know numbers very well. I can look at financial statements and know where the problems are and that's where my strength comes in working with other First Nations too.

Lisa Peters

That's good. Well, I'm gonna ask you just a couple of final questions. I know that you are involved with LeaderImpact. So tell us a little bit about how you got involved and what your involvement is.

Bill Adsit

Yeah, we got involved I think it is about 2000, I'm not sure of the year. About 2006 my daughter went with it. She got involved with LeaderImpact first. And she ended up going on a tour.

Lisa Peters

A global exchange.

Bill Adsit

So then she asked us if we wanted to go on the one to Pueblo. They put our names in and then they accepted us and my wife and I went there. It was a great experience. We got to meet quite a few of the leaders in Mexico. Got to meet the agriculture minister I had to chat with him about....Because I was an aboriginal person he was very interested in the struggles that we, our aboriginal people have in Canada. And what they have there is very similar. So we got to know him very well so to me LeaderImpact is very, I think that was a very profitable experience for myself.

And then after I got back they asked me if I would be interested in going to Saskatoon and taking this speaking course that they offered which is again was really helpful. Because of that opportunity I've had lots of opportunities to speak. Especially yeah, prayer breakfasts. So I mean that in and we're a supporter so I think they do a good job.

Lisa Peters

Well as you know LeaderImpact is dedicated to leaders having a lasting impact. And as you continue to move through your own journey and life, and it is an amazing one to listen to, have you considered what you want your faith legacy to be when you leave this world?

Bill Adsit

He's treated everybody with the respect they deserve. And we, my wife and I, if anybody phones us, we help them. I want to be known as somebody that's generous because of God's generosity to us. So yeah, I'm so grateful, thankful for how life is turned out in every way. I can't complain about anything and I don't.

Lisa Peters

Yeah, good. And my last question, unless you want to tell a story. Do you have another story you've missed? I have one more question for you. Well, my last question is, what brings you the greatest joy?

Bill Adsit

My wife. My family. My church. Actually, I'm proud to be Canadian I think we live in a great country. I don't always agree with their leaders but good country. And the ability to help First Nations. To me that if I can help them in any way I do it. I want our First Nations to, I want them to be successful and change and that's not even about money anymore. It's about healthy emotional...Do you know what I mean?

Lisa Peters

Yeah, You talked about in your bio, you said you have a deep passion to help First Nations grow economically, collectively, and personally. That's a wide range.

Bill Adsit

Yes, yes.

Lisa Peters

Well, Bill thank you for spending the last just over 50 minutes with us. I have looked forward to this to see you again and just to hear your story. You have an amazing story of just forgiveness and it takes hard work to change our attitudes. I mean we can't do it without God.

Bill Adsit

Yeah, I mean what you just said, it takes her hard work to change. I mean, your attitude can change instantly, it's the work afterward to make it, right?

Lisa Peters

Yeah, it's daily. It's daily.

Bill Adsit

Yeah, I have a plaque on my wall by Charles Swindoll. Do you want me to read it to you?

Lisa Peters

I Do want you to read it.

Bill Adsit

Okay, I'm gonna read it to you. This is the one. If you want to see it here. It says, The longer I live the more I realize the impact of attitude on life. Attitude to me is more important than facts. It is more important than in the past than education than money than circumstances than failures than successes than what other people think or say or do. The remarkable thing is we have a choice every day regarding the attitude we'll embrace for that day. We cannot change our past. We cannot change the fact that people will act in a certain way. We cannot change the inevitable. The only thing we can do is play on the one string we have and that is our attitude. I am convinced life is 10 percent what happens to me in 90 percent of how I react to it. And so it is with you. We are in charge of our attitudes.

So I have that on my wall and that to me that's really the key. Changing your attitude.

Lisa Peters

Yeah, and that is a lovely way to end. Thank you Bill for sharing with us.

Bill Adsit

You're welcome.

Lisa Peters

So this ends our podcast with you. But if anyone, and I hope everyone enjoyed their time as much as I did, anyone wants to engage with you in any way, how can they find you, or contact you?

Bill Adsit

I'm a LinkedIn and Facebook.

Lisa Peters

All right, you're on Facebook a lot?

Bill Adsit

No, not often. But I don't post anything but I read people's posts.

Lisa Peters

Well, thank you Bill for joining us. Thank you.

54:49.64

Bill Adsit

Oh, you're very welcome. It was a pleasure.

Lisa Peters

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