Transcript Special Episode: Disability Pride Month 2022 - The PROUD Project Team Reflects

# Isabelle Avakumovic-Pointon [00:00:05:16]

As Disability Pride Month comes to an end, members of the Proud Project team wanted to reflect a bit on what the month means, what the term disability pride means, and how the PROUD Project itself supports, reflects and connects with the concept of disability. Pride.

# Chloë Atkins [00:00:27]

Our project is called The PROUD Project. I made up that acronym. It stands for Phenomenological Research on Unemployment and Disability. But really I wanted to use a positive term with regard to this project so that it could capture all the work that I want to do in terms of increasing the integration of people with disabilities in our societies.

# Chloë [00:00:57]

And in particular, this project is about trying to learn how to incorporate and bring in the incredible assets that people with disabilities have into the workplace and into the workforce.

# Caroline Cassinelli [00:01:11]

It's not a coincidence that we are called the Proud Project. The concept of being proud of one's identity, one's story, one's history is something that's deeply ingrained into our research methodology and which we encounter and address in all of our interviews.

# Andrea Whiteley [00:01:29]

So during our research, we've noticed that a lot of our participants tell a sort of story about how they were sort of on a journey where, maybe initially in their lives they didn't embrace the label of disability or they weren't really part of the disability community, or they weren't really aware of disability issues. There comes a point in your life where you become sort of self aware or aware of your disability, either maybe through a mentor or through a community or even through education.

# Andrea [00:02:05]

And then at that point, you begin to kind of embrace your disability, embrace who you are, and become more accepting of who you are. And this tends to be, in almost all of our participants, a really positive process.

# Caroline [00:02:24]

To me, Disability Pride is about stories. It's about the stories of those in the past who established the disability rights movements around the world. It's the stories of those today in the present who continue those movements and who add their own unique contributions - artistic, cultural, creative and otherwise - to the disability community. And it's also the stories of those in the future who will benefit from this legacy and also continue to change it in ways that it's hard to predict for now.

# Isabelle [00:02:58]

On a personal level, the term disability pride for me means a radical acceptance of my own strengths and weaknesses, acknowledging the situations where I am disabled and the accommodations I need without shame or guilt, and coming to terms with that myself and being confident enough to explain it to others.

# Chloë [00:03:23]

I guess Disability pride means this - is that I have a disability. It took a long time for me to embrace it, embrace that terminology. It has such a negative connotation. There's a lot of stigma in society. How I view my apparent disability is that it's just an aspect of me. It creates problems for me in some circumstances and in other circumstances

# Chloë [00:03:46]

It's actually been a tremendous asset. And so in that sense, that's where my disability pride lies, is that the traits that other people see as somehow negative, as disabling, I see it as contributing to the assets that I possess to the whole person than I am.

# Caroline [00:04:09]

I believe the Disability Pride Month is so important because while this pride and these stories exist all year round, having a specific month and time set aside to foreground them and to bring them to further public consciousness and awareness is really, really valuable.

# Chloë [00:04:28]

I think having a Disability Pride Month is part of the work in trying to transform the idea that people's traits are somehow a negative.

# Chloë [00:04:39]

Broadcastability is produced by the Proud Project at the University of Toronto, Scarborough and by Easter Seals Canada. The music in this podcast was composed and produced by Justin Laurie. Isabelle Avakumovic-Pointon edited this episode.