

Season 2, Episode 5 · Interview with Lyne Chantal Boudreau, a social entrepreneur and founder of Bibilyn Designs

Jennifer Mcdonald-Nethercott:

Welcome to this episode of the W-Power podcast created to share the stories of business women from across the arctic rim and hear from them about growing and running businesses in some of the most remote regions of Northern Europe. I am your host, Jennifer McDonald-Nethercott. And our series will feature amazing women, who have overcome the challenges posed by the remote geography to set up thriving small businesses.

All them have received support of one kind or another from W-Power, a project funded through the Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme of the European Regional Development Fund.

My guest today is Lyne Chantal Boudreau, a social entrepreneur and founder of Bibilyn Designs. Founded through Lyne's passion for international fashion and creating bespoke dresses she wants to restore women and children's confidence who have been affected by violence by donating a percentage of her profits to projects aimed at curbing violence and social injustices among women and children. Welcome to the podcast, Lyne!

Lyne Chantal Boudreau:

Thank you, Jennifer!

Jennifer Mcdonald-Nethercott:

It's great to have you here! So, why did you start doing the business? What was the idea?

Lyne Chantal Boudreau:

Ah, for a very long time I had the desire to one day become an entrepreneur. However, I did not have the training at that time. And I had not figure out what type of business I wanted to develop. I knew, however, that no matter what kind of business plan I was going to develop, the issue for me with education will come forward, being myself a teacher by training. One day I found myself in a situation of domestic violence. I'd been going through several traumatic experiences. Then I was wondering how women could get out of this situation without the family and community support that I had received at that time. After, I was after this difficult time that the Bibilyn

Designs business started to take shape in my mind. After some thought, while I was a doctoral student in education, I'd research how my company could advance my strength and ambition. I didn't know yet how my business world would really define itself. But it was, I was convinced, that it will focus on education, that it will help women and children who are victims of domestic violence. I also knew that my cat Bibi, who had helped my family and I in his own way during the rather dark period of life, was going to be recognized in my new company.

Jennifer McDonald-Nethercott:

Oh, fabulous! So, where did the idea first come from to set up Bibilyn Designs?

Lyne Chantal Boudreau:

Oh, I love the world of fashion. The unique items the fabric the feel-good mood related to wearing clothes that match our free spirit lifestyle. That when I started designing dresses and then the company started to make scarfs with high-quality fabrics in different shape and style. At the same time, I was working on my trademark. It was essential for me to our black cat baby was going to be represented. It was after several sketches that the Bibilyn Designs logo took shape and icon black cat. Then I wrote my mission and my story. I sought to inspire other abused people and encourage them to hope that one day they can regain their confidence and resources are available for them. Bibilyn Designs is a social enterprise with a percentage of net profits going to domestic violence cause that rely on education to advise this great cause.

Jennifer McDonald-Nethercott:

And it's fabulous that you've got such a strong mission behind the business and having that social enterprise filled to it. But in terms of setting up the business, what processes did you have to go through to keep that at the heart of what you were trying to do and helping other women and children?

Lyne Chantal Boudreau:

It took very, very several steps before for my part. As I mention it, I did not have the background in business administration in my in academic career. I come from the world of education, which is very, very different. First of all, I have to read the best strategy to take, to follow, tailor my training, to find the best peoples around me and behind me. That include, for example, a lawyer a

banker, and people with skills in marketing. I like to set up my website, take care of various steps to be able to do all the actions for the online marketing, go through all stages of our products planning, the packaging, and the sending the different products. At the same time, there was the shopping of beautiful fabric across the different countries, because it is not possible to find these in my province. By seeking to know the trends in fashion, and by stirring, and surrounded by people. I trust to them. I'm so thankful to my seamstress, just saying she's the very my right-hand person. She's very professional and I'm very-very happy to work with her. And I also decided to proceed with my incorporation of my company and give myself the intellectual property to all of my products sold.

Jennifer McDonald-Nethercott:

And I think that's the key, when you said, there is having those experts on board to help you with the growth and development of the business. But what are the challenges that you faced along the way and how did you overcome some of those challenges?

Lyne Chantal Boudreau:

Hmm, my bigger challenge for me is and was the whole accounting aspect. The artist in me doesn't really like numbers. (laughs) There's also the whole question of making the business plan. But what I gave myself as the tools, was to surround myself with the competent people that will support me by searching various resources that are available to me. The problem, I realized, was one day I had to make a profit and that contribute more for the cause of the company. Another challenge I faced is the change in the production of products. At the beginning I offered a tailor-made rest service and the service took a lot of time for the design and the final product. The cost associated with these products are too high for the market. So, I decided to go to making scarves instead and slightly smaller items like a pocket square and bag charms. I also begin making animals' bandanas for the last few months.

Jennifer McDonald-Nethercott:

And, you know, I was I was having a look at your animal bandanas and they're lovely, aren't they! And I suppose by moving to making these scarves and the bag charms, they're much more accessible and I suppose easier as well to ship in a way too, aren't they?

Lyne Chantal Boudreau:

(laughs) Yes, it's easier, yeah!

Jennifer Mcdonald-Nethercott:

Yeah, from that side of it. And then, obviously, this year has brought some challenges with Covid-19. And, how has that affected you in your business?

Lyne Chantal Boudreau:

In Bibilyn Designs design I really felt that we need to do something to make our own contribution to get it through this pandemic, especially since we have alarming statistic in our province in terms of violence against women and children. I was aware it'd make many children could no longer go to school, the only place where they have the possibility of leaving without violence. It was then after some thought, my company started to make masks. In the beginning several models are created in order to find the ones that be best suited for our customers. With my team, we made a lot of research to find the right packaging where we're writing a brochure to inform clients about resources to counteract domestic violence. We have undertaken to promote this key message through video clips in both languages in our province, French and English. In order to have this read by as many people as possible. I have also placed some of my products in different stores across the province, with every mask's sold amount of money goes to the Bibilyn Designs cards. Since the start of the pandemic, shelters in the three major regions in my province have received a donation from the company Bibilyn Designs.

Jennifer Mcdonald-Nethercott:

Which is lovely, and as you said, it has been highlighted that that's been sort of one of the major issues, is that women and children suffering were all of a sudden then locked in their homes as well. So being able to, as you said it, and address the need by making masks, which everyone's needing to wear now, and then having that profit from those masks, well, directed to those causes, has been a fabulous way to contribute to this pandemic, that we're all still going through for the foreseeable future.

Lyne Chantal Boudreau:

Yeah, it is.

Jennifer Mcdonald-Nethercott:

And in terms of the rest of this year, for Bibilyn Designs, where do you see your goals and objectives going?

Lyne Chantal Boudreau:

Okay, I have five goals for the rest of this year, first continue to production of Bibilyn masks by providing the necessary resources to help women and children, victim of domestic violence, as the first. The second, showcase other Bibilyn Designs company products on the website, promote and develop products on the website to drive more sales and revenue. Continue to promote our products and services on social media. Continue to collaborate with other professionals to help advise Bibilyn Designs activities. And, at the end for this year, improve Bibilyn's experience with clients by researching clients' needs.

Jennifer Mcdonald-Nethercott:

Wow! It does, yeah. There's some big goals and objectives to work on for the rest of this year!

Lyne Chantal Boudreau:

Till December! (laughs)

Jennifer Mcdonald-Nethercott:

Yes, yes, and I imagine, with Christmas coming as well, that's a big opportunity for you over the next few months.

Lyne Chantal Boudreau:

Yeah. We are so excited, yeah!

Jennifer Mcdonald-Nethercott:

So, yeah, I'd be excited to see that. And in terms of networking, how does that help to your business?

Lyne Chantal Boudreau:

In my opinion, networking is the key to succeed. That's important, surrounding yourself with people you can count on all the time for ideas and events. It's like gold for me. Getting involved in networks are also where women's entrepreneur experience more or less the same realities, can really help a person like me, who as I mentioned it, did not necessarily have the access to the same network, since I did not come from the world of business administration. Also, I must say that I'm really being blessed to be part of the Women in Business group of New Brunswick. Thanks. Thanks very much. Thank you very much for their support. I have felt supported in my initiative of Women in Business and evermore since the arrival of Covid-19. They have allowed me to develop some really interesting friendship and business opportunity. Since last year, for example, I have co-owners of a brand-new organization a new nonprofit company with others Women in Business. We put our expertise together to create the company ELE (Education Leadership Empowerment), which offers education, training, awareness, intervention, service, and support related to victim of domestic violence. This is really great. I thank the Women of Business of New Brunswick for their support and excellent advice, especially Audrey Poitras and Claire Ephetion, and its networking opportunities.

Jennifer Mcdonald-Nethercott:

Wow, yeah, that's a very strong business and support that has come out of building those networks as well. And you'd gained really ties back to what you were trying to do with Bibilyn Designs as well, doesn't it? It's got that theme running through both parts. I'm glad that you can now share all your business experience with other women as well. And assure them that it can be done, if you've got no business background to it, as, as you said, you came from teaching and going to business.

Lyne Chantal Boudreau:

Yeah. This is a gift for me.

Jennifer Mcdonald-Nethercott:

It's lovely!

Lyne Chantal Boudreau:

I'm really proud to be part of their group. It's a gift for Bibilyn Designs.

Jennifer Mcdonald-Nethercott:

Yeah. Yes, from that side of it.

Lyne Chantal Boudreau:

I'm so grateful for that.

Jennifer Mcdonald-Nethercott:

Yeah and being able to, as you said, build that business and give back to other women. And in terms of also moving on, and being able to share with the listeners, please, a brief elevator pitch, about Bibilyn Designs.

Lyne Chantal Boudreau:

Sure, elevator pitch!? Okay, Bibilyn Designs is to create a world without violence, one article at a time. When you wear a Bibilyn Designs creation, you don't just follow a fashion, you support the cause of women and children. Thanks to unique and unique pieces, high fashion goes perfectly with the hag of well-being. Haute couture at the service of the community. Bibilyn Designs, it's a luxury ready-to-wear brand, whose goal is to restore self-esteem of women and children, victims of violence. I invite you, without further delay, to visit our website at <https://bibilyndesigns.com/>, because together less and domestic violence, every action counts for creating a world without violence.

Jennifer Mcdonald-Nethercott:

Oh, that's lovely and really sums up what you're trying to do with the business and with each item that you produce and sale, sale through Bibilyn Designs. And to finish up, what's your vision for the business for the next five years? Where do you see Bibilyn Designs taking you?

Lyne Chantal Boudreau:

I have a lot of dreams for that company (laughs). Oh, over the past five years, I see a big ground for Bibilyn Designs promoting our products here and internationally. I also want to make a change that will have an impact on the environment by giving a second life to high end fabrics. We have already started to shift and the customers appreciate our initiative on this direction. I also expect to continue to personalize approach in the delivery of my products. And so that each people

person who receive and item from Bibilyn Designs feel unique and feel like they are contributing to the great mission. I also appreciate expanding my team and I have a great reputation for the international artist for my items. Then, that I still have the same satisfaction when I find myself in my Bibilyn store that was off in accomplishment and continuing to stay, to take step toward achieving Bibilyn's mission and creating a world without violence one article at the time.

Jennifer Mcdonald-Nethercott:

Fabulous! Thank you for that! And this year, as you said, being able to use unique designs for that cause that you've got that self-esteem. And yes, the ELE, and having a beautiful item as well to accessorize does help with self-esteem. And then, being able to contribute back and having the mission behind the business, when it was, as you just said, that 'one article at a time'. We'll be waiting to watch it over the next five years.

Well, thank you so much for your time today, Lyne. And if you want to find out more about Lyne and Bibilyn Designs, we will pop some links in the short notes. More information about W-Power and the support available in your area is included in the short notes, as well as links to join the project's local and international Facebook pages and LinkedIn group. We thanks to the Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme of the European Regional Development Fund, and Highlands and Islands Enterprise for their support with this project. Until next time!