# **WAT’s Sustainable Episode 10 Transcript**

**00:00:07 Jenna Phillips**

WAT is up, Waterloo? Welcome to wats sustainable, the official podcast of the University of Waterloo's Sustainability Office. My name is Jenna, and I am the host of this episode.

Today on episode 10 of the podcast, I had the opportunity to interview Murray Zink from 4RepairKW. This is a group of individuals that are passionate and knowledgeable about repairing items, and they repair items for their community, so they foster a sense of sustainability and community connection, and relationships by repairing items and repurposing them and extending their life. This was a really informative and inspiring conversation, and I think that you will come away with a lot of valuable tips on how to repair your own items in your life.

**00:00:53**

Before we get into the episode as usual of reminder to follow us on social media @UWSustainable on Instagram and Twitter. And if you haven't already, make sure to subscribe to the podcast so you know whenever we release a new episode. And if you have any ideas for future podcasts or guests, or if you want to be on the podcast, feel free to email us at sustainability@uwaterloo.ca.

Without further ado, let's get into this conversation with Murray.

**00:01:25 Jenna**

All right, Murray, why don't we get started by you telling me a little bit about yourself, your background, and how you are connected to the University.

**00:01:34 Murray Zink**

Okay thanks, thanks Jenna. I think this is a really great opportunity to sort of start thinking again about repairing things. Hopefully as we get past the pandemic and come back to campus. Daytime, my job is on campus at the University of Waterloo I am a staff member involved with the programmes that delivers online courses to students which is part of their Co-op degree. So I'm part of the team of staff that works on those courses and delivers them every term. That’s where I fit in on campus.

**00:02:09 Jenna**

Awesome. And how do you fit in with repairing items? Where did that sort of come in? How did you get inspired to Start repairing?

**00:02:17 Murray**

Well I think the whole idea of repairing for me has sort of been a lifelong thing, literally. It was part of my upbringing. I grew up on a farm about 15 kilometres out of Waterloo and in that sort of setting, things are always being repaired right, there are always sort of things that are whether it’s machinery or things that are part of looking after animals, those things always need repair, so that's always been part of my life. And then I think the other thing to me is, part of my background is I studied engineering at Waterloo is then thinking about how things are designed and then how they can be repaired. Then they kind of kind of go hand in hand.

**00:03:00 Jenna**

Yeah, that's super interesting and you actually when you were talking about living on a farm and that's what you did, you repaired items, that brings up something I wanted to ask you about repair culture and what that actually is, and what that means to you.

**00:03:15 Murray**

So yeah, repair culture to me is this whole idea of when we buy things we have sort of stewardship for them, right? So there's some resources or raw material that’s involved in creating things, and so I think that we've sort of come to accept that somethings don't have a forever life. Yes, and that's very practical, but I think sort of as consumers, we've also sort of resigned ourselves to, it could be short, right? And I don't think that's very practical from the point of view of all of the resources it takes to have something. And we're really not putting a high - How can I say it - high expectation to manufacturers, right? We're sort of accepting something that is very, very poor quality. So like you're asking, so what does repair culture mean to me? I think repair culture is really about sharing what you know, and that's kind of an interesting thing because if you meet different people who become involved with repairing things, they all know something different. We have people that repair jewellery, people that mend things, people are very good with electronics, people that are good repairing things more that are sort of mechanical or even sort of furniture, so that it's very broad about what each individual can bring to a repair culture.

**00:04:31 Jenna**

I love that you brought in that sort of social dimension of it, of connecting and sharing and building relationships in a sense with that. At the Sustainability Office, of course, we always love looking at things from a sustainability lens and particularly an environmental lens. So I'd love to know from you, how does repair culture integrate sustainability, and why do you think it's important from a sustainability lens?

**00:04:57 Murray**

Well, just referring back to what I was saying earlier that people no longer expect that most items will last a long time, or that most items can be repaired. And I think that's just the departure of probably how our values have changed over many decades, maybe many generations. And so when it comes to sustainability, it's - okay there's two parts of sustainability: one is that everybody has finite resources as an individual, so it comes down to some budget, obviously. That's an important thing for us in the individual level, but then there's also sort of this stewardship for the planet and how we look after things, and I think we just sort of overtime no longer expected that if we have a chair or whatever the item is that we can do anything with it, that we should maybe just go buy a new one once we feel the chair is no longer doing the job that we want it to do.

So I think at this point in our culture we want to repair cars obviously, they are high value item, some bigger appliance items, probably a washer and dryer, but in practical terms, now there are many people that are resigned to the fact that after five or seven years of use their clothes washer, for example, will have a repair bill of $400 or $500 and a new one costs $1000. And so, you know, five years into the ownership experience they just say, okay, I think I deserve a new one, their budget allows for it, and that's what they do as opposed to not holding the manufacturers to higher standards and saying, why doesn't the clothes washer last for 20 years as they would have in the 1960s, 70s and 80s?

Beyond the year 2000, we've sort of got to a point where such large home appliance items really aren't expected to go beyond the eight, nine, ten years. And then people are somehow comfortable, at least with sort of our standards of living, and going out and buying something new. So that's part of the whole sustainability thing, is that you know a reasonable thing just too, and I guess if it's a recyclable thing, perhaps. But I still think there's the whole what we invested as a homeowner and what our budget allows, and then that that sort of sustainability aspect as well.

**00:07:10 Jenna**

Definitely. I think the financial aspect that you were just touching on is really important for consumers to consider as, very fairly, the economic aspect is what drives a lot of our decisions so thank you for bringing that up. I know that repair culture and repairing items has been really, really a big part of your life, especially recently. So I'd love to know how that passion for repairing led to the creation of 4RepairKW an what the goal and mission of that is. So if you could give us a bit of background on what 4RepairKW is first of all and then talk about its mission that would be perfect.

**00:07:47 Murray**

OK, just a little bit of the background to 4RepairKW, I guess it was probably 2018 or maybe a little bit before that. There was a grad student at Wilfred Laurier I think, worked with the extended family of the Waterloo Region to start up a tool lending library. And it's not just tools, they lend camping gear, you can go borrow a sewing machine, it's much like the idea of books, you can borrow up to 10 items. There's a yearly fee of $40, but then at that point, whatever you take home, if you're getting a saw to make a furniture project in your backyard, that's borrowed like a book. And I got involved with that group from the point of view of helping them sort of maintain tools and help keep things working well. But then I also realised as I got involved with the KW Library of Things that there was also this whole idea that people needed to know *how*. And so I did some demonstrations there and was excited to see when people came out and learn how to use tools, what that meant to there, you know, their projects and their life and how they just became more independent. And so I guess it was both December at the end of 2019 came around, we had started doing some repair events with KW Library of Things and one or two at that point with the University of Waterloo with the Sustainability Office and students in the Faculty of Environment. And then thought we need to have a more formal organisation to it, and came up with this idea, not repair cafes as in sort of the international organisation, but doing something local, and that's where the 4RepairKW came up. And that's when we started doing stuff on Instagram using Eventbrite and working with partners.

You asked the question, what's the mission? And I think you might see it on the Instagram site. It's working towards a more sustainable world one repair at a time. And really, it's not like a big ambitious thing where we're going to, you know, greatly change things, but if people can see that items can be repaired, so it's a big thing about education, that others can learn how to repair things, learn we can learn from one another. People will become more informed consumers, right? I think that's important. We're not holding their manufacturers to high enough standards. Make parts available to us, make schematics available to us, use good design in the first place, and I think that would help consumers or helps everybody to become more informed about what they look for in good design. And I think at one point as we talked, you sort of heard that I was talking about community building. That really is a part of 4RepairKW. It's about people getting together with other people, and so we want to partner with organisations and invite people to free events and then the volunteers with the know how to repair anything, and it could be something like a household appliance, small appliance, or it could be jewellery or it could be sewing or mending, those people with those skills just show others how to do it and then more people learn from that. So that's hopefully where we're going with all of this.

**00:10:51 Jenna**

That's great, I love that the platform is really fostering that sense of community. And I also think it's really important that it's empowering consumers to inform themselves about the products they are purchasing. Especially when it comes to sustainability on a grander scale, I feel like individuals feel powerless in a sense because corporations and businesses are so large that they don't understand how their individual actions can make a difference. But something as simple as informing yourself about the items you're purchasing and looking for these more durable, long lasting and repairable items is one thing that you can do to be promoting sustainability on a grander scale. So thank you for all the work you are doing with 4RepairKW to foster that.

**00:11:36 Murray**

I have a story maybe share which helps illustrate some of the problem, Jenna. So this goes back two or three years ago. My father in law had a favourite flashlight. He wanted me to find a bulb to replace the bulb in his flashlight. That's the failed part, was the bulb. And I went down to a number of local retail stores, maybe those ones should remain nameless. And I said, I'm here to get a flashlight bulb and I had, I guess at that point, I had accumulated three of them saying, well, we just sell flashlights. You buy the whole flashlight, right? So that's not the one I was intending to do for my father-in-law, and I finally did find that Home Hardware does carry replacement flashlight bulbs, and so we need to think about how to reward organisations that bring those items to our communities where we can do those steps of actually replacing the bulb in the flashlight, which is the only failed, and not putting the whole thing into an opaque bag and then erasing it from our consciousness. Like it's so convenient to have an opaque bag and that's the way the Waterloo Region works is here, our landfill takes opaque bags and what we put in there it's out of sight out of mind basically and our new flashlight is in the cupboard and we're so happy. But I don't feel that's the way we should think about such items. A flashlight should last for...maybe you’re tired of it after 10 years, but it'll still be working fine.

**00:13:01 Jenna**

Absolutely. I actually did one of my co-op positions at a municipal waste site and that was something we tried to emphasise to the municipality so much is that, just because you put your waste into a bag and it gets sent off with our waste collectors, it doesn't mean it disappears off the face of the planet. It’s there permanently, it's going to cause problems if you're not thinking about being mindful of your waste. And yeah, it's such a big problem, but I really like that flashlight story.

**00:13:31 Murray**

Yeah, so I like it that municipalities are also trying to rethink how they're approaching what gets set to them. I think we have to look around North America and we have our own experiences here in the Region, and I have lived in the Region for many years. I had a dishwasher where the springs would break on the door and the door would then fall down. So I knew one source of parts was to go to the scrap metal area at the landfill site with a pair of pliers and actually look for a pair of donor springs from another dishwasher. However, and then maybe the culture is changing locally at that time, the common message from the staff there was this is a “put don't take” facility and they were not encouraging any sort of scavenging, salvaging of such items. However, there are other communities in North America where they've got it a long time ago and they see that this is one of the things as people discard things that others may find value or find a way to repair things, and that would be kind of cool to think, we can evolve not only, you know, as with repair interest among people, but we also have those that take things in from others that also say hey, maybe I shouldn't immediately say I want to bury it in the big hole, but actually see that that has some usability that someone else could achieve from it. Not from a necessarily, how can I say, recycling to some scrap metal business, but maybe the spring has a higher value to repair someone else's dishwasher as opposed to get melted down to become another spring. So yeah, I'm glad to hear that there are municipalities out there that are a little forward thinking on that.

**00:15:06 Jenna**

Definitely, and I bet majority of people that say, might not consider to take items such as screws from other appliances or other items to repair whatever it is that they have, so that's really creative thinking. Is that the type of thinking or processes that you promoting 4RepairKW? Like what kind of services do you offer?

**00:15:27 Murray**

Okay, so 4RepairKW is just really a bunch of volunteers who I have become acquainted with while working at the University. Some of them are from not from the University and from other parts of the community, and they represent abilities at whole variety of areas, from sewing - at least a couple of people to do sewing, a couple of people who do jewellery repair, a lot of people who general repair and electronics repair - and so the idea there is not so much a service but a way to organise people to have community events. And so with this group of volunteers, the other tools we use, our social media is Instagram. We don't go beyond that. We asked whoever we partner with to perhaps get the message out broadly, but we use Eventbrite to set up tickets and sort of coordinate the availability of the subject matter experts or repairs that are available for an event with the number of people they're going to bring things to us and try and sort of balance that out. And that's really what 4RepairKW is about, is to find partner organisations in the community, could be churches could be just about anywhere where they have a space and tables and they have people within their community they want to bring in. They might want to do something a little bit social, have coffee and some snacks, but then as people come and watch the repairs, they actually get to see how to repair things, but they connect to others from within their neighbourhood or community and so it's kind of a sharing thing.

More broadly, not only does someone get something fixed, but they come and see people working with their hands and they meet people from their neighbourhood or community by attending an event that's hosted by another organisation. Generally, I'm always looking for partners to do this. And that's really, yeah, the sort of whole 4RepairKW is more about Instagram and a network of people as opposed to a business per say. It's just more of a part-time thing that is happening for me so...it's what others do as well, the other repairers.

**00:17:34 Jenna**

That’s so amazing, and again, fostering those community relationships. I love it. How has the pandemic impacted the events and other opportunities that 4RepairKW has had to collaborate with other community organisations?

**00:17:47 Murray**

Okay, that's sort of obviously been impactful, so would have been March 2020 the second last weekend that the province was operating, we were able to get into bed in at the Eco Cafe in St. Jacob’s, so we in that building there, in the mill there's a community space in the corner that was available and we actually had them had others there as well and so we were able to have our last sort of public event. And like I say, we use Eventbrite and then people sign up for tickets depending on the repairs that are available. And then all of a sudden fast, not fast forward, it's been kind of a long process of being sort of on pause here. We had then stopped third week of March because we had planned future things, but then it all got cancelled, and then we waited one year and we started this past March to have what we call drop off or curb side events. So COVID compliant sort of events where volunteers sign up, things are dropped off in my driveway, and then two weeks later that people come and pick things up. Everything was isolated for a period of time. The repairers get their things from me separately. Repairs get done, and then the only thing that was happening that was kind of the community connection was that each person dropping something off for repair agreed that they would provide a phone contact or an email so the repairer could contact them to say, well, what exactly was this doing? Or you know what I mend your jeans, can I use the these colours or what are you looking for? And so I think that's something we were able to do and we just actually at this current point, now mid-July we also have one that we kicked off on the 12th. Things are out with repairers and they'll come back I guess on the 26th to pick items up so.

And I should mention, because we haven't really talked about, so is a repair event good or is it just sort of, you know, attempting to do something? We kept a lot of statistics. I have to sort of share that if you sew or mend something, that's 100% of those get fix, right, and some types of electronics, maybe it's 25%, but generally for the repair events that were run on campus and KW Library of Things and at Eco Cafe, I think we're in the 60 to 70% range success across a broad range of items. Now if you bring in a big screen TV that's been struck by lightning, it's probably 0%, right? We don't provide parts or this in-depth diagnostics, we're just trying to basically return things to operation. So one of the things we hope is that people don't mind what things look like. Because there's sometimes, like you know, like the cords not the original colour. Yes, it's a different cord because the donor cord was a slightly different colour. Those kind of things happen, and I think that's all part of sort of seeing repairs being something that's okay. It's just like visible patches when you mend things. Are visible patches cool or not cool? You know, is visible mending cool or not cool? Because some people might say it doesn't look so good and other people say that's so interesting how you got the colours and the stitching patterns and the other fabrics in that, and I think that's sort of what repair is about, is seeing something returned to use and then being okay with the idea. And is it going to work forever well, even if for the hair dryer you got another two years of use out of it, and you think over someone's lifetime that they can every time they have a hair dryer or something that maybe should be replaced or could be replaced, it extends its life, and its usable life is then goes on for two more years, that might mean that over the course of one's lifetime, instead of owning eight or ten hair dryers, you can get by in life with four. And I think that's a much better choice than saying no, I can just go to Walmart and buy another one for $25. I'm ready for a new one, I’m going to get a blue one this time, right? So living with your old red one and having it with a piece of tape on the cord? That's okay.

**00:22:01 Jenna**

Yeah, 100%, I think that's a really interesting point that you brought up and I know I'm that type of person who will try to fix things. I'm not a pro repairer or anything, but I do try to - if something has a minor break that I can repair with some tape, or if I have an extra strap, or if like a purse or something like that breaks, I'm going to do that. It might not look the same it did when I purchase it, but it's about the functionality for me and I think that's the really critical part is that at the end of the day. Of course, if you are looking for something to appear certain way that that does play a factor, but especially from the broader sense if you can cut down using like ten hair dryers to four in your life just simply by a single aesthetic piece, that's a huge difference. So I'm glad you brought that up.

**00:23:00 Murray**

Yeah, and these and this is part of adopting or accepting repair culture and becoming part of that sort of thing. Is just saying, when someone designed it and made it, they made it look a certain way in function or certain way, and if you and then this is sort of the problem-solving, troubleshooting design part of it, and then if you can think your way through what was it meant to do and do I have a way to substitute? For example, someone brought a Roomba week ago and through disassembling some parts incorrectly at some point, other parts had cracked or failed, and they were they were plastic parts so obviously they’re moulded a certain way, and it turned out that with using pieces of wire and drilling a few holes in the plastic and a little bit of hot glue, some of the features were recreated, so functionally works just like it did before. And it's now back together and operational as opposed to somebody turns it over and says, oh, I see, there's you know wire, twist tie here and a piece of wire here and a bit of hot glue, you know, we should just throw the whole thing away. Well, no. I the person who brought it to the repair event to drop off repair but very much wanted to have it back in use. And how exactly looked didn't matter because it's actually that ugly side down as it works. It's the Roomba and it's back and repaired. So that was something that happened yesterday. I thought about when they dropped it off, what were the different techniques? Appearance was not important to them and now they're back and I think a Roomba is expensive thing, like a Roomba could be $400 or $500 or $600. So and I think the replacement part if they bought it was going to be a $100 part. But now it's fixed with the hot glue, a couple twist ties and some wire.

**00:24:39 Jenna**

That's awesome, and the fact that you can use items that probably most people have access to in order to repair things. I think that's really encouraging and demonstrates that even if you don't have the skills yet to repair, you could potentially learn it yourself just through some practise or you can give it to someone in the community like yourself that does have those skills already, so that's really cool. I'd love to know throughout the process of learning to repair items and starting 4RepairKW, what have been some of the most surprising and challenging parts of fostering a repair culture, both in your life and through 4RepairKW on social media and in the broader community?

**00:25:23 Murray**

Well, I think one of the most surprising things about repair in general is this whole idea of having this idea in your mind is something can repair. I don't know if I'll see the day, but I've always joke about the sometimes get to somebody's curb side and the Tesla will be out there sitting curb side, that they've dragged it out to the curb because they don't know what to do with it and they're hoping somebody will just take it away. And that's the thing that amazes me the most is the types of things - and obviously if you have means, or maybe you’re just mad it, you might be mad at the object then just want to get out of here, out of your life =- that people will walk things out to the curb, and they can just be simply fixed. You know something like a vacuum where they bought it new, they've used it for a few years, it's still almost like new, but it's out of warranty and then something fails that just they don't understand or don't know how to troubleshoot, and they'll just walk it out and carry to the curb. And that's the other thing that there are fewer and fewer places locally to take a vacuum to get it repaired or take your shoes to repair leather or whatever it is, and so people just become comfortable with this idea of just walk it out to the curb. So that amazes me, just the type of things that get walked out to the curb and just left because - and quite honestly, some people just don't, it's not their thing, right? But the cool thing is, somebody who can't fix a vacuum cleaner might be able to fix a computer. They just they see themselves as doing the computer thing, but not the vacuum cleaner thing.

And then the other thing that I think is really interesting is the look of amazement on people's faces when they see something they thought was surely not going to ever work again come back to operating condition. The coolest one we did at the KW Library of Things was a grandma’s mixer from the 1950s. Saying that now, actually I think it was maybe onto the great granddaughter, she bought it and she said it' been passed down through several hands, but it's never worked. We think that whoever had probably used it in the 50s in the 60s, and we got it working that day.

So some things have emotional value, especially jewellery repair, right? That it's more about the you like the piece that goes with your other items and whatever. So sometimes it's an emotional thing that this look of amazement is more of a gratitude than just I didn't think it would ever work again, because people have pride in things that they have, especially heirloom things or things that they have an association with another person, so that's kind of a cool part of repairing and very surprising.

Anyway, I think, yeah, the one thing that's obvious in working with repair stuff and even stuff is simpler, is jewellery. People often have no idea how things are put together or how they work, and I think that's where the opportunity is for and all of their pairs that I work with all the volunteers, have the teaching and learning as a big part of what they want to do. They want to show others *how* or how was put together, how it works, how they maybe can be mended. And there was an example at the University of Waterloo or a couple brought a pair of lamps and we had parts to repair the one lamp. And then they realised that the steps were something they could do, and they left saying that we can buy the parts and repair the other lamp. So I think that's the cool thing, that people are willing to jump in and say, now you've shown me I can do this. So yeah, I think those are some of the examples of cool things that have happened as part of repairing.

**00:28:54 Jenna**

That's great and the story about you know these items that are being passed down and no one thought they could be repaired, that reminds me of something that happened recently in my own life where, I don't remember when my family had it, but there was this really old sewing station. It's like a sewing machine and we were trying to figure out when it was dated from and we ended up finding out about the 1940s, 1950s and it hadn't been working for decades, but it was lying in one of my family member’s old homes. So my parents got a hold of it, it was given to them, and they were really determined to figure out how to make it work again. So they did find someone in our local area that was able to repair it and now we have this like seven decades at least, the 70-year-old sewing machine working perfectly fine, and it's such a beautiful design because of how it looked back then. So yeah, and it has that significance as a family heirloom, if you will, because it's been in our family now for about three generations, which is just another benefit of the repair culture is connecting with your family in a sense, that's awesome.

**00:30:04 Murray**

Yeah, it's great you mention sewing machines. We did have somebody on campus actually that was a grad student who was very experienced with sewing machines. I hope when we get back to campus that Steve will be able to come back out and also do the tune up and work on some sewing machines, but sewing machines are a great example of something that you have like you say, they are 70-year-old sewing machine and the expectation is that you adjust it, you clean it, you do whatever and it goes back into working.

But then the challenge is, if we have a sewing machine that was produced in 2015. Do we expect it’s still going to be working in 2085, right? And we know that the manufacturers and everybody is sort of backed off on their expectations, however, for great grandparents, there were goods produced where it would be lifetimes and many lifetimes of use. And I have to think we have to sort of plug some of that back into, why are we so willing to accept what we get? I just yeah, somehow we're just too accepting. We haven't been demanding enough, and maybe that's for the right to repair in the legislation that's happening now will at least get bigger corporations to back off and allow other technicians to open up their equipment or get software or do whatever to repair things. And that's a start. But I also think that something like a sewing machine, you should be able to expect it if you buy it when you're in your 20s that 40 years later you're still working with that same sewing machine. Will you pass it on to another generation or two? We don't know, but I think it's quite unacceptable that we have a sewing machine that someone would go, well it’s 15 years old, what did you expect, right? And I think we have to sort of, yeah, put more pressure into the businesses that make things.

**00:32:05 Jenna**

I would agree, and again that brings it back to as a consumer what you can do. Stay informed on the items that you're purchasing and their repairability and demand those companies do start making those considerations in their product. So that's one great thing you can do is a consumer for anybody that's listening. Another thing if you are interested, of course, is learning how to repair items. So I'd love to know if you have any tips, Murray, for beginner repairers on how to get started. Maybe places they can go or resources that would be really beneficial to them.

**00:32:39 Murray**

Well, I think I mean okay, so the might and might be that well, somebody that's been doing this for awhile isn’t an expert. One of the items that came recently in to get repaired was a KitchenAid mixer, a big dough mixer. And guess what? YouTube is just full of videos of how to repair these dough mixers and it's not, it’s not about being the first, is just about being part of a circumstance where you might learn from somebody else if you ask around. Somebody who might help you. Obviously I mentioned YouTube. I guess there's the need to have some sort of basic tools and some willingness. And I don't think it's so much about experience, but it's more the willingness. And I think yeah, checking out yeah what people have posted on YouTube, seeing what tools they need, seeing what parts you need or what parts you can substitute. Being open minded to the, you repair something, it's slightlymore limited than what it previously could do, but it's adequate or it's fine. Its appearance is not perfect. It's got to be safe. I think that goes without saying, you know, electrical repairs would be an example of. You can't just repair things that are unsafe for others to use. That's a very important thing.

But I think the most important thing if someone wants to become a repair or sort of enter into doing this: Take a look at what you have and understand how it works right? How it's put together. Those are part of understanding you know is it repairable, is it not repairable? Investigate the different ways that it can be repaired or mended, right? Certainly YouTube is a good source of seeing what others have done. You don't need a whole lot of tools. Perhaps, you know, if you're very limited on tools, places like the KW Library of Things could help expand the available tools you have for any sort of major project or repair. You just need very basic tools to fix things.

The other thing to keep in mind is, and the example might be and this happened to me with vacuum cleaners, but it could be just about anything is, if you buy if you buy a particular item, you might see another item similar to it later available to you at a thrift operation or a yard sale or something. And having a second item is available parts is probably a good place to start for repair. You know it's just something that we recently we had a kettle where the cord from flexing no longer would conduct electricity, so that's a common failure for kettles, and being able to go to a thrift shop and just get a spare wire, it might be a black one instead of a white one or whatever. It is probably going to be similar length, but those are other things to keep in mind with you sort of want to repair. It's not always about how can I say, taking it all apart and repairing it. It's finding other ways to keep it going that are thrifty but more sustainable, right?

There's other sources of parts. I mean, salvaging parts. Or yeah, it depends on how you feel about what your neighbours have carried out to the sidewalk and whether you can, you know, go pick it up and actually take some parts off it because, you know, you have something very similar. But I mentioned about having vacuum cleaners. I have vacuum cleaners that are probably go back at this point 35 to 40 years, but they're from a family of vacuum cleaners are all made over several decades by Kenmore or Sears, and they all have interchangeable parts, and from two or three of them, it's always possible to get the one working, you know, sort of the one that you have working. In fact, the vacuum cleaners I have, once you overhauled them once and you know how to maintain them, then I would say three to five years, even if you put used parts into it, it's going to be working fine for three to five years. So I think repair is also about maintaining your things so they stay in good operating condition because that's part of things working well, is you know how to tighten them up or clean them because that's the other thing, often things need a bit of cleaning. A hair dryer has a place that air has to get sucked in that if it gets a bunch of lint on it then it starts to make the heating element overheat, which will then fail something or other in the hair dryer. So if you just do a bit of maintenance on something like a hair dryer it’s going to last you way longer than if you just don't do the maintenance thing, so repair is one thing, but also maintenance goes hand and hand with that.

**00:37:16 Jenna**

Those are some great tips and I really like the idea of using parts from one thing in another. And of course using YouTube. That's something that has helped me a lot in learning to repair even the simplest things in my life. One thing that I'm still trying to repair is the trunk of my car. So I can't remember what it's called, but basically the button to open the trunk, it stopped working a few months ago, and so I was watching YouTube videos on how to deconstruct that how to clean it out. Because sometimes if the wires are just too dusty that can prevent it from connecting. So unfortunately that didn't work, but it was really empowering to be able to take that apart and understand what prevents something from working well, but also what allows it to work.

**00:38:02 Murray**

I have something similar to share, Jenna, so one of the items that came in recently was a hand mixer where there's two speeds, two buttons that one button is low speed, the second button is a high speed. Well the individual must have had some food on their hands and it got sticky and got in around the high-speed button and then the button went in and stayed stuck in, it wouldn't come back out because it was sort of jammed, and as they were trying to figure out what to do, they said, well I couldn't open it up and that is because manufacturers put what are called security screws on so many appliances, and the idea is to limit who can actually open it up. They might say it's so a qualified repair person, but this is one of the things that we just will be posting or if we haven't post it will be shortly on the 4RepairKW Instagram was just about these security screws. You can go to a Home Hardware Store and you can buy screwdriver bits that fit these security screws. Then you too can open up your item and you know cleaned up the buttons on the other hand mixer. So yeah, that’s exactly as you're doing it with your car. That whole sort of thing of getting informed, but what could it possibly be? Trying things and then yeah, at some point in time you might have to go to and for car parts there's a lot of local recycling yards that you can get parts and then maybe just saying I need one of those buttons, I go to the dealer, the dealer wants $70.00, I go to the rec yard and they charge me $20 or $25 because they have to send somebody out to the yard to pull it out of the car that's just like yours, but then you actually can have a part and get it back up and working because you will take your tools and reinstall the button and your trunk will open. Yeah, cool.

**00:39:43 Jenna**

Yeah, fingers crossed that does work! I would love to try that. So again for all of our audience, explore different options and don't be afraid to get creative. It might end up being very rewarding for you and a great learning experience as we out. Sorry you want to say something else?

**00:39:58 Murray**

I just was thinking of something I should share because this is kind of encapsulates so many things about 4RepairKW community and where the knowledge to repair comes from. The second event I did at the KW Library of tings, this person shows up and actually is now one of the regular volunteers. He showed up and he said I learned about what you're doing today, how can I get involved or whatever, and I said what did you bring to repair? He said no, I want to be one of your repairers. And I said, how did you learn about us? He said, well, it's part of the orientation for new Canadians in the KW area, they've included information about you. And I said, well how long have you been in Canada? I've been in Canada less than one month. So I said well do you repair things? Well, yes, in my family and what our community back home we always repair things. I would just want to repair. And he has been for over, let me think about this, well, almost two years we've known each other. He took some repair items this past week for me for the drop off repair event. He's a great repairer, but he has the knowledge and skills that he brought to Canada from halfway around the world and we just have shared experiences through repairing things, and I think it's one of those things where like who can do repair? Well it’s anyone, anyone can do repairs. And what does repair do? Well it allows people to feel good about what they can do and share things with others and connect. You know, we don't come from the same culture, but we connect in a way that is so meaningful when we do see each other and things we talk about an we've gotten to know more about each others’ lives a little bit or jobs or whatever.

So repair can be a whole bridge to so many other things, so I don't think anybody should hold back from doing repairs because they go, ‘I don't really know what I can do.’ You'll be surprised. Just step into it. You can do just about anything. Learn how to darn socks would be an example. Be creative and have very colourful and amazing visible mending and then you'll become the sort of the go-to person for darning socks. There's so many things that people can do that yeah, it's just amazing. It's not about what any one person knows, what I know. I just happened to be the person to organise the what's called 4RepairKW.

And hopefully we'll get more students involved, right? As we get back on campus, you'll be putting this out through the Sustainability Office, and we will be able to get events up and running on campus, and will actually get volunteers to come and help our help us run the events and get some space back. Maybe that's the design lab on the 2nd floor of EV3 is it? Yeah. Above Williams, yeah, that’s where we had the events out of and will get those back up and running on campus. Because, yeah, it's there's a great spirit on campus and great number of volunteers on campus and all these things that need to be repaired.

**00:42:54 Jenna**

Definitely, thank you for that. That was really empowering and motivating. I would love to ask one more question as we wrap up the podcast: what does sustainability mean to you? And feel free to integrate repair into that definition.

**00:43:15 Murray**

Well sustainability is very broad to me and that that's kind of how we fit in on this planet. So can we all have jobs that make twice the average income? Well, it wouldn't be average if we can all make the same huge amount of money. So I think economic sustainability is part of it. We all have to sort of think about where we fit in and yeah, how we live our lives and what we take away from the planet and what we leave behind. That's important. I think also repair and sharing with others is something that we kind...of are lived existences are isolated, but when we actually come down to it, if you get into a room full of people and people start showing each other what they know or can do, that's kind of the cool thing just happens, right? And then you don't really have to sort of do the one upmanship thing, it's just appreciating what someone else can do. So I think sustainability really is about sort of using all the resources that we have, not only our economic or our monetary resources we might have as individuals, but the people that are around us in the community. And then the other part of it is not throwing away things because we have things that we've created products that have been made that have high value to us or have high value at some point to us. But then they stopped functioning well, then we kind of have diminished value. Or maybe we just don't like them anymore. So we want to get rid of them.

I think we have to recognise that we’re privileged in that we have all of these things, and if we don't want to have them ourselves anymore, we should pass them along to somebody else who may want to have, because there's kind of the whole food chain of who else can make use of something. And so even if you have something that's not working, maybe make it available to others, you know, through Kijiji at a really good price, because that may actually help them fix something. So I think sustainability is kind of a very broad thing where you're always going to continue on using the things around you, but then also if you if you're tired of them, the whole idea of making the bill with the others for free, that's good, I promote that idea because having things that are available for free help others then repair things and get things up and working and it helps them with the budget, it helps send one less thing out to the landfill site and let's face it, if you've got tired of something you're just tired of it, you want something new, give it up to somebody else. It's gone, it's gone tomorrow, and it's not about money. But I think the one thing about sustainability, and I think just a visit to landfill site as you had experience working at a landfill site, it is about sort of seeing what goes on in one of those operations. It's sobering. Right? It's really, you know, we're challenged as a species to be accountable to what we're actually doing and then not feel we're not accountable for what we're actually doing. It all comes to sort of that final pilot on the landfill site. That's what sustainability should be about. Go get informed out there if you can make any difference in that, that will make the world a much better place.

00:46:32 Jenna

Thank you, that was a really insightful perspective and I really hope it resonates a lot with our audience. For anybody who is listening, I really encourage you to checkout 4RepairKW. We will be providing their Instagram in our show notes and whether you are interested in learning how to repair items, you have items to repair, or you already know how to repair things and you want to help out, you should really check them out. Thank you so much, Murray, for your time. We really appreciate it on the podcast.

**00:47:01 Murray**

You're welcome, great being here. Thank you, Jenna.

**00:47:03 Jenna**

That is all for this episode. I hope you are feeling inspired and motivated to repair some items in your house. I actually had plans after the workday today to repair some clothing items that I've had, so I think that this conversation is very timely with that. So I encourage you to find items in your own home that you were thinking of simply replacing an instead trying to repair them. Or connecting with 4RepairKW if you are in the Waterloo area to see if they can repair it for you, or if you can just find some videos on YouTube that show you how to repair or repurpose that item. Give it a go and see what happens.

If you enjoyed this episode, make sure to subscribe so you stay in the know for future episodes and follow us on social media @UWSustainable on Instagram and Twitter so you can see all of the other sustainability content that we share. And as always, a big thank you to Bennett Gallant for our amazing jingle music.

That's WAT’s up, Waterloo. I hope you enjoyed this episode. I hope it's inspired you to start fostering a repair culture in your own life. Thank you so much for tuning in. This is Jenna signing off of the podcast, and we will see you in the next episode.