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Edita Hadravska: To me and to my family, as well as to many people in the Czech Republic, which was a country that was occupied by Russian forces at that time, getting outside meant freedom. It was the space they created to really kind of assert that this world still belongs to them even though there are Army bases around the country. And I think it's that kind of emotional connection to the outside, to nature through freedom that really is incredibly powerful.

Shelby Stanger: That's Edita Hadravska, she found freedom connecting with nature, and she's also found freedom working as the Design Director at Arc'teryx, the outdoor apparel company, based in Vancouver, Canada. At Arc'teryx, Edita and her team are focused on making a new kind of women's outdoor gear. Her innovative design approach celebrates women and puts them at the heart of the design process. The work Edita doing in Arc'teryx is rooted in her journey as a mother, a designer, and an outdoor athlete.

Shelby Stanger: I'm Shelby Stanger, and this is Wild Ideas Worth Living. Before she was a badass designer, Edita was an avid skier and a lover of the outdoors, her passion for physical activity for skiing and for outdoor adventures began when she was a toddler in the Czech Republic. Tell me a little bit more about growing up in the Czech Republic. Most of our listeners are based in the USA. I've never visited there. I'm really curious what it was like and what it's like now.

Edita Hadravska: The environment in the Czech Republic was something that I don't think my own daughter can understand, and I'm really grateful that she can't. Czech Republic used to be one of the most advanced countries in the Austria-Hungary Empire, but it was occupied for 40 years and people didn't have freedom to think and say what they wanted. They didn't even have freedom to choose the occupation they wanted. A lot of times they didn't have freedom to choose the school they wanted to go to.

Edita Hadravska: Again, it was the totalitarian regime where everything was centrally planned and government was oppressive. And especially my family was a

family that completely disagreed with the regime, at the same time, they knew that lives were at stake. So we couldn't go and rebel until things got a little bit easier in 89. And that really changed my life, opened the world to me. I could go study in Los Angeles. I could go study all over Europe, in Montreal. I could go work and live in Southeast Asia. None of these things would have been possible had the Velvet Revolution of 89, not happened.

Edita Hadravska: I was 13 when things changed around, but a lot of my growing up years were really in a very different environment. I knew that there were things we discussed at home and we listened to Radio Free Europe that was actually funded by the United States. I knew that we had all these ideas that we could discuss at home, but had I ever talked about this outside of our house, my family would suffer and we actually had people in our circle of friends who disappeared. So it wasn't an environment that I don't think my daughter would ever understand, and I'm incredibly grateful that she doesn't.

Shelby Stanger: Tell us a little bit about growing up and how you found a love of skiing, was that a family thing or how did you find it?

Edita Hadravska: I was very fortunate with my mom being very passionate about skiing and the mountains in general. I started when I was two and it was really something that my mom always put a priority on, made sure that we got out and enjoyed the mountains and the outside. And she just wanted to make sure that she can get to ski, I think. So she got me, when I was two, to these little skis with a Teddy bear in front and actually free heels. So I feel like, "Oh, I was touring at the age of two." And that's how I started to enjoy the outside.

Shelby Stanger: And so was there a mountain really close to your house, or you guys would just drive to a local resort? Or how did that work?

Edita Hadravska: Yeah, it's funny here in Whistler we actually have a place and we are really fully committed and sleep here, but back home we wouldn't, and we would just drive in, in the morning. It was a 45 minute drive. So it was doable, just meant really early mornings and missed TV shows as a kid, but we would just drive in and then drive back in the evening.

Shelby Stanger: From an outdoor perspective, what's the Czech Republic like? Obviously there's mountains there, if you're you're a skier.

Edita Hadravska: Yes. Yes, there are mountains there. There's not a lot of Alpine at all, but there are mountains, good enough to ski and good enough to train for racing. And there's a lot of like slalom tracks. There are mountains actually lining the whole outside of the country. There are several different directions you can go and train or just enjoy. There's a lot of cross-country skiing. And overall there's a lot of camping and river rafting as well. That's how I grew up, every Summer we would go for a river canoe trip with my parents and just put everything into our canoes and move down the river for a week, and then hop on a train, go back home.

Shelby Stanger: Straight out of high school, Edita decided to become a lawyer. She won scholarships that allowed her to study law in Greece, in an Amsterdam and Edita, worked all over the world. The longer she worked as a lawyer though, the less she had time for the things she loved. What made you want to become a lawyer before you ever became a designer at one of the top outdoor brands in the industry?

Edita Hadravska: Oh, that's a funny story, actually, when I was growing up, my two options were doctor or a lawyer.

Shelby Stanger: I'm laughing because that is how it is in a lot of families.

Edita Hadravska: Yeah. And I have to say, my parents have been incredibly supportive even with the late change I did in my life, but this is kind of what they really wanted and wished for me. We didn't have any lawyers in my family, so I felt that was a great option. And you know what? I have the most fantastic time in law school. I again, studied all over Europe. We had great scholarships from the European Union that I was able to benefit from and study in Greece and Amsterdam and et cetera. So it was great fun. And it was also a discipline that I still very like, it's very strategic and there's kind of a drive to win in arguments. And maybe that's not a nice personal quality I have, but there's something very exiting.

Shelby Stanger: I have the same quality, it's okay.

Edita Hadravska: And there's something very exciting about that. So I really enjoyed that and did mood courts during university and again, had a great opportunities. So it was really fun. And then I started working for actually a New York based law firm, with a New York head office, but based in Prague.

Edita Hadravska: And I worked for two years at mergers and acquisitions and it was quite intense. I realized I don't have any time for things that I actually loved. I don't have any time for taking photos. I don't have any times for drawing or painting. I am eating dinner at the office four days a week, and I don't have time for any sports and really being outside or relax outside. So I really wanted to change in my life and I wanted to choose something that's much more creative and design at that time seemed to me as a very visual discipline and also very creative discipline and a problem solving discipline. So I applied to Concordia University in Montreal and got in, and that was it. I had to quit.

Shelby Stanger: What did your parents say when you quit to become a designer?

Edita Hadravska: They were surprised. And I think they were worried, I think they were worried, they were supportive, but I could feel that they're worried. They knew I was very successful as a lawyer, I was at that time earning more than both of them combined. And they were very worried for me going back to university and paying for my paint brushes and design tools and starting all over again. And I can't disagree, it was hard on many levels to be a student again, and especially after coming from two years of very

driven workforce, coming to a class and maybe seeing some people that I had to be surprised how little work they did for the next class. So it was eye opening to start over and humbling, but I never turned back. I never, never regret it.

Shelby Stanger: What do you love about design?

Edita Hadravska: So many things. I love that it's a problem solving discipline. It's not art school. You're working to solve a problem. And you're a great designer if you can actually nail down your needs first and start with the needs and then drive with purpose and end up with a solution that answers those needs. It's also, and this is actually not all kinds of design, but the type of design that you find at Arc'teryx is really based on values and really focused. We have a set of principles and they're really values. And they really aligned with what I expect of good design.

Shelby Stanger: Is it just... I imagine it must be really cathartic from being a lawyer and doing these deals, to actually creating something that then people wear, like it's art. It's totally different.

Edita Hadravska: Well, I would say it's not art. It is problem solving, that you're looking and digging for the needs and to find the real needs. A lot of times you hear, "I want this." "I want that." "I want this." But actually when you dig deeper, you realize, well maybe what you want isn't actually this. Maybe, your actually not comfortable. And maybe you're actually feeling not empowered in what you have. So that's why you're asking for this. But maybe the ruffle is not the answer. Maybe something else is the answer. Maybe it's a better fit. Maybe it's longer length. It's really nailing down the needs. And then working as a problem-solving exercise towards an answer.

Shelby Stanger: Edita is determined to find these answers because the apparel she designed really is supposed to solve problems for whoever's wearing it. She takes into account how women's bodies are actually shaped, the way they moved in the elements that they encounter in the outdoors. When we come back, Edita talks about her team's innovative, new women's snow sport collection and how motherhood has made her even more passionate about her work.

Shelby Stanger: Arc'teryx has built on the principle of obsessive precise design, which means they create versatile long lasting outdoor gear that stands up to the most epic of adventures. They recently released a new version of a fan favorite their Atom LT hoodie, which has been updated with more contemporary fit, features and style lines, making it more versatile than ever before. It's a jacket that keeps you warm and dry while being lightweight, which means it's perfect uses [inaudible 00:12:46] for whatever cold weather activity you have lined up for this Winter. It's one jacket with endless possibilities. You can learn more about the Atom LT hoodie and Arc'teryx by visiting [arc'teryx.com](http://arc'teryx.com) or shop the Atom LT hoodie at REI.

Shelby Stanger: Supporting the belief that a life outdoors is a life well lived. Having an Ikon Pass in your pocket, unlocks a road trip-ready family of unique ski destinations. Across more than 40 Ikon Pass destinations, the mountain community can explore wide open spaces, cut endless lines through fresh mountain air and discovered new adventures with old friends. So whether you're home mountain bound or ready for road trip rambles this winter, the best adventure is always the next adventure. On sale now every 2020-2021 Ikon Pass comes with adventure assurance, giving you the confidence to ride. Discover pass options and plan for adventure @ikonpass.com that's I-K-O-N-P-A-S-S.com.

Shelby Stanger: Historically outdoor brands would take their men's line, make the apparel line smaller, die it pink or another girly color and sell it as their women's line. The process is known to industry insiders as "pink it and shrink it". But Edita takes a different approach. When she's skiing on a mountain, she doesn't want a shrunken version of a men's jacket. She wants gear that will help her perform better and looks cool.

Shelby Stanger: One of the main reasons we wanted to bring you on this show was to talk about this wild idea you had of focusing on designing for women beyond this, shrink it and pink it concept. Can you explain what that means and why that's just such a dated idea?

Edita Hadravska: Yeah. Well, it's as dated as the idea that women don't get to say what they need and what they want in their own words. Shrink it and pink it, is acceptable these days for maybe toddler wear, but definitely not for any solutions for women. And I feel like historically this phenomena happened because, especially in the outdoor industry, this used to be, let's say, very male dominant area where women didn't really get to a pitch or approve line plans or decide which kind of material or research we're going to do, or what kind of fit study we're going to do or how we're going to harvest any insights. And most athletes were men as well because women were busy working at home. So when men realized that it was time to make money on women's outdoor gear, the quickest answer they had was, "Well, let's shrink it and pink it." And maybe there was a bit of a lack of humility to actually ask women what they want. And this might seem like something that happened a hundred years ago, but I've seen it. I've seen it very recently, even.

Shelby Stanger: Historically a lot of outdoor gear has been designed with men in mind. So when do you think that started to change? Was it alongside when more women designers showed up or was it when more female athletes showed up? What do you think? What have you seen, because you're in it?

Edita Hadravska: Great question. I feel like maybe a few things combined, first of all, women started getting out more. They freed themselves from all these other tasks and expectations that were on them and started really enjoying the outside much more than before. We've had more great talented women come into the design force as well. And I feel that a lot of leadership and all these outdoor companies started realizing that they're

actually missing out a lot of business by not serving women properly. So a lot has changed and enough is enough too, we just heard, in recent years. So I feel there's a much more emphasis on actually listening to women and harvesting a true insight, what they want in order to give them what they'll buy.

Shelby Stanger: So are people pretty receptive to ideas or have you ever faced any pushback in trying to change how gear is designed for women throughout your career?

Edita Hadravska: Oh, I've totally faced pushback. I think all designers designing for women would agree with that. But again, the dynamics are changing very much and there's a real curiosity how fit in to what women want. So yeah, I would say definitely pushback, definitely misunderstanding what women want, but that's a great challenge to work with, not against.

Shelby Stanger: Can you tell me some examples of how you specifically changed designs for women at Arc'teryx? With specific examples. I'm really curious about things like harnesses, because men and women both have different body parts down there.

Edita Hadravska: Mm-hmm (affirmative). For sure. First I would like to say that most designers at Arc'teryx are women. And if you think about the industry, most people that touch product are actually a woman. We have some really great athletes within our design team and all of our designers are users. So they bring in really great firsthand insight into, "Well, do we actually need?" The C-Quence harness and the Incendia were started with a women's product as the beginning. So the harnesses, for example, typically are again, designed by men. Then we look at bodily proportions and we kind of adjust the sizing and the proportion. What happened here was our designer, Katie, a great climber herself started with women's needs and really designed it from scratch for women. And then we looked at how men's look like. So really turning it around.

Edita Hadravska: In the apparel side at Arc'teryx, we've been doing that for quite a while. There's a lot of areas of our line where we don't need the, his and hers, which is what typically leads to the shrink and pink. And even then, for example, with the Incendia we really looked at how do women want to look on the mountain? How do we want to feel before we started skiing? And we really looked at the side of empowerment and comfort and really ultimate performance and femininity really in sports. What does that mean? How does that look like? And when you look at the results, you'll see there's no pink, there's no purple, there's no nipped waist. You end up with a very different product when you start with what women actually want and need.

Shelby Stanger: The Incendia line that Edita is talking about is a woman's snow sport collection that she created with her colleague, Sarah Wallace. Incendia is a collection under the Arc'teryx brand, Sarah and Edita were inspired to create it while they were out skiing together in British, Columbia. They were on a chairlift headed to the top of a mountain, as they watched other

skiers make their way down the slopes. As outdoor gear and clothing designers, Sarah and Edita saw evidence of the shrink it and pink it strategy everywhere. So they got to work, after a couple of years searching for the right materials and sketching new designs, Edita, and Sarah finally launched Incendia with a mission to empower and inspire outdoor women athletes everywhere.

Edita Hadravska: Incendia is a pet project of my dear colleague, Sarah Wallace and myself, Sarah leads a ski and snowboard collection at Arc'teryx and we've been friends ever since we saw one another and we really kind of have the same outlook on design and on life, same sense of humor and same shortage of patience and same passion for things that we like, and our sport.

Edita Hadravska: Incendia is something that we dreamed of since the early years of our friendship and our collaboration as designers at Arc'teryx, we wanted to look at what makes us feel strong, what makes us feel powerful and what enables us in our sport. And when we were looking around what's on the market, we could see two things. We could either see very functional gear, that's not very feminine or some not very empowering. And then we could see cool stuff that was wedding out and not really performing for the level that we knew it could. So we wanted to marry both. We wanted to find materials and answers that were based in performance, but also stylish and not pink.

Shelby Stanger: So the name and Incendia, is really powerful, I love it. How did you guys come up with that name?

Edita Hadravska: This is actually a combined effort, after we created what Incendia is and had all the protos and went to Chile to test, in off season. And all of this, we were quite excited, but again, we didn't really think all the way through to the consumer. How are we going to pitch this idea? It was kind of new and it was the first time really we got a space to create women's only product without immense expression in the main Arc'teryx line. And we actually worked with great copywriter on the name and again, she was very humble and listening to what the story is and what are we excited about? And she was interested in the idea of us igniting a fire. And this is what kind of inspired the name.

Shelby Stanger: I love it. I love the name. It's also just so bad ass and beautiful. And I think it's really interesting, you guys went to Chile for inspiration on the new collection. Can you talk a little bit about that experience?

Edita Hadravska: Yes, Sarah Wallace, she lives for her Winter sports, but because they're Winter sports, she also seeks to do them in the Summer, on the other side of the planet. And Chile is a country that she knows very well. I think she's been there maybe eight times and she was generous enough to invite me a couple of times for her trip. And we also invited one of our great athletes. Incendia again, it's a project that was seeded a long time ago. So I would say that the Chile trips were mainly to actually see it on snow and really well to test it before we launch it and send it to bulk. So

yeah, it's a great way to do some off seasons skiing and it was a great trip with just women skiers, which again, kind of changes the dynamics of your back country skiing.

Shelby Stanger: You must be a pretty good skier. I'm guessing.

Edita Hadravska: Well, I like to think that, but maybe more important to me is how it makes me feel. It's really the only sport and I do love running and I do love hiking and I do love paddle boarding, but what I love and adore and crave about skiing is it makes me feel like I have wings. It's again, that links to freedom. And it makes me feel like I'm flying. That's the sport that I actually dream about. And that's the sport that I'm really happy to instill in my daughter.

Shelby Stanger: How old your daughter?

Edita Hadravska: My daughter is six and she is a pretty good ripper by now.

Shelby Stanger: That's incredible. It must be different as a designer now, also as a mom, just talk to me a little bit about, now as a mother and a designer, how you take being a mother into your job and any advice on becoming a designer, especially if you're woman now, and you want to be a designer in the outdoor industry, like how do you do it?

Edita Hadravska: So first about being a mom, I think that changed everything for me, not just my relationship with my job and with my company and with my colleagues and my projects, my relationship to the world. I want the planet to be healthy for her even more intensely than I wanted for myself. I want there to be great mountains and great snow for her even more intensely than I wanted for myself. And I want there to be equity and I want there to be space for women in this world. And that's why all these kind of fights that we face as women, I call it fights, but it could be just disadvantaged on the socioeconomic spectrum. I feel them more intensely because it's not just about me to have equity, it's I want equity for her. I don't want her to have to deal with any of this. I want her to, when it's time for her to come and find a job and her place in society, I don't want her to have to fight any of this. I want to kind of do it for her. So when I hear injustice towards women, again, it kind of raises a different level of, "I need to do something about this."

Shelby Stanger: We get a lot of listeners who want to work in the outdoor industry, any advice, if you want to become a designer in the outdoor industry?

Edita Hadravska: Yeah. Well, first of all, be in the outdoors, be in an authentic user, it's the passion for your sport that will drive you to do overnights or put in the extra effort, really enjoy the outdoors. And then sometimes they take courage to switch from being a successful lawyer, to going into art school again. But if you feel the passion, then do it, do it, and trust that one day at the end, you'll come out and you'll be really happy that you did that.

Shelby Stanger:

Edita is an example of someone who harnessed courage and pursued their passions, even when it meant leaving a law degree and career behind. Not only she changed her own life, but she also works to help women realize their true potential and perform the best they can. Huge shout out and thank you to Edita Hadravska for talking to me. And I want to give another shout out to the amazing women who create the awesome outdoor gear at Arc'teryx. I'm really excited to try some of the amazing pieces from the Incendia collection. You can learn more about Arc'teryx and find the Incendia line on the Arc'teryx website [@arcteryx.com](http://arcteryx.com) or [@arcteryx](#) on social media. That's [@A-R-C-T-E-R-Y-X](#) on social media. Wild Ideas Worth Living is part of the REI Podcast Network. It's hosted by me, Shelby Stanger, written and edited by Sylvia Thomas and produced by Chelsea Davis. Our executive producers are Palo Mottola and Joe Crosby and our presenting sponsor this season is Subaru. As always, we appreciate when you review, rate and subscribe to this show, wherever you're listening. And remember, some of the best adventures often happen when you follow your wildest ideas.